

STUDIES IN PHYSICAL CULTURE AND TOURISM
Vol. 14, No. 1, 2007

RAJMUND TOMIK
Academy of Physical Education, Katowice, Poland

SPORT IN THE PROGRAMMES OF SCHOOL SPORTS CLUBS IN POLAND

Key words: “Sport for All Children” Project, school sports clubs, “Youth Sports” – diagnostic questionnaire for school sports clubs.

ABSTRACT

School Sports Clubs (SSCs) have been operating in Poland since 1994. Their number is constantly increasing and has already exceeded the number of “traditional” sports associations. The purpose of the present study was to determine how the school sports clubs fulfilled the aims of youth sport. The study presents an analysis of data on the SSCs from the Ministry of Sport “Youth Sports” Project as compared with those of other sports associations. It also includes quantitative and qualitative analyses of a questionnaire study carried out in 2003 and 2004 among 8,701 incorporated school clubs. In 2005, the number of school sports clubs involved in the “Youth Sports” project reached 1,038. The proportion of SSCs to other sports associations participating in sporting events of the Project has grown from 7% in 1996 to 37% in 2005. However, the aims of SSCs have not been precisely defined. Over 70% of the questionnaire respondents define them as both sports training and recreation.

INTRODUCTION

The “Sport for All Children” Project was launched in Poland in 1994. It was co-ordinated by the Committee for Children and Youth’s Sport at the Department for Physical Culture and Tourism headed by Stefan Paszczyk. Among the aims of the Project was “...Improvement of the availability of basic areas of physical culture through increasing the quantity of incorporated physical culture services operating in primary schools, i.e. school sports clubs (...)” [12, p. 56].

In 1994, a letter was sent by Minister of Education, Aleksander Łuczak, and President of the Department for Physical Culture and Tourism, Stefan Paszczyk, to school directors and teachers asking for their assistance in an initiative which was expected “not only to promote sports compe-

tion, but also form socially desirable character qualities” [3, p. 3]. In his address to local government activists, Stefan Paszczyk emphasized that “school sports clubs operating within school facilities will provide an opportunity to engage in leisure physical exercise. Thus, sports and organisational talents can emerge, and sports activities will be promoted. This will help form desirable physical, mental, and emotional attributes, and responsibility for one’s own decisions; educate for democracy; and provide an opportunity for self-realization” [3, p. 4].

The assumption was that sports activities within school sports clubs would mostly be instrumental in character. However, youth sport as an autotelic activity was not excluded from the concept; competition and seeking sport talents were also taken into consideration. According to Henryk

Grabowski, an attitude when "... improvement of bodily functions occurs through overcoming physical imperfections on the one hand, and developing talents on the other, does not exclude the coexistence of these two within a common axiology of physical culture" [2, p. 46]. Henryk Sozański differentiates between sports competition of children and adolescents, and defines the areas as "sport for all children" and "youth sport". "Sport for all children" is understood as a commonly available educational process aimed at awakening interest in physical activity. It should result in "developmental processes stimulation and promoting health-oriented behaviour through beneficial effects of movement and physical effort" [5, p. 16]. "Youth sport", on the other hand, involves adolescents talented in sports, and "(...) undergoing training within the principles of a long-term training programme" [5, p. 16]. The aim here is to gain the best results possible.

The purpose of the study was to determine how school sports clubs have been fulfilling the objectives of youth sport and whether their programmes allow instrumental attitude towards sports competition (sport for all children).

METHODS

The "Youth Sports" Project is supervised by the Department of Strategies for Sport Development at the Ministry of Sport in co-operation with the Polish Federation of Youth Sport. The following events have been organized within the project:

- Polish Youth Championships,
- Polish Junior Championships,
- Polish Youth Olympics,
- Inter-regional Youngster Championships,
- School Games and other competitions for children and adolescents organized and assessed by associations of physical culture [7].

In order to define the participation of the SSCs in the "Youth Sports" Project, an analysis of results achieved by the clubs between 1995 and 2005 was carried out; the results were published in annual reports of the Ministry of Education and Sport, and were made available on-line [8].

Quantitative and qualitative analyses were performed on the basis of assessment of 8,701 school sports clubs and other physical culture associations participating in the "Sport for All Children" project. All clubs received a cover letter and a two-page Diagnostic Questionnaire deve-

loped by Rajmund Tomik in co-operation with the staff of the Department of Theory and Methodology of Physical Education at the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice. The final version was approved and funds were provided by the Department of Public Sport at the Ministry of Education and Sport.

The questionnaire consisted of twenty-one questions; seventeen close-ended questions contained predefined responses. There were also open-ended questions encouraging the respondents to give their opinions. The answers to Questions 3, 4, 5 and 21 were analysed in order to gather data on how school sports clubs realised the objectives of youth sport; whereas the importance of SSCs in Poland was judged based on responses to Question 21. Each particular response was assigned a point value, thus "certainly YES" was assigned 2 points, "YES" 1 point, "NO" (-1) and "certainly NO" (-2) points. The support index (W_p) for each response was calculated using the following formula:

$$W_p = (2 \cdot n_1) + n_2 - n_3 + (-2 \cdot n_4)$$

("n" – number of responses to successive questions).

The 1994-2002 Department of Physical Culture and Tourism address database was accessed, which from 1 July 2002 has been administered by the Department of Public Sport at the Ministry of Education and Sport, with 8,701 school sports clubs included by 1 January 2004. The questionnaire was filled in and returned by 2,533 (29.11%) clubs, 249 (2.86%) letters were returned as the addressees were unknown, and 24 contained information about temporary or permanent cessation of club activity. 5895 clubs (67.75%) gave no reply. The collected material constitutes a representative sample for Poland and all clubs, regardless of their registration/incorporation year. The highest questionnaire return rates were from the Podlaskie, and Lubuskie Regions, i.e. 37% and 34%, respectively; while the lowest rates of over 25% from the Silesia, Lower Silesia and Mazovia Regions. Filled-in questionnaires were returned by recently incorporated clubs as well as by those which had functioned even before the launch of the "Sport for All Children" Project. The highest return rate of (over 35%) was from the SSCs incorporated between 2001 and 2003. 25% of school clubs with 12-year-experience or longer also took part in the project.

RESULTS

Participation of the School Sports Clubs in the "Youth Sports" Project

The project objectives include "popularization and promotion of sport, extending the range of "Youth Sports" curriculum, especially within Olympic sports, further development of sports practised in particular Regions of Poland, long-term regular trainings and participation in sporting events aimed at guiding the most talented athletes to the champion's level, and annual multi-level competitions, whose results would facilitate an analysis of training effectiveness in particular sports, clubs, communities, districts, and regions" [7, p. 3].

The number of SSCs participating in "Youth Sports" is on the increase. While only 24 SSCs were admitted to the Project in 1995 (less than 2% of all sports associations), there were as many as 1,038 SSCs (37% of all sports associations) in 2005, whose members took part in various competitions (Table 1).

Table 1. Participation of School Sports Clubs in "Youth Sports", 1995-2005

Year	Number of clubs participating in "Youth Sports"	Number of SSCs	%
1995	1,464	24	1.64
1996	1,694	120	7.08
1997	1,875	222	11.84
1998	2,016	284	14.09
1999	2,029	350	17.25
2000	2,065	415	20.10
2001	2,233	512	22.93
2002	2,390	638	26.69
2003	2,599	848	32.63
2004	2,698	959	35.54
2005	2,826	1,038	36.73

In 2005, over 50% of the competitors in nine sports were SSC members. 13 of 17 sledging clubs (76%), 8 of 12 baseball clubs (67%), and 42 of 64 orienteering clubs (65%) were SSCs. A representative of a SSC was present in all 61 sports and events of youth sport in the overall classification [8] (Table 2).

Table 2. Participation of SSCs (in percent) in "Youth Sports" in 2005 in selected sports

No	Sport	Number of clubs participating in "Youth Sports"	Number of SSCs	%
1	Sledging	17	13	76.47%
2	Baseball	12	8	66.67%
3	Orienteering	64	42	65.63%
4	Biathlon (winter & summer)	39	25	64.10%
5	Synchronic swimming	10	6	60.00%
6	Badminton	81	45	55.56%
7	Skiing	56	31	55.36%
8	Pentathlon	39	21	53.85%
9	Ice hockey	13	7	53.85%
10	Women's football	19	9	47.37%
11	Artistic gymnastics	17	7	41.18%
12	Women's beach volleyball	30	12	40.00%
13	Women's handball	78	31	39.74%
14	Women's basketball	83	32	38.55%
15	Taekwon-do WTF	61	23	37.70%
16	Snowboard	18	6	33.33%

SSCs – Qualitative and Quantitative analysis of sport in SSCs

The aims of school sports clubs have not been precisely defined. Over 70% of questionnaire respondents point to both sports training and recreation as club objectives; and cyclic rather than sporadic participation in sports events is preferred (Table 3).

Table 3. Forms and objectives of SSC activity

Forms and objectives of activity	n	%
Member recreation	1,827	72.13
Sports training	2,015	79.55
Sporadic participation in sporting events	793	31.31
Cyclic participation in sporting events	1,883	74.34
Other	375	14.8

On the basis of the answers to Question 3 regarding the forms and objectives of club activities, School Sports Clubs were divided into three types: sports, recreational and mixed. Those declaring sport instruction and/or cyclic participation in sporting events as the only objectives were classified as sports clubs. A club was classified as recreational when its activities were mostly aimed at members' recreation, and possibly, sporadic participation in sporting events. In the case of other responses, the club was classified as mixed. The vast majority of school sports clubs (73.1%) fell into the "mixed" category; 19.8% were sport-oriented, whereas 7.1% emphasized recreation (Table 4).

Table 4. Percentage of particular SSC types

SSC type	n	%
Mixed	1,848	73.10
Sports	500	19.78
Recreation	180	7.12
Total	2,528	100

Over 74% of those who filled in the diagnostic questionnaire declared cyclic participation in sporting events. Most SSC members compete in school and district events (over 87%), but 23% also took part in international tournaments (Question 4) (Table 5).

Table 5. Participation of SSCs in sporting events at different levels

Levels of sporting events – SSC participation	n	%
School	2,252	88.87
Local	2,212	87.33
Regional	1,885	74.42
National (Poland)	1,228	48.48
International	594	23.45
Unanswered	4	0.16

Most respondents (30%) achieved sports successes at the regional or national level; about 6% were successful in international events (Question 5) (Table 6).

Table 6. SSC successes at sporting events at different levels

Sporting events levels – SSC success	n	%
School	57	2.25
Local	459	18.12
Regional	765	30.20
National (Poland)	764	30.16
International	156	6.16
Unanswered	332	13.11

A significant difference was noted between clubs whose members were and were not participating in sporting events held at different administrative levels (school, local, district etc.). In the case of sports clubs, a higher level of sporting events seems to have entailed a growing participation, e.g. 18% at the school level and 28% at international competitions. In recreational clubs the relation is inverse, i.e. 7% at the school level and 1% at international events. The contribution of athletes from mixed clubs is rather stable and amounts to 70% (Table 7).

The significance of SSCs for Polish sport as perceived by club activists

Question 21 was a close-ended entity. Respondents were expected to give their opinions on statements related to the significance of SSCs for Polish sport, and seemed to unanimously support the idea of school sports clubs. The support rate (responses "certainly YES" and "YES") ranged from 92.4 to 99.6% in all four parts of the question (Table 8).

Data valuation was used for more detailed analysis of the study results, and the support index was calculated for individual responses ("certainly YES", "YES", "NO", and "certainly NO"). Mean point scores, standard deviations thereof, and support indexes for the particular Question 21 parts are presented in Table 9. Variance analysis revealed significant differences between the mean point scores.

After the negative responses were included in the analyses and the difference in positive responses ("certainly YES" and "YES") was calculated, Part 3 of Question 21 (Sport promotion among children and adolescents) turned out to have received the highest support index (Table 9). The

differences between the mean point scores of particular Question 21 responses were evaluated using post hoc analysis. It should be emphasized

that the support index was the lowest for Part 4 of Question 21 (Selection of sports talents) (Table 10).

Table 7. SSC types and levels of sporting events

Type of events	Sporting	Recreational	Mixed	Total
School level	408	167	1,673	2,248
Percent column	81.76	93.30	90.53	
Percent row	18.15	7.43	74.42	
Percent total	16.15	6.61	66.23	88.99
Pearson's chi-square test (χ^2) = 34.47121; df=2; p< 0.001*				
Local level	406	151	1,652	2,209
Percent column	81.36	84.36	89.39	
Percent row	18.38	6.84	74.78	
Percent total	16.07	5.98	65.40	87.45
Pearson's chi-square test (χ^2) = 24.77144; df=2; p< 0.001*				
Regional level	424	77	1,382	1,883
Percent column	84.97	43.02	74.78	
Percent row	22.52	4.09	73.39	
Percent total	16.79	3.05	54.71	74.54
Pearson's chi-square test (χ^2) = 122.404; df=2; p< 0.001*				
National level (Poland)	321	22	883	1,226
Percent column	64.33	12.29	47.78	
Percent row	26.18	1.79	72.02	
Percent total	12.71	0.87	34.96	48.54
Pearson's chi-square test (χ^2) = 144.3902; df=2; p< 0.001*				
International level	167	8	419	594
Percent column	33.47	4.47	22.67	
Percent row	28.11	1.35	70.54	
Percent total	6.61	0.32	16.59	23.52
Pearson's chi-square test (χ^2) = 64.30756; df=2; p< 0.001*				
Total	500	180	1,848	2,528
Percent total	19.78	7.12	73.10	100.00

* statistically significant

Table 8. Question 21 (parts 1-4): What are the outcomes of SSC activities in Poland?

Response	1. Improvement in children and adolescents' fitness		2. Development of youth sport		3. Sport promotion among children and adolescents		4. Selection of sports talents	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
"Certainly YES"	1,024	40.75	976	38.85	1050	41.67	622	25.02
"YES"	1,479	58.85	1518	60.43	1456	57.78	1675	67.38
Total positive	2,503	99.60	2494	99.28	2506	99.45	2297	92.40
"NO"	9	0.36	16	0.64	11	0.44	184	7.40
"Certainly NO"	1	0.04	2	0.08	3	0.12	5	0.20
unanswered	20	0.80	21	0.84	13	0.51	47	1.89

Table 9. Analysis of variance – mean point scores for the four parts of Question 21

Part of Question 21	Mean point score	Quantity	Standard deviation	Support index
1.	1.399	2513	0.516	3516
2.	1.373	2512	0.531	3450
3.	1.404	2520	0.531	3539
4.	1.096	2486	0.745	2725

$p < 0.001$ – statistically significant

Table 10. Statistical significance of differences between answers to Question 21

	1	2	3	4
1	–	0.40739	0.98909	$< 0.001^*$
2	0.40739	–	0.24269	$< 0.001^*$
3	0.98909	0.24269	–	$< 0.001^*$
4	$< 0.001^*$	$< 0.001^*$	$< 0.001^*$	–

* statistically significant

DISCUSSION

School Sports Clubs have been participating in the "Youth Sports" Project in Poland since 1995. Although, initially, the involvement of SSCs in sports events was rather insignificant, the training process and financial aid aimed at supporting the clubs' activity resulted in a growing number of "Youth Sports" members participating in inter-regional youngster championships and national championships. During the twelve years of the "Youth Sports" implementation, numerous communities have developed an organisational model of coaching youth talents based on school sports clubs co-operating with other sports associations training senior professionals. This model has proven beneficial to both sides. The proportion of SSCs to other sports associations participating in sporting

events of the Project has grown from 7% in 1996 to 37% in 2005. However, the aims of school sports clubs still require precise definition. Over 70% of questionnaire respondents point to both sports training and recreation; cyclic/regular rather than sporadic participation in sporting events is preferred. Almost 20% of SSCs aim at sports training and cyclic participation in sporting events, and more than a thousand participated in the "Youth Sports" Project in 2005. An increasing number of SSCs have engaged in children's and youth competitions in both traditional and less popular sports.

Several SSCs participate in sporting events at the highest level and register their teams for the 1st League competitions. The SSC Poznań appeared in the 1st Women's Basketball League; SSC Roeben

Środa Śląska and SSC Lis Kościerzyna in the 1st Women's Handball League, and SSC ZSME Zagłębie Sosnowiec and SSC Janów in the 1st Ice-Hockey League. SSCs representatives have won medals at World and European Championships. Canoe polo teams of SSC Kormoran from Bydgoszcz and SSC Białołęka from Warszawa took the second place in U-21 Women's World Championships in Essen in 2002. Justyna Mospinek, a representative of SSC Piątka Zgierz, took the 5th place in the Senior World Open Field Archery Championships, and the 14th place in the 2004 Athens Olympics. She also won a team bronze medal at the European Archery Championships in Athens in 2006. Rafał Wieruszewski from SSC Orkan Środa Wielkopolska took part in 4 x 400 m men's relay during the European Track and Field Championships in Goeteborg (2006) and won the bronze medal. The participants in the Winter Olympic Games in Turin (2006) were also once members of school sports clubs. Bronze medal winner, Justyna Kowalczyk, had trained in SSC Biały from Kasina Wielka, and Krystyna Pałka, who took the 5th place in biathlon, in SSC Czerwienne.

The author's own research results show that 1,038 clubs taking part in the "Youth Sports" Project account only for 15% of 6,800 active SSCs [9]. The remaining clubs emphasize recreational purposes as presented in Tables 3 and 4. While analysing the SSC programmes, Seweryn Sulisz noted that the majority of SSCs had development- and education-oriented programmes: "(...) the purpose of their operation is to encourage children and adolescents to engage in widely available forms of physical activity, with special consideration of health aspects thereof, (...) and to promote the development of positive personality traits" [6, pp. 518-519].

The results explicitly demonstrate that the actual functions of school sports clubs do correspond with the goals of their founders. Both instrumental and autotelic aspects of competition are included in their programs, thus adding a valuable extra school form of physical activity to physical education classes already incorporated in the school curriculum.

REFERENCES

- [1] Chruścicki D., Uczniowskie Kluby Sportowe – tworzenie, organizacja, doświadczenia, sukcesy, działalność, prawo, sponsoring, ekonomia, finanse (School Sports Clubs – establishment, organization, experience, success, activity, legal issues, sponsoring, economics, and financing), Polskie Wydawnictwo Sportowe "Sprint", Warszawa 1997.
- [2] Grabowski H., Teoria fizycznej edukacji (Theory of Physical Education), WSiP, Warszawa 1997.
- [3] *Lider*, 1994, no 9, pp. 3-6.
- [4] Sawicki W., Szkolne stowarzyszenia kultury fizycznej (School associations of physical culture), Zarząd Główny Szkolnego Związku Sportowego, Warszawa 1997.
- [5] Sozański H., Wybrane aspekty kwalifikacji dzieci i młodzieży do sportu i treningu (Selected aspects of children and adolescent qualifications for sport and training), Polska Federacja Sportu Młodzieżowego, Warszawa 2005.
- [6] Sulisz S., Edukacyjne wartości sportu w założeniach szkolnych stowarzyszeń kultury fizycznej (Educational value of sport – guidelines for school associations of physical culture), (in:) Z. Dziubiński, ed., Edukacja poprzez sport (Education through sport), Salezjańska Organizacja Sportowa RP, Warszawa 2004, pp. 517-522.
- [7] System Sportu Młodzieżowego. Regulamin współzawodnictwa dzieci i młodzieży (Youth Sports. Regulations of children and adolescents' competitions), MENiS, Warszawa 2002.
- [8] System Sportu Młodzieżowego. Województwa, powiaty, kluby, gminy, młodzieżowcy, juniorzy, juniorzy młodszy, młodzicy (Youth Sports. Regions, districts, clubs, youths, juniors, early juniors, youngsters), MENiS, Warszawa 2005.
- [9] Tomik R., Kudlik W., 10 lat uczniowskich klubów sportowych (1994-2004) (10 years of school sports clubs (1994-2004)), Krajowa Federacja Sportu dla Wszystkich, Warszawa 2005.
- [10] Tomik R., Działalność uczniowskich klubów sportowych (The activities of school sports clubs), AWF, Katowice 2006.
- [11] Urbańska J., Uczniowskie kluby Sportowe w programie "Sport wszystkich dzieci" (School sports clubs and the "Sport for All Children" Project), (in:) Sport wszystkich dzieci" zadaniem rodziny, samorządów terytorialnych i stowarzyszeń kultury fizycznej (Sport for All Children – a task for the family, local authorities, and physical culture associations), Krajowa Federacja Sportu dla Wszystkich, Warszawa 2002, pp. 32-66.