

# Characterization of Out of Lesson and Out Of School Physical Activity of Children in Poland on the Example of Selected Primary School in Podkarpackie Province

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## ABSTRACT

Principal purpose of the study is characteristics of out of lesson and out of school physical activities of children in selected primary schools in the Podkarpackie province. Inspiration for undertakings originate research was the opportunity to familiarize oneself with the types of physical activity of students in their free time and the influence of formal and legal factors on the organizational level of additional physical activities. The research was conducted in 60 primary schools in the Podkarpackie province. The basic condition in selecting the schools for the research owned a proper sport facility by the school. Research was conducted in April and May, 2005. Empirical material was gathered by means of a diagnostic survey. Questionnaire of the survey included a set of closed questions. Students of physical education and headmasters of the schools were the respondents. The research indicates low level of physical activity of people of various ages. It should be assumed that this state of affairs corresponds to the state of physical education at schools. Therefore, in the search for optimal solutions, out of lesson and out of school activities should be included in the process of preparation of the young generation to physical activity in their adult lives. In conclusion, additional physical activity of children relies, to a large extent, on community service performed by teachers. Most of the times, out of lesson and out of school activities are occasional and incidental in nature and rarely constitute a part of an organized sequence of systematic events scheduled for specified points in time.

**Key words:** Physical activities, children, the Podkarpackie province, extra-curricular activities

## INTRODUCTION

Physical activity constitutes the key and integrating element of healthy life style. It belongs to the basic needs of a human being in every period of his life. Scientific research proves that health of a person in 50-60% depends on his or her life style. In turn, the most important part of it is physical activity. It results from the meaning of physical activity for our physical, mental and social health (2). Deficiency or excess of physical exercise can be the cause of many disorders and increase the risk of a disease. Physical activity undertaken regularly instead of it being occasional or incidental, and done moderately within the border of tolerance of the system, gives in effect not only growth in muscular mass, strengthening of bones and joints but also growth in heart mass, lowering of the arterial pressure, lowering of the pulse and rhythm of breathing (7).

In the area of mental, personality and social development, physical activity increases immunity of a human being to stress, brings emotional balance, improves general wellbeing, integrates, prevents pathologies and, in addition, constitutes a specific catalyst for social bonds (8).

In terms of physical activity, the Polish society occupies one of the last places in Europe. Such state of affairs results from many causes. We can include among them: economic factors, lack of infrastructure

for sport and recreation or inexpensive equipment, health policy of the state, conservatism of the health care system, lack of broader and systematic interest in promotion of physical activity on the side of the mass-media, late introduction of cross-subject course in health education in schools, late introduction of the “health education” subject to the programs of departments of pedagogy in schools of higher education (including Academies of Physical Education), short-sighted process of physical education (1).

Biological development of children is a subject of special care parents, educators and physicians, as well as of the entire society. Monitoring that development is an important element of assessing the social and economic status in demographic surveys, as those are the key factors of socio-economic differentiation (6).

It seems that school occupies one of the top places in preparation of the young generation for physical activity in the period of growing up and development, as well as in adult life. The measure of the quality of physical education should be the extent to which society participates in various forms of physical activity. School as an institution constitutes the basic system of intentional education and care. That education concerns also physical development and health (3).

Basic goals and tasks of physical education are realized by the school during obligatory physical education lessons. Unfortunately, physical education

lessons are characterized by excessive didactic and program related formalism. Actual, instrumental and immediate goals dominate over physical education in the continuous, long-term perspective. Therefore, improving the system of out of lesson or facultative activities may constitute the main element of a real, not illusory, preparation for physical activity (5).

This analysis concerns characteristics of out of lesson and out of school physical activities of children in selected primary schools in the Podkarpackie province. Inspiration for undertaking original research was the opportunity to familiarize oneself with the types of physical activity of students in their free time and the influence of formal and legal factors on the organizational level of additional physical activities.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

The research was conducted in 60 primary schools in the Podkarpackie province. The basic condition in selecting the schools for the research owned a proper sport facility by the school (gym, complex of external sport fields and sufficient supply of equipment, utensils and tools used in sport activities). Second condition taken into account in selecting the schools was an active student sports club functioning by the school. Research was conducted in the month of April and May, 2005. Empirical material was gathered by means of a diagnostic survey. Questionnaire of the survey included a set of closed questions. Students of physical education and headmasters of the schools were the respondents. It should be stressed that the research was of preliminary in their nature.

### Statistical Analysis

The SPSS statistical program (version 13.0) was used for data analysis. Standard statistical methods were used for the calculation of means and SD. In the comment of results were used percent (%) and frequency values.

## RESULTS

The analysis of the gathered material allows for propedeutic characterization of out of lesson and out of school forms of physical activity of children in the surveyed primary schools.

On the basis of the above results, it can be stated that team sports are dominant in the analyzed schools. Organized lessons in football, volleyball, basketball and handball took place in 62,9% of the surveyed schools. Among the individual forms of physical activity, table tennis lessons took place most often in these schools (61,7%)

To the negative phenomena should include low popularity of disciplines placed among "sports for the entire life". Downhill skiing activities were organized only in 6,7% of the schools and only 10% of schools

conducted lessons at swimming pool. Only 1/5 of the surveyed schools conducted organized forms of bicycle tourism.

**Table 1.** Forms of physical activity organized by the surveyed schools

Item	Type of physical activity	Surveyed schools (n=60)	%
1.	Soccer	44	73,4
2.	Volleyball	40	66,7
3.	Basketball	38	63,4
4.	Handball	29	48,3
5.	Athletics	31	51,7
6.	Gymnastics	4	6,7
7.	Table Tennis	37	61,7
8.	Dance	8	13,3
9.	Swimming	6	10
10.	Riding A Bicycle	12	20
11.	Cross Skiing	3	5
12.	Downhill Skiing	4	6,7
13.	Skating	2	3,3
14.	Badminton	7	11,7

In the out of lesson and out of school forms of physical activity there is a clearly visible tendency for domination of sport oriented lessons over recreational and health improving physical exercises.

Second problem taken into consideration in the research, are organizational, formal, social and financial aspects of the out of lesson and out of school physical activities of children. The gathered results are presented in the table below.

From the table, it seems that definite majority of schools (56,7%) cover the costs of the physical activities organized in the free time. It was presented a clear picture where the share of the costs borne by the authority governing the schools is considerably small (26,7%). At this point it should be added that funds for supporting any forms of physical activity constitute the permanent part of the budget in every local government administrative authority. The sources of funding of additional forms of physical activity by other institutions, for example: non-governmental organizations, social organizations, sport clubs and associations, sponsors, were available only for 16,7% of the schools. In the whole 88,3% of the schools, funds for conducting lesson and out of school activities did not cover the actual costs. The majority of the activities is organized into 1 to 2 hours of lessons (63,3%). Organized physical activity of children relies in 61,7% on the community service performed by the teacher.

## DISCUSSION

Physical education is integrated within education in general. The goal is the formation of the mind, with sport as a means of developing health and resistance.

**Table 2.** Organizational and economic solutions concerning the out of lesson and out of school activities in the surveyed schools

Item	Investigated problem	Surveyed schools (n=60)	%
1.	Sources of funding:		
	- School,	34	56,7
	- Governing authority, - Other.	16 10	26,7 16,7
2.	Amount of funds:		
	- Sufficient, - Insufficient.	7 53	11,7 88,3
3.	Hours per week ( 45 min ):		
	a) 1-2,	38	63,3
	b) 3-6, c) 7-12.	12 10	20,0 16,7
4.	Nature of the work performer by the teacher:		
	- Community service, - Paid.	37 23	61,7 38,3

The responsibility for education is borne by parents, teachers and not least the pupils themselves. Relationships between sport and health are essential for the education of the individual. The major aim of learning is to develop the modern (exactly not new) concept of physical activity established to pursue the recovery of health, fitness and personality (4). The Polish modern school is to teach pupils to remain permanently interested in sporting activities. Today, the traditional, productivity-oriented school system requires change, but there is a lack of sport teachers with sufficient theoretical knowledge about health.

### Conclusions:

Physical activity undertaken in the free time, in accordance with specific preferences, interests and predispositions or physical talents fits well into the process of permanent physical education. The effect of this education should be a high level of physical activity in Polish society. The research cited in the introduction to this analysis indicates low level of physical activity of people of various ages. It should be assumed that this state of affairs corresponds to the state of physical education at schools.

Therefore, in the search for optimal solutions, out of lesson and out of school activities should be included in the process of preparation of the young generation to physical activity in their adult lives.

Result of the research presented above lead to the following conclusions:

1. School system of out of lesson forms of physical activity of children prefers sport related activities, preparing children to participation in sport competitions, and pays less attention to recreational and health improving forms.

2. Funds only partially cover the actual costs of organization and conducting of the activities for children in their free time
3. Additional physical activity of children relies, to a large extent, on community service performed by teachers
4. Most of the times, out of lesson and out of school activities are occasional and incidental in nature and rarely constitute a part of an organized sequence of systematic events scheduled for specified points in time.

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