

MODERN PROGRAMMES FOR FOSTERING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OF CHILDREN AND THE YOUTH ON THE EXAMPLE OF PODKARPACKIE VOIVODESHIP

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Abstract:

We notice in Poland a constant phenomenon of decrease in physical activity and fitness in children and the youth. This leads to a very disquieting data related to ontogenetic development of the young generation. Almost 17 % of children aged 11-15 is overweight and the number of such children in the past decade has doubled. About 80 % of obese teenagers will remain obese when they reach adulthood [3]. Physical activity drops with age. The percentage of children doing everyday, for 60 min. or more, moderate physical exercises is - including also during physical education classes - in the group of 11 year-olds (boys 31,4%, girls 23,2%), in the group of 13 year-olds (boys 22,3%, girls 13,4%), in the group of 15 year-olds (boys 23,0%, girls 9,6%), in the group of 17 year-olds (boys 17,9%, girls 4,2%) [3]. The occurrence of bad postures in developmental age is roughly estimated to be 50-60%, depending on the region, and 18% of the youth aged 18 has problems with back and joint pain [3].

These adverse phenomena demand taking immediate preventive and remedial actions. That is why, these nationwide programmes, projects implemented in cooperation with units of local governments whose higher aim and goal is to improve not only quantity but also quality of physical activity of children and the youth. The article presents characteristics and implementation of the four main projects: Mały Mistrz (Young Champion), Multisport, Animator sportu dzieci i młodzieży (Sport animator for children and the youth) and Animator sportu osób niepełnosprawnych (Sport animator for disabled) in Podkarpackie Voivodeship.

INTRODUCTION

One of the characteristic symptoms of development of modern society is physical passivity and domineering sedentary lifestyle. These phenomena -unfortunately- involve to increasing degree, also the youngest generations. Analysing the problem more closely, one may observe that the influence of environment and lifestyles of children and the youth is characterised by a common hypokinesia, almost total lack of opportunities for working and doing physical exercises, spending time constantly in closed spaces, total lack of conscious toughening up to unpleasant physical and psychological stimuli, forced sitting posture, stress related to daily school duties, limitation of sleep, early contact with nicotine, alcohol and other psychoactive drugs, lack of self-confidence stemming from a restricted sense of security on the street, home environment, and even at school [6]. Alarming are also empirical data directly related to lifestyle and physical activity of a generation that is still in the period of school education. In 2002, the experts of World Health Organisation (WHO) observed that

current generation of children “may be the first, since a very long time, whose average lifespan will be shorter than that of their parents”. In Poland, children put on weight the most quickly in Europe, physical activity of our children in the past 20 years has dropped significantly, older age of children is connected also with decrease of physical activity, bad postures are plague, also in the past thirty years physical fitness of children and the youth has worsened [3].

Presented in this way, pejorative image of psychophysical development of the young generation induces one to look for reliable systemic solutions that would definitely increase the amount and the quality of physical education of children and the youth. Above all, it stems from, theoretical and practical, considerable academic achievement which unquestionably positively assessed the influence of motor activity on human development. Through systematic physical and motor activity one perfects their motor abilities, i.e. at younger school age, children achieve better results in motor learning [7]. On the basis of the research, it can be noticed that during the first phase of the period of younger school age, agility, running speed and dynamic force are characteristics of the most dynamic phase of development [2]. Children’s physical activity is important from medical, biological and psychological perspective. It gives positive and long-term results [8]. The effect of physical activity on the body considerably exceeds fulfilment of biological needs of a human being. As Wiesław Osiński rightly emphasises – “The essence of motor activity deeply penetrates psychological and social sphere” [4]. On the other hand, if we assume that the length and the quality of life depends on lifestyle, and one of its main components is physical activity, there are no doubts to its significance [1]. Low level of physical activity might be one of the factors that constitute a threat to physical, psychological and social health. [5].

Therefore, it is worth taking initiatives that would expand the scope of motor activities offered for children and the youth, and at the same time, would become an important supplement to educational process of physical education at all educational levels. Projects prepared by sport and tourism resort are to help in physical mobilisation of children. These include nationwide programmes, such as: *Mały Mistrz* (Young Champion), *Multisport*, *Animator sportu dzieci i młodzieży* (Sport animator for children and the youth) and *Animator sportu osób niepełnosprawnych* (Sport animator for disabled). In the following part of this monograph, they will be discussed with detailed analysis on the example of Podkarpackie Voivodeship.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SELECTED PROGRAMMES

Young Champion (Mały Mistrz) programme was implemented on 1 September 2014 in first forms of primary school. Participation of schools and teachers in this programme is voluntary. The most important goal and task of this programme is popularisation of physical activity among the youngest children. The main idea behind this programme is to encourage children, students of 1st -3rd form of primary school, to master new motor abilities and improve physical fitness, by shaping proper habits and sport attitude. The children in every school year gain abilities in 6 categories: cyclist-tourist, gymnast-dancer, toboggan-skier-skater, athlete, footballer, swimmer-water sports lover. Except for the above-mentioned abilities, the teachers implementing the programme may introduce other abilities. A proof of gaining ability is a corresponding sticker placed in *Mały Mistrz*’s card. During the first year of implementation of the programme 1 hour of physical education is taught jointly by a pre-school teacher and physical education teacher. For the first one, it constitutes an important experience when it comes to different methods, forms or means of conducting a PE class, for the second one, is means getting acquainted with specificity of development of a child at such educational level. The implementation of programme lasts three years. In second form, children are going to be included in a compulsory, sixteen hours long, swimming lessons course.

The schools that joined the programme were given sport equipment that significantly raises the attractiveness of physical education of the youngest. The teachers that implemented the programme participated in workshops that were of theoretical and practical nature, they also received a set of methodological materials. The table below shows the organisational level of the programme in Podkarpackie Voivodeship.

Tab.1. Implementation of Mały Mistrz (Young Champion), programme in Podkarpackie Voivodeship in the 2014/2015 school year

n-schools	n-form	n-children
276	480	9315

Data: Podkarpacki Wojewódzki Szkolny Związek Sportowy (Podkarpackie Voivodeship School Sport Union) in Rzeszow, 2014

In Podkarpackie Voivodeship 276 schools, 480 forms joined the programme, which gives a total number of 9315 children. These numbers prove that interest of schools, teachers and local governments in the programme was great. All of the children participating in the programme are diagnosed for individual physical fitness. The fitness test consists of three trails, these are: hanging exercise with arms bend or straightened, alternating running 10x5 m and 600 metres run/walk. The teachers, implementing the programme, organise the fitness test two times per school year throughout three years. The nationwide coordinator of the programme is Zarząd Główny Szkolnego Związku Sportowego (Main Board of School Sport Union) in Warsaw. At the Voivodeship level, this programme is implemented by Podkarpackie Voivodeship School Sport Union in Rzeszow. Mały Mistrz Project may be considered a universal tool for implementation of core curriculum of physical education in forms 1st -3rd and strengthening the role of pre-school and physical education teacher in school hierarchy.

Another programme that aims at increasing physical activity in children was implemented also in the present school year. Its name is **Multisport project**. The main aim and goal of this project is popularisation, among students of 4th -6th forms that do not participate in the sport competition organised by Polish sport unions, of sport and recreational activities after the lessons and after school. The trainers train groups of 15 to 20 children. The frequency of these activities is three training units, 90 minutes each. The plan of the recreational and sport activities is based on the following construction of three blocks. Block 1st, are classes including methodological basics of athletics, gymnastics and martial arts. Block 2nd includes motor games and activities as well as team games, among others: football, handball, volleyball, basketball or hockey. The 3rd block may include sports characteristic of a given region, including local traditions and seasonal sports, i.e. winter sports. People who conduct activities with children are also obliged to carry out physical fitness tests and basic anthropometric measurements. Test trials look the same as in Mały Mistrz Programme. Associations and student sport clubs that joined the programme received sport equipment. Organisational scope of the programme in Podkarpackie Voivodeship is given in table 2.

Tab.2. Implementation of Multisport programme in Podkarpackie Voivodeship in the 2014/2015 school year

n-trainers/teachers	n-clubs/associations	n-children
99	99	1782

Data: Podkarpacki Wojewódzki Szkolny Związek Sportowy in Rzeszów, 2014

Through a systematic participation in activities, children develop their motor abilities, have better access to organised physical activity forms, learn new forms, disciplines and recreational and sport competitions, they may as well polish their sport predispositions and talents.

Sport animator for children and the youth (Animator sportu dzieci i młodzieży) is another programme. One of its main aims and goals is to increase activity and effectiveness of club actions: student, school, interschool, people's and other non-governmental organisation, whose scope of actions includes development of physical and sport activity among the junior high school youth. The groups should consist of 18 to 24 people. Each "Animator" teaches the chosen discipline in 3 training units, 90 minutes each per week. Quantitative data of this project in Podkarpackie Voivodeship are provided in table 3.

Tab.3. Implementation of the sport Animator for children and youth programme in Podkarpackie Voivodeship in 2014/2015 school year

n-trainers/teachers	n-clubs/associations	n-disciplines
79	79	11

Data: Podkarpacki Wojewódzki Szkolny Związek Sportowy in Rzeszów, 2014

Among many disciplines implemented within **Animator for children and youth programme** project in Podkarpackie Voivodeship one might list, among others, football, volleyball, handball, basketball, athletics, table tennis, tennis or badminton. Some units teach also martial arts, self-defence, archery and skiing. Therefore, one might claim that quite an attractive offer of recreational and sport activities was prepared for the junior high school youth.

The last of the big projects is **Sport animator for the disabled (Animator sportu osób niepełnosprawnych)**. The basic goal of this programme is to help out clubs and other institutions, including schools and special centers in mobilisation and development of sports for the disabled, through implementation of a motivational system for outstanding motor and sport activity animators for the disabled that work in a given environment. Due to specificity of disability of persons who participate in the project, the group can consist only of a couple of them. During 4 months, an animator should implement 40 hours of recreational and sport activities. A person participating in the project as an animator, except for the proper sport qualifications should also possess qualifications in the field of special education or oligophrenopedagogy. Organisation of this programme in Podkarpackie Voivodeship is given in table 4.

Tab.4. Implementation of „Animator sportu osób niepełnosprawnych” (Sport animator for the disabled) programme in Podkarpackie Voivodeship in 2014/2015 school year. II edition

n-trainers/teachers	n-clubs/associations/schools
11	11

Data: Podkarpacki Wojewódzki Szkolny Związek Sportowy in Rzeszów, 2014

Despite the fact that the programme is nationwide in nature, **Sport animator for the disabled** programme in Podkarpackie Voivodeship has a narrow scope and only a small group of children and the youth, with various degrees of motor and intellectual disability, participates in it.

SUMMARY

The presented programmes are an important and valuable supplement to physical education process implemented in the form of obligatory physical education lessons at first, second and third educational level. At this point, one may formulate a proposal to include also upper secondary youth in this programme. From practical observation of the author of the monograph, one may conclude that the level of physical education at the last stage of education demands probably the greatest reform.

Referring however, to the above-mentioned programmes, it is worth emphasising that they constitute an interesting initiatives of creating patterns of health-promoting behaviours among children, teaching them various motor abilities or stimulating and shaping the level of

general physical fitness. These programmes show also educational function of sport and its connections with culture, as well as the role of physical activity in strengthening family and environmental bonds and cultivation of local traditions related to physical and motor recreation as well as to sport.

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