

Implementation of an active school project in a rural environment in Wallonia. A collaborative study

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Introduction

- Schools are considered as one of the sectors of the society that can contribute to limit the sedentariness
- Several model of active schools have been described
 - Cole (1997)
 - OPHEA (2006)
- More and more projects are launched all around the world
 - SPARK, ... (USA)
 - "Une école bouge" (Switzerland)
 - "Ecole active" (Québec, Ontario)
- Few data about how they are implemented



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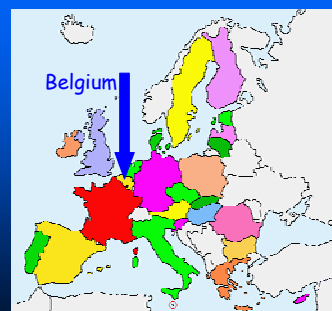
Purposes of the study

- To answer to the request of a rural primary school to propose a more active program to the pupils
- To identify the difficulties encountered by the staff to implement their projects
- To analyze the impact of the actions implemented during one school year

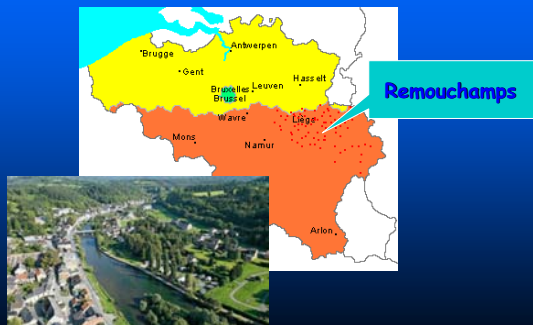


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Context of the study



Context of the study



Origin of the study

- One little rural school depending on the community educational network
 - 4 classroom teachers (6 grades - 68 pupils)
 - 1 PE teacher (1/2 day per week)



Origin of the study

- ♦ Will of promotion of the school because of concurrence with another one
- ♦ Opportunity to double the time for "sport"
 - ❖ 100' → 200'/week
 - ❖ 100' at school with a PE teacher
 - ❖ 100' at the community's sports facilities /week with sport educators



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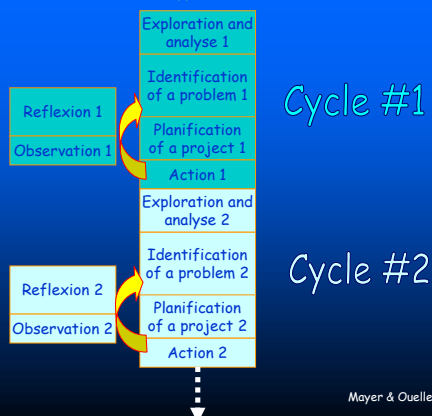
Origin of the study

- ♦ Meeting at the university to take information about similar projects (research in progress in Wallonia)
 - ❖ Director + Coordinator (one of the classroom teachers)
- ♦ Underlining of the "active school" concept
 - ❖ Increasing "sport time" is not enough
 - ❖ Need of "integration projects" of physical activity
 - ❖ Motivation of the educational staff
 - ❖ Involving parents
- ♦ Request of support to implement a project
 - ❖ Need of ideas (non specialists classroom teachers)
 - ❖ Role of consultant: advices, feedback
 - ❖ Follow up: research action basis



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An action research model



Time line

First formal meeting: Principal + Coordinator
Presentation of the "active school" concept

Second formal meeting: Principal + Coordinator
Elaboration of a project - Examples of activities

Contact with the actors: School's staff + Officials + Parents
Conference on the "active school" concept

First part of the school year: beginning of the project + collect of data + regular informal discussions with the coordinator

First written report: Provided to the principal + coordinator



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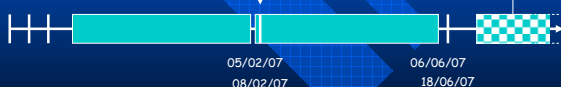
Time line

Second part of the school year: continuation of the project + collect of data + regular informal discussions with the coordinator

Third formal meeting: Principal + Coordinator
Analysis of the data collected during the first part of the year

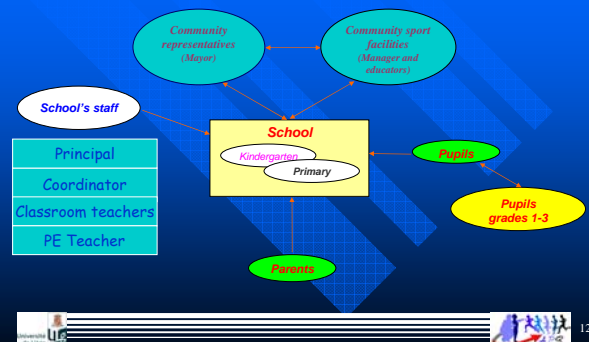
Contact with the actors: School's staff + Officials + Parents
Conference presenting the findings

Contact with the actors: Informal follow up



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An ecological overview



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Data collecting

- ♦ Pupils
 - ❖ Questionnaire (attitude towards school and PE, lifestyle, self-perception)
 - ❖ Focus group for pupils under 8
 - ❖ November 2006 + March 2007
- ♦ Parents
 - ❖ Questionnaire (family lifestyle, attitude towards school and PE)
 - ❖ November 2006 + March 2007
- ♦ School's staff + Officials
 - ❖ Semi-structured interviews
 - ❖ Informal discussions (during visits + by phone)
- ♦ Additional documents
 - ❖ Pupils' productions, classroom teachers' lessons plans, school's journal, pictures taken during the activities
- ♦ Informal observation
 - ❖ Visits on site during classroom/PE teaching + sports activities



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Results & Discussion - Basic information

♦ Origin of the project

- ❖ 2 different opinions about the leadership of the project
 - ⇒ Initiative of 2 classroom teachers (coordinator) who obtained the support of the school and community's authorities
 - ⇒ Collegiate decision not underlining the role of the coordinator
- ❖ Lack of preparation underlined by the manager of the sports facilities (delay of the official decision to support financially the project - payment of the sports educators)



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Results & Discussion - Basic information

♦ Goals of the project

- ❖ To bring benefits to pupils (learning, respect, motor development, active lifestyle)
- ❖ To offer an answer to concurrent schools

♦ Specific aspects

- ❖ The PE teacher is marginalized according to a limited time at the school
 - ⇒ Lack of motivation?
 - ⇒ Lack of integration in the staff?



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Results & Discussion - Content of the project

♦ "ACTIVE" school concept (OPHEA, 2009)

- ❖ Active Participation: Active play for students beyond PE class
- ❖ Co-Curricular: Activity during recess, transportation to school
- ❖ Teamwork: Group focus on physical activity within the school
- ❖ Involvement: Participation of extra school actors (family, athletes...)
- ❖ Values: Regular communications within school
- ❖ Education: Activity integrated into the programme (PE and sport)



♦ Pate et al. (2006)

- ❖ Physical education and school sport
- ❖ Recess and active transport to school
- ❖ Physical activity in the Academic classroom



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Results & Discussion - Content of the project

♦ Active participation

- ❖ Rope jumping
- ❖ Balls/objects handling
- ❖ Port folio ("sport book")
- ❖ Stretching
- ❖ Additional periods of physical activities (table tennis, walking, body expression ...)
- ❖ Adapted fitness training
- ❖ Goal: to reach a minimum of 15'/day
- ❖ Lack of planning



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Results & Discussion - Content of the project

♦ Co-Curricular

- ❖ Free play during recess (soccer + basketball)
- ❖ Preparation of a school festival (dance, gymnastics ...)
- ❖ Involvement of oldest pupils in the organization of some activities for the youngest (initiation + tournaments)
- ❖ Involvement of the PE teacher
- ❖ Involvement of the community to improve the equipment (limited!)



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Results & Discussion - Content of the project

Teamwork

- ❖ Fitness tests day + using the results
- ❖ Jogging + presentation of the performance + pictures
- ❖ Ice-skating afternoon (older pupils)
- ❖ Walk organized for all grades
- ❖ Visit of a museum of bicycle race + preparation + analysis
- ❖ Orienteering afternoon (4th grade)
- ❖ Sport day outside the school (younger pupils)

- ❖ Enthusiasm of the children
- ❖ Parents identified positive changes in the attitude of the children



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Results & Discussion - Content of the project

Involvement

- ❖ First attendance of the parents during the school festival
- ❖ Pupils received a tracksuit !!!
- ❖ Invitation of the parents for walking/bicycling (from January)
- ❖ Accompanying parents to the museum visit
- ❖ Visit of the Belgian Davis Cup Captain + preparation of questions
- ❖ Last sport day with parents' attendance + attendance of top level athletes (Philippe Gilbert - Belgian professional bicycle racer)

- ❖ Difficulty to mobilize people
- ❖ One journalist did not publish a paper after his visit to the activities
- ❖ Parents regretted to be not more involved



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Results & Discussion - Content of the project

Values

- ❖ Bulletin board presenting pictures shot during activities
- ❖ Specific sheet integrated into the pupils' diary
- ❖ Oldest pupils prepared a board with personal sentences/ drawings about benefits of PA
- ❖ Special issue of the school journal focused on the activities proposed within the project (some documents prepared by pupils)

- ❖ Interest of the parents to know what their children are doing



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Results & Discussion - Content of the project

Education

- ❖ Sport afternoons: track and field, gymnastics and games (Kinball, handball, badminton, basket-ball, soccer, tennis and floorball)
- ❖ Performances are provided to the parents (port folio)
- ❖ Formal evaluation of the pupils (never done before)

- ❖ Involvement of the PE teacher in the sports activities → better relationships with pupils, more appropriate content of PE lessons + more contacts with classroom teachers
- ❖ Increased time → Larger opportunities to teach skills and to train fitness
- ❖ Lack of equipment/facilities at school



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Results & Discussion - Problems and solutions

Practical problems

- ❖ The project received a financial support of the community's authorities but the decision was provided very late
- ❖ Political decision is needed
- ❖ Will of one person against "overall" inertia
- ❖ Conflict of interests of some decision-makers (even within the school)
- ❖ Transportation of the pupils to the sports facilities was not covered by the community's authorities
- ❖ A sponsorship for busses was obtained by the mayor after several alarming requests of the coordinator



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Results & Discussion - Problems and solutions

Practical problems

- ❖ Sport equipment of the school is quite poor (400€ for 8 years!)
- ❖ Other schools seemed to be more supported!!!
- ❖ Request to the lending department of the Sport Ministry
- ❖ Lack of sports facilities at the school
- ❖ Recess place was "updated" after pressing of the coordinator
- ❖ A building project has been suggested but ... the school is too small !!!



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Results & Discussion - Problems and solutions

◆ Relational problems

- ❖ Lack of involvement of the schools' authorities
- ❖ Edition of a special issue of the school journal sent to all "community's council"
- ❖ Involvement of the PE teacher
- ❖ At the beginning, he was not invited by the coordinator
- ❖ According to the meetings with the consultant, he was integrated and became a determining actor even if he is not really associated to the decision making (not the initial leader + limited time in the school)



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Results & Discussion - Problems and solutions

◆ Relational problems

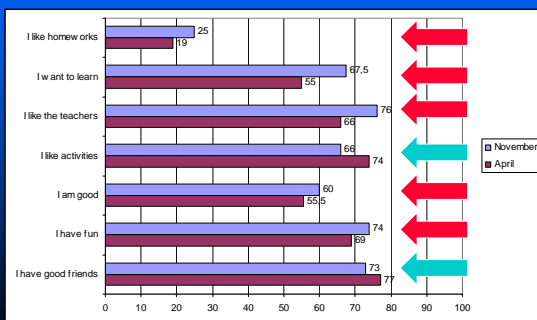
- ❖ Lack of interest/involvement of the parents
- ❖ Few were in favour of the project or showed interest toward what the school wanted to propose to the pupils
- ❖ At the beginning, classroom teachers did not request their involvement
- ❖ It changed after the feedback of the consultant
- ❖ Promotion of the activities
- ❖ Despite of the suggestions of the consultant few changes were operated



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Results & Discussion - Some changes

◆ Perception of the school climate



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Results & Discussion - Opinion of the actors

◆ School's staff

- ❖ Diversification in academic learning (integration of PA in the classroom)
- ❖ Team spirit (identified during sports activities with pupils of other schools)
- ❖ Valorization of the PE teacher's role
- ❖ Less absenteeism

◆ Parents and children

- ❖ 94.7% of the pupils and 100% of the parents want that the project continues



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Conclusions

- ◆ This study underlines again that implementation of an active school project is not a "long quiet river"
- ◆ The personal involvement of a leader and the collaboration of several partners are determining factors underlining the importance of human relationships
- ◆ Without a solid experiment in sport/physical activity management, the promoters of active school projects are likely to meet insurmountable obstacles



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Conclusions

- ◆ Resources offered in the literature (on the Web) are not known or are not used
- ◆ Classroom teachers need to be accompanied as they have other teaching priorities but they can understand the interest of PA within the school
- ◆ While they are reluctant or indifferent before a new project, parents become interested when communication is effectively organized



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Conclusions

- Most children are interested by increasing their PA at school when there are many kinds of situations and when the school proposes some consistence



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Implications

- A permanent support service should be developed in each country to share effective experiences and build a toolbox adapted to local/national requirements/characteristics
- Promotion of effective projects needs to be more organized



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Thank you for your attention

References

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"ACTIVE" school concept (OPHEA, 2009)

- ♦Active Participation
- ♦Co-Curricular
- ♦Teamwork
- ♦Involvement
- ♦Values
- ♦Education



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Promotes regular active play for students beyond the health and physical education class



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Structured initiatives that provide activity-based opportunities for as many students as possible outside of the classroom.



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Involves a group focus on physical activity within the school.



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Involves activity-based interactions between the school and the community.



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- ♦Education

Promotes the value of physical activity throughout the school community through regular communications



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- ♦ Education

Opportunities for students to participate in vigorous physical activity and learn basic movement skills required to participate in sport and physical activity



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