

DIAGNOSIS OF THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF ADULT RESIDENTS OF THE CHOCIANÓW MUNICIPALITY AS A PART OF THE INNOVATIONAL PROJECT *LOCAL CENTERS OF THE KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATION*

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Abstract:

In a knowledge-based society, it is essential to take innovative action at different levels of education and to search for better quality educational and activational programmes for adults. The excellent example of an innovative, non-standard solution in the field of activation of the adult, as well as the entire local community is the Local Knowledge and Education Centres (Polish: Lokalne Ośrodki Wiedzy i Edukacji LOWE) project. It responds to the needs of the community, especially from so-called peripheral and disadvantaged areas. The LOWE project involves the use of schools to activate the local environment and is linked to the creation of an educational offer for adults associated with the primary skills and other key competences that form the basis for lifelong learning.

The leader of this project is the Local Government Chamber Foundation. There is implemented the second part of this project entitled LOWE 2 currently. The beneficiary and implementer of the LOWE 2 Project is, among the others, the Primary School of John Paul II in Szklary Dolne in the municipality of Chocianów, where the project will be implemented this year. Jan Wyżykowski University is the partner of this project. As employees of the University, we have undertaken to carry out a diagnosis of the educational needs of the local community. This diagnosis was the basis for the creation of an educational offer for adult residents of the municipality.

In the article we would like to present the results of the surveys conducted among 130 adult residents of the Chocianów municipality. The research process was conducted with the use of the diagnostic survey method, the survey technique and the self-designed tool in the form of a survey questionnaire, which was made available to the residents of the municipality via the Internet.

Key words: *lifelong learning, self-education, key competences, Local Knowledge and Education Centres. local community.*

JEL Classification Codes: I100, I2, I23

1. INTRODUCTION

The reality of a rapidly changing society reveals the need for lifelong learning and self-education. The citizen is expected to acquire many skills and competences, which he has often not been able to acquire in the past, during his school education, which often determine his professional activity. It is required to be flexible in thinking and acting and being creative in many aspects, such as the one's approach to diverse tasks and problems that arise in the surrounding reality, as well as to the awareness of the necessity to update one's knowledge and



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develop competences, e.g. linguistic or digital. Taking innovative action at different levels of education, as well as searching for better quality education and activation programmes for adults, is therefore becoming highly important in a knowledge-based society (Z. Załona, 2015, p. 7-8). It appears really significant for adults to provide them with cognitive actions which meet their personal needs and developmental abilities. Grown-ups' motivation to learn increases when they benefit from inner educational process or recognize that they are able to solve their life problems, which should be taken into account (M.S. Knowles, E.F. Holton, R.A. Swanson, 2009, p. 182). According to S.D. Brookfield (1986, p. 64; see: A.A. Ghost Bear, 2012, Vol. 41, No 2, p. 28), "as important to teach adults how to learn as it is to specify particular curricular domains for learning".

The example of an innovative, non-standard solution in the field of activation of adults, as well as the entire community is the *Local Knowledge and Education Centres* (Polish: *Lokalne Ośrodki Wiedzy i Edukacji LOWE*) project. It responds to the needs of the community, especially from the so-called peripheral and disadvantaged areas, i.e. remote from administrative, educational and economic centres (<https://lowe.edu.pl>, accessed: 14.10.2020).

The *LOWE* project involves the use of schools to activate the local environment. The role of schools in cooperation with the managing authority and the local community is linked to the creation of an educational offer for adults associated with the primary skills and other key competences that form the basis for lifelong learning. They are therefore universal skills that facilitate movement in the labour market, are essential for the personal development, as well as the entire community.

LOWE's educational offer is based not on approved curricula and textbooks, but on the diagnosis of the needs of adults in a particular local environment. It is therefore necessary to identify what kind of skills are needed for adults, what competences they lack and what opportunities they can use in the everyday life. Diagnosis is the basis for creating an offer of various educational content and forms of learning that are adequate for individual needs and expectations. It allows to engage passive adults in the school environment to undertake various educational activities close to their place of residence (*Model funkcjonowania LOWE - Lokalnych Ośrodków Wiedzy i Edukacji - w drugim etapie ich rozwoju w latach 2019-2023*, p. 4, <http://ko-gorzow.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/zal.-nr-3.-model-funkcjonowania-lowe-na-drugim-etapie.pdf>, accessed: 14.10.2020).

A school acting as a *Local Knowledge and Education Centre* for adult educational activation should take into account certain general assumptions, such as:

- 1) learning in different places (not just on school premises) using all of the available means, methods and forms of activity, including mutual learning of adults from each other;
- 2) taking into account a wide range of clients (not just parents of the pupils) and encouraging them by highlighting the link between education and practice;
- 3) adapting their offer to individual needs, the needs of the local community as a whole and labour market expectations, taking into consideration the views of different environments;
- 4) taking into account the involvement of adults in the proposed educational activities in day-to-day work-related matters and in the social patterns of local communities;
- 5) using the schools potential for lifelong learning and its links to the other local and supralocal institutions (*Model funkcjonowania LOWE - Lokalnych Ośrodków Wiedzy i Edukacji - w drugim etapie ich rozwoju w latach 2019-2023*, p. 4, <http://ko-gorzow.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/zal.-nr-3.-model-funkcjonowania-lowe-na-drugim-etapie.pdf>).

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zal.-nr-3.-model-funkcjonowania-lowe-na-drugim-etapie.pdf, accessed: 14.10.2020).

LOWE's needs-based activities therefore aim primarily at increasing the participation of adults in lifelong learning, changing their attitudes towards learning, developing key competences and social skills, perceiving school as a place where competences can be improved throughout their lives, optimising relationships within the family and opening up different pathways defending from social marginalisation (*Model funkcjonowania LOWE - Lokalnych Ośrodków Wiedzy i Edukacji - w drugim etapie ich rozwoju w latach 2019-2023*, p. 21, <http://ko-gorzow.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/zal.-nr-3.-model-funkcjonowania-lowe-na-drugim-etapie.pdf>, accessed: 14.10.2020).

The leader of this project is the Local Government Chamber Foundation, which was founded in 2015 by a group of professors of Cracow universities – specialists in economics, law and management. Between 2017 and 2018 the Foundation implemented the pilot project entitled “Local Knowledge and Education Centres for educational activation of adults” under the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development 2014-2020 (POWR.02.14.00-00-1020/16), cofinanced by the European Social Fund. As a part of the first edition of the *LOWE* it has been developed the *Model of the functioning of the Local Knowledge and Education Centres in the local environment*. It was tested by the 15 organs of the local governments responsible for running the public schools which were set up through the grant contest, where the *LOWE* Centres were established.

There is implemented the second part of this project entitled *LOWE 2* currently. Through an open grant competition, 20 organs of the local government responsible for managing schools and educational institutions in Poland were selected. For the establishing and running of the *LOWE* Centre at the designated school, the governing organs will receive a grant of up to PLN 250 000 (<https://lowe.edu.pl/partnership/>, accessed: 14.10.2020).

The beneficiary and implementer of the *LOWE 2* Project is, among the others, the Primary School of John Paul II in Szklary Dolne in the municipality of Chocianów, where the project will be implemented this year. Jan Wyżykowski University is the partner of this project. As employees of the University, we have undertaken to carry out a diagnosis of the educational needs of the local community. This diagnosis was the basis for the creation of an educational offer for adult residents of the municipality.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AREA AND CONCEPT OF RESEARCH, AS WELL AS RESEARCH SAMPLE

The area of our research was the premises of the Municipality of Chocianów. It is a municipality located in the Lower Silesia province, in the Polkowice district. Its seat is located in Chocianów on the area of 230.3 km². In 2019, 12,747 people lived in the municipality, of which 12,451 residents were registered for permanent residence and 296 people were registered for temporary residence (as of December 31, 2019).

Most of the residents lived in the urban area (7,912 people, i.e. 62.1%), and just over a third of people in rural areas (4,835 inhabitants, i.e. 37.9%). Considering the data connected with the gender of the residents, it should be concluded that in 2019 there were a similar number of women (6,519 people) and men (6,228) living in the Municipality of Chocianów. A total of 418 people were unemployed at the time, more than half of whom were long-term unemployed (234 people, i.e. 55.9%) (*Raport o stanie Gminy Chocianów za rok 2019*, http://chocianow.bip.pbox.pl/public/get_file_contents.php?id=209598, accessed: 14.10.2020). During

the analyzed period, more than half of the residents of the Chocianów Municipality (62.4%) were of working age, 18.1% of pre-working age, and 19.5% of post-working age (GUS, 2019; https://www.polskawliczbach.pl/gmina_Chocianow, accessed: 14.10.2020).

Last year, there were two kindergartens on the area of the Municipality of Chocianów, including one with integration units, both located in the city of Chocianów; four point pre-schools, located at primary schools in rural areas, in such places as: Parchów, Szklary Dolne, Trzebnice and Żabice; four primary schools (Primary School in Chocianów, Primary School in Parchów, Primary School of John Paul II in Szklary Dolne and Primary School of Władysław St. Reymont in Trzebnice), as well as one secondary school, i.e. The School Complex in Chocianów, which operates Logistics Technical School, Mechatronic Technical School, Tourist Service Technical School and Industry School of the 1st degree. In 2019, cultural activity in the municipality was carried out by one main library based in Chocianów, which had four rural branches and the Regional Cultural Centre in Chocianów, which consists of three Rural Cultural Centres: in Chocianowiec, in Trzebnice and Parchów, and six Rural Community Centres in Żabice, Michałów, Ogrodziska, Pogorzelska, Jabłonów and Brunów (*Raport o stanie Gminy Chocianów za rok 2019*, http://chocianow.bip.pbox.pl/public/get_file_contents.php?id=209598, accessed: 14.10.2020).

The aim of the study was to identify the educational needs of the adult residents of the Chocianów Municipality which has a very limited network of both educational and cultural institutions.) Therefore, the *LOWE* project on its territory can prove to be an incredibly valuable initiative, owing to which the grown-up residents of the municipality will have the opportunity to integrate within their local environment, develop diverse interests and deepen their educational and professional competences. However, in order for this proposal to be interesting for the local community and to bring the expected results, it must be adapted to their needs, hence the idea that before offering the residents of the municipality an offer of educational activities, conduct a thorough diagnosis of their preferences in this regard.

The research process was conducted with the use of the diagnostic survey method, the survey technique and the self-designed tool in the form of a survey questionnaire consisting of 12 questions (8 closed and four semi-open, in which respondents were able to identify their own issues or kinds of the activities they are interested in) and an information taking into account: gender, age, educational level, economic activity, marital status and place of residence of the respondents. The questionnaire was made available to the residents of the municipality via the Internet. The research was conducted at the turn of September and October of this year, for a period of 3 weeks. In total, 130 people took part in the survey (about 1% of the total residents of the Municipality of Chocianów).

The main research problem was formulated in the form of a question: What are the educational needs of the adult residents of the Chocianów municipality participating in the research? As a part of the main problem, the following detailed problems were identified:

1. Are the respondents interested in participating in free educational activities organized under the *LOWE* project?
2. Participation in what kind of educational series are the respondents interested (as part of the 21st Century Senior Academy or the Good Parent Academy)?
3. What are the subjects of the open popular science lectures they are interested in?
4. What kind of activating activities carried out in small groups do the respondents want to participate?

5. What issues of the trainings shaping parental competences are the persons participating in the research interested in?
6. How often do the respondents want to participate in the educational activities?
7. What time of the lectures and classes are the most convenient for them?
8. What are the preferences of adult residents of the Chocianów municipality regarding the place where the educational activities will be held under the *LOWE* project?

The participants of the research were a diverse group in terms of gender, age, educational level, economic activity, marital status and place of residence, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the research sample

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	N=130	%	
<u>GENDER:</u>	Woman	108	83,1
	Man	22	16,9
<u>AGE:</u>	18-30 years	27	20,8
	31-40 years	59	45,4
	41-50 years	26	20,0
	51-60 years	11	8,5
	above 61 years	7	5,4
<u>LEVEL OF EDUCATION:</u>	Primary	4	3,1
	Vocational	20	15,4
	Secondary	47	36,1
	Higher	59	45,4
<u>MARITAL STATUS:</u>	Single	18	13,8
	Married	96	73,8
	Widower/Widow	5	3,9
	Divorced	6	4,6
	Cohabitation relationship	5	3,9
<u>PLACE OF THE RESIDENCE:</u>	City	67	51,5
	Village	63	48,5

Source: Own research

As previously mentioned, a total of 130 people took part in our diagnosis. The vast majority of respondents were women (83.1%). When describing the research sample by age, it can be seen that most subjects were between 31 and 50 years old (a total of 65.4%). So they were people in middle adulthood. A much lower proportion were those in their fifties. A significant proportion of respondents had a higher (45.4%) and secondary education (36.1%). Only less than one in five respondents had a vocational (15.4%) or primary education (3.1%). The group of people participating in the research also varied in terms of economic activity. The vast majority of respondents were of working age (85.4% in total). Most of them (60%) was economically active, while a quarter (25.4%) temporarily unemployed or never took up employment. In total, more than three quarters of those surveyed were married (73.8%) or in an informal cohabitation relationship (3.9%). A subgroup of single people (22.3% overall) was significantly less numerous. Respondents were also a diverse group by place of residence. More than half of the people participating in the survey were city residents, while 48.5% of those surveyed were living in the rural area.

3. DIAGNOSIS OF EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF ADULT RESIDENTS OF THE CHOCIANÓW MUNICIPALITY IN THE LIGHT OF THE RESULTS OF RESEARCH

The implementation of the *LOWE* project in the Municipality of Chocianów will be based on two main pillars: *The Good Parent Academy* and *The 21st Century Senior Academy*. As part of both proposals, cycles of various popular science lectures, workshops and other types of activating classes carried out in small groups will be organized in various cities located in the territory of the municipality. Every adult resident will be able to take part in either a single offer or participate in all organized activities.

An analysis of the collected research material presents that out of the 130 people participating in the survey, the vast majority, 93.1% of those surveyed, declared their willingness to participate in free educational activities for residents of the Municipality of Chocianów. They were of working and post-working age. Eight people (6.2%) admitted that they were not interested in participating in such activities and one person had not responded to this issue.

Three quarters of respondents (75.4%) is interested in a series of educational activities and classes within *The Good Parent Academy*, while 16.1% of respondents - within *The 21st Century Senior Academy*. A small percentage of respondents (8.5%) did not answer the question. The results obtained may be a consequence of the composition of the research sample, especially the age of the people who decided to complete the survey.

After determining the general readiness of residents to participate in educational activities, it was necessary to recognize the preferences of respondents regarding the type of activities and classes they are interested in. Data show that the vast majority of respondents (82.4%) wishes to participate in free popular science lectures. Less than one in five respondents (17.6%) does not express an interest in participating in this form of classes.

Table 2. The content of open lectures that adult residents of Chocianów Municipality are interested in

CATEGORIES OF THE ANSWERS	N=109	%
General health and healthy lifestyle	67	61,5
Pedagogy and Psychology	57	52,3
Physical, mental and social security of the citizens	28	25,7
Verbal and Non-verbal Communication	22	20,2
E-citizen of the 21 st century	17	15,6
History of Poland and General History	14	12,8
Nature and agriculture	1	0,9
Foster care	1	0,9
Crown Manipulation	1	0,9
IN TOTAL	208	----

Source: Own research

Analyzing the issue of open lectures, which are the subject of the interest of adult residents of the municipality, it was found that the majority of the respondents (61.5%) expresses their willingness to participate in lectures on *Health and healthy lifestyles*. Half of those surveyed (52.3%) are interested in *Pedagogy and Psychology*. One in four of the respondents (25.7%) would like to participate in *Physical, mental and social security of the citizens* classes, while one in five (20.2% of respondents) would like to participate in *Verbal and Non-verbal communication* classes. Less often, adult respondents expressed their eagerness to participate in

lectures in the field of *E-citizen of the 21st century* (15,6%) or on the *History of Poland and General History* (12.8%).

When asking residents about their willingness to participate in activation classes in so-called small groups, the obtained data showed that 95.3% of respondents were interested in such activities. Only six people (4.7%) had no opinion about this issue.

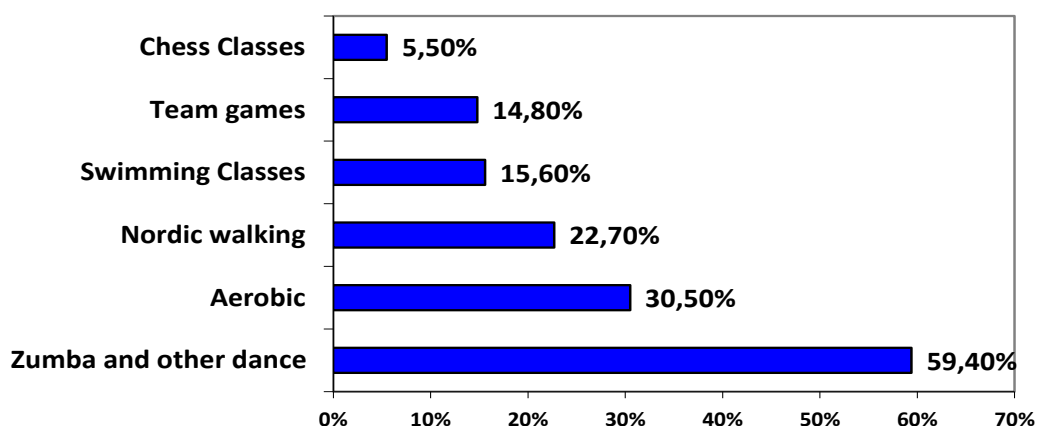
Table 3. The type of activation classes, conducted in so-called small groups, in which respondents would like to participate

CATEGORIES OF THE ANSWERS	N=123	%
Physical and Sports Activities	77	62,6
Learning a foreign language	63	51,2
Parenting skills Training	40	32,5
IT Classes	25	20,3
Art Classes	22	17,9
Music Classes	21	17,1
Preorientation and career counselling Training	14	11,4
IN TOTAL	262	---

Source: Own research

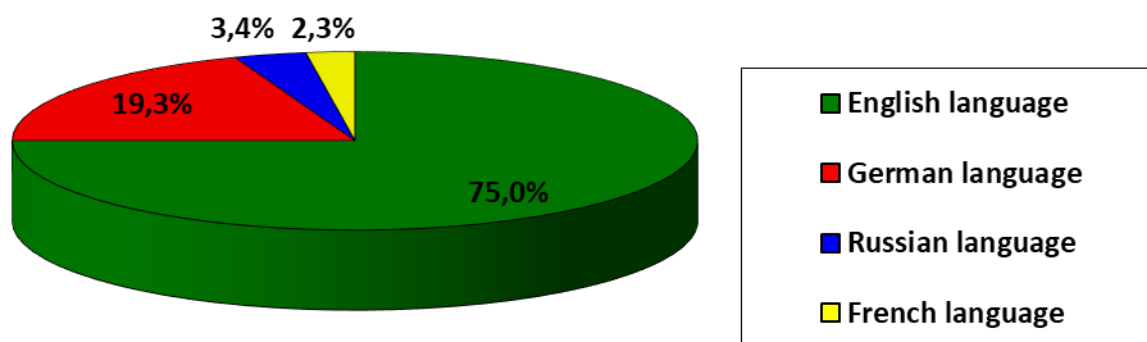
Taking into account preferences for the type of classes in small groups, it was found that respondents were primarily interested in *Physical and Sports Activities* (62.6%), as well as *Learning a foreign language* classes (51.2%). A third of respondents (32.5%) wished to participate in *Parenting skills Training*. One in four respondents (20.3%) would like to take part in *IT Classes*, which is found really crucial in the modern world, as the know-how of new information-communication technologies appears to be a substantial determinant for respondents to participate in social, professional and cultural life to the fullest (D. Batorski, 2011, p. 129). *Art Classes* (17.9%) were also among the preferred activities, as well as *Music Classes* (17.1%) and *Preorientation and career counselling Training* (11.4%).

During the next stage, it was determined in which *Physical and Sports Activities* the residents of the municipality would be eager to participate. This data is presented in Graph 1. The majority of respondents (59.4%) would choose zumba and other dance classes, and almost one in three (30.5%) is interested in aerobics classes (30.5%). Quite a large group of respondents, because 22.7%, expressed their willingness to take part in Nordic walking classes. The respondents also declare that they are interested in participation in swimming classes taking place in the swimming pool complex "Delfinek" in Chocianów (15.6%), as well as in team games (14.8%) and chess classes (5.5%).



Graph 1. Physical and Sports Activities in which residents express their willingness to participate
(Source: Own research)

Frequently adults take up learning a foreign language. The former political system of Poland which came to an end in 1989, obliged people to learn Russian, by reason of which adults have been catching up with western European languages up to now (I. Przybylska, 2020, p. 101). As a result, during the research, it was also important to determine the answer to the question about which kinds of foreign languages the respondents would like to learn (Graph 2).



Graph 2. Foreign languages preferred by the respondents
(Source: Own research)

Three quarters (75%) of the respondents would like to learn the English language. Almost one in five respondents (19.3%) had chosen the German language. The individual respondents expressed their eagerness to learn the Russian language (3 persons) and the French language (2 persons).

The respondents' participation in various parenting skills trainings was another issue to diagnose (Table 4).

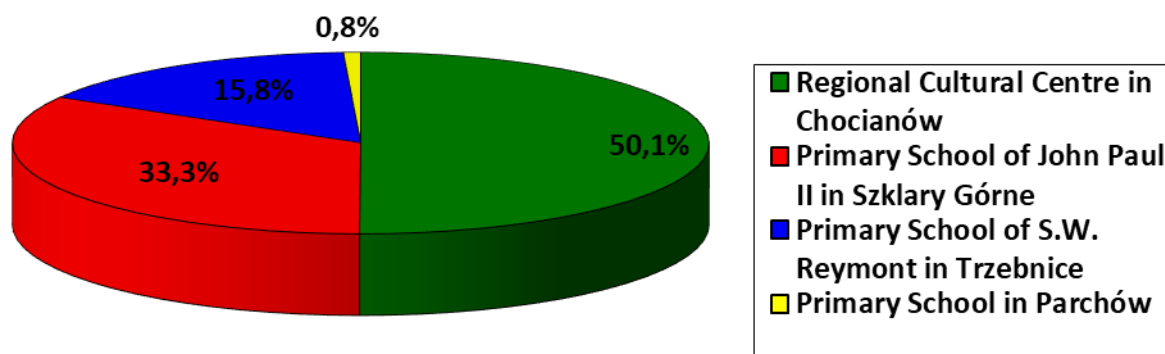
Table 4. Parenting skills trainings preferred by the adult residents of the Municipality of Chocianów

CATEGORIES OF THE ANSWERS	N=97	%
How to strengthen children's self-esteem?	54	55,7
How to motivate children to go to school and learn?	48	49,5
How to talk with our children that they will listen us?	47	48,5
How to have a good relationship with your child?	46	47,4
How to protect children from depression?	43	44,3
How to improve attention span of your child?	40	41,2
How to overcome aggressive behaviours of children and adolescents?	38	39,2
IN TOTAL	316	----

Source: Own research

Recognizing the issues of the parenting skills trainings, in which adult residents of the Chocianów Municipality are interested, it was found that the most popular are trainings dealing with the issues of: strengthening children's self-esteem (55.7%), motivating them to learn (49.5%), effective communication with children (48.5%), relationship between children and parents (47.4%), protecting children from depression (44.3%), improving attention span of children (41.2%) and eliminating and overcoming aggressive behaviors (39.2%).

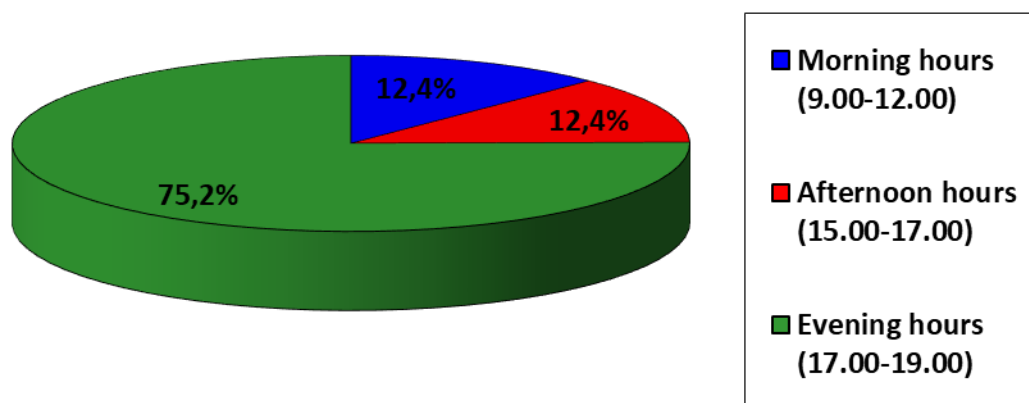
After identifying the preferred form of classes and their issues, the most convenient places for the respondents were determined (Graph 3) and the time of the classes (Graph 4), as well as their frequency (Graph 5).



Graph 3. Preferences of the respondents concerning the place of implementation of the activities and classes

(Source: Own research)

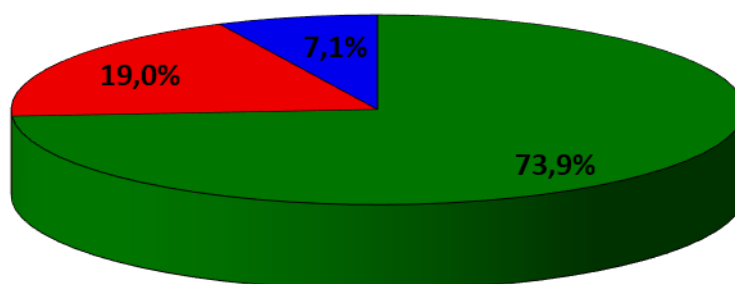
Half of the respondents identified the Regional Cultural Centre in Chocianów as the most preferred place (50%). One in three respondents (33.3%) declared their willingness to participate in classes organized in the Primary School of John Paul II in Szklary Dolne, and one in six (15.8%) – in the Primary School of S.W. Reymont in Trzebnice. Only one person indicated as a convenient place to carry out classes at the Primary School in Parchów.



Graph 4. Preferences of the surveyed concerning the time of the activities and classes

(Source: Own research)

In the course of the research, we were also interested in the time of implementation of the activities and classes. On the one hand, the vast majority of respondents considered evening hours to be the most convenient time for them– between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. (75.2%). On the other hand, 12.4% of respondents prefer morning hours (9 a.m. – 12 p.m.) and afternoon hours (3 p.m. – 5 p.m.).



■ Once a week ■ Every two weeks ■ Once a month

Graph 5. Preferences of the surveyed regarding the frequency of activities and classes

(Source: Own research)

Respondents are eager to participate with a fairly high frequency in the proposed activities and classes, as the vast majority (73.8%) would like to participate once a week. Nearly one in five respondents (19%) preferred once every two weeks. Only eight people indicated once a month as a suitable option for them.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE RESEARCH

The analysis of the empirical material obtained during the research allows to draw the following conclusions:

1. The vast majority of the adults participating in the research (93.1%) is interested in participating in various types of free educational activities and classes both in the form of open popular science lectures (82.4%) and in the form of activation classes in small groups (95.3%).
2. The largest number of respondents would like to participate in open lectures on health and healthy lifestyles (63.3%) and in the field of pedagogy psychology (52.3%).
3. The majority of respondents are interested in participating in activities in small groups:
 - a) related to the physical and sport (62.6%), i.e. zumba or other dance classes, aerobics and Nordic walking;
 - b) learning a foreign language (51.2%), in particular English and
 - c) improving their parenting skills (32.5%).
4. Many respondents also declared their willingness to participate not only in individual projects, but in the whole cycle of educational activities carried out within the framework of *The Good Parent Academy* (75.4%) and *The 21st Century Senior Academy* (16.1%).
5. Half of the participants in the survey indicate the Regional Cultural Centre in Chocianów as the most convenient place of the implementation of the project (50%), one third of the respondents declared – The Primary School of John Paul II in Szklary Dolne and one in six of those surveyed – The Primary School of S.W. Reymont in Trzebnice.
6. The vast majority of respondents would like to participate in educational classes on average once a week (73.8%) between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. (75.2%).

In conclusion, we are convinced that the *LOWE* project is an innovative and interesting proposition for the residents of the Chocianów Municipality in working age and post-production age, owing to which they will be able to integrate with the other local community members, develop various interests, as well as deepen their social, educational and parental competences. It would be beneficial to popularizing the educational offer among the residents of the municipality who did not participate in the research due to the fact that they did not have information about it or because they did not have access to the Internet or enough competence to fill in an online questionnaire, especially among men and people in the post-working age.

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