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## **OVERCOMING EDUCATIONAL DIFFICULTIES AT CLASSES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN THE OPINION OF TEACHERS, PEDAGOGUES AND HEADMASTERS OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS**

**Key words:** overcoming educational difficulties, classes of physical education, junior high school, teachers

### **Introduction**

A junior high school is the school bearing the greatest burden of an educational reform and, simultaneously, the most difficult stage of education. Adolescents at the age of 13-15 are undergoing the most complicated developmental stage, which requires not only knowledge and skills but also heart and engagement as well as patience and wisdom from junior high school teachers (MEN 1999).

The Ministry of National Education has assumed that special prophylactic programmes, cooperation with parents and help to children with pedagogical difficulties implemented in junior high schools would diminish the level of aggression and violence amongst the adolescents. Constantly appearing news, observations of behaviors of adolescents and an analysis of investigations addressing that problem prove the continuous escalation of that phenomenon (Bergier, Gajewska-Moś 2007).

Pedagogical difficulties usually refer to behaviors of children and adolescents that are inconsistent with social standards, hinder co-existence and cannot be affected by common pedagogical treatments. Most frequently, they are evoked by unfavorable life conditions and improper upbringing, with simultaneously a correct intellectual development of an individual (Bergier, Gajewska-Moś 2008).

Overcoming upbringing difficulties is an extremely complex and long-term process, therefore it should not be brought only and solely to some educational techniques. It is necessary to elaborate a specific system of upbringing effects, which on the one hand would consider the needs of difficult pupils, and on the other – would also be functioning well in the overall sy-

stem of upbringing and learning (Łobocki 1987). Usually, the overcoming of upbringing difficulties proceeds in three dimensions:

- prophylactic – that includes both global pedagogical effects, organized within the overall system of upbringing and learning, as well as individual work with a child posing educational difficulties;
- diagnostic – that determines the type of educational difficulties and searches for their causes;
- therapeutic – which counteracts the difficulties through the selection and application of the most effective means (Dąbrowska, Wojciechowska-Charlak 1996).

According to pedagogues, educational work with pupils that pose difficulties involves help in learning, development of skills and interests, and restriction of free time.

H. Izdebska (1988) believes that of undisputed significance to the proper development of each child is the development of skills and interests. Early developed and extended interests stimulate the development of children and enrich their personality. A lack of positive interests depletes personality, poses threat to a psychical balance, and happens to be a source of development of undesirable attitudes. It is therefore worth to utilize the work of various hobby clubs and after-school activities, corresponding to active interests and needs of pupils, that may become an important therapeutic and prophylactic agent.

An excellent pedagogue – A. Kamiński (1985) claimed that, unlike in the case of adults, the free time of children should be restricted and filled with contents desirable from the pedagogical point of view. He recommended organizing various forms of sports and tourist activities. Joint preparation of such events affords an opportunity for active involvement of also “difficult” children, creates also multiple occasions for their activation as well as teaches rational methods of planning and organization.

In a complex and often long-standing process of overcoming upbringing difficulties, a tutor should examine each case individually and should follow some general methodological guidelines, including among others:

- grading the difficulties – starting from what is close, known and easy to a child, and then going into more complex issues;
- inducing proper motivation – the application of positive reinforcements;
- individualization – based on the one hand on the in-depth knowledge on child development; and on the other – on adjusting requirements and the pace of work to child’s capabilities;
- application of methods of practical teaching to less gifted children;

- skillful utilization of therapeutic methods (play, sport, useful work) (Dąbrowska, Wojciechowska-Charlak 1996).

All these actions will yield the desired effect on condition that the teacher – pedagogue is well prepared, has mature personality and is qualified from the psychopedagogical perspective. In this case, the maturity means most of all the capability of pedagogues to understand their pupils. A pedagogue is someone who understands a pupil and is able to patiently accompany him in his development, with simultaneous resolution and sense of realism. A significant test of the maturity of a pedagogue is the capability of defending the pupil against his own weakness and immaturity. M. Dziewiecki (2002) believes that a qualified pedagogue knows perfectly subjective strategies of pupils thinking of themselves. He is additionally aware that his pupils are becoming increasingly better in understanding the surrounding world, but far worse in understanding themselves. They can use the freedom so naively that they eventually lose it. To some extent, each pupil is therefore a threat to himself. In addition, he usually adopts more easily the negative than the positive models of behavior noticed in his environment. In such a situation, a mature pedagogue utilizes each contact with a pupil and each school class in order to enable the pupil increasingly realistic comprehension of himself and the world.

Under conditions of school work, the pedagogical work with difficult pupils does not exclude the need of actions in the area of individual or group (outside the class) contacts with them. They may be held in the form of psychotherapeutic meetings or the so-called techniques of behavioral therapy, organized by experienced psychologists or specially-trained pedagogues.

According to some psychologists, the behavioral therapy techniques are more effective than the psychotherapeutic methods. They consist in systematic manipulation of some components of the surrounding environment, the patient is being in. They may be applied both under clinical conditions as well as in the natural environment of a child, e.g. at school or at home. Amongst the most commonly applied techniques of behavioral therapy, M. Łobocki (1987) enumerates:

- desensitization techniques, in the case of fear (phobia) therapy, which consist in the application of first a stimulus inducing minor anxiety states, accompanied by the sensations of relaxation and pleasure evoked in a child, and then the application of stronger and stronger fear stimulus which, when introduced gradually no longer makes a great impression on a child; this technique is used in overcoming children's fears of animals, water, school;
- imitation techniques which consist in allowing a patient to observe persons who do not feel fear nor fright in situation very frightening to

him; a specified behavior may be altered or modeled by means of exposure of some standard – a role model (a story, a movie or a situation from an everyday life).

The above-mentioned techniques of behavioral therapy are based on the so-called “positive reinforcement”, sometimes manifested in the form of specific rewards or more often social appreciation. In that case, a just assumption is made that the rewarded and socially-approved behaviors manifest a greater tendency to be repeated, than the behaviors bearing negative consequences. It should be remembered, however, that not all educational influences will reach the desired goal. Usually, in studies into the effectiveness of overcoming educational difficulties, the improvement is observed in not more than 2/3 of children subjected to therapeutic and pedagogical treatments (Łobocki 1987). In turn, a number of disorders in the behavior of children disappear irrecoverably, in a somehow self-induced manner, without any purposeful or aware pedagogical intervention. Nevertheless, one cannot count on such a coincidence, unless it refers to some disorders typical of some developmental phases. Of utmost significance is also to capture the escalating process of social misadaptation in time. By responding to the appearing educational difficulties in the appropriate time, a pedagogue may spare many disappointments and distress to both pupils and himself. According to a renowned Polish pedagogue: “the greatest harm that may be done to difficult children is to kill their faith that the good hidden inside them may and will eventually triumph” (Grzegorzewska 1964 s.98).

According to Z. Stępień (2001), teachers of physical education to a greater extent than teachers of other subjects may effectively cope with educational difficulties. A leading method is the preparation of interesting, non-stereotypical lessons, with the use of original accessories and organizational solutions, engaging the whole group of exercising pupils.

K. Kasperska (1998) believes that the best way leading to the engagement of adolescents in the classes of physical education is:

- increasing the attractiveness of classes, avoidance of schematic solutions;
- adjusting classes to needs and interests of pupils;
- searching for new and frequently changing forms of motor activities;
- diversifying exercises by the application of a high number of colorful accessories (small balls, colorful tapes, stoles, scarves, skipping-ropes, ring-plays, ribbons);
- engaging pupils in the conductance of fragments of classes by themselves.
- In order to increase the activity of pupils at classes, each lesson should be preceded by the explanation of its objective and an appropriate se-

lection of exercises. In the case of girls, the classes should be more feminine in character, which may be achieved through:

- introduction of more dance- and music-oriented exercises;
- application of up to day forms of motor activities, including: elements of modern dance, jazz-gymnastics, aerobic and Callanetics;
- diversification of exercises with various dancing steps and jumps, fragments of folk dance and ballroom dancing.

Engaging the girls into such type of classes consists in encouraging them to search and demonstrate interesting forms of motion at those classes as well as in encouraging them for motion improvisation and realization of own ideas in mini dancing programmes.

A pupil should be evaluated objectively for the attitude and achievements as well as rewarded with appraisals and diplomas for active participation in classes, sports competitions or school shows.

According to M. Barlak (1998), physical education in a reformed school constitutes a specific type of “prophylaxis”, by undertaking actions of physical education the school protects a young pupil against a variety of social pathologies, including: drugs, alcohol, tobacco, gangs, and subculture groups. That author stated that the warning of a priest Jan Bosko: “dead field – live devil; live field – dead devil” should still be valid in education.

John Paul II (2001) in his deliberations over the face of sport called it the most educating domain that enables the exercise of attention and will, the development of persistence, responsibility for oneself and the others, as well as bearing hardships and inconveniences.

### **Objective of the study and research problems**

The major objective of the study was the identification of means of preventing educational difficulties occurring at classes of physical education and of overcoming them by teachers of physical education, school headmasters and school pedagogues working in junior high schools of the city of Zamość.

Research problems:

1. Educational methods and means of imposing discipline on pupils used during a class of physical education.
2. Adjustment of plans of didactic and upbringing work to interests of pupils, and means of motivating them to participate in little attractive classes.
3. Effect of sports-talented youth on the group and the course of classes.
4. Difficult educational cases and solutions to them.
5. Prophylactic and educational actions undertaken at school.

## **Material and method**

The study conducted in the year 2005 was carried out with the method of a diagnostic survey, with a questionnaire being the main research technique. The questionnaire survey was conducted amongst 53 teachers of physical education (26 women and 27 men) working in seven junior high schools located in the city of Zamość. Their job seniority was diversified. Eight of them (15,1%) have been working for less than two years, and ten of them (18,9%) for more than twenty years. The most numerous groups were those of teachers with seniority of two to ten years (46,2% of women and 44,4% of men). After the recognition of the job seniority declared by the respondents, due to relatively low sizes of the extreme groups (less than 2 years and more than 20 years), the following distinction was adopted in the study: "seniority up to 10 years" (60,4%), and "seniority over 10 years" (39,6%). The questionnaire survey was completed by interviews conducted with six school headmasters and seven pedagogues working at those schools.

## **Results**

Educational challenges are imposing new requirements onto teachers and, simultaneously, hold them responsible for educational effects. Today, the most desirable are those teachers who in their everyday life are driven by universal values, are wise, qualified, professional, devoted to adolescents, open to their needs and lifestyles, as well as critical and responsible for their own actions. What were the results of the survey, then?

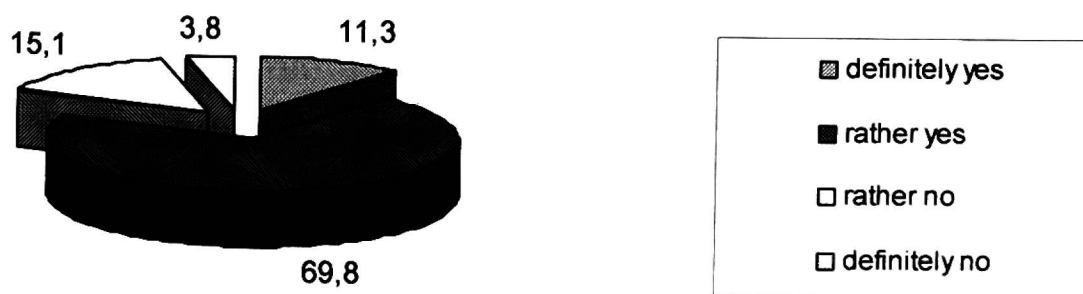
The collection of answers provided to an open question referring to educational methods applied by the respondents on their classes was assumed to provide data on the methods of preventing educational difficulties and on the knowledge of professional methodological literature by the teachers. Since 22,6% of the respondents did not answer that question, it may be speculated that recalling appropriate methodological terms at the moment of filling up the questionnaire posed a problem to a considerable part of the teachers. In the presented collection of data, we have tried to meticulously retain language of the respondents.

**Tab. 1.** Educational methods applied at a class of physical education.

Methods	Women		Men		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Lack of answer	5	19.2	7	25.9	12	22,6
The use of rewards and punishments	13	50.0	9	33.3	22	41.5
Methods of a personal effect of a teacher – expressing disapproval or approval – a personalized example	11	42.3	8	29.6	19	35.8
Assigning functions and roles to participants of classes	5	19.2	2	7.4	7	13.2
The use of play-like forms of classes	3	11.5	1	3.7	4	7.5
Conducting educational talks – making children aware of the consequences of their behavior	1	3.8	2	7.4	3	5.7
Referring to positive role models – e.g. famous sportsmen	1	3.8	-	-	1	1.9
Teaching self-assessment and development of self-esteem in participants of classes		-	1	3.7	1	1.9

Data presented in Tab. 1 show that 41.5% of the respondents prefer the method of “the system of rewards and punishment”, whereas 35.8% – the method of personal effect, and 13.2% the method of “assigning functions and roles to participants of classes”. The other “methods” presented above and corresponding loosely to the methodological literature were indicated less frequently.

It is recommended that a teacher of physical education considers interests of adolescents as a hint in elaborating own work plan. This, however, does not necessarily work in the school reality. When asked if they adjust the program of physical education to interests of the pupils, the respondents provided diversified answers (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1.** Adjusting educational programme to interests of pupils.

A small group of the teachers (11.3%) is definitely convinced about the need of adjusting educational programmes to interests of the adolescents. In turn, 69.8% of the respondents were rather adjusting their programmes, and

15.1% of the teachers were rather not adjusting their programmes to the needs of the pupils. There are also some answers pointing to the fact that some of the teachers (3.8%) definitely do not adjust the educational programme to the interests of the pupils. While substantiating the answer “definitely no”, one of the respondents explained that: “sports sections are supposed to deal with pupils’ interests, and the programme is a programme”.

The question about imposing discipline on pupils at classes of physical education (an open question) remained unanswered by 15.1% of the respondents, which constitutes a considerable percentage of the surveyed group of teachers. Perhaps the reason of evading the answer to it was the open construct of the question. One of the teachers stated that he did not feel the need of imposing discipline on his pupils, whereas the others exemplified actions undertaken in this respect, which were summarized in Tab. 2.

**Tab. 2.** Methods of imposing discipline on pupils.

Methods of imposing discipline indicated by teachers	Women		Men		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Lack of answer	3	11.5	5	18.5	8	15.1
No need for imposing discipline	-	-	1	3.7	1	1.9
A talk with a pupil, persuasion	8	30.8	8	29.6	16	30.2
Additional portion of exercises, strain	8	30.8	6	22.2	14	26.4
Admonition, reprimand	8	30.8	2	7.4	10	18.9
Negative mark	4	15.4	4	14.8	8	15.1
Complaint to authorities (class tutor, parents, school headmaster, school pedagogue)	1	3.8	5	18.5	6	11.3
More extensive introduction of elements of drill to classes	2	7.7	3	11.1	5	9.4
A change of the form of classes	2	7.7	-	-	2	3.8
Raising voice	-	-	1	3.7	1	1.9
Expelling undisciplined pupils from classes	-	-	1	3.7	1	1.9

In most cases, the methods of imposing discipline on pupils applied by the teachers surveyed are based on a talk and persuasion (30.2%), however already the second means mentioned is “enforcing” in character and involves the administration of additional exercise to pupils (26.4%). In the rank of those means, the successive places are occupied by: giving admonition, reprimand (18.9%), giving a negative mark (15.1%) and making a complaint to other persons significant to a pupil (11.3%). Nearly every tenth teacher (9.4%) believes that a good method of imposing discipline on pupils is a wider application of elements of drill (briefing at different locations, reporting *etc.*). Two female teachers were trying to impose discipline on their pupils by changing the form of classes, and single answers of teachers (men)



indicate such means as raising voice or expelling the undisciplined pupils from classes.

Taking into account that a teacher of physical education cannot solely flatter the tastes of the adolescents and is obliged to accomplish the programme minimum, which is not always convenient to the participants of classes, the teachers were asked the following question: „How do you motivate adolescents for active participation in little attractive classes?”. The construct of the question suggested some answers, did not restrict the number of methods selected and provided an opportunity to add another form of motivating pupils not considered in the question (Tab. 3).

**Tab. 3.** Methods of motivating pupils to participate in little attractive classes.

Methods of motivating	Women		Men		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Convincing	11	42.3	16	59.3	27	49.1
Encouraging with a good mark	9	34.6	7	25.9	16	30.2
Negotiating (something for something)	3	11.5	3	11.1	6	11.3
Such problems do not occur	6	23.1	3	11.1	9	17.0
It does not bother me - I am doing my job	2	7.7	2	7.4	4	7.5
Using constraint (credit with mark)	-	-	3	11.1	3	5.7
Motivating through personal example	-	-	1	3.7	1	1.9

The analysis of answers indicates that six of the respondents are using more than one method, and that one teacher (a man) did not answer that question. Nine of the respondents (17.0%) claimed that they did not have such problems with pupils and another four (7.5%) that they were not paying attention to it and were doing their jobs.

The survey shows that 39 teachers (74.6%) feel the need of motivating their pupils for active participation in little attractive classes and are trying to achieve that by means of: convincing (49.1%), encouraging with a good mark (30,2%), negotiating (something for something) (11.3%), using constraint by crediting with a mark (5.7%) and by a personal example (1.9%). By noticing and respectively rewarding the sports-talented youth, the teachers are indirectly affecting the improvement of discipline at their classes (Tab. 4).

**Tab. 4.** Effect of sports-talented adolescents on the group during classes.

Type of answer	Women				Men				Total of all teachers	
	Seniority of up to 10 years	Seniority over 10 years	Total		Seniority of up to 10 years	Seniority over 10 years	Total		N	%
			N	%			N	%		
They definitely have an effect	6	5	11	42.3	8	4	12	44.4	23	43.4
They rather have an effect	8	3	11	42.3	8	3	11	40.7	22	41.5
Total - they have an effect	14	8	22	84.6	16	7	23	85.1	45	84.9
They rather do not have an effect	2	2	4	15.4	-	4	4	14.8	8	15.1
They definitely do not have an effect	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total - they do not have an effect	2	2	4	15.4	-	4	4	14.8	8	15.1

The occurrence of such an effect is noticed by 84.9% of the respondents, whereas its lack – by little as 15.1% of the teachers surveyed. Amongst the teachers who notice that effect, 43.4% of the respondents determine it as “definite”. It seems that the teachers who do not notice that effect are not really convinced on the soundness of their observation, Since they were choosing the answer “they rather do not have an effect”.

All teachers who declared the impact of the sports-talented adolescents on the group of exercising pupils believe that the effect is linked with measurable benefits in the course of the classes (Tab. 5).

**Tab. 5.** Effect of sports-talented adolescents on the course of classes.

Effects indicated by teachers	Women		Men		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
They have a positive impact by setting good examples, mobilizing and motivating other pupils	13	50.0	14	51.9	27	50.9
They increase the activity of other pupils at the classes, affect an appropriate pace of the classes, and increase a sports level of the group	4	15.4	4	14.8	8	15.1
They play a leading role at the classes, they are an authority to the other exercising pupils	5	19.2	2	7.4	7	13.2
They help the teacher demonstrate new exercises, they are the point of reference	1	3.8	2	7.4	3	5.7
They encourage other pupils to participate in after-school sports activities and to practice a specified sports discipline	2	7.7	1	3.7	3	5.7

The teachers declaring the occurrence of the effect of sports-talented adolescents on the course of the classes of physical education enumerated the following manifestations of that effect: the sports-talented adolescents are setting good examples, mobilizing and motivating other pupils to effort (50.9%), they increase the activity of other pupils at the classes by affecting an appropriate pace of the classes, and increase a sports level of the group (15.1%), they play a leading role at the classes, they are an authority to the other exercising pupils (13.2%), they help the teacher demonstrate new exercises, they are the point of reference (5.7%), and finally they encourage other pupils to participate in after-school sports activities and to practice a specified sports discipline (5.7%).

They teachers turned out to be rather reluctant when asked to describe any of more difficult educational cases. As a result, only thirteen descriptions of more difficult cases and methods of their solution were obtained in the survey (Tab. 6). Perhaps, the open character of the question and the need of convincing reconstruction of the event along with the method of its solution caused that as many as 75.4% of the respondents evaded that task. It is also likely that an everyday life of each school is so rich in various events, that even memorized cases lose their status of "a more difficult case".

We have tried to present the descriptions obtained from the respondents in as little modified form as possible (nevertheless some stylistic modifications turned out to be necessary) and to group them according to reasons that evoked the specified "more difficult case".

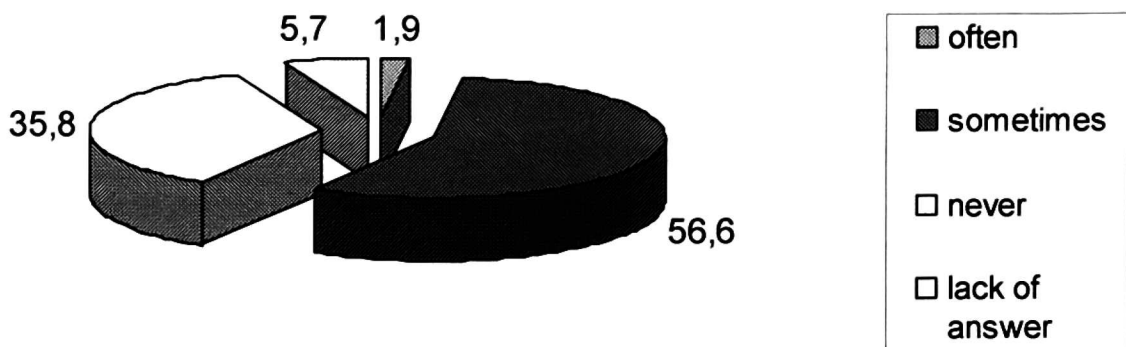
The descriptions made by the respondents indicate that educationally difficult cases do occur at school, since those cases are either typical to adolescents at this stage of development, or result from various pathologies occurring at school or from the fact that the school itself cannot always "rise to the educational challenges".

The above-presented descriptions of more difficult cases signalize also solutions to them. In some of the cases, the problem was solved by decisions of the teacher, yet in most of the cases described, the problem seemed to be beyond competences of the teacher, who was handling the case over to a school pedagogue or to a school headmaster, or was seeking help in parents of a pupil.

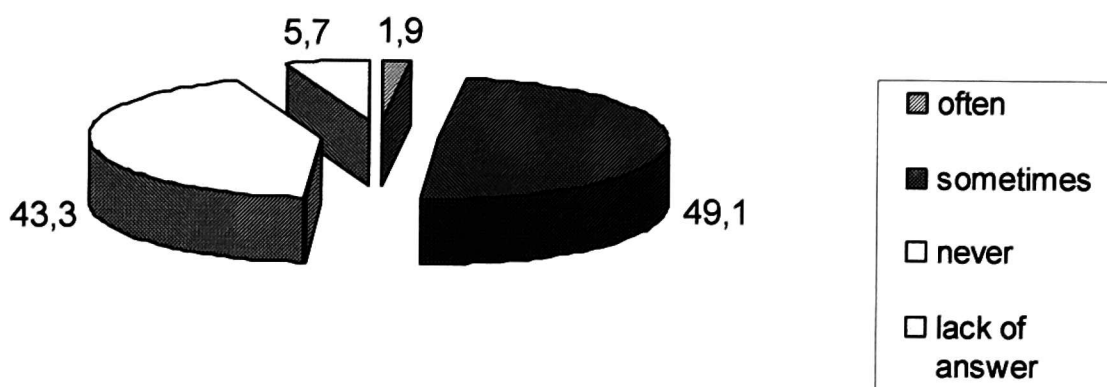
Resorting to the educational help of significant persons in actions undertaken in respect of disobedient pupils is illustrated by compilation of data referring to the frequency of applying "sending to" or "calling for" solutions by a teacher (Figs. 2, 3, 4).

**Tab. 6.** Descriptions of more difficult educational cases and methods adopted by teachers of physical education to solve them.

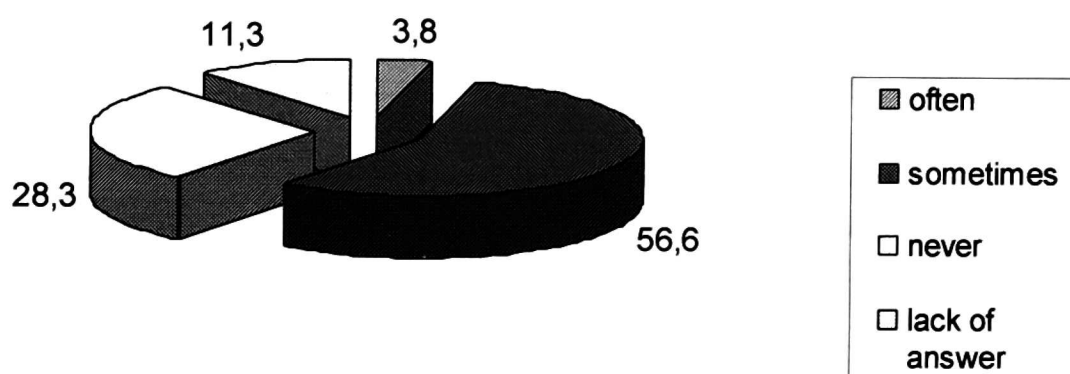
Case category	Case description
Cases depicting difficulties that result from the puberty period of adolescents; acceptance of own appearance and interpersonal relationships in the group.	<p>„A girl (III class of junior high school) did not want to exercise at classes. She was eager to exercise in the first class. Neither persuasion nor threatening with a bad mark helped. After (...) talks, it turned out that she did not accept her appearance which was changing during puberty. I have left the case of a school pedagogue.“</p> <p>„While dividing the group into teams for the game “dodgeball”, none of the teams wanted to have an obese girl in their team. I was convincing the group (...) and, finally, I have assigned the girl to one team. It turned out that the “unwanted” girl was able to stay the longest in the game and was “smashing” opponents the strongest of all players. The whole group was surprised“.</p> <p>„A disliked pupil, who was teased by the class, turned out to be a good in sprint and long jump. After school competition in athletics and wins recorded by the boy the class has changed the attitude toward him“.</p>
Cases depicting difficulties that result from legally-forbidden or socially-unacceptable acts.	<p>„Someone from the group was devastating sports equipment. The class did not want to reveal who was doing it. After intensive, individual talks with a few “suspects”, finally - softened - the pointed out the real perpetrators. The guilty pupils suffered the financial consequences and the situation did not happen again.“</p> <p>„Notorious absence of a pupil (a boy) on classes on physical education and others. Social interview revealed alcoholism in the family. The pupil was put under surveillance of a chief education officer.“</p> <p>„A pupil (a boy) avoided classes of physical education which he was supposed to change his clothes at. It turned out that he had bruises and sings of being beaten by a parent. I have reported this case to a school pedagogue.“</p> <p>„During classes at a sports hall, I have noticed that a boy was under the influence of alcohol. I have called his parents.“</p> <p>„At classes of physical education I have learnt about cases of threatening others by, allegedly, two pupils (boys) from junior high school. I have informed the headmaster and the fact was reported on a police station. In the effect of an explanatory procedure, one of the boys was transferred to another school, whereas charges were not confirmed in the case of the other“.</p>
Cases depicting difficulties that result from improper organizational and educational activities of school.	<p>„At classes of physical education, a pupil (a boys) accepted only playing football. He did not recognise any other forms of classes and refused to participate in them. Finally, he has received an unsatisfactory mark for the semester. Numerous talks with boy’s parents and with the boy have led to signing a contract (!!?) with the pupil. Finally, he has accepted other forms of activities at classes of physical education.“</p> <p>„Due to organizational reasons, the III class of junior high school was coupled into one coeducative group for classes of physical education. The boys were unconcerned about that, but the girls were refusing to exercise in such conditions. Especially two girls were very persistent in their resolutions. I have engaged school headmaster and pedagogue in the case, but already my personal example as a woman, instructing and rewarding were slowly bringing some effects and were convincing the girls to active participation in the classes of physical education.“</p> <p>„The class was behaving terribly. I have asked the headmaster for immediate visitation of the lesson. The atmosphere has been slightly improved“</p>



**Fig. 2.** Sending a disobedient pupil to a school pedagogue.



**Fig. 3.** Sending a disobedient pupil to a school headmaster.



**Fig. 4.** Calling for parents of a disobedient pupil.

The analysis of data shown in Figs. 2, 3, 4 demonstrates that none of the respondents classifies the frequency of using help of significant persons in imposing discipline on pupil to a category “very often”. The „often” use of help of a school pedagogue and headmaster is declared by 1.9% of the respondents, whereas the : often” calling for parents – by 3.8% of the teachers surveyed.

“Often” interventions of a school pedagogue are reported by over half the respondents (55.6%). The same percentage of the surveyed teachers declare the same frequency of calling for parents of a misbehaving pupil. The “often” help of a school headmaster in imposing discipline on disobedient pupils is declared by nearly half the respondents (49.1%).

The number of indicating the answer “never” by the respondents discussed together with indications of the above-mentioned categories (“very often”, “often” and “sometimes”) enables assuming that when it comes to imposing discipline on pupils, the teachers seek the major allies in parents. Data collected in the table indicate that 28.3% of the respondents “never” call for parents, and that 35.8% of the teachers “never” send pupils to a school pedagogue and 43.4% to a school headmaster.

The observation on choosing parents as the main ally in educational activities is also confirmed by the analysis of data obtained from the collection

of respondents' answers to a question: "Are you a supporter of direct contacts with parents of a difficult pupil?".

**Tab. 7.** Attitudes of teachers towards direct contact with parents of a difficult pupil.

Should the parents be called for?	Answers of women		Answers of men		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Definitely yes	16	61.5	10	37.0	26	49.1
Yes - in sporadic cases	10	38.5	15	55.6	25	47.2
No - a remark in a pupil's record book is enough	-	-	-	-	-	-
I have any difficult pupils	-	-	2	7.4	2	3.8

As it results from Tab. 7, 49.1% of the respondents are definite supporters of immediate contacting the parents in all difficult cases, whereas 47.2% of the teachers opt for restricting the contacts only to sporadic cases. None of the teachers surveyed prefers the contact with parents by means of a pupil's record book.

In the interview, the school headmasters and pedagogues were asked a question that referred to undertaking prophylactic and educational actions in their schools (Tab. 8). Owing to the fact that the question concerned issues that category of respondents is especially hold responsible for at school, their answers were very extended and tended (deliberately or not) to boast with own initiatives undertaken in this respect.

Almost all the surveyed (92.3%) reported that a special educational programme was implemented at their schools, some of them were ascribing specific names to the programmes, others were granting them the status of an original author's programme.

The second place in the rank (53.8%) was occupied by activities oriented towards parents of a pupil, *i.e.*: continuous information on the behavior of a pupil and activities aimed at extending the parental knowledge on education. School pedagogues took also the opportunity to mention they own individual work with a difficult pupil (46.2%).

**Tab. 8.** Prophylactic and educational activities undertaken at school as reported by school headmasters and pedagogues (ordered acc. to the number of indications).

Form of prophylactic and educational activities	N	%
Realization of an educational programme aimed at diagnosing and counteracting threats of addictions and violence, realization of author's original educational programmes „Common road”, „To be myself - to live better”, „No to playing truant” - tending to strengthen the self-esteem of adolescents and to develop their capability to cope with problems	12	92.3
Contact with parents of pupils with problems - informative and advisory calls - pedagogisation of parents	7	53.8
Compensatory classes with pupils having learning difficulties	6	46.2
Collaboration with environmental institutions linked with law and order - the police, municipal guard, family court, education officers	5	38.5
Collaboration with psycho-pedagogical counseling services	4	30.8
Collaboration with the District Center of Social Care in solving difficult problems linked with living standards of pupil families	3	23.1
Trainings for teachers - the so-called assertiveness training	3	23.1
Promotion of physical and psychical health	2	15.4
Individual talks with pupils posing educational problems	2	15.4
Keeping records, care and surveillance over pupils with didactic problems	1	7.7
Collaboration with the Addiction Therapy Clinic	1	7.7
Consultations in a group of: pedagogue, tutor and school psychologist	1	7.7
Engaging parents into participation in solving educational problems at school	1	7.7
Social (free-of-charge) involvement of teachers in leading hobby clubs, sports sections and an after-school room	1	7.7
Weekend meetings - once a quarter - at the Retreat House of the Franciscan Nuns	1	7.7

Other prophylactic actions undertaken in junior high schools involved different forms of collaboration with local institutions: the police, municipal guard, educational officers and courts (38.5%), as well as with Psycho-Pedagogical Counseling Services (30.8%) and Centres of Social Care (23.1%). An interesting form of prophylactic activities seem also the so-called “assertiveness trainings” (23.1%). The other forms mentioned in the report were indicated sporadically. It may be concluded that the range of prophylactic actions is relatively extensive.

### Summary and conclusions

An inseparable part of teacher work are both school successes and failures. What should be done to make the latter as rare as possible, to convince more difficult adolescents to physical education, to win their liking and authority? The analysis of problems addressed in the presented work may, at least in part, answer that question. The analysis of results achieved in the survey enabled formulating the following conclusions:

1. Alarming seems to be fact that a considerable part of the teachers of physical education are facing deficiencies of knowledge on education-

nal methods. Nearly every second teacher uses the system of rewards and penalties, every third – a personal example, approval and disapproval, and only a few of the teachers – assigning functions and roles to the participants of classes and making pupils aware of the consequences of their actions.

2. In most cases, the methods of imposing discipline on pupils at classes of physical education used by teachers are based on talk and persuasion. However, there are also cases when teachers are trying to imposing discipline by: additional exercises, drill, reprimands or negative marks. In those cases, alarming seems to be a lack of appropriate capability of coping with that problem and inappropriate selection of educational methods which does not facilitate increasing the motivation of pupils. Inappropriate effects may not only daunt pupils to a teacher or a subject but also evoke aversion to undertaking physical activity.
3. The fact that only a small group of teachers of physical education are convinced about the necessity of adjusting the educational programme to interests of junior high school pupils points to a poor recognition of the needs of adolescents at this state of development and to a lack of faith in virtues and values resulting from programme's internalization.
4. Most often, methods of motivating pupils to little attractive by indispensable classes are restricted to convincing and encouraging with a good mark.
5. The prevailing majority of the teachers of physical education are noticing and utilizing the positive effect of sports-talented adolescents on the course of the classes, since they are first of all an example to others, as well as mobilize and motivate other pupils for exercise.
6. A difficult case and its solution was described only by every fifth teacher. Most often, the examples referred to difficulties resulting from the puberty period, e.g. lack of acceptance of own appearance, interpersonal relationships in a group, whereas others were caused by legally-forbidden or socially-unacceptable acts or were resulting from improper organizational and educational activities of school. A part of the cases described were solved by the teacher himself, but most of the cases were handled by the teacher over to a school pedagogue or school headmaster, or the teacher was asking pupil's parents for help.
7. It is pleasing that almost all teachers of physical education appreciate the significance of contacts with parents of a pupil in difficult cases.
8. The account made by school pedagogues and headmasters indicates that the prophylactic and educational activities undertaken at the surveyed schools include, most of all, various educational programmes which enable diagnosis and counteracting threats resulting from addic-



tion and violence and which tend to the strengthening of self-esteem in the adolescents and their ability to cope with problems. Of significance are also continuous contacts with parents and individual work of school pedagogues with difficult pupils.

### **Abstract**

The major objective of the study was the identification of methods of overcoming educational difficulties occurring at classes of physical education at the stage of junior high school education. The study was carried out with the method of a diagnostic survey, with a questionnaire being the main research technique. The questionnaire survey was conducted amongst 53 teachers of physical education working in seven junior high schools located in the city of Zamość. The questionnaire survey was completed by interviews conducted with six school headmasters and seven pedagogues working at those schools.

The conducted analysis of results enables concluding that a significant part of the teachers of physical education were tangibly facing shortages of knowledge on the educational methods, and that methods of imposing discipline on pupils during classes of physical education are in most cases based on talk and persuasion.

Only a small group of the surveyed teachers of physical education is convinced about the necessity of adjusting a school programme to interests of the junior high school pupils.

The account made by school pedagogues and headmasters indicates that the prophylactic and educational activities undertaken at the surveyed schools include, most of all, various educational programmes which enable diagnosis and counteracting threats resulting from addiction and violence and which tend to the strengthening of self-esteem in the adolescents and their ability to cope with problems.

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