

Analysis of physical education lessons in the aspect of its organization, teacher's work and attitudes as well as attitudes of students on the example of participant observation

Analiza lekcji wychowania fizycznego w aspekcie jej organizacji, pracy i postaw nauczyciela oraz postaw uczniów na przykładzie obserwacji uczestniczącej

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Abstract

Introduction: The lesson as the basic methodical unit is the most important link in the process of physical education. The aim of the research was to learn the organization and course of physical activities in early school teaching, teacher's work and attitudes, and students' attitudes towards lessons.

Material and methods: The research used focused, public participant observation, which covered 128 lesson units in 19 randomly selected primary schools in Krakow. To describe the obtained qualitative data, the statement of numbers and percentages and the percent chart were used.

Results: Most physical education lessons were held in the gym. A large part of physical activities were carried out contrary to the principles of building the lesson. There was also a lack of individualization of requirements for students, the use of praise and grades for correctly performed exercises, and the enforcement of instructions given to students. Almost half the lesson was unattractive. During the classes very good treatment of students by teachers was visible.

Conclusions: In addition to well-conducted preparatory activities before PE, a number of organizational and methodological errors were noted. Teachers' attitudes towards tasks related to conducting physical activities were not satisfactory. The attitude of students to the duties related to participation in physical education lessons was positive.

Keywords: lesson, teachers, students, attitudes

Introduction

A lesson as a basic methodological unit is the most significant link in the process of physical training and formation. Physical training is understood as improving body fitness, developing motor skills and transferring knowledge. On the other hand, the process of formation should consist in building a constant belief that the body is most valuable, and body care is a necessity [1]. In the theoretical aspect physical training and formation are an integral part of physical education, which is an intentional transfer of value patterns and patterns of behaviour regarding the body [2]. The behaviour such as care about the body should be taught in early childhood, when acquiring new skills does not pose major problems, and even quite frequently is a source

of pleasure and satisfaction [3, 4].

In the beginning of a child's life the family is responsible for shaping positive behaviours regarding the body. However, when school education starts the said role is also taken over by the school, i.e. Physical Education teachers, who are responsible for the preparation of a young man for body care and as it was defined by Crum [5], for independent, conscious, satisfying and lifelong participation in motor culture. The above aims can be achieved only by well-planned and well-run Physical Education lessons, which apart from developing general fitness, skills and knowledge, also enable students to develop their creativity, social competences as well as positive behaviours regarding an active and healthy lifestyle.

The aim of the research was to get to know the organisation and the course of Physical Education lessons in early school education, the work and attitude of the teacher, as well as the students' attitudes towards the lesson.

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The results of the research were supposed to provide answers to the following questions:

1. How is an early school Physical Education lesson organised?
2. What attitudes are presented by the teachers towards the tasks resulting from running motor activities?
3. What are students' attitudes towards Physical Education lessons?

Materials and methods

In order to get to know better the structure of physical education in integrated teaching as well as the teacher's functioning in this process, a focused, open participatory observation was carried out, which covered 128 lesson units at 19 randomly selected Cracow primary schools. The research was dominated by lessons focused on motor games and plays (Tab. 1) of the improving type (Tab. 2).

Table 1. Kinds of observed motor activities

No.	Kinds of motor activities	N	%
1	Motor plays and games	100	78.1
2	Team sports games	18	14.1
3	Gymnastics	10	7.8
Total		128	100

Table 2. Types of observed motor activities

No.	Types of motor activities	N	%
1	Improving	118	92.2
2	Mixed	6	4.7
3	Teaching	4	3.1
Total		128	100

The observation was carried out following a strictly defined plan, which among others took the following into account: duration, ways of observation and data recording, the conditions and situations in which it was performed as well as the principles of the collected data interpretation. The examined motor activities were mostly performed in comparable conditions (Tab. 3) and were run by female teachers of early school education.

The observation had a form of a visitation and consisted in recording the actual course of a Physical Education lesson in natural environment. The decision on the application of an open observation was motivated by ethical and technical reasons. It is emphasised by some researchers that more can be gained than lost in this way. What is primarily emphasised is the increase of the observer's reliability among the observed due to his disclosure of the research aims and the ways of their use [6]. Furthermore, the detailed recording of the teacher's behaviour

while working with students, which consisted in recording the observation data during the lesson, required the presence of the observer – researcher. Theoretically, the appearance of the observer, particularly during a lesson, may embarrass the observed, however, in reality it gradually completely disappears [6].

Table 3.

Places where motor activities were run in visited schools

No.	Places where motor activities were run	N	%
1	Gym	82	64.1
2	Replacement gym	22	17.1
3	School corridor	12	9.4
4	Schoolyard	12	9.4
Total		128	100

Since students in integrated education should have daily 25–30 minute Physical Education classes, it was established with the teachers that each visited lesson would last 30 minutes. The observation data were recorded on a lesson visitation form. The form included structured information from four areas, which regarded: lesson organisation, the attitudes of the students participating in activities towards the Physical Education lesson, the attitudes of the teacher towards the tasks connected with running motor activities as well as the tasks realised by the teacher during the lesson. The said information allowed to analyse the preparation of the teacher for running the lesson in terms of both the content and methods of teaching.

For statistical description of the obtained qualitative data contingency and percentage tables were used.

Results

The effectiveness of a Physical Education lesson depends among others on observing the basic principles of its structure, i.e. the principle of versatility, variety of tasks, gradual increase of effort; the course of the lesson; thoughtful and efficient organisation as well as the teacher's attitude.

Unfortunately, as research carried out in early school education revealed, nearly 1/3 of motor activities were performed against the principles of lesson structure, and in 64.1% the principles were only partly observed. What is more, in the majority of classes (75%) the course assumed for a given type of lesson was not followed. However, the most striking and alarming phenomenon was the fact that at the end of the lesson the teachers did not discuss the tasks performed by the students. As many as 92.1% of teachers behaved in this way. Whereas what turned out to be performed best by the teachers were the preparatory tasks before the lesson (62.5%), which included among others gathering in the place of planned activities the necessary sports equipment and other materials to be used during motor activities. In

26.5% of the examined lessons it was observed that the students participating in the exercises were adequately placed. Adequate bringing and taking away the sports equipment was observed only in 1/5 of motor activities, and in 14.1% of the lessons the equipment for exercises was adequately situated (Tab. 4).

During Physical Education lessons the attitudes of the teach-

A modern Physical Education teacher is primarily required to possess the knowledge of methods of teaching, skills and the knowledge of the subject. What is also expected is creativity and application of modern solutions during the lesson. However, the requirements and expectations posed to the teachers do not always meet the reality. The research has given many such exam-

Table 4. Different aspects of motor classes organisation in early school education

No.	Kinds of tasks	Realisation					
		Complete		Partial		None	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Preparatory activities before the lesson	80	62.5	44	34.4	4	3.1
2	Following the principles of lesson structure	8	6.3	82	64.1	38	29.7
3	Compatibility of the lesson with its course	6	4.7	26	20.3	96	75.0
4	Time management in the lesson	8	6.3	72	56.2	48	37.5
5	Planning the setting of equipment	18	14.1	100	78.1	10	7.8
6	Ways of bringing and taking away the equipment	30	23.4	88	68.8	10	7.8
7	Adequate selection of forms of placing students doing exercises	34	26.5	84	65.6	14	10.9
8	Discussing the lesson	2	1.6	8	6.3	118	92.1

ers towards the students and the activities were also observed. As it was shown the vast majority of them (96.9%) were not prepared for work, i.e. did not possess sportswear and sports shoes. In the majority of motor activities the teachers did not individualize the requirements towards the students participating in the exercises (92.2%), did not praise and assess students for correctly performed tasks (81.2%), and did not execute the commands given to the students (78.1%). A small percentage of the teachers instilled self-reliance in students (12.5%) and were able to keep order during the lesson (10.9%).

Much better results were recorded as regards the rapport between the teacher and students. In as many as 81.3% of the lessons it was observed that the students were very well treated by the teachers, and in 31.2% of the classes a permanent contact between the teachers and students was observed (Tab. 5).

The lesson observations show that during motor activities students were not trained to self-control and self-assess at all, whereas such behaviours are characteristic of a modern lesson. In the majority of classes the students were not made aware of the significance and usefulness of the exercises (95.3%), the students doing exercises were not helped and were not protected (90.6%), new exercises were not demonstrated and explained (89.1%) and mistakes were not corrected during exercises (84.4%). Half of the examined lessons were deprived of attractive solutions and adequate selection of methods, and in 42.2% of the lessons the recognized principles of teaching were not followed. The best realized responsibility as regards the teachers' work was ensuring general safety for the students. Whereas the selection of organisational forms and the selection of exercises was in most lessons only partly adequate (Tab. 6).

Table 5. Teacher's attitude towards the tasks connected with running motor activities

No.	Kinds of tasks	Realisation					
		Complete		Partial		None	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Teacher's outfit and appearance	4	3.1	0	0.0	124	96.9
2	Teacher's attitude towards exercising students	104	81.3	24	18.7	0	0.0
3	Teacher's contact with the students	40	31.2	78	61.0	10	7.8
4	Execution of commands	2	1.6	26	20.3	100	78.1
5	Using praise and assessment	6	4.7	18	14.1	104	81.2
6	Training students to self-reliance	16	12.5	76	59.4	36	28.1
7	Application of requirements individualization	6	4.7	4	3.1	118	92.2
8	Keeping order during the lesson	14	10.9	98	76.6	16	12.5

Table 6. Task realisation by teachers during motor activities

No.	Kinds of tasks	Realisation					
		Complete		Partial		None	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Adequate selection of exercises	10	7.8	80	62.5	38	29.7
2	Attractiveness of exercises	12	9.4	52	40.6	64	50.0
3	Observing the principles of teaching	4	3.1	70	54.7	54	42.2
4	Adequate selection of methods of teaching	2	1.6	62	48.4	64	50.0
5	Adequate selection of lesson organisation forms	18	14.1	102	79.6	8	6.3
6	Use of demonstration and explanation	4	3.1	10	7.8	114	89.1
7	Making students aware of the significance and usefulness of exercises	2	3.13	1	1.56	61	95.3
8	Training to self-control and self-assessment	0	0.0	0	0.0	64	100
9	Error correction during exercises	10	7.8	10	7.8	108	84.4
10	Ensuring general safety for the students	37	57.8	24	37.5	3	4.7
11	Using personal help and protection	4	3.1	8	6.3	116	90.6

The attitudes of students during Physical Education lessons generally can be considered as satisfactory. The majority of lesson participants (87.4%) behaved correctly. Quite a considerable number of students (78.1%) were also prepared for the class, i.e. possessed the required sportswear and sports shoes. However, only one in five students showed interest in the lesson throughout its entire course. A very good level of fitness and involvement in the lesson were shown by nearly one in four examined students (Tab. 7).

of motor activities leads to a better quality of both school and 'out-of-school' physical activity of children. Systematic physical activity has a positive impact on children's behaviour, their creativity, discipline and achievement of better study results. It facilitates decision making and problem solving [7].

An optimistic aspect of the performed research was the fact that the majority of the observed Physical Education lessons took place in a gym. It is worth noting that such a tendency has been observed only for several years, which was confirmed in

Table 7. Students' attitudes towards Physical Education lessons

No.	Kinds of tasks	Realisation					
		Complete		Partial		None	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Preparing students for exercises	100	78.1	28	21.9	0	0.0
2	Students conduct	110	87.4	10	6.3	8	6.3
3	Interest in the lesson	26	20.3	86	67.2	16	12.5
4	Involvement in the lesson	30	23.4	98	76.6	0	0.0
5	Students' fitness	30	23.4	98	76.6	0	0.0

The research results shown on Figure 1 revealed that during the majority (84.4%) of visited lessons no conduct problems were recorded. In the remaining lessons (15.6%), where undesirable student behaviours occurred, the teachers reacted adequately only in two cases.

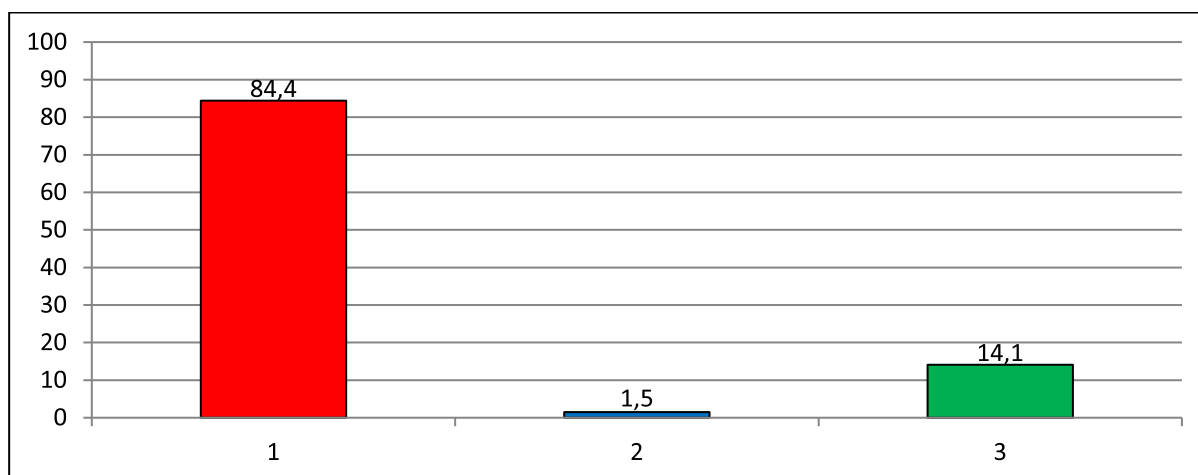
Discussion

Motor activities with early school children should be realised in such a way that they meet their basic needs, support the development of their motor skills, develop their intellect and form the desired attitudes towards physical culture. The high level

of the research done by other authors [8–10].

Unfortunately, a considerable number of motor activities were realised against the principles of lesson structure, and such behaviours are not only the breach of basic methodological rules but put students at risk as well. The completion of the above deficiencies was the widespread failure to make students aware of the significance and usefulness of the exercises, to provide the students exercising with help and protection by the teacher, to demonstrate and explain while teaching new exercises as well as to correct student mistakes while doing motor tasks.

In the majority of Physical Education lessons there were also no individualized requirements towards the students participat-



Legend:

- 1. No conduct related situations.
- 2. Teacher's reaction in conduct related situations.
- 3. No teacher's reaction in conduct related situations.

Figure 1. Conduct related situations in a Physical Education lesson and teacher's reaction.

ing in exercises, no praise and assessment for correct performance of exercises and no execution of commands given to the students. It should also be clearly emphasised that nearly half of the visited lessons were not attractive. While running motor activities the recognized teaching principles were also not observed. The teachers found it difficult to choose adequate methods of teaching and keep order during the lesson. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand why only one in five students was interested in the lesson throughout its entire course.

Considerably better results were recorded in the area of up-bringing and maintaining proper human relations. During the lessons it was visible that students were very well treated by the teachers.

Conclusions

The analysis of the gathered data allowed to formulate the following conclusions:

1. Excluding well-run preparatory activities before a Physical Education lesson the teachers made several organisational and methodical mistakes. As is generally known the effects of early school children physical training are primarily dependent on the teachers' knowledge of methods of teaching and their ability to practically use them. The level of the said knowledge makes an impact not only on the quality of education but also on the correct development of a child in an emotional, social and physical aspect. Therefore, in order to improve the quality of early school physical education it is recommended to more frequently supervise the realisation of motor activities and motivate teachers to participate in specialist in-service training.
2. Excluding proper teacher – student relations the attitudes of

the teachers running motor activities in other areas covered by the research were less than satisfying. This phenomenon is alarming as a Physical Education teacher is required to set examples of proper behaviours, in particular as regards body axiology.

3. Despite the positive attitude of the students to their Physical Education lesson tasks it is recommended to focus more on the attractiveness of motor activities, with particular consideration of utilitarian sports exercises. In this way not only the interest in the lesson but also 'out-of-school' physical activity would increase.

To sum up one can conclude that the early school physical education crisis revealed in the research is alarming, particularly considering the research of Woynarowska et al. [11], which shows that at the subsequent educational stages student participation in Physical Education lessons decreases with age.

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Streszczenie

Wstęp: Lekcja jako podstawowa jednostka metodyczna jest najważniejszym ogniwem w procesie wychowania fizycznego. Celem badań było poznanie organizacji i przebiegu zajęć ruchowych w nauczaniu wczesnoszkolnym, pracy i postawy nauczyciela oraz postawy uczniów wobec lekcji.

Material i metody: W badaniach zastosowano ukierunkowaną, jawną obserwację uczestniczącą, którą objęto 128 jednostek lekcyjnych w 19 losowo dobranych krakowskich szkołach podstawowych. Do opisu uzyskanych danych jakościowych użyto zestawienia liczebności i procentów oraz wykresu procentów.

Wyniki: Większość lekcji wychowania fizycznego odbywała się w sali gimnastycznej. Duża część zajęć ruchowych była realizowana niezgodnie z zasadami budowy lekcji. Zabrakło też indywidualizowania wymagań wobec ćwiczących, stosowania pochwał i ocen za poprawnie wykonane ćwiczenia oraz egzekwowania poleceń wydawanych uczniom. Prawie połowa lekcji była nieatrakcyjna. Podczas zajęć widoczne było bardzo dobre traktowanie uczniów przez nauczycieli.

Wnioski: Oprócz dobrze przeprowadzanych czynności przygotowawczych przed lekcją wychowania fizycznego, odnotowano szereg błędów organizacyjno metodycznych. Postawy nauczycielek wobec zadań dotyczących prowadzenia zajęć ruchowych były mało satysfakcjonujące. Stosunek uczniów do obowiązków związanych z udziałem w lekcji wychowania fizycznego był pozytywny.

Słowa kluczowe: lekcja, nauczyciele, uczniowie, postawy
