

Usefulness and feasibility of the physical education school programme in the opinions of teachers from selected schools in the Silesian and Opole Voivodeships

Przydatność i wykonalność podstawy programowej wychowania fizycznego w opiniach nauczycieli wybranych szkół województwa śląskiego i opolskiego

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Abstract

Introduction: One of the objectives of the core curriculum reform was to diversify school physical education and to adapt it to the interests of students. Nowadays, there is an alarming decline in physical activity among young people, both during school and after-school classes, and school offers for the selection of one's favourite sport discipline are less preferable in comparison to non-school offers, therefore the search for effective solutions was not only a need but also a necessity.

Material and methods: The research was carried out in 2013 among 74 junior high and high school teachers. The method of a diagnostic survey via a questionnaire was applied. The arithmetic mean of the results and the significance of differences were calculated using the chi-squared test (χ^2).

Results: In most cases, the assessments of men and women were very similar. The data show that the highest ratings of usefulness and feasibility were obtained by the thematic blocks: „Lifetime sports and leisure” and „Sport”. For many years, sports games have been the most desirable content of physical education lessons by students and, as shown by the results of the conducted research, also physical education teachers.

Conclusions: The obtained results indicate that physical education teachers positively assess the content of the core curriculum implemented in 2009. The surveyed teachers assessed the usefulness of the core curriculum content much better than its feasibility.

Keywords: core curriculum, physical education, opinions, teachers

„There is no education without physical education”

(Madrid Declaration, EUPEA, 1991)

The core curriculum is the most important document regarding subject content taught at each stage of education in all types of schools. It precisely defines what the state undertakes to teach a student about average aptitude, while encouraging to enrich and deepen the content of teaching. It defines the minimum knowledge and skills that every student should possess at the end of a given educational stage [1].

The physical education curriculum reform of 2009, as well as the previous one of 1999, can be considered as another modification of Maciej Demel's concept announced in *Szkicach krytycznych o kulturze fizycznej* (Critical essays on physical culture) [2].

The most important changes introduced by the core curriculum of 2009 to school practice of physical education are:

- writing the content of teaching using the language of detailed requirements,
- departure from classes conducted only in the class-lesson system, in favour of compulsory classes to be chosen by the student, in accordance with his/her interests and capabilities,
- expanding the content of physical education with specific requirements in the field of health education.

Writing teaching content using the language of specific requirements had a key impact on school practice. Describing the tasks of the education process was replaced by defining its effects.

The core curriculum of 2009 did not deprive teachers of the possibility of differentiating students' achievements, but it de-

finishes a certain common standard for physical education, which must be included in every curriculum implemented in public schools. This standard referred to classes conducted in the class-lesson system, which were grouped into seven thematic blocks:

1. Diagnosis of physical fitness and activity as well as physical development;
2. Health training;
3. Lifetime sports and leisure;
4. Safe physical activity and personal hygiene;
5. Sport (concerned the 2nd, 3rd and 4th educational stage);
6. Dance (concerned the 2nd and 3rd educational stage);
7. Health education (concerned the 3rd and 4th educational stage).

Most of the thematic blocks were repeated at each educational stage, except that each subsequent stage assumed more complex and extended requirements. It allowed to maintain full coherence and continuity of education at all educational stages.

One of the objectives of the core curriculum reform was to diversify school physical education and to adapt it to the interests of students. Nowadays, a disturbing phenomenon of decreasing physical activity of young people is observed both during school and after-school (sports, recreation and tourist) classes. There can be many reasons for this. These are not only computers or the Internet, to which televised media frequently refer, but also content, methods and forms of lessons that discourage participation in physical education[3]. School offers for the selection of one's favourite sports discipline were less preferable in comparison to non-school offers. Therefore the search for effective solutions was not only a need but also a necessity. Krzysztof Zuchora has already called for introducing a mixed strategy for physical education proposed in the core curriculum in the nineties [4].

The purpose of the pilot study was to find out the opinions of physical education teachers about the usefulness and feasibility of the content of the physical education core curriculum adopted for implementation in 2009.

At the beginning of the research, the following questions were formulated:

1. Are the student requirements written in the core curriculum useful and achievable by an averagely capable student in the opinion of physical education teachers?
2. Is it possible to achieve the goals of health and sport education within one subject?

Material and methods

The research was carried out in 2013 in selected junior high and high schools in the Silesian and Opole Voivodeships. A total of 74 teachers were surveyed, including 33 women and 41 men. The method of a diagnostic survey via a questionnaire was applied [5]. All the questions included in the questionnaire were

closed-ended and the respondents were asked to mark a specific rating value (from 1 to 5, where 1 was very low and 5 very high) for the above-mentioned core curriculum content, taking into account their usefulness and feasibility.

Basic statistical methods were used [6]. The arithmetic mean of the results and the significance of differences were calculated using the *chi-squared* test (χ^2).

Results

The teachers teaching in junior high school positively assessed the content of the physical education core curriculum, both in terms of usefulness and possibilities of their implementation, because all content received a rating above „3”. In most cases, the assessments of men and women were very similar. The content of theme block No. 3 *Lifetime sports and leisure* received the highest rate. Their rating significantly exceeded „4” and in most cases was greater than „4.5”.

In the first block (Table 1), women found the most useful content related to obesity and unreasonable weight loss. They rated the least useful content related to the self-assessment of physical activity, which in turn men gave the highest rating. In the opinion of women and men, the most feasible content is related to the assessment and performance of physical activity trials, and the least associated with changes occurring in the body during adolescence.

In the second thematic block, the teachers rated content related to the development and implementation of various exercises by a student as the most useful. They rated the topics related to the unassisted preparation of the daily schedule as the least useful and also the least feasible. The most feasible in the opinion of the surveyed teachers is the student's own warm-up, the highest mean of „4.93” (Table 1).

In the third block, all content in the opinion of men and women was rated at a very similar, high level, both in terms of usefulness and feasibility (Table 2).

In the fourth block, the teachers considered hygiene as the most useful and feasible topic during adolescence, and considered the topic of threats resulting from practising certain sports disciplines to be the least useful and feasible (Table 2).

In the fifth educational block, content related to the application of the rules in a game and the ability to behave properly in a situation of victory and defeat were considered the most useful, and at the same time achievable. The knowledge about the Olympic flag and the torch was deemed the least needed, and the content that was considered the most difficult to teach related to the roles a student has to assume, such as: organiser, player, referee, supporter – of school sports competitions (Table 2).

The sixth educational block – dance – was extremely highly rated by women, both in terms of their usefulness and feasibility. Men rated the content related to dance slightly lower (Table 2).

Table 1.
Teaching content – detailed requirements, 3rd educational level

Scope and content	Usefulness		Feasibility	
	F	M	F	M
1. Diagnosis of physical fitness and activity as well as physical development. Student:				
performs a set of trials of his/her choice to assess endurance, strength and flexibility,	3.93	4.27	4.25	4.44
assesses the level of own physical activity,	4.25	4.44	3.81	4.11
explains what changes occur in body structure and physical fitness during puberty,	4.43	4.11	3.75	3.66
lists the causes and effects of obesity as well as unreasonable weight loss and the use of steroids to increase muscle mass.	4.75	4.22	4.04	3.61
Block mean:	4.34	4.26	3.96	3.95
2. Health training. Student:				
discusses changes that occur in the body during exercise,	4.25	4.27	3.25	3.5
indicates the benefits of physical activity in the field,	4.43	4.33	3.81	4.05
discusses the health benefits of undertaking various forms of physical activity in subsequent periods of human life,	4.56	4.5	3.75	3.61
performs a warm-up,	4.56	4.55	4.93	4.5
develops and demonstrates a set of exercises shaping selected motor skills, including strengthening the muscles of the abdomen, back as well as upper and lower limbs, developing flexibility, increasing endurance, and also helping to maintain proper body posture,	4.68	4.72	4.68	4.5
prepares a daily schedule, taking into account the proportions between work and leisure, mental and physical effort,	3.62	3.83	3.12	3.27
plans and performs a simple gymnastic routine,	4.25	4	3.62	3.88
selects and covers a cross route.	3.93	3.94	3.31	3.61
Block mean:	4.28	4.26	3.8	3.8

In block No. 7 *Health education*, the topics related to addictions and ways of avoiding them, health-promoting and health-threatening behaviours, and the topic of dealing with negative emotions constructively were recognised as feasible. The topic of stress and ways of dealing with it were considered as needed to a small extent. Content on social support and assertive behaviour was considered difficult to implement (Table 3).

The *chi*-squared test showed no statistically significant differences in the opinions of women and men at the 3rd stage of education in terms of usefulness ($\chi^2 = 1.42$) and feasibility ($\chi^2 = 0.69$).

The teachers teaching in high schools positively rated the content of the physical education core curriculum implemented in 2009, both in terms of their usefulness and feasibility, as most of the content received a rating above „3“. Analysis of the results of the survey presented in Tables 4, 5 and 6, however, clearly shows the difference between the evaluation of the content contained in the analysed core curriculum by women and men teaching at the 4th stage of education. The female physical education teachers rated almost all content of education higher in terms of usefulness and feasibility than the male teachers.

In the first block (Table 4), the highest results in terms of usefulness were obtained by content related to the student's ability to indicate strengths and weaknesses of his/her physical activity. The least needed content turned out to be the discussion of recommendations for physical activity in terms of sex, period of life and type of work (but in terms of implementation, women rated this content the highest). Among women, the content about listing factors influencing physical activity dependent on family, colleagues, media and the local community, which were rated the highest among men, proved to be difficult to implement.

In the second block, *Health training*, women rated the highest content regarding the relationship between physical activity and nutrition and health and well-being, as well as ways to maintain adequate body weight in all periods of life. For men, the most valuable was the topic of assessing the student's own body reaction to physical exertion of varying intensity, which women, in turn, rated the lowest. In terms of feasibility, the topic of a healthy lifestyle turned out to be the best, and the weakest was the calculation of the BMI growth-weight index, which men also found to be of little use (Table 4).

Table 2.
Teaching content – detailed requirements, 3rd educational level

Scope and content	Usefulness		Feasibility	
	F	M	F	M
3. Lifetime sports and leisure. Student:				
when in a game, uses the following: deflects a ball with both hands from the bottom, does serves, forehand and backhand, feints,	4.68	4.66	4.5	4.5
positions correctly on the pitch in attack and defence positions,	4.5	4.66	4.31	4.5
lists places, facilities and equipment in the immediate area that can be used for physical activity.	4.5	4.66	4.5	4.66
Block mean:	4.56	4.66	4.43	4.55
4. Safe physical activity and personal hygiene. Student:				
lists the most common causes and circumstances of accidents and injuries during physical activities, discusses how to prevent them,	4.5	4.27	4	4
indicates the risks associated with practising certain sports,	4.31	4.22	3.25	3.66
demonstrates ergonomic lifting and handling of objects of different sizes and weights,	4.37	4.44	3.75	3.77
explains hygiene requirements resulting from changes in the body during puberty.	4.75	4.66	4.68	4.5
Block mean:	4.48	4.39	3.98	3.92
5. Sport. Student:				
plans school sports games according to the cup and "round robin" system,	4.12	4.33	3.62	4.05
assumes the role of organiser, player, referee and supporter during school sports competitions,	3.87	4.44	3.43	4
explains what the Olympic flag and torch symbolise,	3.75	4.22	4.12	4.05
applies the rules of "fair play": not using random advantage, the ability to behave properly in a situation of victory and defeat.	4.68	4.72	4.37	4.33
Block mean:	4.1	4.43	3.88	4.1
6. Dance. Student:				
develops and performs any dance arrangement individually, in a pair or in a band.	4.75	4.05	4.68	3.66
Block mean:	4.75	4.05	4.68	3.66

The third block, *Lifetime sports and leisure*, (Table 5) was highly rated by the teachers teaching at the 4th educational stage, and their usefulness was very highly rated by women – 4.82.

The fourth block, *Safe physical activity and personal hygiene*, was also highly rated. The most necessary and feasible content about performing shaping and compensating exercises to counteract adverse health effects of work, including sitting and using a computer. The second place was occupied by the topic related to the ability to assess the degree of risk associated with certain sports or physical activities (Table 5).

In block five, *Sport*, all content in terms of usefulness received a rating close to „4“. Content that was considered to be the most feasible related to the student explaining the relationship between professional sport and sport for all as well as health. The interpretation of the constructive and destructive behaviour of sports fans was considered hardly feasible (Table 5).

The last block, *Health Education*, and its content received the lowest rating in terms of usefulness and feasibility in the entire core curriculum. In this case, feasibility is rated very low, as some content received a rating lower than „3“. The information about self-examination and self-monitoring of health, as well as the importance of preventive examinations throughout life was considered the most important topic. Women found the content related to the notion of „active patient“ and the basic rights of the patient as the least useful and at the same time hardly feasible. Men found constructive, optimistic ways of explaining difficult events and reformulating negative thoughts into positive ones the least useful and feasible. The topic of the value of human health and resource for society as well as care for health during youth and early adulthood was the most feasible (Table 6).

A comparative analysis of the *chi*-squared test showed no statistically significant differences in the opinions of women and

Table 3.
Teaching content – detailed requirements, 3rd educational level

Scope and content	Usefulness		Feasibility	
	F	M	F	M
7. Health education. Student:				
explains what health is; lists factors that have a positive and negative effect on health and well-being, and indicates the ones that can be affected,	4.68	4.44	3.62	3.66
lists behaviours that are beneficial and pose a threat to health, as well as explains what consists in and what determines making healthy choices,	4.5	4.38	3.87	3.77
identifies his/her strengths, plans ways of their development and is aware of the weaknesses that should be worked on,	4.3	4.22	3.43	3.5
discusses constructive ways of dealing with negative emotions,	4.12	4.11	3.87	3.55
discusses ways to reduce excessive stress and deal with it in a constructive way,	4	4	3.62	3.77
discusses how good relationships with other people, including parents and peers of the same and different sex, are important for health	4.3	4.11	3.62	3.55
explains how he/she can give and receive various types of social support,	4.12	4.16	3.75	3.27
explains what assertive behaviour means and gives examples of it,	4.25	4.16	3.37	3.77
discusses health and social harm associated with smoking, alcohol abuse and the use of other psychoactive substances; explains why and how to resist pressure and persuasion to use psychoactive substances and other risky behaviours.	4.5	4.38	3.87	3.83
Block mean:	4.3	4.21	3.66	3.63

Table 4.
Teaching content – detailed requirements, 4th educational level

Scope and content	Usefulness		Feasibility	
	F	M	F	M
1. Diagnosis of physical fitness and activity as well as physical development. Student:				
indicates strengths and weaknesses of his/her physical fitness,	4.35	4.13	3.88	3.69
develops and implements a physical activity programme tailored to his/her own needs,	4.23	3.8	4.11	3.2
discusses recommendations regarding physical activity depending on gender, period of life and type of work,	4	3.69	4.23	3.47
lists factors influencing physical activity that depend on family, colleagues, media and the local community.	4.11	4	3.82	3.73
Block mean:	4.17	3.9	4	3.52
2. Health training. Student:				
evaluates the body's response to physical exertion of varying intensity,	4.29	4.56	3.7	3.82
explains what a healthy lifestyle is,	4.52	4.47	4.11	4
explains the relationship between physical activity and nutrition as well as health and well-being, and discusses how to maintain adequate body weight throughout all life periods,	4.58	4.21	3.94	3.65
performs simple relaxation exercises,	4.52	4.3	4	3.82
explains where to look for reliable information about health and sport, and makes a critical analysis of media information in this regard,	4.52	4	3.88	3.56

lists diseases related to contemporary civilisation caused by deficiency of movement, in particular cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal system and obesity, and discusses ways to prevent them,	4.52	4	4	3.56
calculates and interprets his/her own weight-height index (BMI).	4.35	3.86	3.47	3.39
Block mean:	4.47	4.2	3.87	3.68

Table 5.

Teaching contents – detailed requirements, 4th educational level

Scope and content	Usefulness		Feasibility	
	F	M	F	M
3. Lifetime sports and leisure. Student:				
uses known elements of technique and tactics in selected individual and team forms of physical activity.	4.82	4.43	4.41	4
Block mean:	4.82	4.43	4.41	4
4. Safe physical activity and personal hygiene. Student:				
performs shaping and compensating exercises to counteract adverse health effects of work, including sitting and using a computer,	4.76	4	3.82	3.43
explains the ability to assess the level of risk associated with certain sports or physical activities.	4.64	3.86	3.76	3.43
Block mean:	4.7	3.93	3.79	3.43
5. Sport. Student:				
explains the relationship between professional sport and sport for all as well as health,	4.23	3.91	3.94	3.65
discusses the ethical and health consequences of using doping agents,	4.17	4.08	4.11	3.47
lists and interprets examples of constructive and destructive behaviour of sports fans.	4.23	3.91	3.88	3.43
Block mean:	4.21	3.96	3.97	3.51

men at the 4th stage of education in terms of usefulness (value $\chi^2 = 2.16$).

A comparative analysis of the *chi*-squared test showed no statistically significant differences in the opinions of women and men at the 4th stage of education in terms of feasibility (value $\chi^2 = 0.71$).

An analysis of the data presented in the above tables shows that the highest ratings of usefulness and feasibility were obtained by the content of thematic blocks: *Lifetime sports and leisure* and *Sport*. For many years, sports games have been the most desirable content of physical education lessons by students and, as shown by the results of the conducted research, as well as in the opinion of the physical education teachers.

Summary

The usefulness and feasibility of individual thematic blocks according to the physical education teachers received similar ratings. The junior high school teachers rated both the useful-

ness and feasibility of the content of the core curriculum of 2009 higher than their high school colleagues. This may be the result of prolonged work solely with the core curriculum. The highest rating in terms of usefulness and feasibility was given to the thematic block *Lifetime sports and leisure*, while the lowest in both types of schools was given to *Health Education*, which is the latest thematic block of physical education. This disturbing phenomenon may be the result of the lack of methodical preparation of teachers for the implementation of health education in physical education lessons. It is worth noting here that there is a need for more substantive and methodical help for physical education teachers (lectures, trainings and methodologists' help) than currently provided, which, according to research results, is not enough. It is comforting that teachers put the greatest emphasis on content related to self-monitoring, self-examination and prevention, rating their usefulness the highest in the entire block. In each thematic block, the usefulness of the content of the physical education core curriculum received higher ratings than the feasibility of their implementation.

Table 6.
Teaching content – detailed requirements, 4th educational level

Scope and content	Usefulness		Feasibility	
	F	M	F	M
6. Health training. Student:				
explains why health is a value for a human being and a resource for society, and what care for health in youth and early adulthood consists in,	4.29	4.17	3.7	3.69
explains what responsibility for one's own and other people's health means,	4	4.21	3.52	3.59
discusses constructive, optimistic ways of explaining difficult events and reformulating negative thoughts into positive ones,	3.94	3.08	3	2.51
explains how to work on yourself to increase self-confidence, self-esteem and decision-making skills,	4.11	3.73	2.94	3.26
explains how to constructively provide and receive positive and negative feedback and deal with criticism,	4.17	3.56	2.76	2.91
discusses the principles of rational time management,	4	3.34	3.23	3.04
explains what is self-examination and self-monitoring of health, and why one should undergo preventive examinations throughout one's life,	4.58	4.3	3.35	3.34
explains what it means to be an active patient and what are the basic rights of the patient,	3.64	3.73	2.76	2.81
discusses the causes and effects of stereotypes and stigmatisation of mentally ill and discriminated persons (e.g. living with HIV/AIDS).	4	3.73	3.23	2.91
plans a project on selected health issues and indicates ways to attract allies and project participants at school, home or in the local community,	3.7	3.39	3.17	2.78
discusses the participation of people, organisations and institutions in health care activities,	3.82	3.17	2.94	2.82
explains the relationship between health and the environment, and what it can do to create a health-friendly environment.	3.88	3.47	3.17	2.78
Block mean:	4.01	3.65	3.14	3

Conclusions

The obtained results indicate that physical education teachers positively assess the content of the core curriculum implemented in 2009. Analysis of the data obtained allows for the following conclusions:

1. The surveyed teachers assessed the usefulness of the core curriculum content much better than its feasibility.
2. The requirements of the new core curriculum are useful and achievable by an averagely capable student.
3. The teachers teaching in junior high schools rated the usefulness and feasibility of the content of the core curriculum higher than the teachers teaching in high schools.
4. According to the surveyed teachers, it is very difficult to achieve the goals of health and sport education within one subject – physical education.

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Streszczenie

Wstęp: Jednym z celów reformy programowej było urozmaicenie szkolnego wychowania fizycznego i dostosowanie go do zainteresowań uczniów. W dzisiejszych czasach obserwuje się niepokojące zjawisko zmniejszającej się aktywności fizycznej młodzieży zarówno na zajęciach lekcyjnych, jak i pozalekcyjnych a szkolne oferty wyboru ulubionej dyscypliny sportowej przegrywają z ofertami pozaszkolnymi, dlatego poszukiwanie skutecznych rozwiązań było nie tylko potrzebą, a i koniecznością.

Material i metody: Badania przeprowadzono w 2013 roku wśród 74 nauczycieli uczących w gimnazjum i szkołach ponadgimnazjalnych. W badaniach zastosowano metodę sondażu diagnostycznego z wykorzystaniem ankiety. Obliczono średnią arytmetyczną wyników oraz istotność różnic testem zgodności *chi*-kwadrat (χ^2).

Wyniki: W większości przypadków oceny kobiet i mężczyzn były bardzo podobne. Z analizy danych wynika, że najwyższe oceny przydatności i wykonalności uzyskały treści bloków tematycznych: „Sporty całego życia i wypoczynek” oraz „Sport”. Gry sportowe od wielu lat są najbardziej pożądaną treścią lekcji wychowania fizycznego przez uczniów i jak wskazują uzyskane wyniki przeprowadzonych badań, również nauczycieli tego przedmiotu.

Wnioski: Wyniki badań wskazują, że ankietowani nauczyciele wychowania fizycznego pozytywnie oceniają treści podstawy programowej wdrożonej w 2009 roku. Badani nauczyciele znacznie wyżej ocenili przydatność treści zawartych w podstawie programowej niż ich wykonalność.

Słowa kluczowe: podstawa programowa, wychowanie fizyczne, opinie, nauczyciele
