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**SCHOOL TOURISM AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN NATURAL SETTINGS BASED  
ON THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION**

**Key words:** school tourism, physical education, outdoor education.

ABSTRACT

Contact with nature, tourism and sightseeing are undoubtedly great potential interests of schoolchildren. The article constitutes a study of school tourism and physical education classes as criteria for implementing outdoor education in Polish schools. The study used a diagnostic survey method in the form of questionnaire "General offer of the school in the area of extracurricular recreation and sport". The questionnaire was completed by physical education teachers from 292 Polish schools. The statistical analysis revealed that secondary schools had a better tourism than primary schools. However, the school type does not have affect the proportion of physical education classes held in natural settings. The range of tourist activities offered by schools in small towns and villages in Poland is fairly limited in comparison with schools in mid-sized and large cities.

INTRODUCTION

Contact with nature, tourism and sightseeing are undoubtedly among those potential interests of schoolchildren, whose development might be of particular importance in preparation of active pastimes. Outdoor activities during physical education classes or extracurricular active tourism not only make the school's didactic and educational programmes more attractive, but also have unquestionable health-related, cognitive and cultural advantages. J. Drabik (1997) emphasizes that physical activity can effectively counterbalance the progressive hypokinesia of the present day generation [1].

In accordance with the Schengen Agreement, schools in Europe which organize various sightseeing and tourist events can co-operate with various associations and institutions, including

international exchange programmes. The aims of these activities are 'to promote, among schoolchildren and youth, the principles of environmental protection and the ability to use natural resources judiciously,' and to foster active recreation. Extracurricular sightseeing and tourism can be also organized as qualified tourism or walking trips. Participation in these events requires physical fitness and specialist skills including the use of specialist equipment<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution of the Polish Ministry of National Education and Sport, November 8, 2001, concerning the organization of tourism and sightseeing by state infant schools, schools and institutions (Dz. U. – Official Journal No. 135, item 1516).

B. Domarecka (2008) believes tourism plays an invaluable role in the education of schoolchildren and youth. Modern teaching and sightseeing have become inextricably tied together enabling further learning through practice. She emphasizes that ‘the essence of sightseeing and school tourism consists of emotional experience associated with group engagement in outward bound activities’ [5, p. 14]. A. Wartecka-Ważyńska (2007) stresses the cognitive, educational, hygiene- and health-related, social and educational aspects of school tourism, which is one of the most attractive pastimes [39]. All these advantages have been frequently included in tourism functions [18, 41], which can be divided into *eufunctions* (positive) and *dysfunctions* (negative) [1, 32, 33].

Literature on the subject perceives school tourism as a preliminary attempt to prepare young people to pursue tourism as a social phenomenon [11, 40]. R. Kogut and A. Gordon (1999) notice that promotional activities undertaken by Polish tourism organizations and institutions (Towarzystwo Krzewienia Kultury Fizycznej – TKKF – *Physical Culture Promotion Association*, Polskie Towarzystwo Krajoznawczo-Turystyczne – PTTK – *Polish Sightseeing and Tourist Association*, Polskie Towarzystwo Schronisk Młodzieżowych – PTSM – *Polish Youth Hostels Association*, Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego – ZHP – *Polish Scouting and Guiding Association*) are complementary to the role of the school which inspires and coordinates the educational process [14]. According to R. Winiarski and J. Zdebski (2008) late childhood, also referred to as early school age (7-10 years), is viewed as the preparatory stage of tourist activity development, frequently determining students’ future attitudes [40].

School trips have been included in the school curriculum since Poland regained independence in 1918 [11]. The magnitude of tourism among contemporary schoolchildren and youth can be estimated with the use of data from school and tourism organizations [17, 34, 37], which, unfortunately, reveal a declining tendency. However, there have been no representative nationwide research studies into the phenomenon. Thus, any precise estimates regarding the use of the above mentioned options of tourism promotion among school students are hindered.

School curriculum updates introduced in Polish schools in 2009 accentuate the need for a physical education program based on students’

exposure to the natural environment. It is recommended that, on bright days, movement activities should be organized in the school sports pitch and in natural settings<sup>2</sup>. Two extra PE classes per week, the content of which is optional but attendance mandatory, should also comprise some forms of tourism devised to awake pupils’ interest in tourism and sightseeing and strive for badges of the qualified tourism achievements programme. A school can offer one or several forms of tourism depending on students’ interests and natural conditions, e.g. hiking, cycling or kayak trips [30].

A study of W. Pańczyk (1996) shows unambiguously that an outdoor physical education class increases the intensity of physical effort, necessitates the emergence of spontaneous physical activity forms more than indoor physical education, and improves students’ general physical fitness [28]. E. Madejski (1997) analysed the results of a pedagogical experiment where students were able to select from among several outward bound forms of physical education classes, he and arrived at similar conclusions. Step count, physical effort intensity, emotional response, physical fitness, and attitudes towards physical culture were of higher levels as compared with the results of students exercising indoors [19].

The unquestionable advantages of school tourism and outward bound physical education classes help further direct the educational process towards natural settings. This is in accordance with a worldwide trend of providing education in the open, i.e. outdoor education. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the United Kingdom and United States [6, 7, 35], ‘adventure education’ became an important element of ‘outdoor education’. The ‘adventure’ aspect is most significant for the psychophysical development of participants in such activities [4, 20, 21]. Adventure education also includes school adventure tourism, which can comprise, among others, geology-oriented mountain climbing combined with collection and subsequent filing of interesting minerals [35].

J. Oździński (2004) believes that outdoor forms of physical education “allow involvement in existential activities aimed at health enhancement through contact with the environment and ecology”

<sup>2</sup> Resolution of the Ministry of National Education dated 23 December 2008 concerning infant school and general education curricula, *Dziennik Ustaw* (Official journal of the Polish Parliament), 15 January 2009 r. no. 4, item 17), Physical Education Curriculum.

[27, p. 65]. Outdoor education can function as a source of valuable biological (air, sun, water) and psychological stimuli which reinforce the outcome of being physically active, and activate natural adaptation mechanisms thereby increasing the body's resistance to temperature, light, and mechanical factors. Thus, coddling and oversensitivity to physical and mental stimuli frequently observed among the youth could be prevented [8, 15, 16, 29]. Unforgettable aesthetic sensations bring about respect for nature and distance to everyday life [22]. Outdoor learning also causes situations which promote education through team activities [31, 35].

Considering the above, the idea of a physical education class being carried out in a sports pitch, park, forest, etc. seems well justified. The same regards the incorporation of various forms of tourism and sightseeing into the school curriculum, which once devised, should comply with the needs and interests of the youth as well as with organizational capabilities and conditions of the area. Detailed schedules should be prepared by form masters [18, 36, 41]. These demands and postulates develop parallel to the concept of outdoor recreation activities [10, 12, 38]. Physical education classes are aimed, among others, to prepare students for future engagement in outward bound recreation. Held in natural settings they also help avoid gym overcrowding, which has been an increasing problem since the introduction of two extra physical education classes per week in the Polish school curriculum.

The aforementioned situation caused us to design a study into school tourism and outward bound physical education classes as the criteria of outdoor education implementation in Polish schools.

The following research questions were formulated:

1. Do schools organize trips or events based on the philosophy of active tourism, and what is the proportion of physical education classes held in natural settings?
2. What tourism promotion organizations are present in schools?
3. What percentage of schools introduces active tourism as an element of extracurricular activities?
4. Do school location and type affect the implementation of outdoor education?

Two associated research hypotheses were formulated as well:

1. Secondary schools have better organizational capabilities regarding outdoor education as compared with primary schools.
2. Schoolchildren from big cities receive an offer to participate in some form of active tourism more frequently.

## METHODS

The questions were answered based on the analysis of a diagnostic survey, a part of pilot studies conducted at the turn of 2008 and 2009, the aim of which was to refine the questionnaire 'General offer of the school in the area of extracurricular recreation and sport'. Random school selection was not used as the purpose was mainly to verify the value of the research tool, i.e. the questionnaire. Nevertheless, a large number of respondents as well as the fact that the schools were located in several provinces, over a dozen districts, and several dozen communes do justify some cautious conclusions, and the probability of obtaining similar results in the majority of Polish schools.

The questionnaire consisted of 20 closed-ended questions and several additional closed-ended, half-open, and open-ended questions regarding various aspects of extracurricular recreation and sports activities, school tourism as well as opportunities and conditions of being involved in physical activity during school hours. The present report uses the answers to questions concerning active tourism and the location of physical education class. The questionnaire was sent together with a letter of intent to school principals and physical education teachers and contained information about the institution affiliated in the research project, research organization, the way questionnaires should be filled in and anonymous data analysis.

The questionnaire was completed by physical education teachers from 292 Polish schools. The majority of responses, i.e. 173 (59.3%), were returned from primary schools; 72 (24.7%) from middle schools, and 47 (16.1%) from secondary schools (Table 1). The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice and each subject gave their informed consent.

**Table 1.** The number and type of schools

School type (student' age)	n	%
Primary school (11-13 years)	173	59.25
Middle school (13-16 years)	72	24.66
Secondary school (16-19 years)	47	16.10
Total	292	100.00

Seventy-nine schools (27.1%) were located in large cities (over 100.000 inhabitants), 77 (26.4%) in mid-sized cities (25.000 – 100.000), 33 (11.3%) in small towns (up to 25.000), and 103 (35.3%) in villages (Table 2).

**Table 2.** The number and location of schools

Location	n	%
Large city (>100 thousand inhabitants)	79	27.05
Mid-sized city (25-100 thousand inhabitants)	77	26.37
Small town (< 25 thousand inhabitants)	33	11.30
Village	103	35.27
Total	292	100.00

It was assumed that the school type (primary, middle, secondary) and location (large city, mid-sized city, small town, village) might influence the scope and forms of school tourism as well as the number of outdoor physical education classes. The aim of the statistical analysis was to clarify to what extent the above specified independent variables were associated with the school's 'outdoor education' offer. Nonparametric Pearson's Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test, and – in the case of a form with fewer than eight students – the Maximum-Likelihood Chi-square were used in statistical analysis. Correlations between the variables and the location of physical education classes were estimated by means of univariate analysis of variance. Statistically significant results of nonparametric tests and analysis of variance

( $p < 0.05$ ) indicated significant correlations between independent (school type and location) and dependent (elements of outdoor education) variables.

## RESULTS

The physical education teachers under study confirmed organization of trips and other tourist events within the framework of the active tourism concept in the majority of the schools. The offers turned out to be significantly determined by the school type: different forms of school tourism were more frequent in middle and secondary schools (83.3% and 83.0%, respectively) as compared with primary schools (69.0%). School location did not reveal any associations with outward bound activities (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Active tourism and school type / location

Variable	n	%	Total
School type			
Primary school (11-13 years)	119	68.79	173
Middle school (13-16 years)	60	83.33	72
Secondary school (16-19 years)	39	82.98	47
Pearson's $\chi^2 = 7.750$ ; $df=2$ ; $p=0.0209^*$			
School location			
Large city (>100 thousand inhabitants)	61	77.22	79
Mid-sized city (25-100 thousand inhabitants)	55	71.43	77
Small town (< 25 thousand inhabitants)	29	87.88	33
Village	73	70.87	103
Pearson's $\chi^2 = 4.526$ ; $df=3$ ; $p=0.210$			
Total	218	74.66	292

\* statistically significant (in all tables)

School tourism was most frequently initiated and organized by the form master, both in the middle (75.0%) and secondary schools (80.1%). As opposed to location, the school type had an effect on the engagement of form masters in this form of activity. Trips and tours were also organized by other teachers including physical education teachers;

however, they were less involved than form masters and neither the type nor location of the school affected tourism promotion by those teachers (Table 4).

The survey showed that only every fourth primary and middle school, and every second secondary school had a school PTTK division (the difference was statistically significant). The association (PTTK) chapters were less often present in village schools. The activities of other associations engaged in tourism promotion and organization, were negligible or non-existent (Table 5).

Tourism was a more frequent component of extracurricular outward bound activities in the middle schools (55.6%) as compared with the primary and secondary schools (40.4%). However, significant differences were brought about not by the type but location of the school; school tourism was more frequently initiated in big cities than in small towns (Table 6).

The implementation of outdoor education in the school is also affected by conducting physical education classes in the natural settings. However,

survey data indicate that in 89.7% and 42.8% of the schools the classes were held in the gym and the swimming pool, respectively. Nevertheless, 83.6% of the schools also organized physical education classes on the school sports pitch, and 37.0% in a park/forest/field.

School type and location did not affect the proportion of outdoor physical education classes: 20.3% (primary school) to 23.1% (middle school) of the classes were held on the school sports pitch, whereas only 2.8% of middle school and 3.9% of secondary school PE classes in the park/forest/field. Surprisingly enough, the school sports pitch was least used by small town school students (15.6%), who, however, were more frequently seen in the park/forest/field as compared with their peers from other locations (still only 4.3%). The highest proportion of PE classes on the school sports pitch (23%) were held in villages and large cities, whereas only 2.8% of all large city physical education classes were held in parks, forests, and fields (Table 7).

**Table 4.** School tourism organizers and school type/location

Variable	Form master		PE teacher		Other teachers		Other persons		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
<b>School type</b>									
Primary school (11-13 years)	92	53.18	63	36.42	67	38.73	17	9.83	173
Middle school (13-16 years)	54	75.00	28	38.89	31	43.06	10	13.89	72
Secondary school (16-19 years)	38	80.85	20	42.55	18	38.30	2	4.26	47
	Pearson's $\chi^2=18.034$ ; $df=2$ ; $p<0.001^*$		Pearson's $\chi^2=0.622$ ; $df=2$ ; $p=0.733$		Pearson's $\chi^2=0.445$ ; $df=2$ ; $p=0.800$		M-L $\chi^2=3.248$ ; $df=2$ ; $p=0.197$		
<b>School location</b>									
Large city (>100 thousand inhabitants)	49	62.03	27	34.18	33	41.77	11	13.92	79
Mid-sized city (25-100 thousand inhabitants)	50	64.94	19	24.68	27	35.06	5	6.49	77
Small town (< 25 thousand inhabitants)	24	72.73	18	54.55	16	48.48	1	3.03	33
Village	61	59.22	47	45.63	40	38.83	12	11.65	103
	Pearson's $\chi^2=2.126$ ; $df=3$ ; $p=0.547$		Pearson's $\chi^2=12.671$ ; $df=3$ ; $p=0.005^*$		Pearson's $\chi^2=1.928$ ; $df=3$ ; $p=0.587$		M-L $\chi^2=5.088$ ; $df=3$ ; $p=0.165$		
Total	184	63.01	111	38.00	116	39.73	29	9.93	292

**Table 5.** Tourism organizations at schools and school type/location

Variable	PTTK		TKKF		Other		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
School type							
Primary school (11-13 years)	42	24.28	9	5.20	17	9.83	173
Middle school (13-16 years)	15	20.83	2	2.78	12	16.67	72
Secondary school (16-19 years)	23	48.94	1	2.13	2	4.26	47
		Pearson's $\chi^2=13.368$ ; df=2; $p<0.001^*$		M-L $\chi^2=1.415$ ; df=2; p=0.493		M-L $\chi^2=5.060$ ; df=2; p=0.080	
School location							
Large city (>100 thousand inhabitants)	26	32.91	4	5.06	12	15.19	79
Mid-sized city (25-100 thousand inhabitants)	27	35.06	5	6.49	6	7.79	77
Small town (< 25 thousand inhabitants)	11	33.33	2	6.06	2	6.06	33
Village	16	15.53	1	0.97	11	10.68	103
		Pearson's $\chi^2=11.356$ ; df=3; $p=0.010^*$		M-L $\chi^2=5.084$ ; df=3; p=0.166		M-L $\chi^2=3.106$ ; df=3; p=0.376	
Total	80	27.40	12	4.11	31	10.62	292

**Table 6.** Tourism in extracurricular programme and school type/location

Variable	n	%	Total
School type			
Primary school (11-13 years)	70	40.46	173
Middle school (13-16 years)	40	55.56	72
Secondary school (16-19 years)	19	40.43	47
Pearson's $\chi^2=5.016$ ; df=2; $p=0.081$			
School location			
Large city (>100 thousand inhabitants)	44	55.70	79
Mid-sized city (25-100 thousand inhabitants)	31	40.26	77
Small town (< 25 thousand inhabitants)	9	27.27	33
Village	45	43.69	103
Pearson's $\chi^2=8.564$ ; df=3; $p=0.036^*$			
Total	129	44.18	292

**Table 7.** Proportion of physical education classes held in the gym, swimming pool or in the open and school type/location

Variable	n	Gym		Swimming pool		Sports pitch		Park/forest/field	
		$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD
School type									
Primary school (11-13 years)	169	57.62	25.84	7.13	11.63	20.25	15.82	3.31	5.40
Middle school (13-16 years)	65	51.66	22.43	6.18	9.16	23.05	15.93	2.82	4.83
Secondary school (16-19 years)	46	48.17	26.45	2.39	4.76	22.83	17.07	3.89	5.55
Analysis of variance		F=3.15; p=0.045*		F=3.87; p=0.022*		F=0.95; p=0.388		F=0.56; p=0.573	
School location									
Large city (>100 thousand inhabitants)	71	58.73	24.47	6.46	10.95	23.04	19.57	2.28	3.96
Mid-sized city (25-100 thousand inhabitants)	75	53.57	23.99	6.44	9.85	19.85	13.72	3.52	5.35
Small town (< 25 thousand inhabitants)	32	43.44	27.54	9.28	13.29	15.63	16.55	4.31	5.79
Village	102	56.21	25.61	4.69	9.09	23.00	14.42	3.50	5.84
Analysis of variance		F=2.92; p=0.034*		F=1.71; p=0.166		F=2.22; p=0.086		F=1.36; p=0.254	
Total	280	54.68	25.39	6.13	10.36	21.32	16.05	3.29	5.29

## DISCUSSION

The 21<sup>st</sup> century will be an age of intensive development of tourism programmes for children and adolescents. W. Alejziak (2000) maintains that children and youth are expected to become the group most intensively engaged in tourism as compared with adults and senior citizens [1]. Our study was also carried out to determine whether such a trend was present in Polish schools. The reason for conducting the survey among school teachers was the fact that tourism habits start developing during early school age [41]. The Hague Declaration on Tourism issued in April 1984 by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) emphasized the need to introduce tourism to school curriculum. As considered vital for the development of tourist industry and tourism, it was agreed that education in this particular area should start at school. It was also postulated that efficient measures should be undertaken to prepare the

society “to travel and tourism, and this mainly through incorporation of tourism in school and university curricula” [1, p. 307].

The obtained survey results indicate that active tourism was organized by a large proportion (74.7%) of schools. Similar results were obtained in a study on the scope and range of school tourism carried out by A. Wartecka-Ważyńska (2007) in high schools and vocational schools of the Wielkopolska Region: 71% of the schools’ students participated in organized trips (82.25% of high school students, 55.50% of vocational school students) [40]. However, conclusions based on data published by the Institute of Tourism are less optimistic: 54% of respondents admitted involvement in tourism in 2001, and only 44% in 2005 [18]. According to B. Kaczor (1999), the school fails to meet the expectations as a tourism organizer, which is due to the lack of teachers committed to the promotion and participation in various forms of qualified tourism [14]. Although the official

introduction of two extra PE classes a week does create an opportunity for such activities to be organized, the results of our investigations do not show a widespread interest in the idea.

A. Wartecka-Ważyńska investigated several school types and identified organizations most frequently involved in tourism promotion among schoolchildren in Poland: Physical Culture Promotion Association (TKKF), Polish Sightseeing and Tourist Association (PTTK), Polish Youth Hostels Association (PTSM) and Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (ZHP) [40]. However, only a small proportion of schoolchildren belong to these organizations. B. Kaczor confirms the rather insignificant role of these associations in the promotion of qualified tourism among schoolchildren. The involvement of PTTK, SKKT, and ZHP was mentioned by as few as 8%, 7%, and 5% of respondents, respectively. In the opinion of many students this was caused both by schoolchildren's unfamiliarity with the organizations' offers and their low incentive quality [14, p. 114]. Even fewer schoolchildren (2%) noticed any co-operation between TKKF/PTTK and their school in the 1990s [35, 38]. The data presented herein clearly demonstrate that the situation has not improved throughout the years.

Despite respondents' declaration of a considerable proportion of tourism (44.2%) in their extracurricular recreation and sports activities, the data from the Central Statistical Office concerning the school year 2007/2008 show that only 2% of primary and middle school students, and 1% of secondary school students participated in extracurricular sightseeing and tourism programmes organized by their schools [27]. A slightly higher proportion (4% and 5% of girls and boys, respectively) was noted in the 1990s among middle and secondary school students in five provinces of northwestern Poland [35, 38].

Our own investigations show that less than 25% of physical education classes are held in natural settings (sports pitches, parks, forests or fields), which is highly unsatisfactory. Based on his studies, W. Pańczyk (1999) postulated that a half up to two-thirds of physical education hours per school year should be held outdoors [30]. This is consistent with the long-term goals of the teaching process preparing schoolchildren to willingly engage in physical recreation, which is at present an indispensable element of daily life. Research results indicate that tourism is the most popular form of

physical recreation among the adult population of Poland [26]. It should be emphasized here that the most characteristic present-day trend of the world's recreation is the so-called 'return to nature' [10], which allows location change as opposed to staying within a closed space.

The concept of outdoor education also complies with global trends in physical education [3] aimed at combining motor skills improvement with the concept of health-related fitness [2, 24, 25]. For all the above mentioned reasons, physical activity in natural settings is particularly beneficial to health.

The above observations suggest a need for explicit accentuation of tourism in school curricula, and especially those concerning physical education. The two extra PE classes a week provide a considerable chance of a shift to outdoor physical activities. Pertinent legal issues are currently being discussed by the Polish Parliament, and plans are aimed at facilitating the implementation of school tourism and its functions.

The study results led us to draw the following conclusions:

1. School curricula contain both tourism and outward bound physical education classes; however, the proportion of these is too small as compared with the needs of contemporary children and youth.
2. The PTTK (Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Association) is the only organization actively promoting tourism at school, but its engagement should become more intensive in primary and middle schools (school type) and village schools (school location).
3. Although tourism turned out to be an important component of extracurricular programmes in a large proportion of the schools, schoolchildren's participation in tourism was rather insignificant.

The results of statistical analysis allow a verification of the assumed research hypotheses:

1. Secondary schools have a better offer of tourist events as compared with primary schools. However, the school type does not have an effect on the proportion of physical education classes held in natural settings.
2. The range of tourism offered by small town and village schools is limited as compared with schools located in large and mid-sized cities.

The results of our pilot study suggest that the research should be continued in order to obtain



more representative data sets from schools all over Poland.

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