

## **SCHOOL AND AFTER-SCHOOL INTERESTS TAKEN UP BY THE DEPENDENTS OF FOSTER CARE FACILITIES (ON THE EXAMPLE OF LUBELSKIE VOIVODESHIP)**

**Marzena Urszula Ruszkowska**

Pope John Paul II State School Of Higher Education in Biała Podlaska, Poland

**Anna Róg**

Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce, Poland

**Magdalena Zmysłowska**

University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland

**Abstract.** *The subject of the article are school and after school interests popular among the dependants staying both in institutional care facilities as well as in family custody. A significant problem, which should be taken into consideration, is the fact that the research is not carried out among young people being brought up in their own biological families, but only among the foster care pupils what can also affect the types of activities undertaken in their free time both in the school environment and after classes. The aim of the research was to determine how different school and after school interests are shaped among dependents of various forms of foster care and what they are conditioned by. Among the indicators influencing the type of activities taken up by the pupils participating in the research the following were enumerated: environmental factors, namely: location of the facility or the family-type children's home; personal factors including age and gender of the dependents, or institutional factors such as the type of facility in which the research respondent is staying; obtained support and help from both educators and teachers.*

*The material for the article was created as part of the project "Education, levelling developmental and educational deficiencies of children under the care of family-run children's houses as well as the educational care centre (on the example of the selected poviats of Lubelskie, Świętokrzyskie, Warminsko-Mazurskie voivodeships)". The project was implemented by the Department of Pedagogy of Higher State School in Biała Podlaska.*

*There were used two methods in the research: diagnostic survey and study of individual cases. The following questionnaires were used: proprietary questionnaires for charges, interview questionnaires with educators of educational care centres and family houses, an observation sheet and interviews with coordinators and directors of the examined institutions.*

**Keywords:** *foster care, school interests, Lubelskie voivodeship, foster care charges*

## **Introduction**

The issue of interest has been in the focus of multiple analyses of different disciplines for numerous years, amongst which one may distinguish, first and foremost psychology, pedagogy or sociology. Deliberations and researches on this subject were led, inter alia, by L. L. Thurstone, D. H. Fyer, E. K. Strong, G. F. Kuder, E. S. Borodin, J. P. Guilford, H. Piéron, S. Larcebeau, A. Gurycka, St. Szuman, St. Baley, H. Słoniewska (Gurycka, 1998, 1076-1082).

Currently, it is difficult to indicate one definition of interests. However, A. Gurycka, in her global perception of interests, defines them as a relatively permanent, noticeable pursuance to explore the surrounding world, taking the form of directed cognitive activity with a selective relation to surrounding phenomena (Klasińska, 2011, 19-20). In accordance with the concept of S. Hidi and K. A. Renninger, interests consist of the affective component, understood as positive, stimulating emotions and expressed in experiencing satisfaction and pleasure, and a cognitive component, concerning perception of the values of a specified task, knowledge and information processing related to interest (Kwapis, 2015, 44).

Interests – set the direction for the development of our personality, prepare for self-development and self-education throughout entire life and are an important determinant of human life – both in the private and professional area. Thanks to interests we gain a sort of independence and we obtain tools to explore the world, often useful at different levels of daily functioning (Gurycka, 1989, 7). As indicated by psychologists, interests and curiosity related to them also perform an important role in the educational process, because they motivate us to learn (Mietzel, 2009, 380-390), which is entirely understandable, given the fact that people learn more likely and effectively about the subject of their interests.

The development of interests is the process passing through several phases and depending on gender, age, conditions in which a person is raised, or specific aptitudes (Gurycka, 1998, 1080). As noted by Pękala, more and more often the relationship of interest with the educational environment is noticed, because the human environment, on the one hand, sets patterns of social roles, while on the other hand, creating opportunities for learning and the acquisition of interests (Pękala, 2006, 14). These environments may be divided into intentional and natural. As indicated by B. Klasińska and M. Kaliszewska in the process of intentional shaping of interests of children and young people, conducted mainly in schools and non-school institutions, the system approach may be compelling. It assumes, first of all, that the essence of interests is formed both together, as well as within mutual interrelations the elements such as mobilization of attention, dynamic orientation, and emotional factor. In addition, in the system approach, the methodology of interests' development of students should create the

vertically-horizontal layout of purposes, content, provisions, forms, teaching methods, teaching measures, and educational process conditioning (Klasińska, 2011, 147.). The system paradigm, based on already established knowledge about interests, gives an opportunity to return to the broad, interdisciplinary research on the individual interests of men (Klasińska, 2015, 131).

A great importance in the development of interests of young people is assigned to after-class and after-school activities. The former ones are organized and implemented within the school, while the latter – are offered by various types of activities outside school establishments and organizations. However, in both cases, according to W. Ciczkowski (1999, 355), these classes have characteristics of human activity in their free time – voluntary nature, flexibility and autotelicity. Thus it is difficult to distinguish both concepts – interest and free time, which is also stressed by M. Kwilecka, writing that free time is "(...) the sphere of free, unfettered human activity, time spent on various activities for leisure, entertainment, expansion of knowledge and one's interests (...)" (Kwilecka, 2006, 101).

The subject of the article is the school interests and after-school activities of pupils of institutional and family-run establishments. An important issue that should be taken into account is the fact that the studies are not executed among young people staying with their own biological families, only among residents of foster care facilities, which can also have an influence on the types of undertaken activities' forms both in and outside the school environment, during free time.

The purpose of the study was to define how school and after-school interests of charges of the various forms of foster care are shaped and what they are conditioned with? Among the indicators affecting the actions of examined pupils, the following were listed: environmental factors, i.e.: the location of the facility or the family foster home; personal factors: age and gender, institutional factors: the type of facility in which the examined person resides, and factors related to the received support and assistance from tutors and teachers upon organisation of free time.

### **Researched territory and researched sample**

A study for the purposes of the present publication was conducted in Educational-Pedagogical Institutions and Family Foster Homes in the selected districts of the Lublin Voivodeship located in the Eastern part of Poland. Their execution was planned in the framework of the project "*Education, levelling developmental and educational deficiencies of children under the care of family-run children's houses as well as the educational care centre (on the example of the selected poviats of Lubelskie, Świętokrzyskie, Warminsko-Mazurskie voivodeships)*" implemented by the Department of Pedagogy of State School of

Higher Education in Biała Podlaska, with the active participation of the research personnel of the Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce and University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn.

The test site presented for publication is the Lublin Voivodeship – with the area of 25122.46 km<sup>2</sup>. According to data from the CSO in 2017 it was inhabited by nearly 2.14 million people (CSO, 2017, p. 34-35). It is the easternmost region in Poland and consists of 4 sub-regions:

- Lublin sub-region covering 1 city with district rights and 4 districts: Lublin, Lublin county district, Świdnica, Lubartów, Łęczyn;
- Biała Podlaska sub-region covering 1 city on district rights and 4 districts: Biała Podlaska, Biała Podlaska county district, Radzyń, Parczew, Włodawa;
- Chełm - Zamość sub-region covering 2 cities with district rights and 6 districts: Chełm, Zamość, Chełm county district, Zamość County District, Hrubieszów, Biłgoraj, Tomaszów Lubelski, Krasnystaw;
- Puławy sub-region covering 6 districts Puławy, Łuków, Ryki, Opole Lubelskie, Kraśnik, Janów Lubelski.

The research was conducted in each of the above sub-regions of the Lublin Voivodeship. From the sub-region of Lublin, the pupils from nursing-educational facilities from Lublin the county district of Lublin attended the study. In Biała Podlaska sub-region the study was participated by the charges of Włodawa and Biała Podlaska country district facilities. Chełm - Zamość sub-region was represented by the facilities from Chełm and Krasnystaw district, and in the last sub-region - Puławy district – the research was carried out in the facilities from Łuków and Kraśnik. It should be noted that the research was realized only in those schools in which the directorate has expressed willingness to cooperate and participate in the research. The distribution of the examined facilities has been presented in table 1.

*Table 1 The number of examined students in the various forms of care*

Type of foster care	Lublin Voivodship		Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodship		Świętokrzyskie Voivodship		Total	
	Form of care	Number of examined children	Form of care	Number of examined children	Form of care	Number of examined children	Form of care	Number of examined children
<b>Institutional custody</b>	13	109	12	124	5	50	30	283
<b>Family custody</b>	5	13	1	1	4	18	10	32
<b>Total</b>	18	122	13	125	9	68	40	315

As it results from CSO data, 25 nursing-educational facilities of socialization type function in Lublin Voivodeship, further to 12 family-run foster care institutions and 11 family foster homes. This study involved 18 facilities including 122 charges aged 10-25 years, i.e. 1/3 of all establishments operating in Lublin Voivodeship.

In the study the triangulation of research methods and techniques was applied, since the surveys were connected with the qualitative case studies. Within the framework of the survey, a survey for children aged 10 years and above, a survey including both open and closed questions. An interview questionnaire with educators were used, while in the case studies qualitative interviews, partly structured with the heads of nursing-educational facilities, were carried out. Interviewed people were both men and women. Case studies they constituted a supplementation and completion of the missing information, allowing also for the explanation of doubts in the analysed issues (Creswell, 2013).

### **School and after-school interests of the charges of various forms of foster care in light of own elaborations**

The development of interests is closely linked with the organisation of free time. We can accept, following Marian Grochociński's (1979) division of the ways of leisure, the below types:

- perceptual forms, i.e. reading books, watching TV, going to the cinema, listening to music (Zdaniewicz, 2015, 174; Nippold, Duthie, & Larsen, 2005).
- recreation forms, including: sports (various sports); tourism (hiking, biking, kayaking, sailing, skiing); hobby (an amateur producing activities, fishing, mushroom picking, hunting); social (dance, plays and games, bowling, billiards, bridge); cultural-entertainment (amateur artistic work) and virtual (interactive Web games).
- creative activities, for example, artistic activities (music, plastic arts, technical, photography), collecting and others.
- socializing forms, consisting of the implementation into the social life, shaping social attitudes, through participation in a variety of extra-curricular and school activities, including active participation in the work on social objectives.

Among the activities chosen by research participants, the recreational forms of leisure dominate, mainly sports activities (52.4 % of the students), and in particular the team games: football, volleyball, basketball, the athletics or swimming is mentioned slightly less often. By contrast, in the facilities which are located in urban environments the following were indicated: boxing, wrestling, karate, dance, table tennis, fitness classes. Occasionally, also artistic gymnastics

and horseback riding were noted. Of course, sports are very important, because next to active leisure, they are a form of care for the proper development of the one's health and physical development, as well as promoting the development of social skills (Cairney, Joshi, Kwan Hay, & Faught, 2015, 267).

Unfortunately, only every third interviewee showing interest in sport states that they develop them systematically by belonging to school sports clubs (12.2%) or local clubs (6.1 %), the remaining survey participants practice just for their own pleasure and quite irregularly. Only the boys declare, that almost every day they play football with their friends or siblings, which is also important, because according to I. Janssen and A. Rosu, spending time outdoors develops physical health affecting health both in physical and mental terms (Janssen & Rosu, 2015, 7; Razak et al., 2018, 2). Some researchers highlight that after-school activities are also important from the point of view of the proper social development of children (Cairney et al., 2015, 267), but a small number of students from the foster care uses it, because it often involves incurring additional charges, for example for providing additional equipment, outfit, footwear, which not all establishments can afford. Therefore, access to sport may be limited due to low economic status (Donnelly & Harvey, 2007; Trussell & McTeer, 2007).

A much smaller group of children and youth in foster care facilities noted being interested in all kinds of creative activities of musical nature (18.3 %), plastic nature (9.76 %), technical nature (3.66 %), other (photography-1.22 %). The research executed by inter alia E. Parkita shows that 59 % of pupils at the age of secondary school are not interested in participating in any form of artistic activities (Parkita, 2012, 70), and participation in the activities of this type can be a kind of therapy and enable the compensation of the deficiencies and negligence of the family environment (Fallon & MacCobb, 2013, 213).

In turn, the socializing forms such as participation in all kinds of additional school and after-school activities are shown in table 2.

Interest clubs (musical, artistic, computer) have been noted only by the charges of facilities located in the cities (Lublin, Krasnystaw). After-class activities, implemented in the school area (pool, wrestling, boxing, dance, ballet, team games) have been indicated only by the pupils attending urban schools (Lublin, Chełm, Włodawa, Krasnystaw, Kraśnik).

Among the extracurricular activities, the following have been listed: horseback riding (Włodawa, Lublin, Szachy), team games in the regional clubs (Lublin, Biała Podlaska), artistic gymnastics (Lublin), ballroom dance (Lublin, Kraśnik).

*Table 2 Distribution of school and after-school activities of children under the care of family-run children's houses and the educational care centre*

Type of activity	Charges of foster family		Charges of institutional care		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Does not use any form of activities</b>	7	53,84	46	50,14	53	63,44
<b>Interest clubs</b>	1	10,3	6	6,54	7	8,54
<b>After-classes activities</b>	0	0	16	16,63	16	19,52
<b>Additional activities at school</b>	0	0	10	10,9	10	12,2
<b>Additional extracurricular activities</b>	4	41,2	15	15,54	19	23,18
<b>Vocational and educational counselling</b>	0	0	11	11,99	11	13,42
<b>Activities in the parish</b>	0	0	4	4,36	4	4,88
<b>Other forms</b>	4	41,2	0	0	4	4,88

*Note: the research results do not add up, because it was possible to make more than one choice of answers, the percentage was counted for N1=13 charges of foster families and institutions and N2=109 charges of institutional establishments*

Additional classes at school in the form of compensatory classes on different subjects, mostly mathematics and English are offered by various types of schools, regardless of the location of the facility. Vocational and educational counseling addressed to older charges facing the perspective of choice of school and future profession, emerged in the answers of charges of nursing-educational establishment in Włodawa, while activities in the parish were offered only in Lublin (church choir and oases). Classes paid privately were treated as other forms (singing lessons – family facility in Lublin and dance and English lessons – family facility in Kraśnik).

In relation to the absence of any offer of extracurricular activities or the insufficient offer, facilities located in rural environments organize various activities and meet the expectations of charges on their own. This is encouraged by their location, they have, in fact, usually much more space around the facility for active leisure (Przybysławice, Komarno, Radoryż Smolany, Bohukały).

Current research in 2018 among the charges of foster care facilities, as well as previous studies of M. Ruszkowska executed in the district of Biała Podlaska (which is a part of Lublin voivodeship) in foster care homes in 2011 (Ruszkowska, 2013) have shown that limited access to activities developing interests among pupils is not dependent on tutors, nor on the type of foster care, but above all it is

conditioned by the environment position. It is widely known that the rural environment does not have any well-developed offers when it comes to additional after-classes activities, whether in school or outside of it, which adversely affects the possibility of compensating educational deficiencies, as well as the development of interests and passions of a child. This is confirmed by some statements of educators: *"there is a problem of commuting here and back home if a child wanted to stay after school for some activities", "the school offers nothing, the lessons end and the facility is shut down", "even if the school something offers activities, children are not interested in participating in the activities, because school stigmatizes our kids"*. From research executed in urban and rural foster families in the area of Biała Podlaska district, it is visible that in a rural environment 42.5 % of children do not develop any interests, whereas in the comparative group from the cities it concerns just 10.9 % of children (Ruszkowska, 2013, 80). The analysis of the CBOS research executed in 2007 by Alicja Zawistowska allowed detecting relationships between sending a child to additional activities and the environment of residence, also to the detriment of the rural environment (Zawistowska, 2012).

Another factor determining participation or lack thereof in the additional activities at school or outside it is the age of the pupils, for mainly children aged 10-15 years are involved in creative activities. Older charges (8.54 %) are involved mostly in sport activities.

In turn, gender determines the type of selected activities, men choose mostly sports activities (games), while women have more varied interests. From sports, they choose: a swimming pool, horseback riding, dancing, while they additionally develop themselves musically or artistically.

## Conclusions

The material obtained through research allows for the formulation of some conclusions:

- 1) The facilities located in an urban environment have far more opportunities to send their children to activities both in and outside the school.
- 2) In spite of the possibility to participating in various activities, less than 40 % of the pupils of foster care facilities use such possibility.
- 3) 20 % of pupils attend classes implemented in informal educational organizations (i.e. culture clubs, environmental classroom, local sports clubs, etc.).
- 4) Children and adolescents indicate most often the sport interest, however, only every third of them works on their development.

- 5) Occasionally, and only in family-type care facilities, pupils attend classes paid privately, organised individually just for them.
- 6) The facilities in rural environments frequently organize extracurricular activities on their own and with the use of space around the facility.

### Summary

The considerations presented in the present work do not cover all the issues relating to activities developing the interests of the pupils of foster care. The discussed subject requires further research and analyses. Provisionally discussed material allows, in line with what has been stated by A. Gurycka, to note that the development of interests of the surveyed young people is affected mainly by age, gender and the conditions in which they are raised (Gurycka, 1998). The location of the facility, in which respondents currently are staying is important also, to the detriment of the establishments located in a rural environment. A large role is also played by the environment itself unless it actively participates in preparing children and youth to participate in the socio-cultural life (Winiarski, 2017, 265) through the implementation of various activities.

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