

Jože Štihec^{*1}**Vid Ismajlovič²****Mateja Videmšek¹****Damir Karpljuk¹****Bojan Šebjan²****Saša Vrbnjak²****AN ANALYSIS OF SPORTS EDUCATION
AND DANCE AS ELECTIVE SUBJECTS
WITHIN SLOVENIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS****ANALIZA ŠPORTNE VZGOJE IN
PLESA KOT IZBIRNIH PREDMETOV V
SLOVENSКИH OSNOVNIH ŠOLAH****ABSTRACT**

The introduction of elective subjects (electives) is one of the most significant outcomes that has emerged as part of the implementation of the nine-year primary school educational period within the Slovenian education system. This is the most recent education system reform in Slovenia and it has introduced a selection of over 50 electives that aim to provide pupils with more personalised input to their education. The aim of this research was to obtain the opinions of pupils from selected primary schools on two of these new elective school subjects: Sports and Dance. The sample was comprised of 367 pupils from 14 Slovenian primary schools. Pupils completed a questionnaire containing 25 closed-type questions that sought to establish their opinions on these elective subjects from the following perspectives: why did the pupils decide to sign up for Sports and Dance electives; what problems (if any) pupils perceive with these electives; which contents do they find to be the most interesting; how do they rate the organisation and implementation of electives; and what are their views regarding the elective evaluation and grading process? Based on the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire, the following conclusions may be drawn: pupils are very positive about attending Sports as an elective subject, while there is slightly less interest in Dance; pupils find the contents of Sports and Dance electives both applicable and interesting, and many would choose these electives again; within Sports as an elective subject, the pupils mostly want to take the following sports: swimming, handball and football; within Dance as an elective subject, the pupils most want to take hip-hop and aerobics, but these were only offered by a handful of teachers; in most cases pupils are equally satisfied with the teacher, contents, process organisation and the grading process; The results also suggest that there have been no major difficulties with the implementation of this key area of reform, despite the fact that electives are a new requirement within our education system and that schools have not had much experience in their design, organisation and delivery.

Keywords: educational reform, elective subjects (electives), sports and dance; pupil choice.

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IZVLEČEK

Izbirni predmeti predstavljajo eno od pomembnejših novosti v slovenskem šolskem sistemu z uvedbo devetletne osnovne šole. Namen raziskave je bil pridobiti mnenja učencev izbranih osnovnih šol o izbirnih predmetih Šport in Plesne dejavnosti. V vzorec je bilo vključenih 367 učencev in učenk iz 14 osnovnih šol v Sloveniji. Učenci so bili anketirani z anketnim vprašalnikom, ki je vseboval 25 vprašanj zaprtega tipa, s katerimi smo iz različnih zornih kotov ugotavljali mnenja učencev o teh predmetih. Na osnovi analize rezultatov anketnega vprašalnika o izbirnih predmetih Šport in Plesne dejavnosti lahko zaključimo: učenci radi obiskujejo izbirni predmet Šport, medtem ko je zanimanje za izbirni predmet Plesne dejavnosti nekoliko slabše; anketirani učenci bi najraje v okviru izbirnega predmeta Šport obiskovali plavanje, rokomet, nogomet, rolanje, odbojka, badminton, smučanje; pri izbirnem predmetu Plesne dejavnosti bi najraje obiskovali hip-hop in aerobiko, ki pa jo je ponudila le peščica učiteljev; rezultati kažejo, da bi otroci tudi v prihajajočem šolskem letu izbrali enega od izbirnih predmetov, saj so v veliki večini zadovoljni tako z učiteljem, vsebino, organizacijo procesa, kot z oceno, ki jo dobijo. Izbirna predmeta Šport in Plesne dejavnosti predstavljata zanimivo popestritev procesa športne vzgoje v šoli. Otroci se za izbirne predmete s področja športa odločajo množično. S tem se paleta pestrih in zanimivih športnih vsebin v osnovni šoli povečuje. Učitelji športne vzgoje imajo tako možnost, da poleg rednega programa športne vzgoje ponudijo učencem še dodatne vsebine. Rezultati potrjujejo, da to možnost učitelji tudi dobro izkoristijo v dobrobit skladnega telesnega in gibalnega razvoja otrok.

Ključne besede: uvajanje izbirnih predmetov, devetletna osnovna šola, analiza, učenci

INTRODUCTION

One of the biggest changes found within the new education system (affected by the school reform in Slovenia) is the introduction of elective subjects. Electives have been introduced to enrich the compulsory physical education programme and to enable pupils to extend their knowledge in areas in which they are more interested. The aim of this research is to investigate and analyse the opinions of pupils from selected primary schools in Slovenia on how they view the new elective sports subjects. It will also aim to provide an insight to how the process of implementing the elective has thus far been carried out by those responsible for its delivery.

Youth education

Education is the process of the development of both the individual and society as a whole. The education of youth is therefore one of the most important and permanent functions of every civilisation (Ambrožič et al., 1996). Through the processes of intentional or functional education, every society attempts to transfer knowledge and experience that has been acquired in the course of its development. Physical Education (in schools in Slovenia it is called Sports Education) is a vital component of the integral conception of culture (Štihec & Kovač, 1990, Ambrožič et al., 1996). With its goals that seek to move beyond the utilitarianism of muscle exercise, tendencies for motor expressiveness, spontaneity and creativity, sports education is incorporated within the concept of common culture. Schools are required to provide students with sports education according to the needs of a cultural human being and to thus contribute to the permanent acquisition of a healthy lifestyle (Štihec & Kovač, 1990). In this way, sports education is gaining special significance in the process of the development of a harmonious child personality. Sports education plays a highly significant role in both guiding and supporting children's natural need for movement along with acting as an effective means of education. By using appropriate programmes, forms and methods aimed at individuals, we can influence the development and correlation amongst the motor, cognitive, affective and social components of a child's personality. This view also promotes reaching beyond the health and biological aspects in schools and focusing more on issues of humanistic anthropological importance. Sports programmes and practical work in schools should increasingly result from an awareness of children's abilities, characteristics, needs and interests (Štihec & Kovač, 1990); all of which ultimately contribute to the development of the whole child.

School reform in Slovenia

As society continuously progresses, so too is the education system subject to related and appropriate changes. Topics of interest such as the treasury of global knowledge, variations of earlier theories, different points of view and varying requirements of society are thus sooner or later reflected through the education system. This in turn requires targeted curriculum, as well as organisational and methodological changes. The latest major school system change in Slovenia entailed the transition to a nine-year primary school educational period (previously there was an eight-year primary school educational period). Linked to this new nine-year primary school period in the 1999/2000 school year was the introduction of elective subjects. To enrich the compulsory programme and to enable pupils extend their knowledge in areas in which they are more interested and feel more successful in, the curriculum of the final three-year cycle (Years 7, 8 and 9) includes a choice of elective subjects approved by the Council of Experts for General

Education of the Republic of Slovenia. From the elective subjects offered by a school each year, pupils select two or three subjects of their choice (Markun Puhan & Kovač, 2003, Kovač & Novak, 1999).

Elective subjects

Electives are offered according to officially approved curricula. The curricula define the goals, levels of knowledge, number of hours and facilitate the placement of electives within the regular schedule. Pupils attend elective subjects throughout the school year and are graded at the end of the year. A decree also determines who can be an appointed teacher for a selected subject. Electives thus complement regular classes including that of Sports Education. Together they represent well-rounded sports contents that are offered to pupils at school while making significant contributions to the process of both independent and personalised learning. Elective subjects should therefore give pupils the possibility of choice to help raise their motivation and improve their ability to make later choices about their education and experience with the contents, tasks and ways of working that characterise the various education programmes. The subject curricula for programme subjects should establish clear competence aims and clearly show the pupils what they should be able to master upon the completion of their studies, and elective subjects should be formulated so they can form the basis for a dialogue between pupils, parents, teachers and relevant co-operation partners, and should form the basis for assessing what the pupils have learned. According to the law governing primary schools in Slovenia, a school is obliged to offer the following subjects: a second foreign language, rhetoric, religions and ethics. All other electives offered are determined in accordance with a school's human and financial resources, local tradition, pupil preference and available teacher specialisation. There are two groups of electives: (1) the natural and technical science group, and the (2) sociological and humanities group. Electives are primarily designed as a one-year programme and are not usually followed by a second year. The school is obliged to offer at least three electives for each group. Pupils can therefore select from among over 50 electives, two of which are the sports electives Sports and Dance. Sports as an elective subject, includes the following three one-year programmes: *Sport for a Healthy Lifestyle*, *Sport for Relaxation* and a *Selected Sport*. Dance as an elective subject includes the following three one-year programmes: *Dance*, *Folk Dance*, *Old Fashioned and Social Dance* (Kovač & Novak, 1999). As part of these sports and dance activities, pupils can learn about new sports, improve their skills in sports they already know and thus gain more theoretical information and practical knowledge. These subjects offer sports activities that cannot always be implemented within the compulsory Sports Education programme. A key aim of the elective sports subjects is to help with the promotion of entering into a lifetime of physicality. Because these contents have sports-recreational effects, such subjects are significant for adopting sports as a quality and health-enhancing way of spending one's free time in all periods of their life. There is also additional focus on the correlation between sports contents and other school subjects (cross-curriculum integration). Individual schools also attempt to take account of the specific local community characteristics and to integrate with the local cultural community. Different sports topics can be offered in different areas of Slovenia. Some parts of Slovenia are famous for cross-country skiing, some for football, basketball or other sports. In the coastal area of Slovenia, more swimming-related topics can be offered, while at ski resort towns there is more skiing etc. Introduced as a method of curriculum enrichment and personalised knowledge extension,

electives can also be performed as out-of-school classes that take place after regular school time. In these cases, special norms for forming groups should be observed (Kovač & Novak, 1999).

The implementation of electives within Slovenian schools has been in place for several years. Since then, several research articles and different analyses of their implementation have been completed (Kovač, 1999; Kovač, 2002; Ačimovič Svenšek, 2002; Markun Puhon, 2000; 2001; Markun Puhon & Kovač, 2003; Ismajlovič, 2005; Petrovič, 2006). The aim of this research is to investigate how primary school pupils perceive the choice of Sports and Dance as electives. This in turn will help further evaluate how successful the implementation of electives has been since their introduction. Respondents were asked to comment on five key areas of investigation: (1) why they decided to sign up for Sport and Dance electives; (2) what problems (if any) they encountered over their period of study and participation; (3) which of the content areas and activities did they find most interesting; (4) how did they rate the organisation and implementation of electives and (5) what was their personal view of the elective(s) evaluation and grading process.

METHODS

Participants

The sample was comprised of 367 male and female pupils from 14 Slovenian primary schools who took the Sports or Dance electives during the 2004/2005 school year. The electives are performed in the final three-year cycle; therefore, we questioned pupils attending the 7th, 8th and 9th grades (aged 12 to 15). It should be noted that the sample of participants was too small to allow us to generalise the results.

Instrument

For the purpose of this research, we administered an anonymous questionnaire that had already been used and tested (Ismajlovič, 2005). Twenty-five closed-type questions were included in order to establish the pupils' opinions on the elective subjects from various perspectives generated from the research aims. For each question, the pupils could only select one answer. Possible answers and the scale for each question are outlined within the Results section. Due to the limited length of this article, only the 15 most relevant questions from the questionnaire are referred to within this paper.

Procedure

Data was collected during the regular physical education hour of the sample classes. Prior to the completion of the questionnaires, the purpose of the study was explained to all the pupils. Obtained data was processed with the SPSS statistical software package and the frequencies sub-programme at the Faculty of Sport computer centre. Basic statistical parameters were calculated (average values, standard deviation and the frequencies of individual answers).

RESULTS

Most pupils take Sport for Relaxation, then Sport for a Healthy Lifestyle, a selected sport, Dance, Old-fashioned and Social Dance, and Folk Dance. The results are presented in Figure 1.

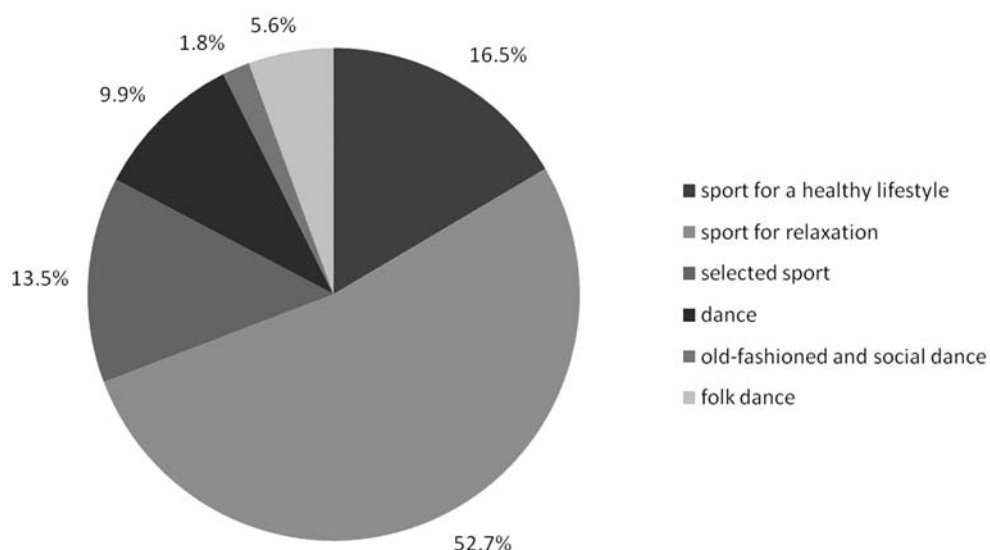


Figure 1: Answers to the question: Which electives are you taking this year?

There are some pupils who attended two electives offered by sports teachers. Only a small share of pupils selected dance as an elective subject (Dance, Old-fashioned and Social Dance, and Folk Dance). The main reason is that these subjects were offered by the smallest number of sports teachers.

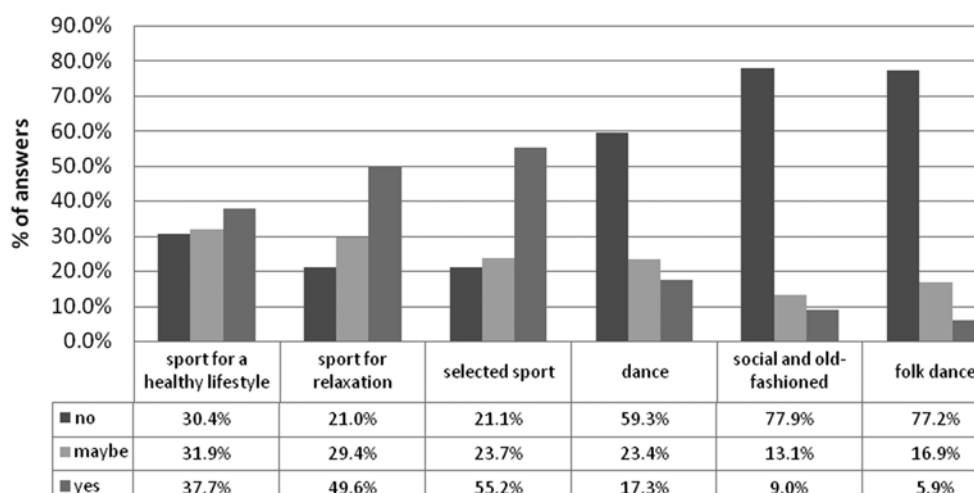


Figure 2: Answers to the question: Would you also like to choose the electives sports or dance next year?

The results shown in Figure 2 indicate that in the following year, most pupils would choose a Selected Sport elective. The Selected Sport elective is followed by Sport for Relaxation and Sport

for a Healthy Lifestyle. The majority of pupils gave a negative answer to all three programmes of the Dance elective, which indicates that dance is not one of the most attractive activities. The reason for this could be that, unlike Sports, many of the selected schools do not offer Dance as an elective and therefore pupils are not familiar with such content. Another reason could be that these subjects are less interesting and unattractive. Pupils are more likely to be interested in modern dance, rather than old-fashioned and folk dance.

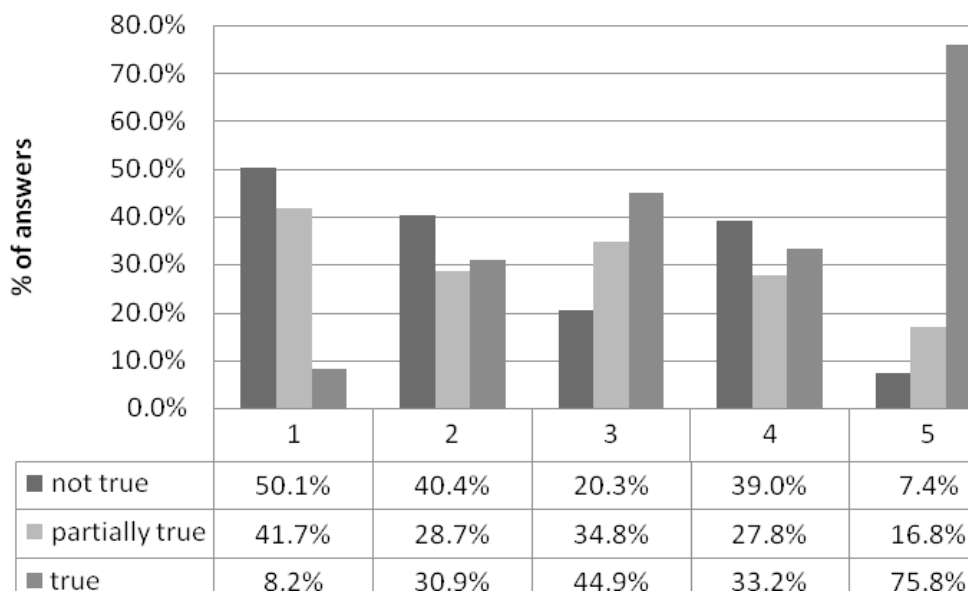


Figure 3: Answers to the question: Why did you decide to select the electives sports or dance?

In this question (Figure 3), pupils rated each of the following five options: 1 – because of friends, 2 – because there is no homework or afternoon study, 3 – because of the opportunity for a good grade, 4 – because of last year's good experience, and 5 – because the contents are interesting and applicable. Figure 3 shows that most pupils selected their elective because they believe the contents are interesting and applicable (75.8%). This is a very positive indicator for Sports and Dance electives as the majority of respondents have highlighted that selection was based primarily on the potential for learning and/or sampling new physical activities. By introducing Sports as an elective subject, children are offered a possibility to learn about new sport contents – contents that are outside the curriculum or cannot be implemented during regular physical education classes. It is therefore not surprising that pupils rated the option “because it is interesting and applicable” so highly. A total of 44.9% of all respondent pupils stated their decision was driven by the fact they could achieve good grades, while 30.9% decided to select their electives because there is no homework or afternoon study, and because they had good experiences in the previous year. The least important factor in decision-making was the choice made by their friends (8.2% of all pupils questioned).

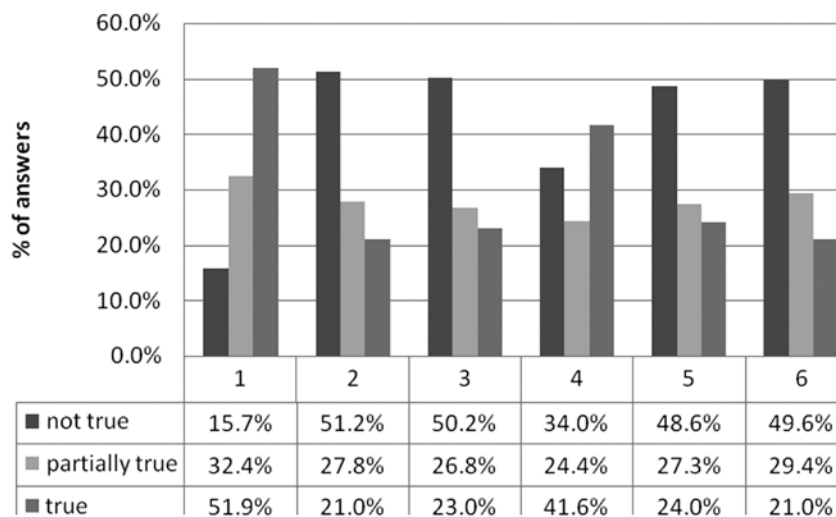


Figure 4: Answers to the question: What bothered you concerning the organisation and implementation of the elective subject?

For this question (Figure 4), the pupils rated the following options with three possible statements: true, partially true, not true: 1 – nothing bothers me, 2 – the place is too small, 3 – inappropriate time, 4 – too few times per week, 5 – boys and girls in the same group, 6 – pupils from other classes. The majority of respondents answered that nothing bothered them in their classes of Sports or Dance. Also, the answers to other options indicate that the mentioned problems did not bother them very much. As many as 41.6% pupils believe that these electives are not scheduled often enough per week, indicating a relatively high level of interest in their contents. This is also a very positive indicator of the attitude of pupils towards Sports and Dance electives as it illustrates that a large percentage of them would like to participate in additional sessions. Electives which include sport activities are some of the most popular subjects and pupils show the greatest interest in such subjects.

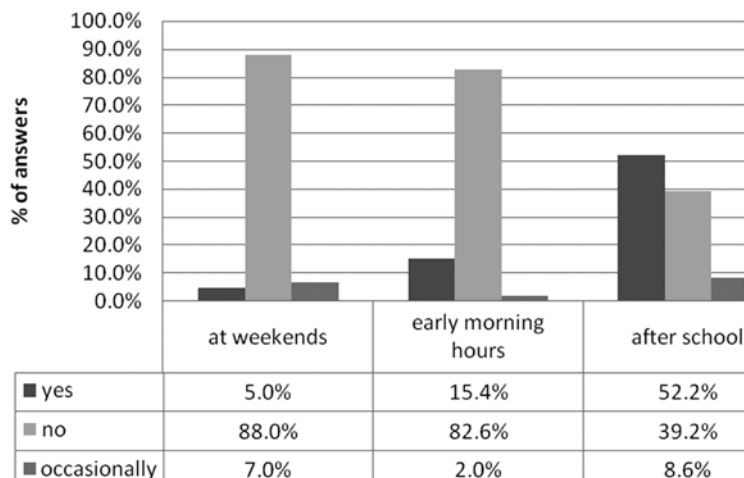


Figure 5: Answers to the question: Did the class ever take place outside of scheduled hours?

The electives Sports and Dance primarily took place after school hours (52.2%) (Figure 5). They took place less often prior to the beginning of the school day in early morning hours (15.4%) and least often on weekends (5%). It is well known that adjusting schedules can often be difficult. In addition, a certain programme can be attended by pupils from all of the last three-year cycle grades (7, 8 and 9) resulting in large participant numbers. Therefore, classes are most easily organised after school, before school or on weekends when all pupils are available. While the latter two options are often not favoured nor or not the most appropriate times, given the above reasons, other solutions are not always readily available.

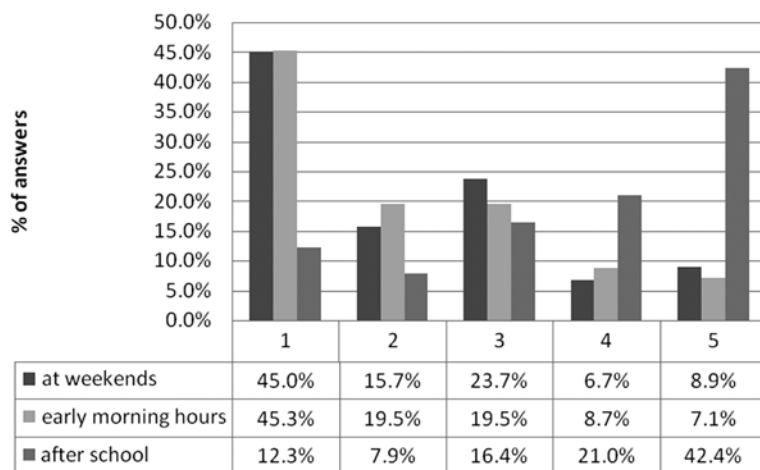


Figure 5: Answers to the question: Do you consider out-of-schedule hours to be appropriate?

Pupils rated out-of-schedule hours according to the five statements: 1 – absolutely inappropriate, 2 – inappropriate, 3 – partially appropriate, 4 – appropriate, 5 – absolutely appropriate. Pupils clearly indicated that they do not like weekend or early morning classes. 45% of the pupils rated both these options as *absolutely inappropriate*, while 15.7% and 19.5% rated these respective options as *inappropriate*. Less than 10% pupils rated either of these times as appropriate, while 42.4% of the pupils rated after-school time as absolutely appropriate. The time after school is also when pupils are most used to having classes. In addition, certain activities (such as cycling or swimming) are much more easily arranged during after-school hours as opposed to early in the morning.

As expected, classes mostly took place in the school gym (66%), followed by the school -yard (26.7%) and swimming pool (5.8%). Without the relevant facility, onsite activities at places such as a swimming pool or a skiing area are not free of charge. Since elective subjects at school must be free of charge and equally available to all children, teachers normally decide to select such contents and activities that are free of charge and can be organised at school or in its surroundings.

The implementation of elective subjects also entailed the award of numerical grades for evaluating performance within them, just as with other mainstream school subjects. A total of 77% of the respondent pupils agreed with this, while 9% disagreed that the evaluation grades are awarded on a numerical basis. Of the pupils questioned, 92% are satisfied with their grade in Sports or Dance, while only 5% are not satisfied.

The majority of pupils (74%) were of the opinion that they were sufficiently and well informed about the evaluation methods and criteria used. However, the fact that 26% of respondents still indicated that they felt that they were not sufficiently informed about the evaluation and grading process for electives suggests that further emphasis should be placed upon this area.

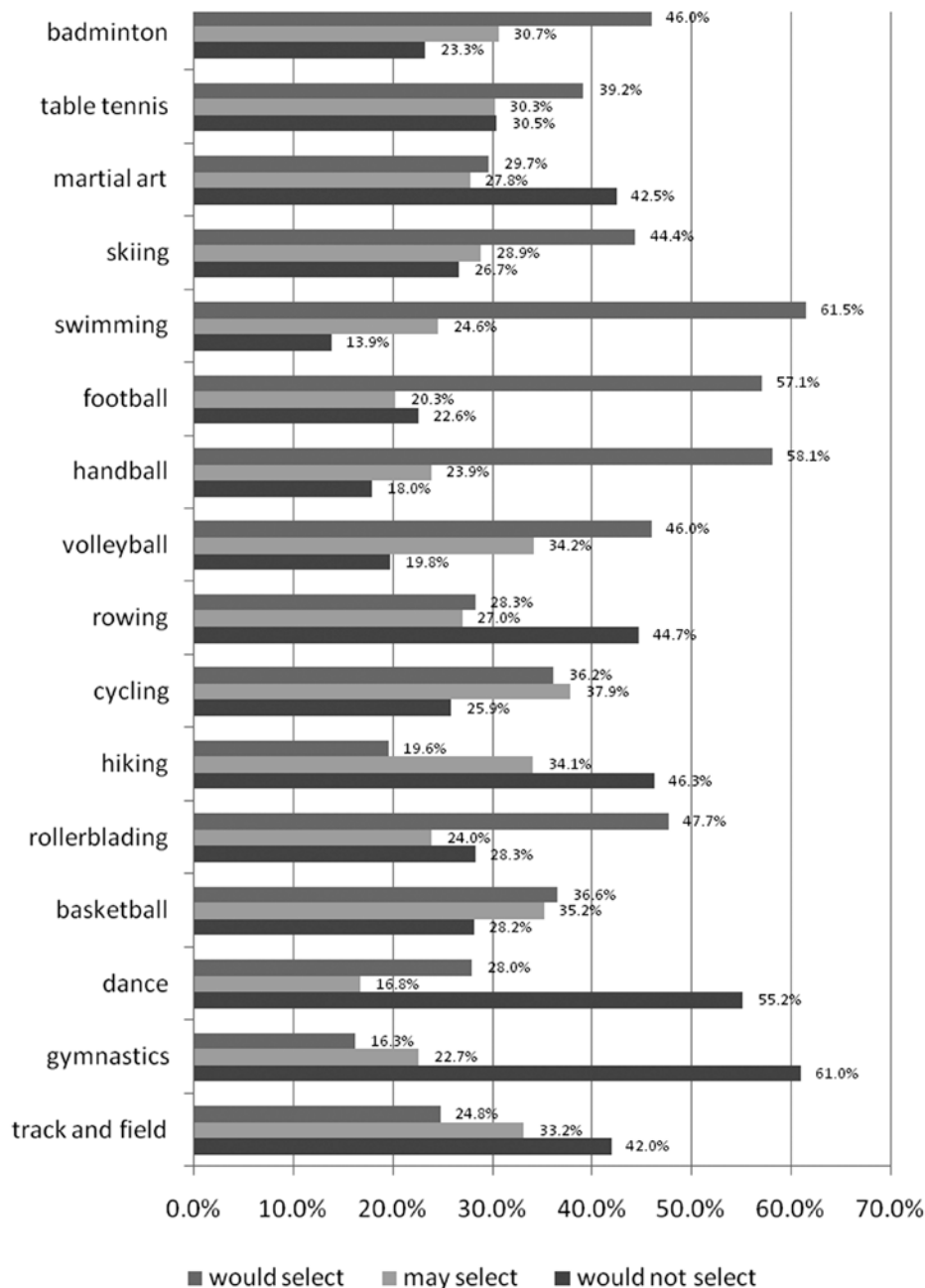


Figure 6: Answers to the question: Which sport would you select as an elective subject?

Only a little over 25% of the pupils think that their good performance in the elective lessons would have an influence on them obtaining a higher grade in physical education. Half of the pupils (50%) do not think this way, which indicates that sports teachers clearly distinguish the contents and the evaluation process between the two subjects. It also indicates that the majority of pupils choose Sports and Dance electives primarily for recreational and relaxation purposes as well as because they find them generally interesting.

The pupils were offered the following 16 sports (Figure 6): track and field, gymnastics, dance, basketball, volleyball, handball, football, swimming, rollerblading, hiking, cycling, rowing, skiing, martial arts (such as karate and judo), table tennis and badminton. For this question, pupils had to mark each sport with one of the following options: would not select, might select, would select as part of the Sports elective subject. The results are presented in Figures 7 to 10. The majority of respondents indicated that they would select swimming (61.5%) as an elective. The sports that follow are: handball (58.8%), football (57.1%), rollerblading (47%), badminton and volleyball (46%), skiing (44.4%), table tennis (39.2%), basketball (36.6%), cycling (36.2%), martial arts (29.7%), rowing (28.3%), dance (28%), track and field (24.8%), hiking (19.6%) and gymnastics (16.3%). The majority of pupils would *not* select gymnastics (61%) and dance (55.2%). It is perhaps surprising that swimming is the most popular sport – it was expected that it would have been one of the team ball games. It is also unfortunate that swimming is one of the activities that cannot be offered by many schools due to the associated costs (electives have to be free of charge). We anticipated the lower percentage for hiking (19.6%) since children of this age are not particularly keen on long-lasting and monotonous activities.

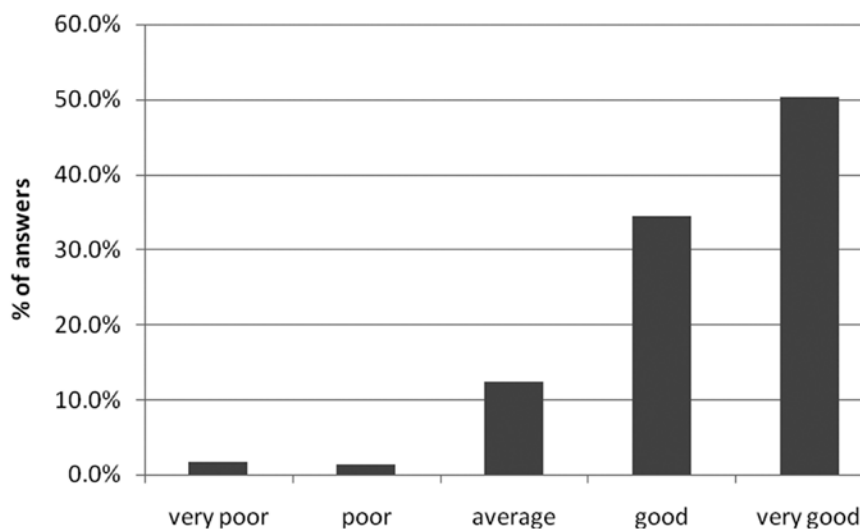


Figure 7: Answers to the question: Which dance would you select as an elective subject?

Pupils were offered the following seven types of dance (Figure 7): standard, Latin-American, old-fashioned, aerobics, jazz ballet, hip-hop and folk dance. For this question, the pupils had to mark each dance with one of the following options: would select, might select, would not select.

The majority of pupils would select hip-hop dance (58.5%) and aerobics (20.6%). These are quite new, attractive and familiar styles of dance, while children of school age often look at modern day

musicians as role models. The majority of pupils would *not* select old-fashioned dance (80.4%), folk dance (71.6%), jazz ballet (63.1%), standard dances (58.3%), and aerobics (55.2%). The low percentage given for other dances may be due to several reasons. Undoubtedly, one of them is that children do not know these dances and may think they are boring and not fashionable enough.

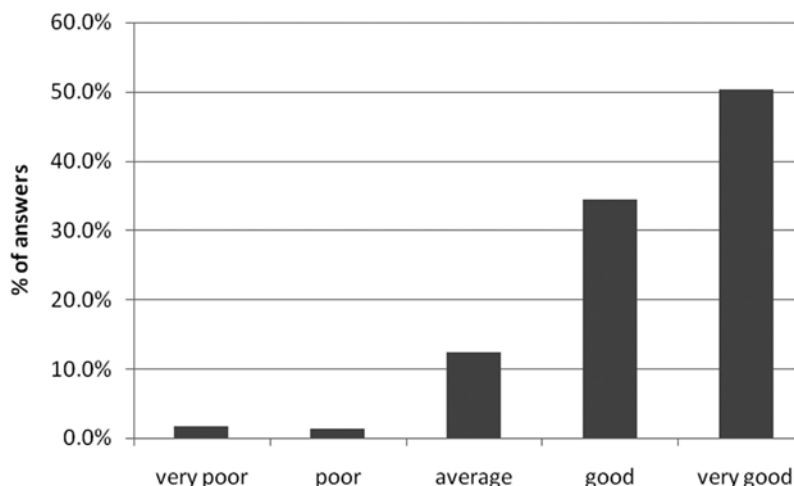


Figure 8: Answers to the question: Were sports or dance lessons well-prepared?

Figure 8 shows that the majority of the respondent pupils believe that the Sports and Dance lessons were very well-prepared. The percentage of those who thought the lessons were poorly prepared is very low. This again provides a very positive view by pupils of both the style and content of Sports and Dance electives. In addition, it also reflects the fact that Sports teachers dedicate time and effort towards planning and preparation for lessons.

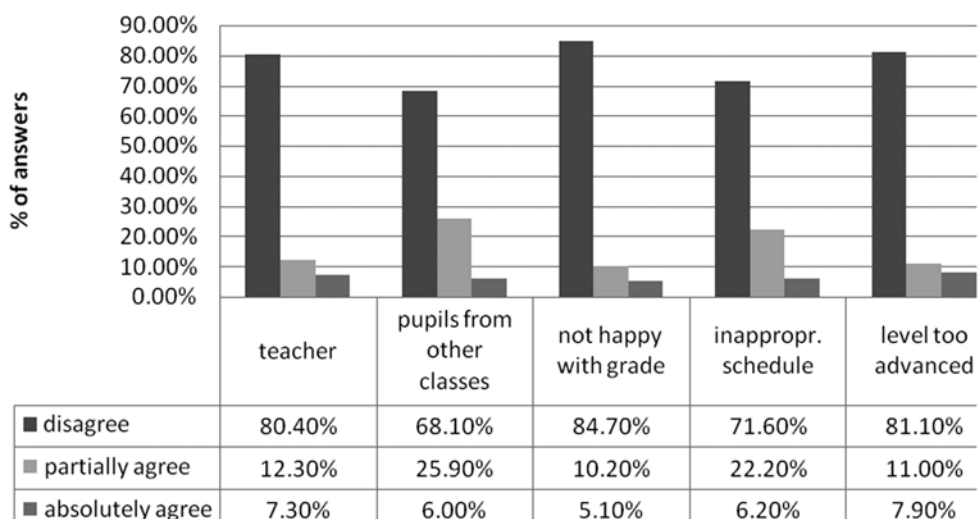


Figure 9: Answers to the question: Which reasons would you give for not selecting sports or dance as an elective sport?

A hypothetical question was included that asked the pupils why they would not select the electives Sports or Dance in the following year. They were given five possible negative factors that were thought to be possible reasons for them not to choose the electives. The negative factors suggested for this question were: the teacher, pupils from other classes, not happy with the grade, inappropriate schedule, too advanced level. Figure 9 shows that the majority of pupils questioned do not agree with the reasons offered, and that these factors would currently have no negative influence over them not selecting the desired elective.

DISCUSSION

Every modification to a nation's education system has a number of resultant consequences. The majority of consequences are normally very positive and increase the efficiency of that system (the main reason why change was brought about). However, some consequences can (at least at the beginning) also be viewed as negative, particularly because the execution of the new principles may initially face minor or major difficulties. All changes, particularly major ones, to any education system must therefore be as clearly defined as possible to avoid ineffective implementation and thus frustration towards the entire school population. This is perhaps one of the main reasons the education system in Slovenia undergoes major reform only relatively rarely and only when deemed necessary.

During the last decade, the Slovenian education system has undergone such major reform. The majority of changes have applied to primary schools, which have moved from an eight to a nine-year educational period. A new curriculum was defined for all schools (Kovač & Novak, 1999) with one of the biggest requirements proving to be the introduction of elective subjects. This study has shown that the electives which include sport activities are very popular among pupils and most of them decide to select these subjects. Some pupils even decide to attend two such subjects. Both the aforementioned points provide a very positive indication that the introduction of electives has proved both a progressive and successful area of reform. The majority of respondents stated that they chose Sports and Dance electives because the contents are interesting and applicable. This again is a very positive point when promoting Sports and Dance electives, if the view is taken that pupils are selecting these electives due to the fact that they are genuinely interested in them.

In terms of elective choices, the study has shown that a large percentage of pupils select Sport for Relaxation, Sport for a Healthy Lifestyle and a Selected Sport, while the smallest number of pupils select Old-fashioned, Social and Folk Dance. It should however be noted that these types of dances are offered by schools the least often. The main reason is because teachers responsible for delivering electives do not always have enough specialist expertise regarding these contents, as has already been ascertained by other researchers (Markun Puhan, 2001; Ismajlovič, 2005; Petrovič, 2006).

The most popular subjects are swimming, handball and football, while the least popular are gymnastics and dance. The fact that swimming is an activity that a large percentage of pupils would choose is interesting especially as it is one of the sports that for many schools may not be free of charge. Individual child preference in relation to physical activity is an ongoing area of research interest across every dynamic education system and should therefore warrant future study in this area. In relation to the delivery of Sports and Dance electives, the majority of the

respondents believe that the pedagogical process is very well organised. This in turn indicates that the teachers responsible for the planning and delivery of Sports and Dance electives deserve credit for the level of effort directed towards this new process.

In addition, the fact that the results indicate that the majority of pupils would select these electives again in the following school year is again a very positive step forward in the promotion of participation in physical and health-enhancing activity. Subjects like Sport for a Healthy Lifestyle offer a number of opportunities to encourage pupils to increase their level of involvement in sport, to introduce the benefits of sports activity, to make pupils accept sport as an element of a quality way of life, to accept sport as an activity which can help an individual avert the harmful consequences of modern life and bad habits such as smoking, drinking, illicit drugs etc. (Videmšek et al., 2003; Sekulić et al., 2008). Within the scope of a healthy lifestyle, pupils can be introduced to the principles of healthy eating habits, how nutrition influences sports results and the most common eating disorders facing youth like bulimia or anorexia (Videmšek et al., 2004).

A large percentage of pupils stated that they felt to some extent that they would like additional Sports and Dance elective sessions to be scheduled on a weekly basis. This is another very positive response and one which serves to promote the continued implementation and development of sports-oriented electives. Pupils stated that their electives are most often scheduled to take place after school, which was a popular choice amongst pupils. In some cases, however, electives took place in the early morning (one hour before school) or on weekends. A large percentage of pupils expressed negative views towards what they felt was inappropriate scheduling. Our results are quite similar to those found in the research by Petrovič (2006). It is important to note, however, that individual teachers and schools are often very restricted in terms of choice. It can prove impossible to fit the organisation of activities like swimming, cycling trips and other similar activities within the regular schedule during the week. The issue of available sports-specific facilities and related equipment also contributes to the difficulty of organising such activities. In terms of the venue, these electives most often take place in the gym or school yard, which are free of charge, being onsite. A section of pupils however indicated that they felt the venue for activities was too small, especially when class sizes were increased due to pupils from other years. In addition, over half the pupil sampled partly felt or did not like the fact that some classes were mixed (boys and girls). These are areas of design and delivery that could continue to be the focus for improvement.

Respondents indicated that they expect a good grade in Sports and Dance. As many as 92% pupils are satisfied with their grade, and it is therefore understandable they also agree the evaluation grades should be numerical (1 to 5), which another statutory requirement of the new education system in Slovenia. The evaluation criteria are explained in advance, which is positively accepted by 74% of the pupils. The teachers are fair and correct in their knowledge evaluations, since the majority of pupils believe that a good grade in electives does not automatically mean they will have a good or better grade in Physical Education. The teachers thus take enough time to explain the programme, implementation and evaluation criteria to the pupils. Similar results were obtained in the research by Ačimovič Svenšek (2002) and Petrovič (2006). It can therefore be stated that teachers are well aware of the importance of such explanations, and that they make pupils active participants in all phases of the educational process. Pupils are thereby motivated, while the process acquires meaning because the pupils know exactly what, when and how it will be performed. In a process organised in this way, pupils are aware of their role, the purpose of

exercising and are in fact becoming the subject of education and not just the object. This also causes changes in the pupils' willingness to actively co-operate, so a range of troubles, conflicts and problems will no longer be present (Štihec, 2004).

This research produced very similar results to other research, including that of Markun Puhan (2000), Markun Puhan (2001), Ačimovič Svenšek (2002), Ismajlovič (2005), and Petrovič (2006). All previous research indicates that electives, particularly those that include sports contents, are very well accepted in schools, and that these subjects are in fact some of the most popular ones. They represent very good variety in the school curriculum and offer pupils a wide range of activities to satisfy individual desires. There are a large number of areas and contents to select from, so each individual can find something that they will enjoy doing, satisfy their needs for creativity and develop their own potential. A school that has a wide range of electives is interesting and appealing to children.

CONCLUSION

Sports and Dance electives vastly contribute to the provision of interesting variety in the physical education process in schools. These electives help to increase the available choice of mixed and innovative sports activities in schools. Sports teachers thus have the possibility of offering extra activities in addition to the compulsory programme, some of which cannot be organised through the normal curriculum. The results of this study indicate that teachers make good use of this fact for the benefit of children's harmonious physical and motor development. In addition, results have shown that the experiences of pupils within elective subjects in the field of sports have so far been very positive. We must therefore strive to preserve these elective subjects as a very significant part of the wider school curriculum. Based on the analysis of responses related to the organisation of Sports and Dance electives, it can be stated that within the sample schools at least, there have been no major difficulties with the implementation. This is even though the introduction of electives have been a major component of reform within our education system and that schools have not had a lot of experience with their design, organisation and implementation.

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