

THE IMPACT OF MOTIVATION OF PRIMARY STUDENTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DISTANCE LEARNING (SPORTS DAY EXAMPLE)

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Abstract: *The article contains the description of the bases and starting points of primary physical education and sports day in Slovenia and other European countries. It presents the motivational point of view of the students at the implementation of distance learning for a sports day. There is a graphic display of the results of an online survey that was carried out among teachers and students of Komen primary school, branch of Štanjel. Fifty students from the 1st to 6th grade and 7 teachers took part in the survey. The purpose of the article is the research about what influences the motivation of students in distance learning. From the collected data it was found out that the ICT and interdisciplinary connection have played the most important role in the implementation of the sports day. The answers of the teachers show that besides the ICT devices, the weather, the family and interdisciplinary connections are the main motivators for the children. The students were very motivated at the implementation of the distance sports day. The teachers, as well as students, have found advantages and disadvantages in the organization of a distance sports day.*

Keywords: *Sports day, Motivation, ICT, Interdisciplinary connection, Distance learning.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the school year 2019/2020 the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic caused the “normal” way of life to come to a grinding halt and had a huge impact on the operation and activity of the school system. After the closure of schools, the pedagogical process was transferred online. Distance learning lasted from the beginning of March till the end of May 2020. A similar situation occurred in the school year 2020/21 with the emergence of the second wave of the coronavirus. All the primary schools in Slovenia shut their doors and the distance learning re-started. In the second wave, students have had online lessons since November 2020. Teachers, as well as students, have found themselves in a situation that requires excessive use of computers and other ICT devices, and a lack of time and motivation for physical activity.

2. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND NEED FOR ACTIVITY

Physical activity is a basic human need, walking is the most elementary form of natural movement. With the right support in the family and later in kindergarten and at school, we affect the child’s later lifestyle and we equip him with all the independent and active master of experiences, burdens and stress that life has in store for him (Škof, 2007).

Physical activity is one of the most important areas in a child’s development. With proper physical activities, a child develops not only physical and functional skills but also cognitive, social and emotional skills and features. With different activities a child gains confidence in his body and physical capabilities and thus builds a proper perception of himself, he proves himself and

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creates an emotional connection with the environment. With different activities he comes to know the environment that surrounds him and keeps and improves his health (Videmšek in Pišot, 2007).

3. THE IMPACT OF THE SARS-COV-2 PANDEMIC ON THE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

It's a fact that during distance learning students spend the majority of time in front of their computers. According to the results of the internal survey of Komen Primary School (April 2020) the majority of students spent on average 5 to 6 hours a day for school work. This means nearly a third of the day. Besides, today's children spend the majority of their free time in a sitting position, in front of the TV or smartphone. Sports is the most appropriate means and an alternative to such a way of life. With sport, we can successfully reduce the consequences of a sedentary way of life.

As early as a decade ago the research showed that the percentage of population that performs the majority of their daily tasks in a sitting position, was never higher (Brettschneider and Bunemann, 2005, v Šimunič, Volmut and Pišot, 2010). If we add a sedentary way of spending free time we can soon figure out that daily physical stimulation has decreased in such a way that physical inactivity as one of the factor of chronical non-infectious diseases has reached a dimension of a pandemic (Biddle, Gorely in Stensel, 2004, v Šimunič, Volmut in Pišot, 2010).

Even modern research shows preoccupying results of a sedentary way of life and consequently a drastic fall of physical skills in primary students. Here, distance learning plays an important role as it requires a sedentary way of work and learning. The actual state among the population of children and teenagers is alarming.

The SLOfit organization has done interesting research about the physical capacities of primary students. After the end of the pandemic in May and June 2020, the P.E. teachers at 100 primary schools performed measurements of the Sports Educational Chart including 20,000 thousand students. The collected data from all the students was compared to their data of the previous school year and a decline in all the physical capacities was big, the biggest at endurance and coordination of the whole body. Besides, more than half of the students experienced an increase of subcutaneous fat, which was shown also by the rapid increase of overweight children in the last year (<https://www.slofit.org/aktualno/ID/216/Upad-gibalnih-sposobnosti-otrok-med-epidemijo>).

The spread of the Covid-19 in almost all the countries of the European Union virus has contributed to the implementation of measures that led to a social distancing between us. Among those measures were also the closures of schools and consequently distance learning. This directly affects the basic physical activity of youngsters. The majority of international research in European countries that were dealing with the comparison of physical abilities of the students prior and after distance learning showed the decline of the basic motor abilities, mainly endurance and strength (<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/10/4072/htm>).

4. DEFINITION OF THE SCHOOL SUBJECT PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The curriculum for physical education states that school physical education is a continuous process of enriching the knowledge, developing skills and characteristics and an important means for forming personality and relationships among individuals. With a regular and quality sports

activity, we contribute to a proportionate biopsychosocial development of a young person, relaxation, neutralisation of negative impacts of a long-hour sitting and other unhealthy habits (https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MIZS/Dokumenti/Osnovna-sola/Ucni-nacrti/obvezni/UN_sportna_vzgoja.pdf).

The role of primary physical education is very important as its point is not only in the satisfaction of the child's need for movement. The purpose that physical education has is far-reaching: they comprise also the cognitive, moral and aesthetic side of pedagogical effectiveness. (Videmšek in Pišot, 2007).

The base for planning and implementing the school physical education in primary school is the syllabus. The syllabus is a national document that presents the professional base for work in primary school and defines the weekly number of hours that are dedicated to physical education.

The interesting fact is that in all the European countries they recognize the important role of physical education at school. The P.E. subject is part of all the major curricular frameworks and is mandatory in primary and lower secondary education throughout Europe. Everybody agrees that physical activity and sport are a useful way of spending one's free time (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1467-3010.2012.01983.x> <https://www.zrss.si/pdf/pos-pouka-os-sport.pdf>).

Thus The European Commission has issued Recommendations to encourage physical education in schools including the instructions for the development of physical abilities in early childhood and creating useful connections with the sports sphere in schools, which was also accepted by the Council of Europe. The basic message is that school is the only institution that can provide all the children to reach the recommendations about physical activities for young people through the formal (mandatory) curricular participation (physical education lessons and sports days in Slovenia as well) or additional (extracurricular) sports and corporal activities (Global recommendations about physical activity for health, 2010 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/593559/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)593559_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/593559/EPRS_BRI(2016)593559_EN.pdf)).

5. COMPARISON OF THE NUMBER OF HOURS OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The programme of physical education in Slovenia is performed in all the primary school grades. Physical education comprises 834 hours of regular lessons and five sports days in each school year.

Physical education is part of the school programme in the majority of the European countries, even if the approach and quantity of hours differ. The chart below represents the comparison of weekly hours of physical education and the percentage in the European countries.

From the chart, it is visible that among the European Union countries there are differences in the time that is dedicated to the physical education of the children at primary school (European Commission, 2013). France dedicates the most time to physical education, that's 108 hours, in Slovenia, Hungary and Croatia 15% of the total lesson time is dedicated to physical education. Approximately half of the European countries dedicate 10% of total lesson time to physical education, only three countries 15%, whereas in Ireland only 4%. More preoccupying is the fact that approximately 40% of the EU countries dedicate 60 hours or less to physical education.

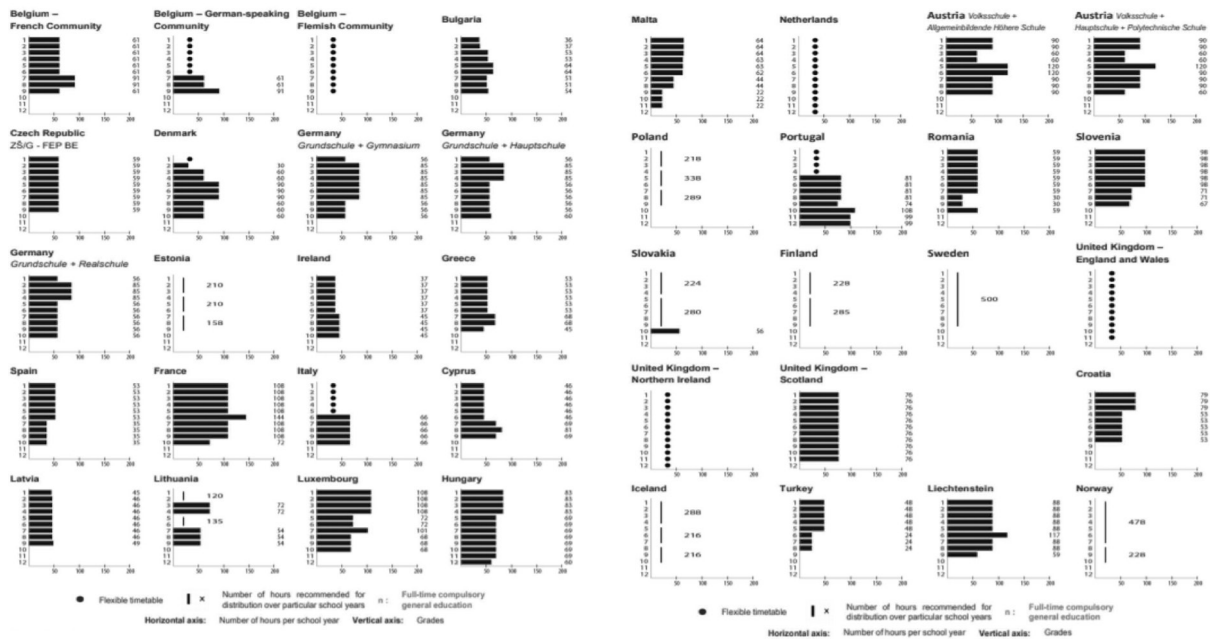


Chart 1. Recommended minimal number of hours (60 min) of physical education as mandatory programme and percentage (%) of the time of physical education lessons in the curriculum in primary education

Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2013. Physical Education and Sport at School in Europe Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

6. ACTIVITY DAYS AND SPORTS DAY

Activity days are that part of the primary school programme which connects different disciplines and subject areas included in the primary school syllabus. Activity days are performed in accordance with the school annual work plan that defines their content and organisational execution. Every single activity day lasts for 5 pedagogical hours.

Activity days can be organized separately for each class, collectively for a couple of classes or for the whole school. The planning and organisation of actual activity days are connected with the environment in which the school is situated and depend on the specificity of every individual school.

The goal of the sports day is that students satisfy the need for physical activity, physical expression and creativity, relax and amuse themselves. They get acquainted with different activities and sports in their free time, they practice for individual sports activities (https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MIZS/Dokumenti/Osnovna-sola/Ucni-nacrti/obvezni/UN_sportna_vzgoja.pdf).

7. SPORTS DAY AND INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTION

One of the important principles of modernizing syllabuses is also the connection and intertwining of knowledge. The connection of physical education with the content of other subjects contributes to the overall understanding of sports and its effects.

With such didactic approach teachers try to discuss the chosen topic in a most integral way or they try to look at the same problem from different points of view. Interdisciplinary connection is performed most effectively in activity days, project weeks and different forms of school

camps called school in nature. Physical education is a subject where it is possible to implement the goals of interdisciplinary curriculum content that do not have their own subject in the mandatory curriculum, but have an important role at overall formation.

8. EUROPEAN SPORTS DAY

In recent years the international project European school sports day (ESSD) has taken place in Slovenia as well as in other European countries. The European school sports day represents a network of school sports days the main purpose of which is the promotion of physical activity and sport among youngsters. Thus we can simplify the whole thing and say that the European school sports day is dedicated to entertainment, collective games and supporting physical activity and health for everyone (<https://www.edubuzz.org/innerwick/2017/09/29/european-school-sports-day/>). The European school sports day gives schools the opportunity to:

- Promote physical education and school sport,
- Create entertainment and enjoyment with the help of the initiative for physical activity of youngsters,
- Encourage health and well-being for life-long learning,
- Encourage social inclusion,
- Develop social competences among peers and influence motivation.

9. MOTIVATION

In professional literature we can read that motivation is one of the most important psychological processes. It's a process of challenge, guidance and regulation of human activity towards a goal or satisfaction of demands that was the source of motivation. Needs and instincts stimulate us, values, ideals and other motivational goals are those motivational elements that attract us. If a properly motivated behaviour or internal state that induces, directs and supports behaviour doesn't emerge, the motives cannot be realized (<https://www.parentsinsport.co.uk/2019/03/10/how-can-you-help-motivate-your-children-when-it-comes-to-their-sport/>).

We know many species/kinds of motivation. As two most important ones are intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is innate and natural inclination for the development of our inner capabilities through learning for which an external stimulus isn't needed. This means that an intrinsically motivated man doesn't cling to external goals such as a reward, a good mark, acknowledgment and enforcement in public as intrinsic motivation stimuli are characteristic of him (curiosity, interests, excitement, enthusiasm and positive self-esteem.)

For extrinsic motivation are typical extrinsic motivation stimuli that originate from the environment, are direct and used by someone from the outside (parents, teachers, schoolmates, peers) in order to trigger the motivational process with them. Extrinsically motivated man functions because of external consequences (praise, reprimand, reward, punishment, evaluation and assessment), he isn't interested in the activity itself, work is just a means for reaching good and avoiding bad (<http://www.solski-razgledi.com/e-sr-prispevek.asp?ID=177>).

10. MOTIVATION OF PUPILS

The main goal of each school is to motivate its students so that they can broaden their needs, change the consciousness, improve and enrich their behaviour. There isn't learning without mo-

tives and only the motivated students and the motivated teachers are successful. They are aware that it is exactly the motivation that changes the process of teaching into the process of learning.

Recently P.E. lessons teachers have had problems with the motivation of students. This is particularly visible with students that have bad motor skills. Sometimes a different approach is all that is takes to increase the student's performance for movement. One of the most frequently used ideas is the use of ICT at P.E. lessons as well as at implementation of the sports day. Students want novelty, dynamics and possibility of choice, which means what they like and what they dislike. The teacher has to help the student so that he realizes by himself that P.E. has a lot of positive effects. Here the pleasure at doing sport that the student learns through the game is of crucial importance.

Even the organisation of a sports day must base on the idea that develops motivational levers at students. This is triggered primarily by interest and curiosity, which are increased by the inclusion and use of ICT. The teacher must include them in the lesson and give an opportunity to the students to use them. In this way, he gives meaning and enriches the course of the activity day. Frequently he includes the contents of other subjects in such a way that he gives to students' other tasks that they carry out during the activity itself (interdisciplinary connection).

Numerous strategies and ways exist how we can motivate students with the purpose of reaching a goal and productivity increase. It's a fact that there isn't a unique rule that productivity increase will increase a student's bigger motivation and consequently productivity. Praise and encouragement are among the most widely used and effective means of motivation that have a positive impact on students' productivity especially in lower classes of primary school. It's important to pay attention that the teacher values the success and achievement of every single individual student. The quantity of the passed information mustn't be too big. The students like the feedback very much. It must include specific information that refers directly to the task. The teachers must give clear instructions and encouraging address. Thus the approach is very important. (<https://childmind.org/article/how-to-help-your-child-get-motivated-in-school/>).

11. RESEARCH, METHODS OF WORK, SAMPLE

After three months of distance learning, students and teachers were asked about the impact of motivation on distance learning. At the end of January 2021, an on-line survey was carried out among students and teachers at Komen Primary School about the impact of motivation of students on implementing a distance sports day. The survey was sent on 25 January 2021 to all the students from grade 1 to grade 6 (total 75 students) and teachers (7). Till 29 January 2021 50 students and 7 teachers answered the survey, which means 66% of students and 100% of teachers. Among teachers, which are all women, are 5 classroom teachers and 2 are P.E. teachers. Among the polled students there were 24 male students (48%) and 26 female students (52%). The average age of male and female students was 9.4 years, whereas the average age of teachers was 49.8 years.

12. FINDINGS OF RESEARCH AND ANSWERS ON THE RESEARCHED QUESTIONS

Below you will find the results of the survey of primary students and teachers at the implementation of a distance sports day. Four research questions were answered in the survey.

The first research question is as follows: Were you motivated at the implementation of a distance sports day?

From chart 2 it is visible that 45 students or 90% of all the students that took part in the survey were motivated at the implementation of a distance sports day. Only 5 students or 10% of all the students that took part in the survey weren't motivated at the implementation of a distance sports day.

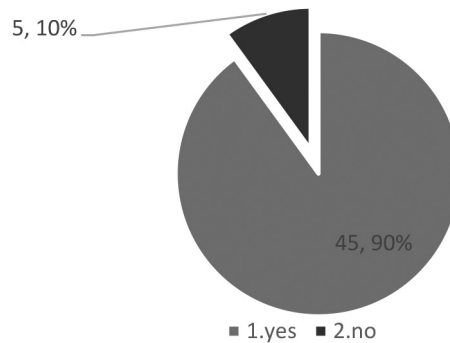


Chart 2. Were you motivated at the implementation of a distance sports day?

The second research question goes as follows: Was your motivation influenced by additional exercises (interdisciplinary connection with other subjects) and the use of smartphone, smartwatch (ICT)?

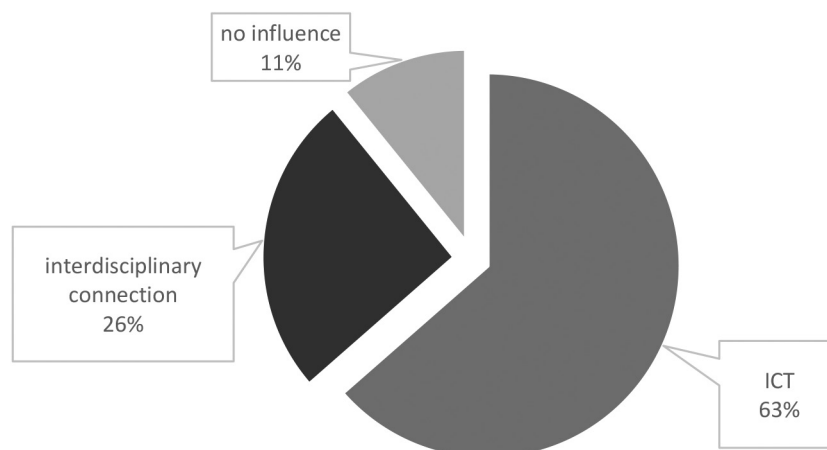


Chart 3. Was your motivation influenced by additional exercises (interdisciplinary connection with other subjects) and the use of smartphone, smartwatch (ICT)?

The question whether additional exercises and the use of ICT influenced the motivation of students was asked in this way: 13 or 26% of male and female students answered that their motivation is influenced by the additional exercises (interdisciplinary connection), 32 or 64% by the use of ICT and only 5 or 11% answered that their motivation is influenced by neither of the two.

The third research question goes as follows: What, in your opinion, most influences the motivation of students at organizing a distance sports day?

From the Chart 4 it can be seen that 4 teachers (57%) answered that motivation is influenced by the weather and family, 2 teachers (28%) by the intermediate tasks, interdisciplinary connection and the use of ICT.

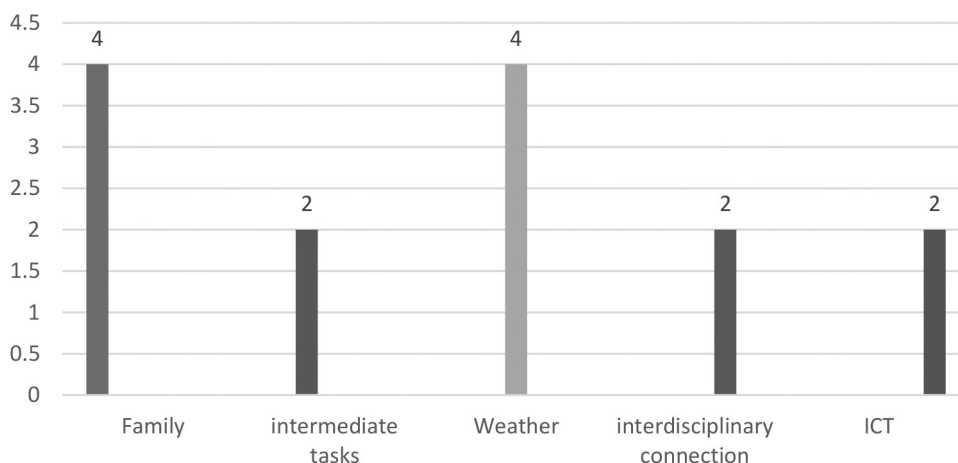


Chart 4. What, in your opinion, most influences the motivation of students at organizing a distance sports day? (teachers)

The fourth research question goes as follows: Do you think that additional tasks (interdisciplinary connection) and the use of ICT influence the motivation and performance of students at the implementation of the distance sports day?

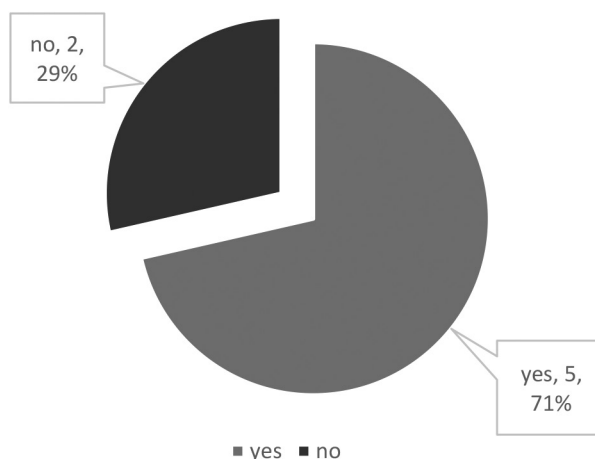


Chart 5. Do you think that additional tasks (interdisciplinary connection) and the use of ICT influence the motivation and performance of students at the implementation of the distance sports day?

Chart number 5 shows that the use of ICT and additional tasks (interdisciplinary connection) influence the motivation and consequently the productivity of students at the implementation of the distance sport day, as 5 teachers gave an affirmative answer to this question, which means 71%, only 2, that's 29% think that ICT and interdisciplinary connection don't have any influence.

13. CONCLUSION

According to the processed data of the survey questionnaire we can deduce that teachers will have to include ICT in sports lessons in the future and pass additional tasks to students in the form of interdisciplinary connection, as those are two main motivational levers of "modern" children. But teachers must take this with a huge amount of caution so that students don't become addicted to applications of smart devices.

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