

Physical education teachers' ratings of extracurricular sports activities and services of the Polish School Sports Association

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. The school should provide its students with favourable conditions for the development of their individual interests and skills through organizing additional activities and training, enabling the students to engage in social life and enhance their capabilities to purposefully fill leisure hours. Children's participation in extracurricular activities does not restrict their leisure; rather, it helps to efficiently fill their time with activities allowing a shift from mental engagement during lessons to sports or artistic activity – both providing recreation and entertainment.

Aim of Study. The aim of the study was to obtain the ratings of physical education teachers on their school's offer of extracurricular activities and the engagement of the local authorities in these activities as well as opinions about the program and services of the Polish School Sports Association.

Material and Methods. The study sample comprised physical education teachers from 292 schools. The research tool was a diagnostic questionnaire devised by the authors.

Results. The most positive comments were given by physical education teachers concerning their school's offer of extracurricular sports activities and the program and services of the Polish School Sports Association. The type of school and its location resulted in significant differences in the teachers' ratings regarding (1) their school's offer of extracurricular sports activities, (2) the Polish School Sports Association program and (3) the Polish School Sports Association services.

Conclusions. The responders' positive ratings emphasize the significance of extracurricular sports activities and competitions organized by the Polish School Sports Association as important components of school physical activity promotion programs.

KEY WORDS

extracurricular sports and leisure activities, teachers' ratings, school sports association.

Introduction

The task of organizing extracurricular activities ensues directly from the Act on the Education System, according to which an education system should provide students with favourable conditions for the development of their individual interests and skills through organizing additional activities and training enabling students to engage in social life and enhance their capabilities to purposefully fill their leisure hours¹. Children's participation in extracurricular and out-of-school activities does not restrict their leisure; rather, it helps to efficiently fill the time with activities allowing a shift from mental engagement during lessons to sports or artistic activity – both providing recreation and entertainment [1, 2, 3]. However, surveys on adolescents' leisure

habits indicate that meeting friends, listening to music and watching TV are preferred to practising sports and physical activity [1, 3]. Didactic and educational programs for schools should therefore focus on creating the conditions for students' self-fulfillment through developing their interests and skills resulting in a satisfying participation in social life. Extracurricular and out-of-school activities constitute the basic means to achieve the above-mentioned goals with a special emphasis on the development of good interpersonal skills and the ability to use free time for personal excellence and self-improvement. Leisure time might have several effects on the life of children and adolescents that intermingle and permeate each other. Depending on the studied population, different authors pointed out different effects important for a given social group [4, 5, 6].

B. Zawadzka's [7] analysis of health-related behaviours of adolescents depending on their health condition, including the assessment of their leisure time budget, demonstrated

¹ Act on the Education System of 7 September 1991. Official Law Journal, No. 256, item 2572 with subsequent amendments.

that a significant majority of survey respondents (61.7%) watched TV or video recordings 1 to 3 hours a day while another 24% spent 4 or more hours doing the same. 78.7% of girls and 67.4% of boys admitted spending up to one hour daily playing computer games; however, 17.8% and 21.9% of female and male adolescents, respectively, spent 1 to 6 hours a day in front of a computer screen. Only one half of healthy boys performed physical activity during leisure 1 to 3 times a week, 38.5% four times a week or more; 14.5% of the boys did not exercise at all. 53.5% of girl respondents exercised 1 to 3 times weekly while the percentages of girls performing physical activity 4 times a week or more and non-exercising girls were roughly the same and amounted to 23 per cent. Similar results documenting the predominance of leisure-time sedentary over active behaviours in children and adolescents were reported by other authors [8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13]. Physical activity is mainly practised at school, which has been confirmed by numerous surveys of children and adolescents carried out in Poland and other countries. Involvement in physical activity was significantly lower at weekends compared to weekdays spent at school [14, 15, 16, 17, 18].

According to B. Suchodolski, "participating in extracurricular activities is not perceived as a formal duty, but stems from interests and voluntary engagement". Extracurricular activities help organize children and adolescents' leisure and have two functions: to deepen and broaden curricular knowledge, and to integrate the school community into an effective educational milieu [19, p. 223]. W. Siwiński defined extracurricular physical education activities as extracurricular sports, recreation and tourist activities characterized by students' voluntary participation in selected sections and by objectives associated with movement activities, relaxation, pleasure and self-improvement. Siwiński emphasized the significance of such activities in the preparation of adolescents for future engagement in movement activities. "A well-devised, comprehensive program of extracurricular physical education is beneficial, first of all, for students' relaxation through restoring their mental alertness and physical vitality. It is also a form of popularizing models and patterns of pursuing worthwhile pastimes thus filling in the gap in teaching our society how to spend leisure hours efficiently and mannerly" [20, p. 93].

W. Osiński insisted on the importance of enriching the school's offer of physical education indicating the course of action to modernize physical education's image as related to educational system reforms in Poland. He believes that "a part of physical education curriculum should go beyond the form of a physical education lesson and school hours. Some activities can be offered at weekends and out of school – during camping trips, competitions or, simply, in the family milieu" [21, p. 19].

No cross-sectional studies on the forms and participation of children and adolescents in extracurricular sports activities have been carried out following the educational reforms of 1999. Data provided by the Polish Central Statistical Office only show that in the school year of 2010/2011 extracurricular activities were attended by 20%, 23% and 21% of primary school, middle school and high school students, respectively [22]. Participation of adolescents in sports extracurricular

activities during the pre-reform period was not satisfactory, especially regarding access thereto. However, although insufficient, the effects of these activities were undoubtedly positive [3, 13, 24, 25].

The school offer of physical education should be enriched with the provision of extracurricular sports activities, school sports competitions and efficiently operating school sports clubs. The services of the Polish School Sports Association are also of great significance. The Association organizes interschool competitions in multiple sports disciplines. Over 91% of Polish schools participate in School Olympics (for children below the age of 14), Middle School Olympics (students aged 14 to 16 years) and High School Olympics (high school students), which indicates the great popularity of these events [26].

Thus, the objective of modern schools is to prepare and encourage children and adolescents to come up with some worthwhile goals for their leisure time. The objective of physical education classes is to provide the students with competences which would enable them to engage in leisure-time physical activity. The Core Curriculum of General Education (Podstawa Programowa Kształcenia Ogólnego) thoroughly reformed in 2008 brings attention to the fact that, consistent with the physical education curriculum, schools should devise their own physical education offer including extracurricular and out-of-school activities. The Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 19 August 2009 regarding the acceptable forms of two compulsory physical education classes states that the classes can be conducted in the form of extracurricular or even out-of-school activities – as elective modules chosen by students according to their areas of interest [27].

Aim of Study

The aim of the study was to obtain the ratings of physical education teachers regarding their schools' offer of extracurricular activities and the interest/involvement of the local authorities in these activities as well as the program and services of the Polish School Sports Association.

Three research questions were formulated:

1. What are the physical education teachers' ratings of a) their schools' offer of extracurricular activities, b) the involvement of the local authorities in these activities and c) the program and services of the Polish School Sports Association?
2. Does the type of school have any effect on these ratings?
3. Does the location of the school affect these ratings?

Material and Methods

The study population comprised of physical education teachers from 292 schools in several administrative regions of Poland including over a dozen of districts (Polish *powiaty*) and several dozen of rural or urban communes (Polish *gminy*). Questionnaires were distributed along with a cover letter and a request to answer the questions in the way that would best describe the school's offer of extracurricular sports activities. The majority, i.e. 173 (59.3%), of respondents were primary school teachers; 72 (24.7%) were middle

school teachers and 47 (16.1%) were high school teachers. Seventy-nine schools (27.1%) were located in large cities (over 100 thousand inhabitants), 77 (26.4%) in medium sized (25-100 thousand inhabitants) and 33 (11.3%) in small cities (up to 25 thousand inhabitants). One hundred and three schools (35.3%) were located in rural areas.

The study was carried out at the turn of 2008 and 2009. The research tool was a diagnostic questionnaire "School's offer of extracurricular sports activities" devised by the authors, consisting of a letter of intent to the school principal and physical education teachers, 20 central and several complementary questions. The validity of the questionnaire content was determined using Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio. High internal consistency of the questionnaire had been confirmed with Cronbach's coefficient alpha of 0.657 [28]. The study was approved by the Committee for Research Ethics in Science of the Jerzy Kukuczka Academy of Physical Education in Katowice (Resolution No 10/2008 of 16 October 2008).

The present paper summarizes the results of the analysis of the respondents' answers to 4 close-ended questions concerning their opinion on extracurricular sports activities and the activities of the Polish School Sports Association. The teachers could select one of five ratings: "very good", "good", "fair", "poor", "I don't know".

The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to establish the significance of answer differences depending on the school type or location. The level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results

The survey required that the teachers should answer 4 questions concerning extracurricular sports activities and the services of the Polish School Sports Association.

Question 17. How do you rate the school's offer of extracurricular sports activities?

Question 18. How do you rate the local authorities' interest/involvement in extracurricular sports activities?

Question 19. How do you rate the program of the Polish School Sports Association?

Question 20. How do you rate the services of the Polish School Sports Association?

The highest percentage (14%) of "very good" ratings concerned the schools' offer of extracurricular sports activities, while the lowest (6%) characterized the local authorities' engagement thereto. As many as 32% of respondents expressed disapproval with the overall level of interest of the local authorities in extracurricular sports activities; only 9% had the same opinion about the program of the Polish School Sports Association. Differences between the assessment regarding particular issues turned out statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The best ratings were obtained regarding the program (67% of "very good" and "good" ratings; average rating 3.7) and services (67% of "very good" and "good" ratings; average 3.6) of the School Sports Association. The worst ratings expressed were those regarding the interest of the local authorities in extracurricular sports activities (65% of "satisfactory" and "poor" ratings; average 3.1 (Fig. 1, Tables I-IV).

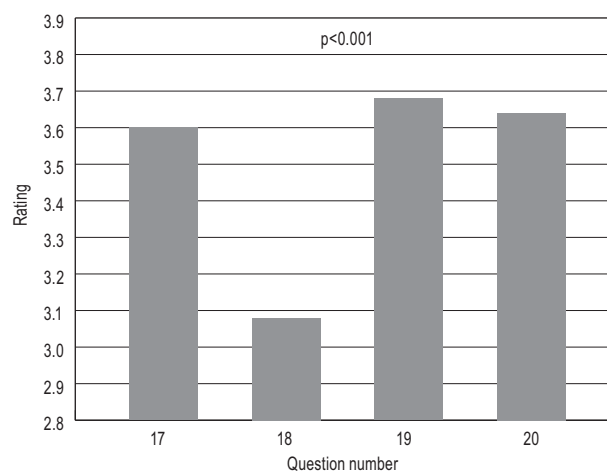


Figure 1. Average ratings

Table I. Assessment of school's offer of extracurricular sports activities

Rating	Total		Primary school		Gymnasium		Post-gymnasium schools		Rural area		Small sized city		Medium sized city		Large city	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very good	30	13.8	17	15.0	10	17.5	3	6.4	11	15.7	4	18.2	5	7.7	10	16.7
Good	101	46.5	53	46.9	27	47.4	21	44.7	31	44.3	8	36.4	26	40	36	60
Fair	54	24.9	29	26	16	28.1	9	19	21	30	6	27.3	17	26.2	10	16.7
Poor	32	14.8	14	12.4	4	7.1	14	29.8	7	10	4	18.2	17	26.2	4	6.7
I don't know	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unanswered	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	217	100	113	100	57	100	47	100	70	100	22	100	65	100	60	100
Average rating	3.59		3.64		3.75		3.27		3.65		3.54		3.29		3.86	
Significance of differences between the average ratings (Kruskal-Wallis test)	p = 0.041*								p = 0.006*							

* Statistically significant at 0.05 (in all tables).

Table II. Local authorities' interest in extracurricular sports activities

Rating	Total		Primary school		Gymnasium		Upper high school		Rural area		Small sized city		Medium sized city		Large city	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very good	12	5.5	6	5.3	3	5.3	3	6.4	5	7.1	2	9.1	3	4.6	2	3.3
Good	64	29.5	32	28.3	21	36.8	11	23.4	21	30	7	31.8	17	26.2	19	31.7
Fair	72	33.2	43	38	17	29.9	12	26	28	40	7	31.8	15	23.1	22	36.7
Poor	69	31.8	32	28.3	16	28.1	21	44.7	16	22.9	6	27.3	30	46.2	17	28.3
I don't know	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unanswered	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	217	100	113	100	57	100	47	100	70	100	22	100	65	100	60	100
Average rating	3.08		3.1		3.19		2.91		3.21		3.22		2.89		3.1	
Significance of differences between the average ratings (Kruskal-Wallis test)					p = 0.232					p = 0.164						

Table III. Assessment of the Polish School Sports Association's program

Rating	Total		Primary school		Gymnasium		Upper high school		Rural area		Small sized city		Medium sized city		Large city	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very good	21	9.7	14	12.4	4	7.0	3	6.4	10	14.3	3	13.6	3	4.6	5	8.3
Good	124	57.1	61	53.9	41	71.9	22	46.8	47	67.1	12	54.6	31	47.7	34	56.7
Fair	52	23.9	27	24	10	17.5	15	32	11	15.7	7	31.8	18	27.7	16	26.7
Poor	20	9.2	11	9.7	2	3.5	7	14.9	2	2.9	0	0	13	20	5	8.3
I don't know	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unanswered	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	217	100	113	100	57	100	47	100	70	100	22	100	65	100	60	100
Average rating	3.67		3.69		3.82		3.44		3.92		3.81		3.36		3.65	
Significance of differences between the average ratings (Kruskal-Wallis test)					p = 0.045*					p = 0.001*						

Table IV. Assessment of Polish School Sports Association's services

Rating	Total		Primary school		Gymnasium		Upper high school		Rural area		Small sized city		Medium sized city		Large city	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very good	24	11.1	17	15.0	5	8.8	2	4.3	9	12.9	4	18.2	5	7.7	6	10
Good	116	53.5	51	45.1	41	71.9	24	51.1	41	58.6	13	59.1	28	43.1	34	56.7
Fair	52	23.9	33	29.2	9	15.8	10	21	18	25.7	4	18.2	17	26.2	13	21.7
Poor	25	11.5	12	10.62	2	3.5	11	23.4	2	2.9	1	4.5	15	23.1	7	11.7
I don't know	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unanswered	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	217	100	113	100	57	100	47	100	70	100	22	100	65	100	60	100
Average rating	3.64		3.64		3.85		3.36		3.81		3.9		3.35		3.65	
Significance of differences between the average ratings (Kruskal-Wallis test)					p = 0.017*					p = 0.011*						

The type of school and its location resulted in significant differences between the respondents' ratings of the school's offer of extracurricular sports activities and their opinions regarding the program and services of the Polish School Sports Association. The best ratings were given by middle school teachers, while the ratings of high school PE teachers were the worst. School location did not have such a direct effect. The most negative ratings regarded the interest of local authorities in extracurricular sports activities and did not show any significant association with the type or location of the school (Tables I-IV).

Discussion

The analysis of the respondents' ratings unambiguously indicates that, among the four assessed areas, the services of the Polish School Sports Association and the school's offer of extracurricular activities were deemed best. The result is not surprising in the context of the same respondents' reports regarding the implementation of these activities by the school. Contrary to popular beliefs, in almost all (98%) schools surveyed, students, who were interested, could participate in extracurricular movement activities [28]. The most commonly attended were those financed from the commune budget (primary schools and gymnasiums) or district budget (high schools) organized in 62% of the surveyed schools. Thus, the low opinion of physical education teachers regarding the interest of the local authorities is somewhat baffling though it may be explained by the fact that in the same percentage of the schools (62%) physical education teachers were carrying out extracurricular activities with no remuneration [29].

The Health Behavior in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey revealed that 55% of 15-year-old adolescents were involved in extracurricular high-intensity physical exercises two or three times a week or even more frequently than that [11]. It should also be mentioned that, apart from participating in extracurricular physical activities, students can also become involved in activities offered by sports clubs and organizations promoting active, health-enhancing lifestyles. There is also a wide range of privately run movement activities with a fee to pay to get involved. Different forms of spontaneous physical activity are also important for children and adolescents' health; however, as already mentioned, sedentary behaviours prevail over physical activities.

It should be emphasized that the overwhelming majority of surveyed physical education teachers were positive about the program and services of the Polish School Sports Association. Taking into consideration the widespread participation of schools in sports competitions organized by regional branches of the Association [26], the approval of these initiatives by physical education teachers is beyond any doubt and remains in contrast to a mistaken belief that PE teachers reluctantly take on additional tasks. A student's participation in a sports competition requires that the teacher should devote significant time (quite often their leisure time) and attention to the student's preparation and travel to the place where the competition is held. Despite all this, the teachers highly appreciate

the Association's services. Interestingly enough, the best ratings were given by teachers from rural areas and small cities. Positive attitudes of physical education teachers correlate with positive ratings of students regarding school sport. Studies on students' attitudes towards physical education classes and sport also indicate positive views on school sport, especially among boys and members of school sports associations [30].

Improvement of the organization of extracurricular activities and better co-operation with child- and adolescent-focused youth sports organizations also requires following some good examples from abroad. The United Kingdom offers several interesting solutions in this respect. In 2002, the national PE, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) strategy was launched there; the main aim of the program was to enhance the take-up of sporting opportunities by 5 to 16 year olds both within and beyond the curriculum. Students were inspired to get involved in extracurricular movement activities organized in co-operation with local clubs, National Sports Partnerships, School Sports Partnerships and School Sport Coordinators. Intra- and inter-school sports competitions constituted the integral part of the project [31].

Considerable changes of the Polish education system in recent years might be used to enhance the attractiveness of the national curriculum in physical education. The 2008 reforms of the Core Curriculum of General Education allow some alternatives to the previous stereotypes of physical education classes. Local authorities and schools can obtain both the European Union and Polish government funding. School sports clubs develop dynamically [32] and physical education teachers are obliged to organize additional classes. Thus, there are solid, but still unresearched grounds for physical activity promotion programs among school children and adolescents. The programs should undoubtedly include the commonly approved offer of the Polish School Sports Association.

Conclusions

1. Physical education teachers rate positively their schools' offer of extracurricular sports activities as well as the program and services of the Polish School Sports Association. Less enthusiastic responses were given regarding the interest of local authorities in becoming engaged in extracurricular sports projects. The positive attitude of physical education teachers constitutes a strong argument for including extracurricular sports activities and competitions organized by the Polish School Sports Association in the programs promoting physical activity among school children and adolescents.

2. The highest and the lowest ratings regarding survey questions under analysis were given by middle school and high school teachers, respectively. This might be related to the fact that middle school years are much better time for students to become involved in extracurricular physical activity compared to high school years.

3. School location (urban or rural) did not seem to affect the teachers' ratings.

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