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**SELECTED INTERNATIONAL DEFINITIONS
ABOUT YOUNG STUDENTS' LEISURE TIME:
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL BACKGROUND IN POLAND**

ABSTRACT

Terms such as recreation, leisure, functions of spare time, physical hygiene, mental hygiene or forms of spare time are among the issues discussed in the branch of educational science. The majority of educationalists are convinced that the issue of active leisure should form part of the core curriculum and should be an objective of education in kindergarten, in early schooling and in subsequent tiers of education. Some teaching aids (textbooks, workbooks and worksheets) for young children do reflect this process. It is worthwhile making this issue the subject of educational research in order to assess the achievements in this regard in a sub-discipline referred to as 'early school pedagogy'. This article constitutes a preliminary theoretical and practical study to this end. It has been indicated that the students of classes I–III (depending on the attitude of parents) spends his free time in the following way: learning a foreign language, usually English sports; the other for boys and another for girls, reading books, watching television, playing on the computer, recreation with their parents, the practice of tourism, family shopping in supermarkets. It has been stated that physical activity is a popular form of recreation, which has been proven during a small-sample research project; this type of recreation meets numerous psycho-social needs; it facilitates adaptation to rapidly changing conditions of life by helping with stress management, illness prevention and fitness improvement; it shapes interpersonal relations by strengthening social integration and family ties; it also aids development of physical and artistic skills.

Key words: *leisure, recreation, passive and active leisure, teacher's role, young students, shaping attitudes, education.*

INTRODUCTION

The notions of work and leisure have been described in different ways throughout the history of education. Leisure is an interdisciplinary issue and is studied by various experts from different fields all over the world. The development of civilisation and increased workload are associated with a more widespread reference to the notion of leisure and its inclusion in the processes of raising children and educating students.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the research is to identify the definition of free time in the meaning of educators from selected countries and with a reference to Polish educational theory and practice. Another aim will be to obtain data on the forms and functions of spending free time for pupils.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

The notions of free time and leisure time as well as other terminology and definitions. Throughout the history of education, different meanings have been attributed to



the notions of work time and spare time. *Spare time* can mean both *free time* and *leisure time*. The notion of *free time* refers to a time span expressed in a quantitative manner i.e. in hours and minutes whereas *leisure time* means time remaining after work has finished and chores have been completed. J. Dumazedier suggests that *leisure time* should be seen as 'time during which activity is oriented towards self-fulfilment as an ultimate end' (Dumazedier, 1974). Society allows an individual spare time when time remains after family, social and political duties have been fulfilled. An individual can free themselves from fatigue through rest, from boredom through entertainment and from functional specialisation through the development of bodily and mental capabilities as determined according to personal preference. The availability of time does not result from individual decisions but is primarily the result of economic and social factors. It constitutes a new social value in the form of an individual's right to spend time for the sake of personal satisfaction.

Leisure is an interdisciplinary issue. It is the subject of research conducted by many experts representing different disciplines from all around the world. The development of civilisation is associated with a more widespread use of the notion of leisure, although not everyone is able to arrive at a definition (Kuś, Wyszogrodzki, 1980). According to my observations, the growing number of obligations, the more widespread use of computers and the tendency towards a more sedentary lifestyle are accompanied by an increased demand for rest and recreation, including active recreation.

The first recorded mention of the concept of leisure was made by Aristotle (De Grazie, 2000). The scholar juxtaposed different activities: mandatory activities (e.g. carried out by slaves) and activities undertaken in order to aid relaxation, contemplation, creativity, admiration of arts or service of the state. Aristotle pointed out that time should be used in accordance with values which reflect the meaning of human life. He underlined that leisure time should be embraced with a desire to achieve the greatest human good i.e. Eudaimonia. According to Aristotle, leisure was not simply time spent pursuing pastimes but it rather played a key role in human life. Of course, the workload of ancient philosophers is incommensurable with what is observable today.

E. Tarkowska states that leisure is one of the historical categories which refers to events from the quite recent past 'associated with industrial society, related to it and disappearing along with it or adapting alongside it' (Tarkowska, 2001). According to this author, leisure time is 'one of the many types of social time and should be studied in this context'.

From a pedagogical point of view, A. Kamiński associates the notion of leisure time with holidaying while referring to our tradition in this area, among others (Kamiński, 1969).

The term *leisure time* is usually employed to refer to time at a person's disposal after they have undertaken actions related to the fulfilment of biological and hygienic needs (sleep, nourishment and personal care) as well as mandatory tasks (work, study, family duties and commuting). Leisure time is time when an individual has greater freedom of choice as regards activities pursued (Pomykała, 1993).

L. Berek and K. Czajkowski believe that 'entertainment and rest' are the most important aspects of a child's leisure time (Berek, Czajkowski, 1965).

These days few are ashamed to describe what they do in their spare time or admit to having some. In the past (in Socialist days), to have leisure time was seen as a reason for shame or embarrassment and thus one did not admit to having any. It was believed that every spare minute of one's time should be devoted to vocational endeavours and anyone



who had spare time was undoubtedly plagued by laziness. ‘Work was [...] a yardstick by which a person was judged; an everyday test of their capabilities. That is why leisure time did not formally exist in traditional, rural communities and also why it was seen as a notion which bordered on immorality. It was considered less than virtuous for one to acknowledge that he had spare time or to express a desire to have it’ (Kocik, 2000). Fortunately, such attitudes now belong to the past.

Leisure functions in literature. The author of this article has repeatedly emphasised the need to organise students’ spare time in her publications and curricula. She has also underlined the important role played by teachers in their work with students and alongside parents of students in this regard (Teresa Janicka–Panek, 2016).

Z. Dąbrowski outlined four functions of leisure: rest, entertainment, development of interests and talents, identification of one’s own place in society (Dąbrowski, 1966). Leisure determines the extent of one’s physical, mental, social and intellectual development. It also contributes towards determining an individual’s ability to meet cultural and social needs.

According to J. Węgrzynowicz, ‘rest leads to the regeneration of physical and mental abilities and restores one’s ability to act effectively’ (Węgrzynowicz, 1971).

A. Roykiewicz classifies functions of leisure as follows: psychorecreational function; psychocompensational function; psychocorrectional function; psychocreative function (Roykiewicz, 1985).

A. Kamiński outlined three functions of leisure: rest, entertainment and personal development with respect to hobbies (so-called leisure pursuits) (Kamiński, 1980).

The abovementioned functions relate to the roles and the meaning of leisure which include several aspects such as socio-economic, psychological-and-pedagogical and hygienic-and-health-related aspects (Kwilecka, 2006).

Analysis of different approaches represented by the abovementioned authors indicates a diversity of functions and their synergic effect/meaning.

The role of leisure in the development of a child’s personality. The following factors influence the development of an individual’s personality: inborn anatomical and physiological characteristics, the individual’s own activity, environment, education and upbringing (Kwilecka, 2006).

Leisure is an intrinsic and utility value which can be used in different ways. The value of leisure is measured by its content. Leisure as such is not valuable. Individual feelings, opinions, the use and objectives of leisure determine its nature and functions (Dąbrowski, 1966).

Decision taken as regards the pursuit of a given pastime can indicate an individual’s traits. We may paraphrase a popular saying: ‘tell me how you spend your spare time and I will tell you who you are’. The fact that a number of values, habits and hobbies which consequently play a huge role are formed during an individual’s free time is a fact of great importance (Czajkowski, 2011). K. Czajkowski believes that an individual is a wholesome being and therefore what s/he does in his spare time goes a long way to determining what s/he does during the rest of the day (Czajkowski, 2011).

The notion of recreation, its forms and the process of upbringing. The term *recreation* is derived from the Latin term *recreo* which means to create anew, refresh, rejuvenate or make stronger. In Old Polish, ‘recreation’ referred to a break in between duties or leisure activities (Dutkowski, 2002). Recreation can also mean ‘sports for all’. This notion was introduced by UNESCO in the interests of people of all ages having the chance to choose any sport to practice in their spare time.



Recreation involves a set of behaviours exhibited by an individual in their spare time and it is indicative of the process of rest.

The term *recreation* is used to describe different forms of activities, is not related to occupational duties, household chores or social duties, and is undertaken in the interests of improving one's health as well as for the purposes of entertainment and self-education. Recreation fulfils the following functions: rest, entertainment and development (Dutkowski, 2002).

Recreation belongs to the category of action and is the content of leisure. However, not all activities we participate in during our spare time can be considered recreational (Kwilecka, 2006).

Child leisure delineates time devoted to rest, entertainment and the satisfaction of personal interests (Kamiński, 1982). Referring to the theses of R. Wroczyński, Kazimierz Czajkowski defines the teaching of recreation as planned, educational activities targeted at the development of skills for the proper organisation of leisure by the young generation (Czajkowski, 1979).

A child's first recreational patterns are defined by his parents, as underlined by K. Czajkowski (1997): 'A family home forms patterns, habits and skills related to organising leisure' (Czajkowski, 1979).

The kindergarten is the first institution in which a child encounters teaching aimed at helping him to consciously shape his spare time and render it meaningful. This institution consciously and purposefully teaches recreation. One of the objectives behind a child's attendance of kindergarten is that the child learns the value and meaning of leisure. In kindergarten, children learn how to spend time actively and to develop their own initiative. The process of developing initiative begins during playtime in the first place (Czajkowski, 1979). This approach is reflected in the core curriculum of the kindergarten and early school education which includes activities related to recreation, travel and playtime (Journal of Laws 2016, item. 985). Teachers tackle the topic of leisure in the course of their work and sometimes refer to their own personal preferences in the interests of providing examples.

Ways of spending spare time play a decisive role in the development of a child's personality, hobbies, talents and interests as well as his psychological and physical development. The amount of spare time available is increasing thanks to technological developments and generic, global progress. A child's spare time should be spent in accordance with his own interests and under the supervision of adults.

Children who are well-prepared to spend their spare time appropriately should possess skills required for peaceful co-existence within a peer group, be able to share impressions and experiences, help others and be aware of the importance of their own aspirations and needs (Kwilecka, Brożek, 2000).

As regards children, ways of spending spare time contribute to the development of the following skills: cooperation, active participation in family and social life, learning the importance of culture, promotion of culture, promotion of certain behaviours and conduct and development of certain social-and-moral attitudes.

Literature on leisure (see references) describes leisure activities for children which are necessary for the development of these skills.

M. Demel and W. Humen classify recreation activities in accordance with three main forms: physical form, mental form and social form.

They also suggest that recreation forms can be classified in accordance with age (recreation of children, adolescents and adults) or according to equipment involved (sports recreation or technical recreation etc.) (Przeclawski, 1978).



Taking into account a variety of forms of activities undertaken during spare time, the following recreation types can be delineated: physical recreation (physical activity), creative recreation, cultural and entertainment-related recreation and recreation related to social activity (Czajkowski, 1980).

Recreation types may be defined as follows:

Physical recreation is the most versatile form of leisure from the point of view of the impact it has on an individual. Physical recreation boosts self-esteem, self-confidence, optimism and makes life more beautiful, healthy and full of joy (Czajkowski, 1980).

Basic forms of physical recreation practiced by children include the following activities: physical activities during school breaks, rhythmic activities, artistic gymnastics, field games, sports games, cycling, badminton, basketball, athletics, skating, skiing, *palant*, handball, swimming, volleyball, tennis, table tennis, hiking, obstacle courses (Czajkowski, 1980).

Creative recreation: has a major impact on an individual's emotional intelligence and promotes development of appreciation of beauty, aesthetics and manual skills.

Primary forms of creative recreation include art classes (painting, drawing and modelling etc.), music classes (playing instruments, dance or rhythmic), drama classes (recitation, puppetry and theatre), DIY classes, modelling (airplane, spaceships and boat building), photography and cinematography classes, radio broadcasting and automotive classes (Czajkowski, 1980).

Cultural and entertainment-related recreation includes a number of appealing and widely popular activities carried out during spare time which promote cultural knowledge and which are entertaining at the same time.

These activities include reading, intellectual entertainment, film and theatre, radio and television, cultural and artistic events and social life in general (Czajkowski, 1980).

Recreation in the form of social activities includes forms of social activities cultivated with passion which induce joy and constitute a form of leisure. Recreation in the form of social activities is less about personal pleasure or benefit and more about sharing one's joy with others. This form of recreation encourages an individual to view this type of sharing as meaningful, promotes altruism and empathy, accelerates recovery from childhood selfishness and self-centeredness and enriches one's value system.

Forms of family recreation. Generally, there are three types of recreation involved here: cognitive recreation, entertainment-based recreation and recreational leisure.

The most popular forms of family recreation include leisure during holidays, weekends and family tourism of different types.

Holidays are associated with the opportunity to sleep longer, to have a lie in, visiting a café, cinema, museum and attending exhibitions or concerts. This form also includes reading books, listening to music, watching TV, surfing the Internet, playing games and visiting friends and relatives. The above-mentioned forms of recreation are defined as passive leisure or an intermediary type which includes some elements of active leisure (Czajkowski, 1980).

There is a relatively numerous group of people who do not leave home when they take annual leave from work or on weekends. In the case of this group, we can expect such forms of activities as going out, peaceful time at home, healthy lifestyle, entertainment and long, peaceful sleep. Such people take walks in recreational areas, organise one- or two-day trips, go to the cinema, a café or visit relatives.

K. Kotłowski applies such differentiation criteria as the number of children in a given family, the family's affluence and the moral culture of parents. He differentiates between larger families with three or more children and small families with two children or



less. K. Kotłowski believes that families with more than two children of both sexes are the most optimal from the point of view of upbringing provided that the parents have a good income and a good rapport (Grochociński, 1979).

The first method of data collection is a critical analysis of the literature in the area of free time. The research, which are conducted in Poland, in the field of free time children are implemented in the form of a survey. The respondents are the students, their parents and teachers of classes I–III. Another source of data is the observation of the children, how they spend their free time. Furthermore, the researcher prepared proprietary tools: a questionnaire survey for children, their parents and teachers in grades I–III, as well as observation sheets.

RESULTS

The student classes I–III (depending on the attitude of parents) spends his free time in the following way:

- learning a foreign language, usually English;
- sports; the other for boys and another for girls;
- reading books;
- watching television;
- playing on the computer;
- recreation with their parents;
- the practice of tourism;
- family shopping in supermarkets.

Physical activity is a popular form of recreation, which has been proven during a small-sample research project. This type of recreation meets numerous psycho-social needs (Gromek, 2016). It facilitates adaptation to rapidly changing conditions of life by helping with stress management, illness prevention and fitness improvement. It shapes interpersonal relations by strengthening social integration and family ties. Moreover, it also aids development of physical and artistic skills. Active recreation improves mood and self-esteem. It hones one's character, promotes personal development and interests and helps shape values (such as the importance of mutual help, empathy or social activism). It can also be an effective means of psychotherapy and resocialisation.

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the theory and practice of spending free time demonstrates the variability of forms and functions over the last forty years. Increasingly, the time outside the classroom is spent on the acquisition of additional competencies. It demonstrates the growing awareness of parents. The role of these teachers is educating parents.

Recommendations for parents and teachers:

- recreation is part of the content of education in kindergarten and early schooling; therefore, it is an important educational task to be implemented at this stage of education;
- teachers and parents should offer a child a form of recreation and leisure other than that routinely practiced by the child if it gives the child no satisfaction or joy or if it is determined to constitute passive leisure;
- teachers should discuss the way children can spend their spare time especially when they need assistance in this respect;
- it is advised that parents take into account their children's needs when planning family/individual recreation;
- teachers and parents should adjust forms of recreation taking into account the child's fitness level, health and interests;
- raising awareness among children and parents will help promote the need to carefully plan leisure time.



The topic of leisure time is one of the key issues in the contemporary world given the significant changes both to social and professional life (greater needs and maintenance costs, increased workloads, combining several jobs, sedentary lifestyles, extensive use of computers, general monotony and potential for professional burnout).

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