

## IMPLEMENTATION OF GYMNASTICS CONTENTS IN THE CLASSROOM TEACHING AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF OSIJEK - BARANJA COUNTY

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### Abstract

The aim of the research was to determine whether teachers of physical education (5th-8th grade) in the Osijek and Baranja county conform to the gymnastic content proscribed by the curriculum, in what proportion and whether there are any significant differences between the execution of the curriculum in each of the grades. Forty-five people were examined, all of which have taught physical education in the primary schools Osijek and Baranja county throughout the school year of 2009/2010. 38 primary schools have been tested, which represent 54,29% of schools in the whole county. The results indicate that teachers (per grade) have spent 20 hours on the gymnastic contents which corresponds with the 30% of all gymnastic contents. Safer and simpler elements are taught, which means that these elements do not include the flight phase so there is no danger of falling or injuring (forward and backward rolls, handstands and cartwheels etc.). At the same time, teachers are afraid of carrying out more difficult and complex skills which include the flight phase of greater amplitudes (dive rolls, various jumps on a small trampoline, backward dismount from the uneven bars or balance beam) and mostly avoid these skills. Generally, teachers fail to carry out contents on parallel bars, uneven bars, high bar and small trampoline due to the insufficiency of adequate equipment.

**Keywords:** artistic gymnastics, curriculum, elementary school, physical education

### Introduction

Physical education (PE) and its important role in comprehensive development of children and youth has an serious place in curriculum from elementary to higher education. Croatian national education standard (HNOS) for PE in the elementary schools contains 225 teaching topics distributed from 1st to 8th class. Their distribution was made according to development periods dependent on anthropologic and educational tasks. Educational tasks are consisted of basic theoretical and motoric knowledge distributed according to a type of physical activity and its impact on motor abilities, personality traits and morphological attributes of pupils. All teaching topics according to basic goal and criteria for program design, are selected in the way to satisfy their studies, the maximum adjustments to the material components, time and safety of pupils.. There are also respected their gender and sex and their practical application and utility in everyday life. Distribution of gymnastics contents are differed toward their developmental periods, so in PE curriculum for 1st to 4th grade a total of 106 educational topics and unity, 47 topics contains different gymnastics contents (MZOŠ, 2006, 2008). That means that of total number of recreational and sport facilities, cca 44,4 % are gymnastics structures (Živčić-Marković, 2010 a). In subject teaching (5th to 8th grade) gymnastics contents are in lower ratio in regard to classroom teaching, but they still have a dominant place toward a rest of sport facilities (aproximatly 20,85% for boys, 28,28% for girls). So, of the total number of topics in curriculum quarter are gymnastics structures they are divided in 4 groups: fundamentals of acrobatics, vault, swing and comparing on apparatus and balance position on

narrow areas (Novak et al., 2008; Živčić-Marković, 2010.a). Design of PE curriculum has an open type, which means that teachers have quite high level of autonomy and responsibility in its creating and implementation. Teacher has a privilege that largely decides about the hourly rates of each facilities (Markuš et al., 2008; Stibilj, Batinić & Živčić-Marković, 2011; Živčić-Marković, 2011.a; MZOŠ, 2008). This mode provides better interaction between teacher and pupils, and many other factors that affects its implementation. There is a need to provide material conditions (apparatus, accessories, space) for successful implementation of gymnastics contents. In the numerous Croatian schools material conditions are sufficient, because of that sometimes pupils can not be familiar with this part of curriculum (Bučar-Pajek, 2003; Bučar-Pajek et al., 2010; Turšić, 2007). In such situations teachers are enabled to adjust program to real material conditions.

Of course this mode of free program design can result in opposite effects, in the way of neglecting gymnastics contents. Some studies (Živčić-Marković et al., 2011.b; Živčić-Marković & Čavar, 2011.c), conducted on the female students of Faculty of Kinesiology University of Zagreb, shows exactly these negative effects, in which the observed complete ignorance of basic through concrete structures from the sport of gymnastics. According to the fact that nowadays children spend little time moving and playing sports, so the course of PE have to partially compensate that problem (Vrbanac & Palijan, 2009; Živčić-Marković & Breslauer, 2011.a) given that artistic gymnastics is one of basic branches of sport which contains a lot of and different number of facilities, and also some (demanding and less demanding) material.

The question is the extent to which its contents are implemented in elementary schools teaching PE (Bučar-Pajek et al., 2010; Turšić, 2007). So the main aim of this study is to determine whether PE teachers, from 5th to 8th grades of elementary schools in Baranja country spend gymnastics contents prescribed by curriculum (Table 1), in which ratio, and whether there are significant differences between grades.

## Methods

This study was conducted on 45 PE teachers, who taught PE from 5th to 8th grade in elementary schools of Osijek and Baranja country in school year 2009/2010. Teachers were tested in 38 elementary schools, of total of 70 (MZOŠ, 2006), which is 54,29% of all elementary country schools (Osijek-Baranja County, 2006). Questionnaire was filled by 35 PE male teachers and 10 PE female teachers with university degrees, between 27 and 64 years of age, with 1 to 40 years of tenure, who were teaching in all of 4 grades. All of tested teachers graduated on the Faculty of Kinesiology University of Zagreb. Variables sample was consisted of questions from

the questionnaire entitled « implementation of Artistic gymnastics program in the third quarter of elementary schools», authors Turšić, Čuk & Kovač (2005) (Turšić, 2007), according to PE curriculum for the elementary schools in Republic of Croatia (MZOŠ, 2006). The questionnaire is divided in three parts: socio-economic informations, questions about minimal and optimal conditions for gymnastics contents implementation, teacher reviews about gymnastics implementation and its importance in classroom teaching. Teachers answered anonymously by three or five degrees of Likert scale, given the importance they attribute to a particular question or statement. They also answered by YES or NO. Subjects were informed about the aim and the protocol of testing, and they confirmed their consent. They were tested on expert working group of PE teachers held in January 2010.

The results were analyzed by software package SPSS 11.5 for Windows. According to the aim of study, means, variable frequencies were calculated. To determine the differences in implementation of gymnastics contents between grades we used nonparametrical Friedman Test (Kendall's W test).

Table 1. Gymnastics teaching topics from 5th to 8th grade

Male students			
5th grade	6th grade	7th grade	8th grade
tuck jump off a beam board	basic jumps off mini trampoline- tuck, pike and straddle jumps	dive roll on soft mats with assistance of beam board	half somersault on soft mats with assistance of beam board
one leg pull up on lower bar	dive roll on soft mats	dismount while performing front swing on high bar	swing on rings with 180° turns
handstand beside vertical board	swinging on rings with small amplitude, dismount during swing	basic swing on high bar	floor exercises
inverted hang from L hold on gymnastic rings	support swing on low parallel bars, swing back dismount	different variants of cartwheel	
swing forward, straddle legs to seated straddle leg position on the bars	tuck jump-vault	back somersault from hang position on low rings	
straddle jump-vault			
Female students			
5th grade	6th grade	7th grade	8th grade
tuck jump off a beam board	basic jumps on mini trampoline- tuck, pike and straddle jumps	dive roll on soft mats with assistance of beam board	180° turns on the floor and balance beam
one leg pull up on lower bar	dive roll on soft mats	dismount during front swing on high bar/parallel bar	„Cossack“ jump
handstand beside vertical board	swinging on rings with small amplitude, dismount during swing	leg swings on uneven bars, dismount during front swing and 90° turn	floor exercises
gallop forward on the floor and balance beam with different high	tuck and straddle forward swing on uneven bars	leap on 80-120cm high balance beam with front leg swing and 90° turn, stand up through squat	exercise on balance beam- recommendation high 80 cm
front leg balance on the floor and balance beam with different high	leap into press position with squat on balance beam and dismount with extended body	turns on the floor	
straddle jump-vault	tuck jump-vault	cat leap on low balance beam	
scissors jump	cat leap		
	forward jump		

## Results

Results about acquired knowledge and its implementation, as their further education indicates that all tested teachers (100%) had Artistic gymnastics in the program during their higher education, but about a half of them do not have permanent vocational and update, a large number of them are not familiar with the legal consequences of safety in the PE teaching (44.2%). Teachers are not involved in the professional work from the field of artistic gymnastics outside the regular classroom (93.0%), and many of them are not familiar with a basic artistic gymnastics competitive program (79.1%). So, we can assume that pupils from elementary schools of Osijek and Baranja Country do not participate in specialized school's competitions in artistic gymnastics (76.7%, for female pupils, 86.0% for male pupils).

Regardless of the lack of additional interest in sports gymnastics, teachers within their subject (PE) in the vast majority of the terminology used names (86.0%), inform students about the basic principles of security (95.3%) in training and performance of gymnastic facilities, and its effect on the development of motor skills (97.7%), health and healthy life (81.4%). Unlike teachers, pupils are more interested in artistic gymnastics, so about a third of pupils of tested schools included in the artistic gymnastics training at a nearby gymnastics club (32.6%), while 67.4% are not engaged in gymnastics at their leisure. Of the total number of tested teachers, 97.7% answered they performed gymnastics in the regular PE teaching and for learning gymnastics contents predicted on averaged (per grade): 20.2 sat in 5th, 20.1 in the 6th hour, 19.0 hour in the 7th and 18.9 in the 8 hour class (Table 2). In relation to the total number of 70 hours per year, which is intended for the PE teaching, about 30% of PE teaching teachers have predicted pupils will practise gymnastic facilities. The results of part of the study where the teachers spoke out about the type, number and quality of certain apparatus and supplies/accessories that gym for PE teaching are equipped, which provide learning and performance, and thus the implementation of gymnastic contents.

We determined a lack of necessary equipment for implementation of gymnastic contents (Table 3). A number of schools do not possess equipment such as polyvalent mats (88.4%), a small trampoline (60.5%) or removable wall bars (74.4%). In half of the schools there is a lack of parallel bars (44.2%), high bar (48.8%), balance beam with height adjustment (44.2%) and marine ladders (44.2%). Some equipment, apparatus and accessories are, if any school has, generally useful, but outdated. But also we should mention that the basic quantity and quality of apparatus that are required for the implementation of set gymnastic teaching topics in a number of schools meet the basic conditions for successful implementation of programs. The results of part of the study where the teachers spoke out about the type, number and quality of certain

apparatus and supplies/accessories that gym for PE teaching are equipped, which provide learning and performance, and thus the implementation of gymnastic contents.

Table 2. Basic statistics parameters about the number of hours spent on gymnastics contents

	N	Min	Max	Mean
5th grade	45	5.00	57.00	20.2±11.4
6th grade	45	5.00	57.00	20.1±11.6
7th grade	45	5.00	51.00	19.0±11.0
8th grade	45	5.00	46.00	18.9±10.7

We determined a lack of necessary equipment for implementation of gymnastic contents (Table 3). A number of schools do not possess equipment such as polyvalent mats (88.4%), a small trampoline (60.5%) or removable wall bars (74.4%). In half of the schools there is a lack of parallel bars (44.2%), high bar (48.8%), balance beam with height adjustment (44.2%) and marine ladders (44.2%). Some equipment, apparatus and accessories are, if any school has, generally useful, but outdated. But also we should mention that the basic quantity and quality of apparatus that are required for the implementation of set gymnastic teaching topics in a number of schools meet the basic conditions for successful implementation of programs.

Table 3. The quality of the material conditions for the gymnastics program. The quality of equipment, apparatus and supplies graded from 1-3 (1- unusable, 2- usable but outdated, 3- in good shape)

	QUALITY ASSESSMENT	LACK OF EQUIPMENT
Set mats height of 5 cm	2.57	9.3 %
Soft mats height 25 cm	2.56	37.2 %
Polyvalent mats	2.60	88.4%
Mats stroller	2.58	39.5 %
Swedish bench	2.25	25.6 %
Spring board	2.21	2.3%
Swedish case	2.28	9.3%
Jumping goat	2.47	7.0 %
Mini trampoline	2.29	60.5%
Parallel bars	2.28	34.9%
High bar	2.27	48.8%
Rings	2.37	30.2%
Uneven bars	2.08	44.2%
Balance beam (low)	2.47	16.3%
Balance beam with height adjustment	2.37	44.2%
Wall bars (fixed)	2.59	20.9%
Wall bars (removable)	2.36	74.4 %
Marine ladders	2.29	44.2%
Rope climbing	2.45	32.6%
Rod climbing	2.59	37.2%
Tape Recorder or CD player	2.39	34.9%

These results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference ( $p=0.05$ ) in the implementation of gymnastic contents between classes. Statistically significant differences were found between 5 and 6 grades ( $p 0.001$ ) and a 5 and 7 grades ( $p = 0.05$ ). We did not find any statistically significant differences in their implementation among other classes (Table 4).

## Discussion

From the total amount of 105 hours per year it is estimated that PE teachers use 20% of hours per year for the implementation of gymnastic content (Medved, 1985), while in the Ljubljana 56% school teachers devote 16-30% of the total time for all gymnastic lessons, 29,7% of teachers spent 0-15%, and 14.3% have spent learning gymnastics more than 31% of hours in relation to other topics in PE (Rogelj, 1985). The latest research conducted indicates that the actual numbers are much lower and thus in the 7th grade teachers spend 10.6 hours per year (15.1%), in the 8th grade 9.7 hours (13.8%) and in the 9th grade 2 hours (9.2%) per year (Bucar Pajek et al. 2010).

Table 4. Results of Friedmans test (differences between grades in implementaion of gymnastic contents.

	Mean Rank	N	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
5th grade 6th grade	1.69 1.31	45	10.70	1	.001
5th grade 7th grade	1.63 1.37	45	4.50	1	.034
5th grade 8th grade	1.57 1.43	45	.95	1	.330
6th grade 7th grade	1.51 1.49	45	.03	1	.862
6th grade 8th grade	1.50 1.50	45	.000	1	1.000
7th grade 8th grade	1.44 1.56	45	1.19	1	.275

In our study 97.7% of teachers in Osijek - Baranja County spent a far greater number of hours to implement the gymnastic content, about 30% of hours per year. The above percentage is high in relation to the rest of the themes and even much higher than the basic and given range of curriculum in PE. Teachers have declared on the implementation of Physical Education curriculum and meaningfulness of the content in individual gymnastic classes where they partially agree that the gymnastic content is purposefully being built from year to year. Reason for a bigger involvement of gymnastic content in school PE programs could be found in a fact that it has great impact on the healthy growth and development of children.

An important fact that affects the importance of gymnastics in the curriculum is that it is very appropriate for the adoption of essential, basic movement structures that are stored in the motor base in the form of motor foundation necessary for a harmonious and efficient movement and its application in everyday life (Novak and al., 2008., Živčić Markovic, the 2010). In analyzed schools of Osijek - Baranja county, in the teachers opinion, certain apparatus, equipment and supplies are generally usable and old.

Nevertheless, the basic quantity and quality of equipment that are required meet the conditions for the successful program implementation. It is noticeable the lack of certain equipment and apparatus (Table 3) such as: Polyvalent mats (88.4%), Mini trampoline (60.5%) or Wall bars (removable) (74.4%). In half of the schools there is a lack of Uneven bars (44.2%), High bar (48.8%), Balance beam with height adjustment (44.2%) and the Marine ladders (44.2%). The results of this study indicate that teachers believe that gymnastics is an easy program, according to some authors (Baranovic et al., 2004) and that total PE program is insufficiently modern and comprehensive enough, unlike other authors who say that their gymnastics program is difficult and very demanding compared to the overall program of PE (Bucar Pajek et al., 2010, Kovac, 2003).

Teachers mostly conduct elements that are technically less complex concerning the motion structure. Thus, they are easily feasible, safer with less risk of injury. These are usually the elements that do not include the phase of flight in its technique (forward and backward roll, handstand, cartwheel, walking on balance beam). Elements that include phase of flight in its techniques (without the support phase of the body) with increased amplitude and reduced thrust area are considered more difficult and less appropriate for learning. The least implement activities were performed on the bars, and the most implemented elements were on vault (split 77.75% and squat jump 65.53%) despite the fact that they are the most difficult, complex and dangerous elements in gymnastics.

## Conclusion

Because of all above mentioned gymnastics belong to a group of basic sports (athletics and swimming), and beside the large number of competitive sports and its contents in the curriculum of primary schools (Ministry of Science, 2006., 2008) gymnastics is represented by a large number of educational contents. Gymnastic sports, with impressive number of different content (Novak et al. 2008) indicates the significance and applicability in the exercise of basic and special tasks: correctional, educational and anthropological tasks of school children.

Gymnastics has an important role in training students for independent practice by enhancing the quality of life, effectively changing character and develop skills which directly provides health promotion as an irreplaceable factor in all human activities (WHO, 2004), defined as the main objective of physical education (Findak, 1999th, Findak et al., 2003). Therefore, its presence in educational system is completely unjustified. It must be enabled to every teacher to fully realize required part of the basic gymnastics program and all other content of PE.

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## IMPLEMENTACIJA GIMNASTIČKIH SADRŽAJA U NASTAVI U OSNOVNIM ŠKOLAMA OSIJEKA – BARANJSKA ŽUPANIJA

### Sažetak

*Cilj ovog istraživanja bio je utvrditi da li profesori TZK, od 5. do 8. razreda osnovnih škola Osječko – baranjske županije, provode gimnastičke sadržaje propisane nastavnim planom, u kojem obimu te da li postoje značajne razlike između njihove provedbe u pojedinim razredima. Uzorak ispitanika sačinjavalo je 45 profesora tjelesne i zdravstvene kulture koji su školske godine 2009./2010. predavali od 5. do 8. razreda u osnovnim školama Osječko – baranjske županije. Testirani su u 38 osnovnih škola što predstavlja 54,29% zastupljenosti županijskih škola. Rezultati ukazuju da su profesori po razredima prosječno predvidjeli i utrošili 20 sati na gimnastičke sadržaje po akademskoj godini što odgovara 30% ukupnog broja sadržaja TZK. Profesori će uglavnom poučavati jednostavnije i sigurnije sadržaje koji u svoju tehniku na uključuju fazu leta te ne postoji opasnost od pada i ozljeđivanja (kolut naprijed i natrag, premet strance, stoj na rukama osloncem uz vertikalnu plohu i slično). Istovremeno se boje provoditi sadržaje koji su kompleksniji i uključuju fazu leta većom amplitudom (kolut letom, skokovi na malom trampolinu, saskok natrag na ručama i s grede) te ih izbjegavaju u svojim programima. Općenito profesori najmanje realiziraju sadržaje na ručama, dvovisinskim ručama, preči i malom trampolinu što se uz ostalo može protumačiti pomanjkanjem adekvatne opreme.*

**Ključne riječi:** *nastavni plan i program, tjelesna i zdravstvena kultura, osnovna škola, gimnastika*

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