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The system of sports schools in respect with youth-training in Hungary

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Running head: System of sports schools in Hungary

Abstract

Purpose. The Hungarian government and the National Sport Strategy aim to preserve the results of our internationally recognized competitive sport by supporting youth-training. One of the components of youth-training is the system of sports schools. According to the Sport Law, the sports school is either an institution of public education, a commercial company, a sport club, or a foundation in which youth-training is done in an organized manner.

Methods. We were interested to see if these sports schools would have an equal spatial distribution within the country, what is the age-distribution of their pupils, and, finally, do they have the necessary infrastructural background for their work. The research was conducted through a telephone survey in which 52 out of the 54 schools were included.

Results. Half of the schools do not own all the necessary infrastructure that they would need to conduct proper training. This they try to solve by leasing them. Many of the schools (37%) specialize in three or four sport disciplines, and only a handsome (20%) coaches at least eight. While all together almost 36000 students are involved in the program, their number shows a large variation, from 50 to 1800, between the different schools.

Conclusion. Sport infrastructure in Hungary in respect to youth-training shows a back-lag as compared to European standards. Nevertheless, due to the infrastructural developments and the subsidy of certain sports in the past few years, the opportunity to get engaged in sports and the available services have increased. Sports schools thus have a positive effect on youth-training and, through this, on physical education within the country.

Keywords: youth-training, sports school, infrastructure

Introduction

One of main objectives defined in the Hungarian National Sport Strategy [1] is the preservation of internationally outstanding sports excellence results. The government aims to accentuate its role in nurturing youth training within competitive sports. The unified youth system consists of the following four subsystems.

- 1.) Sports XXI. Youth Programme, which aims to create a wide mass base for young people between the ages of 6-10 by establishing a sporty lifestyle through promoting training and sports. Early specification is avoidable at this age (with the exception of some sports) thus schools aim to provide a multifaceted approach to developing skills. Ball games and the basics of ball games are the most suitable for this. Quality training begins between the ages of 10-14.
- 2.) Heracles programme, which aims to nurture talent. It consists of two sub-programmes, one of them is the Heracles Champion Programme, which aims to provide a framework for selecting and training talented athletes achieving world-class standard between the ages of 14-18, by involving the best professionals. The other sub-programme is the Star Programme, which supports young talents capable of achieving adult results, between the ages of 18-23, who cannot yet compete with world-class athletes. The sub-programme provides an opportunity for individual preparation, competition and getting into a team.
- 3.) The objective of student sport employment and competition system is to support those students who - due to their weaker athletic abilities –are unable to make it into quality youth systems or have left those. This programme provides an opportunity for leisure type student sport employment and active involvement in the competitive system. Its aim is to develop the need for a health-conscious behaviour and prepare these young adults for pursuing a life of physical activities and sports.
- 4.) The sport school system - to which this current research is linked –is a system of training according to grades, which can be developed into two directions: establishment of the public

education type institutional system from one aspect, and in the direction of establishing the club type sports school network from the other aspect.

Sports schools are such public education institutions, business organisation, sports associations or foundations according to the Hungarian Sports Act [2], where youth nurturing is performed in an organised manner. It can have two forms: public education type or sport club type sports school.

The *public education type sports school* is a public education institution subject to the act of public education that provides sports education according to grades or age groups, which prepares its local pedagogical programme based on a sports school training curriculum and ensures the high level of physical education as well as taking the preparation and competitive activities of athletes into account. It performs its tasks related to preparation and competing linked to sports programmes based on cooperation agreement with business organisations, sports associations and foundations.

The *sport club type sports schools* are business organisations, sports associations, foundations providing sports training according to age groups, which participate in youth systems based on cooperation agreement with public education institution by fulfilling tasks of high level preparation and organising competitions or ensuring the conditions for youth programmes.

So the sports school programme is a special youth-training system. The programme includes the training and sports education of 1-12 grade students, in addition to the complex educational and sports professional system supporting sports training and education. The public education institution endeavours to coordinate and harmonise the obligations arising from compulsory education and the opportunity to build a career in sports. The National Institute for Sport is responsible for the supervision and professional development of Sports School programme.

The aim of our research was to obtain a comprehensive picture of the current situation of subsidised sports school system in Hungary.

Material and methods

Our survey was based on a telephone interview questionnaire carried out in the spring of 2016. Currently 16 sport club type and 38 public educational institution type sports schools are operating in Hungary, 52 of which were involved in our research.

Our aim, during the compilation of the survey, was to find the answer to whether these institutions are evenly distributed in various parts of the country, how many different types of sport are actually taught, what the age structure of the students is and whether these sports schools possess the necessary infrastructural background or not.

The data was evaluated using EvaSys (VSL Inc., Hungary; <http://www.vsl.hu>) programme, as described earlier [3]. Chi-square test was applied to identify statistically significant differences. Differences where $p < 0.05$ were regarded as significant. Correlation was examined by Spearman rank analysis, the value of the correlation coefficient (r) is provided in the text.

Results

The sports school programme can be applied starting from the 2007/2008 school year in a phasing-out system. Our analysis first focused on the current distribution of schools in the country (Fig. 1).

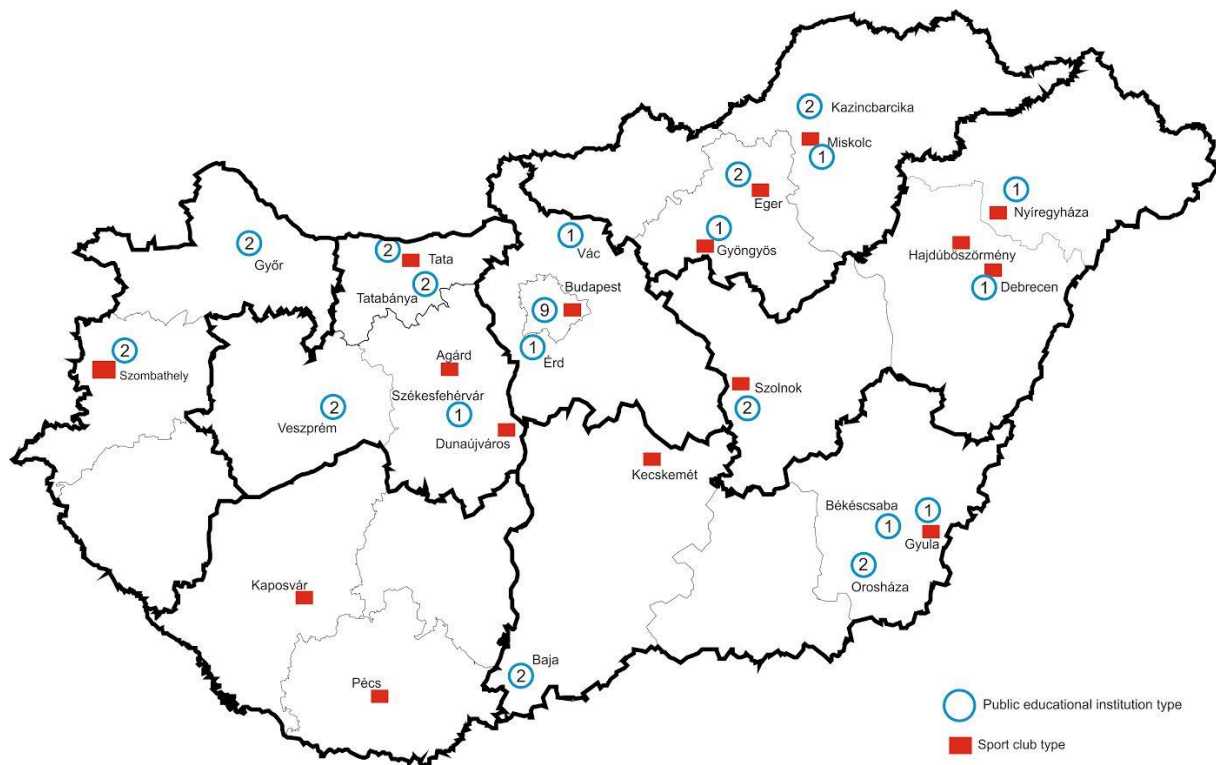


Figure 1. Nationwide distribution of sports schools in Hungary (2016)

It is clear that schools are located in the county seats and larger towns but their distribution is uneven, the Southern Great Plain is underrepresented from this aspect.

When examining the distribution of the number sports in the schools it can be verified that at least 2 sports are taught by every school, 2-5 different sports are taught in most schools but there are many schools where 10 or more sports are represented (Fig. 2). Significant difference was detected among the two school types ($p < 0.01$) when the data was examined

according to their types, typically 6 or lesser in the case of public institution type schools, while 6 or more sports are typical in the case of sport club type schools.

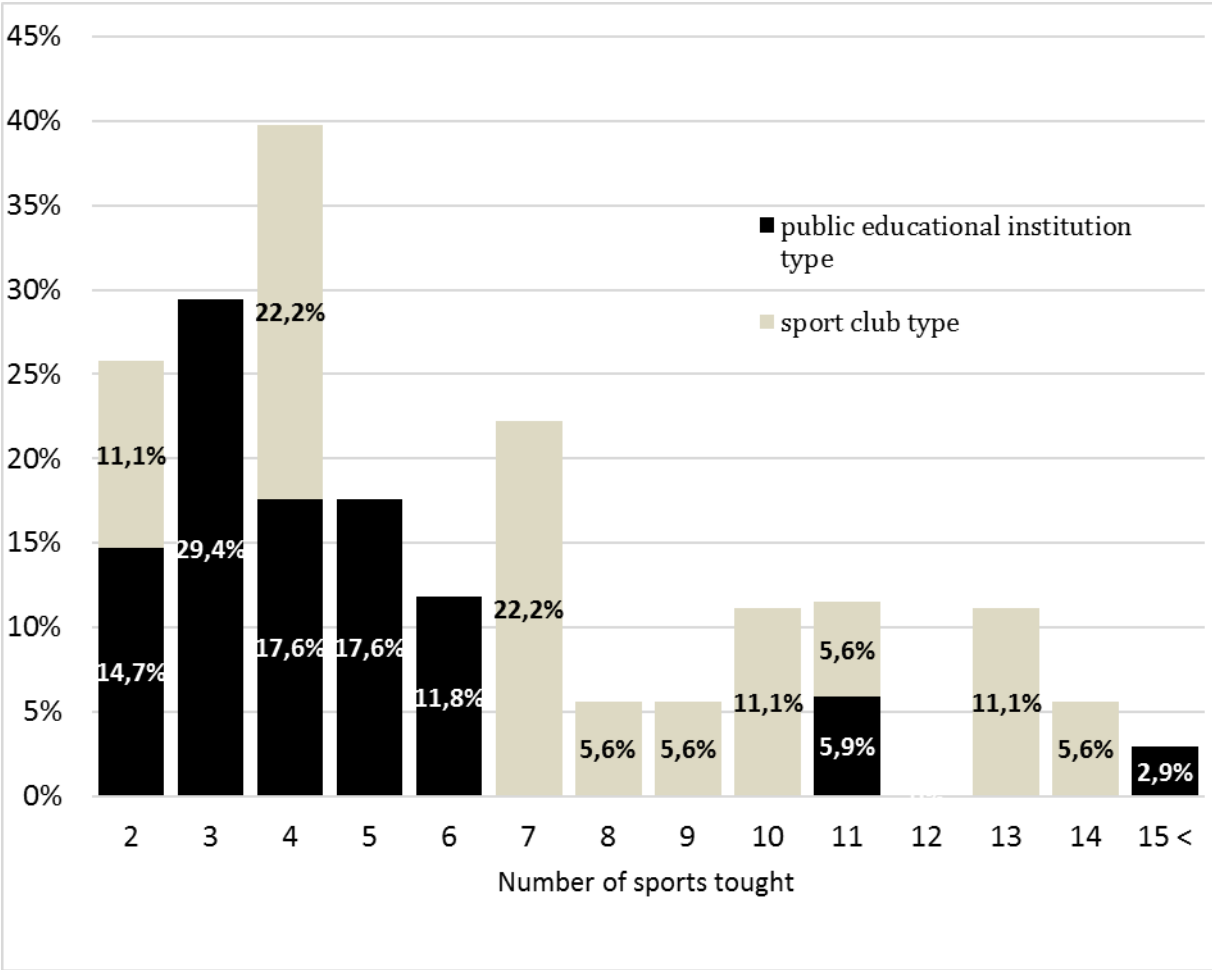


Figure 2. Distribution of the number of sports taught

Currently 35,831 students participate in the sports school programmes. 45.47% of students are girls and 54.53% are boys, which is not a significant difference ($p > 0.3$) between genders. Student numbers of individual schools vary greatly; from schools with a mere 50 students, to a school with up to 1,800 students. It can be seen that the majority of institutions ($p < 0.01$) educating less than 600 athletes are sport club type schools, while only public education institutions operate with student numbers of over 1,500 (Fig. 3).

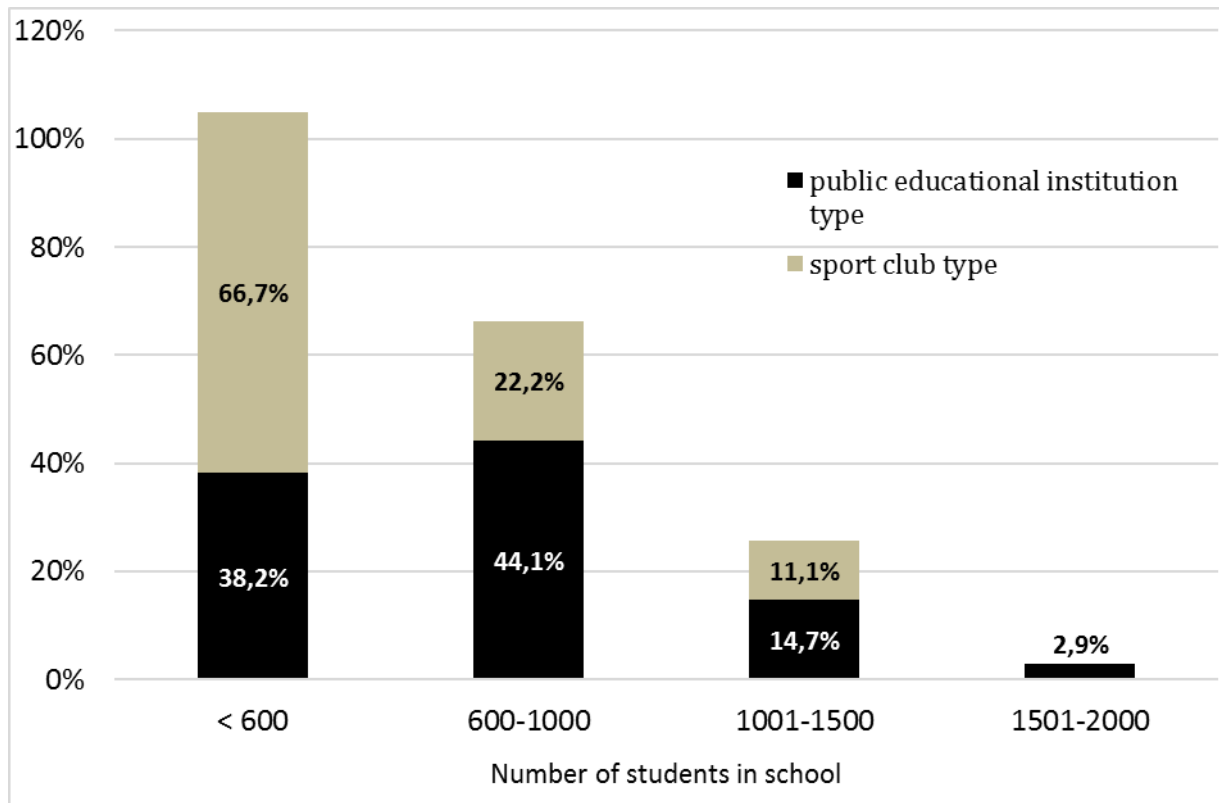


Figure 3. Number of students

When examining the distribution according to age we found that only public education institutions deal with children younger than 6, and only sport club type schools deal with people older than 18 years (Fig.4). Accordingly, examining the age distribution among the two school types showed that the sport club type schools become increasingly important (correlation coefficient, $r=1$) with the increase in age of the students.

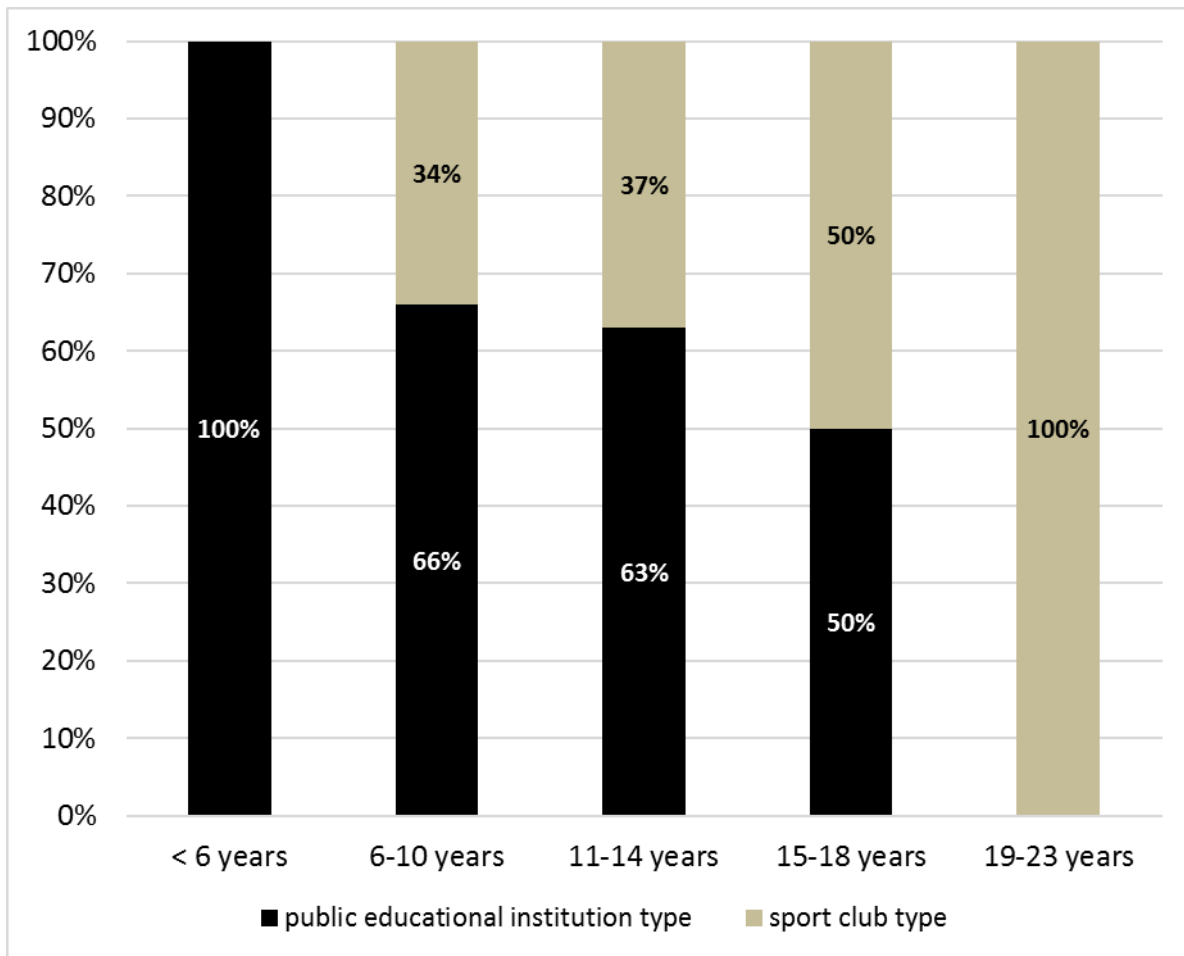


Figure 4. Distribution of age-groups in respect to the type of sports schools

When examining the infrastructure facilities of individual schools we found that all have some kind of sports facilities. At the same time, only 50% have the infrastructure necessary for all the sports taught.

Required facilities that are not owned are rented. Most (75%) of the institutions have sports fields and gyms, however, facilities serving one specific sport, such as swimming pool, tennis court, ice rink, etc. are present (Fig. 5) or rented (Fig. 6) primarily in sport club type schools.

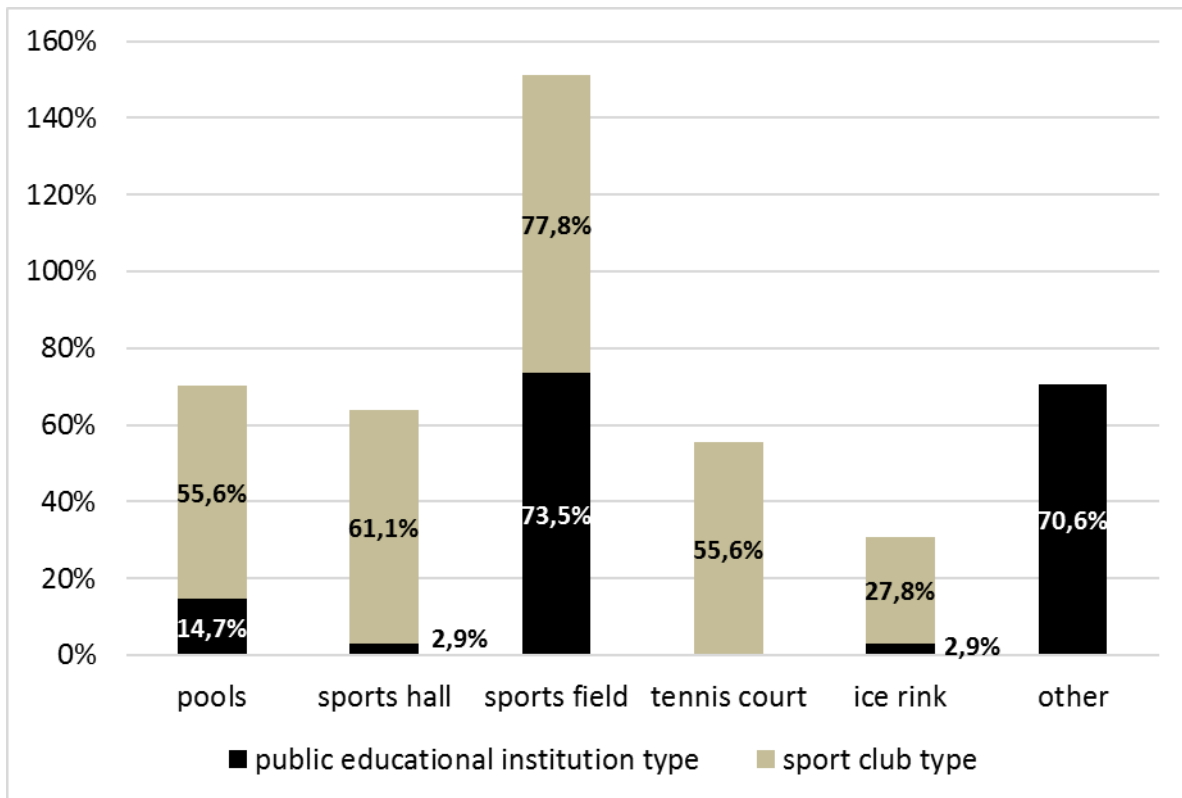


Figure 5. Infrastructure background in sports schools

Please note that more than one facility could be selected in the questionnaire

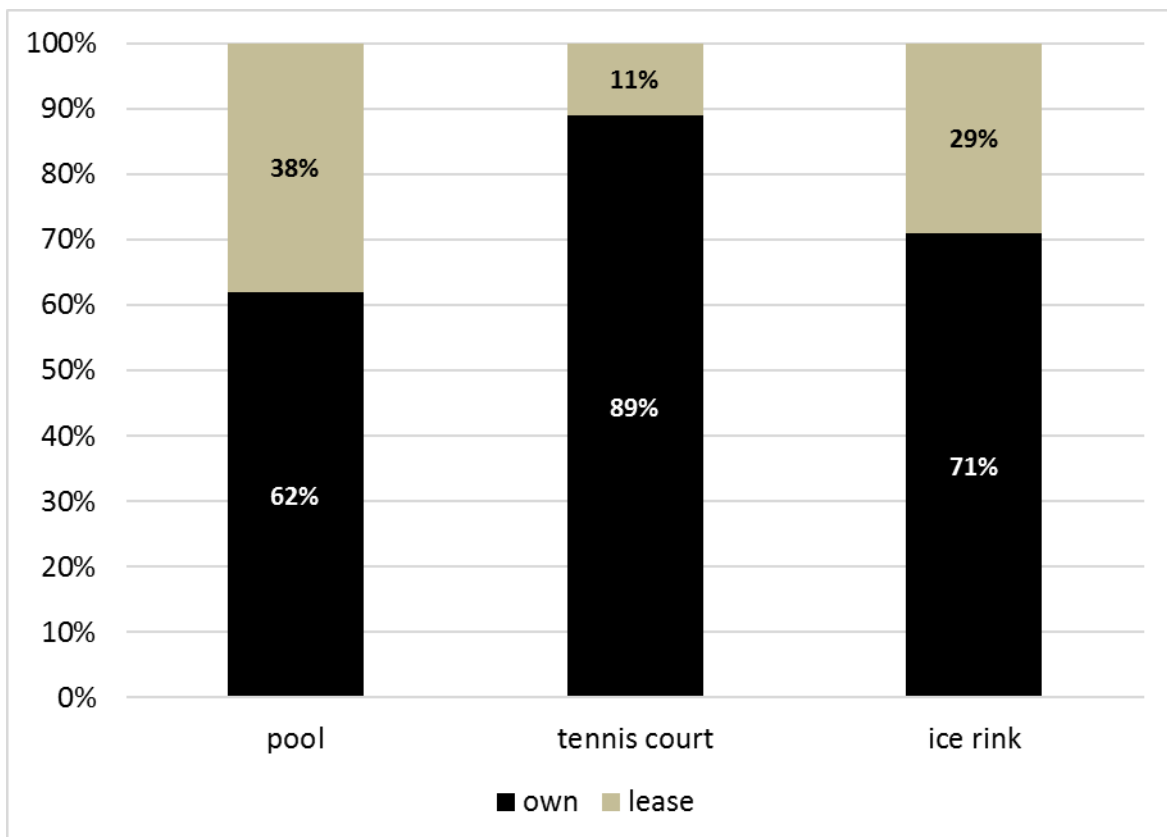


Figure 6. Availability of special sports facilities in sports schools

Discussion

Physical education in schools provides an excellent opportunity for children and young people for acquiring and practising skills, which improve lifelong fitness and health. This activity could regularly performed running, swimming, cycling hiking but also includes more structured sports and games. The early acquisition of basic skills enables young people to better understand the values of these activities and accordingly think responsibly during their later studies, or as adults in their work and free time.

At the same time, physical education is not only the development of physical abilities and not only a recreational activity as participation involves understanding principles and learning such terms as game rules, fair play, respect, tactics, learning about our social environment and our own bodies, which are essential in many sports for team work. Those objectives that go far beyond physical education and sports, like health, proper personality development and social integration, all promote incorporation of this subject into school curriculum.

It is not a coincidence therefore that most European countries have some sort of strategy regarding sport education in schools [4]. The EU, for this very reason, proposed national strategies for member states in order to raise social awareness on how physical activity results in positive health effects [5] and contributes to improvement in academic success [6,7,8, 9,10].

The situation of physical education has also been evaluated many times in the United Kingdom. It was found that the standard of education has improved in the examined period (2005-2008), at the same time, knowledge and competence of elementary school teachers was found to be lower than that of secondary school physical educators, in most cases because they did not receive adequate training during the early phases of their career and did not later compensate for it. The best schools regularly measured and tracked student development, however were unable to accurately judge performance due to the lack of national benchmark [11]. A survey from 2013 produced similar findings [12]. It was found that $\frac{1}{4}$ of schools did not motivate their students to improve their endurance and only a few schools introduced personalised physical education programmes, which take e.g.: the special needs of overweight students into account.

Similarly to our results, it is typical in other European countries as well that schools do not possess the complete required infrastructure therefore obtain additional support through cooperation with local communities, local government and businesses, which enable them to ensure the required sports facilities [13,14,15]. The local community supports the school and

the extracurricular physical activity of students in Belgium and the United Kingdom as well, thus playing a role in establishing and ensuring the infrastructural conditions.

The Ministry of Education in England had a survey made in 2011 on how the 2012 London Olympic Games influenced schools in promoting objectives connected physical education, increasing the number of athletes and whether it changed students' attitudes to sports and physical education. 1/3 of teachers responded that the values of the Olympic Games were incorporated into the curriculum. It was found the majority of students enjoyed the transformed physical education lessons and that they could learn about the sport. 1/3 of the schools introduced new sports linked to the programme [16].

The Hungarian government also set an objective to maintain and advance our international sports achievements, therefore committed itself to a youth-training system as it aims to find future talents in the upcoming generation, which can only be achieved by establishing a wide mass base.

The system of sports schools is common not only in Hungary. As an international study points out, the sports school system and, through this, nurturing young talent can be regarded as everyday practice in a number of countries around the world [17]. It can be stated in general that the establishment of sports schools occurred in the early 1990's in most countries. The number of sports schools varies, generally between 10 and 30 in the examined countries. Germany and Sweden are exceptions; this number is 60 in the latter. Germany had the highest number of students from the examined countries with over 11,000 students. These numbers are expected to have risen in the past 10 years, therefore the 54 sports schools in Hungary and the number of students learning there can be regarded as good in an international comparison as well. The schools in the examined countries were state funded schools, too. In most countries it is an expectation that young athletes must meet regular academic requirements. The range of optional sports in the sports schools of the examined countries is wide similarly to the data we obtained, at the same time there are examples of more specialised schools offering 1-2 sports as well. Schools typically have indoor sports fields.

Sports clubs cannot only promote school physical education and nurturing young talent by operating sports schools but also through targeted programmes [18]. An English study [19] found that joining a sports school programme positively influenced physical education and sports activity, especially in the case of elementary schools. This meant that more time and attention was devoted not only to lessons of physical education but the scope of sports activities and extracurricular sports opportunities were also widened. In those cases where

partnership was established with any sports clubs, involving highly qualified trainers from sports clubs in school sports activities became a common practice.

Conclusion

In conclusion it can be said that Hungary significantly lacks sports facilities compared to other European countries, but sporting possibilities and the standard of services have improved as a result of developments in the past few years and the expansion of sports funding systems. Sports schools have a favourable effect on nurturing young talent and thus on the physical education in Hungary as well as on the development of sports life. Currently about 36,000 students participate in the programme. The government plays an outstanding role in this field but further funding is also required for development at the same time.

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