

ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS BY MRS MIOARA ARMANU

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Thesis Title: MODALITIES OF OPTIMISING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' PREPARATION THROUGH THE UPGRADING OF THE CONTENT OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES WITH SPORTS SPECIFIC

Key words: extracurricular activities, curriculum, group cohesion, the class of students, physical education, high school students, sports group, interpersonal relations.

PART I - THEORETICO-METHODICAL BACKGROUND

In the first part, we presented the theoretical approach of the entire scientific demarche, necessary in the finalisation of this study.

In this context are described: theoretico-methodical aspects regarding the Romanian curriculum, approaches regarding the scholar physical education lesson according to the educational policies in Romania and the European Union, the contents, the forms of organising and practising the extracurricular activities with a sports specific, interpersonal relations and the group cohesion during teenage years, the motivation of choosing the theme.

Within the educational system, the extracurricular activities are enrolled in a larger background, introducing other indicators regarding the appreciation of the formative act and may also represent a method of achieving education.

The extracurricular activities contribute, thanks to its diversity, to the shaping and definition of the students' personality. The main role in the forming of the personality is attributed to the university teaching, which elaborates formative-educational programmes.

The students' education represents a very complex activity, to the accomplishing of which contribute (by different degrees), a variety of agents, like:

- The family and the social background in which the students live;
- The school through its multiple activities done on a daily basis and through extracurricular activities;
- The media;
- The groups that the student joins in his/her free time.

Although physical education is a compulsory subject matter, it should not be imposed upon students, but ought, instead, to be practised willingly.

Physical education is the only subject matter which pursues the students' preparation for a healthy lifestyle, and which transmits important social values (self-discipline, solidarity, team spirit, tolerance and fair play).

The extracurricular activities with a sports specific may constitute a medium of taking action concerning the correction of the youngsters' moral behaviour, by offering viable alternatives to spending the spare time in an enjoyable, useful and wise manner. These activities should promote the desire of taking physical exercise and spending the spare time collectively, but in an organised way, while being guided by specialised teachers, who have to motivate the students to practise physical exercise throughout their life.

PART II – PRELIMINARY RESEARCH REGARDING THE OFFER FOR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES WITH A SPORTS SPECIFIC

In order to outline the opinion of specialised teachers in Physical Education, regarding the importance, the role, the difficulties and the possibilities of organising the extracurricular activities with a sports specific, we carried out a research, the main method consisting in a questionnaire. The participants have been the physical education teachers from schools and high schools within Bucharest.

With the intention of carrying out the research we conceived and applied an opinion test for all the teachers from Bucharest, for the students of Bucharest's Grup Scolar 'Nichita Stănescu' and the parents of these students. The participation in the study was made banking on self opinion.

The analysis of the answers received, for the questionnaire used, from teachers and parents permitted us to reach the following conclusions:

- 1) Concerning the specialty literature, the problem of extracurricular activities is insufficiently approached;
- 2) In the wake of the undertaken study, we observed that nowadays there is a poor concern regarding the education through extracurricular activities with a sports specific, the heuristic value of the game, which contributes to the forming of the students' personality;
- 3) The undertaken study has highlighted the methods of organising the extracurricular activities with a sports specific, the forms of their organisation, which have to be conceived and carried out systematically, so as to contribute in an important way to the personal development of the students;
- 4) The diversity of the extracurricular activities through sports activities is imposed. We can see that, although the achievements in the targeted domain are evident, at present, the problems concerning the significance of the educational values of the sports activities, in the development of the high school students' personality, still remain unsolved. The 'spare time' extracurricular activities, are included in a larger background, which we can call a noninstitutionalised form of attaining education.
- 5) Practice demonstrated the necessity of elaborating a diversified programme of extracurricular activities with a sports specific, which correspond to the students' options. Unfortunately these are inexistent at the moment. This can contribute to the forming of the students' personality, but implies an ampler vision of the educational domain. The diversification, the promotion and the application of some sports activities will be able to avoid the monotony and the perception of advent physical fatigue or the students' lack of motivation. It will also bring them to have a positive attitude and interest in the practising of a form of physical education.
- 6) Attracting parents and involving them in the educational process leads to the rising of the interest in providing their children a 'natural' health and a physical condition, based on the voluntary practice of forms of organised exercise in a safe and sound environment.
- 7) According to the desires of the students from Grupul Scolar 'Nichita Stănescu', the educational offer for extracurricular activities, will be materialized in the extracurricular lessons- sports assembly- cheerleaders(for girls) and the training of the representative formations- basketball and handball(for boys), according to the answers received in the wake of the questionnaire addressed to the students of the Grup Scolar 'Nichita Stănescu'.

In the school year 2007/2008, regarding the high school education in Bucharest, we can ascertain the following :

- the domination of the extracurricular lessons as training the representative teams , since the specialised teachers are more preoccupied with the training of the school's representative disposition in the interscholar sports competitions;
- the insufficient preoccupation and support of specialised teachers in order to promote this type of activity;
- the domination of certain sports branches due to the continuity of certain schools' sports traditions.

PART III – STUDY REGARDING THE APPLICATION OF THE SPECIALLY CONCEIVED PROGRAMME FOR EXTRACURRICULAR LESSONS WITH SPORTS SPECIFIC, IN THE PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

The aim of our demarche was to outline the benefits brought by the practising of the extracurricular activities with sports specific, within the psychometric and psychosocial education of the high school students, in order to optimise the students' preparation by improving the content of the extracurricular activities with sports specific.

The hypotheses of the research:

Hypothesis number 1: The application of an extracurricular activities program with sports specific at a high school level, will lead to the optimisation of the motive activity and implicitly to the improvement of the students' motive habits.

Hypothesis number 2: The practising of extracurricular activities with sports specific at a high school level, will have a positive effect on the results that the students will have at the tests from the national curriculum, meaning that it will improve their performances.

Hypothesis number 3: The application of an extracurricular program with sports specific, determines a significant improvement of the interpersonal relations at the level of a group of high school students, expressed through the rates of the sociometric indicators.

Hypothesis number 4: The program applied in the extracurricular activities with sports specific, encompasses a good alternative to the spare time, which the high school students who practise extracurricular activities have.

The methods of research used were:

1. Methods of research – collecting data;
 - theoretical and generalisation analysis of the data;
 - the analysis of the scholar documents;
 - the observation method;
 - the investigation with the help of the questionnaire;
 - the sociometric method;
 - the pedagogical experiment;
 - methods of recording the data.
2. Methods of processing and interpreting the data;
 - the statistic-mathematical method;
 - the graphic method.

The structure and succession of the experimental demarche regarding the application of the extracurricular activities programme with sports specific at the Grup Scolar 'Nichita Stanescu' from Bucharest

The research was carried out at the Grup Scolar 'Nichita Stanescu' from Bucharest, on a stratified test specimen (teachers, students and parents) and an experimental test specimen. The research was carried out during the scholar years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 and had 3 distinctive stages:

The first stage (year 2006-2007) was an observation stage and comprised:

- the study of specialty literature concerning the subject of the research;
- the analysis of the instructive-educational extracurricular programmes;
- obtaining and analysing the opinions of the high school teachers from Bucharest, of the students of Grup Scolar 'Nichita Stanescu' and of the parents;
- the constitution of the groups of students according to the expressed opinion.

The second stage (September 2007- June 2008) of the research, had comprised the display of the main pedagogical experiment, stage in which the specially conceived programme and the tests for the subjects taking part in the experiment were applied.

The third stage (June 2008) , comprises the finality of the programme's application, the systematization , the processing and the interpretation of the data obtained during the main pedagogical experiment. Considering the obtained results we will formulate the conclusions and the methodical recommendations.

Specific conclusions of the experiment

Having evaluated the experiment we can formulate the following conclusions:

- A) The testing of the level of psycho-motive preparation highlighted an acceptable level of the motive qualities as a basis of the motive performances at this age;
- B) In the wake of the initial testing we observed o inadequate social climate, the existence of some deficient interpersonal relations between the students, which represents the starting point in the elaboration of the educational offer;
- C) The results of the theoretical approach, of the analysis and generalisation of the experience concerning the subject, the pedagogical observations, the sociologic survey carried out on the teachers and the students, enabled us to deteminate the content of the programme for the extracurricular lessons with sports specific.
- D) In the wake of having applied the experimental programme, we have observed the following:
 1. the application of the extracurricular activities program led to the improvement of the speed indices , at the final testing having obtained a 1.86%(0.13s) progress at the basketball group, 1.58%(0.11s)at the handball group and 2.95% (0.25s) at the

- cheerleaders group , the differences between the arithmetic average recorded at the two testings for each group being significant;
2. for the second common test- the long jump from a fixed place- the progress obtained by the basketball group is 3.67% (7.6 cm), that of the handball group is 4.09% (8.53 cm), and for the cheerleaders group the increase was 5.46% (8.87 cm), being significant for all 3 groups;
 3. at all the other testings the differences between the averages of the two testings were significant, which demonstrates that the activities program applied during the instruction process had a good efficiency, the hypotheses of the research having been confirmed.

The progress recorded for each of the 3 groups confirms the fact that the applied working method is efficient. So, we confirm the hypothesis which says that the application of an extracurricular program with sports specific which brings a substantial contribution to the level of driven preparation of the subjects and that it will have a positive effect on the results obtained by the students at the national curriculum examinations (hypothesis 1 and 2).

- E) The research carried out concerning the social climax and the interpersonal relations demonstrated that the participation of the students at the extracurricular lessons suggested in the programme , have determined superior rates at the final testing concerning the most important sociometric indices : the index of preferential power of the group , the index of preferential stability of the group, the index of cohesion;
- F) The extracurricular activities programme contributed not only to the development of the competences and abilities specific to the sports activities displayed, but also had a positive effect on the students' personality traits, influencing in a good way their attitude towards the practising of physical education, towards the negative effects of alcohol, smoking ,drugs , aggressive behaviour , antisocial actions, having influenced in a good way the scholar activity and the mental state of satisfaction, the self-esteem.

Students considered this type of educational activity very necessary and attractive, affirming that it is a very good alternative for spending spare time (hypothesis 4).

Practical-Methodical recommendations for the extracurricular activities with sports specific

The finalisation of the research enables us to formulate the following recommendations regarding the practical-methodical activity of the extracurricular activities with sports specific:

1. The initiation and promotion of some extracurricular activities programmes with sports specific, in order to motivate a number as large as possible of teachers and students who may practise them systematically according to each educational form;
2. The identification of the existing possibilities and the extending of the extracurricular activities with sports specific in all high schools , as extracurricular lessons (sports assembly and the training of the representative team), and also by other means of display;
3. The knowledge the teacher of Physical Education transmits during the compulsory lessons, the educating of attitudes and behaviour which favourise an active lifesyle, in order to attract the students to extracurricular activities with sports specific;

4. The diversification of the offer of extracurricular activities and the increase in their popularity , as a benefic alternative to the students' spending their spare time;
5. Finding some attractive and encouraging organisational forms for the sports contests that take place in schools and locally, which could involve the majority of students;
6. Creating some flexible hours or finding new locations for displaying activities of the extracurricular type;
7. Conceiving gradual programmes of instruction, adequate to the individual characteristics of the subjects;
8. Motivating the students to choose this type of activity by explaining to them the sang genetic effects of exercise, the monitoring of the body's harmony (anthropometric measurements, weight), prizes (laurels, appreciation etc);
9. The affective implication of the Physical Education teachers in the display of these extracurricular activities, bearing in mind that a lot of them take place outside the working hours. It is known that when dealing with physical education and scholar sports, the teachers who satisfy the wishes of their students obtain the best results. The teacher is obliged to influence the students' conscience through what they teach them and through the activities in which they place them.
10. The professional responsibility of the Physical Education teachers of convincing the high school's Curriculum Committee, in order to grant optional classes and extracurricular lessons- the sports assembly and the training of the representative formations. All these aimed so as to have a better perception of the subject 'Physical education and sports', in order to ensure satisfaction and recognition of the merits of both students, teachers, and also of the educational form they belong to.