

**ABSTARCT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS
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**THESIS TITLE: SPORTS – a favourable factor
of socialization and harmonization of inter-ethnic relations
at high school student’s level**

Key words: sports, socialization, harmonization, inter-ethnic relations, high school students

Introduction

This doctoral thesis is entitled “SPORTS – a favourable factor of socialization and harmonization of inter-ethnic relations at high school student’s level”. Thus, we want to present sports as a notable phenomenon in terms of the possibility of socializing students, but also as a means of harmonization of inter-ethnic relations among high school students in a multiethnic and multicultural environment.

The thesis is divided into three parts. The first part is a theoretical foundation, the second part presents the preliminary study conducted in Cluj-Napoca in schools with Romanian and Hungarian teaching language, and the third part contains the experiment conducted to study the effect of practicing sports systematically and in an organized setup.

Part I of the thesis

In Part I of the thesis we argue for the reevaluation of sport as a notable social phenomenon. For this reason we extend the analysis on the concept of sport during its historical development, showing the definitions of sports given by specialists but also the importance of this phenomenon for the European Union.

To understand in depth the phenomenon of sports in Romania we have to study the actual sport system of the state, so we presented the physical education and sport system in Romania, both theoretically (here we consider the special sport references) as and in terms of normative acts regulating Physical Education and Sport in Romania.

We also thought that it is important to outline the structure of contemporary sport, namely its internal structure. One of the most important elements of the sport is the organized training lesson that present as an efficient organizational framework to use the sporting phenomenon as a factor of socialization and harmonization of relations between the participants.

Because the subjects of the research were high school students (i.e. teenagers), we considered a major importance to formulate some fundamental ideas about their bio-motrical and psycho-social features to understand what would be their reactions towards sport, or better sad towards practicing sports in a multiethnic and multicultural group.

Biomotor abilities are developed, motor skills are learned, reinforced and improved, but what is the basic mechanism? In our opinion, the answer to the question is that the fundamental mechanism is the motor learning, thus we present the fundamentals of motor

learning, but in our opinion motor learning and social learning must go hand in hand, if we want to use entirely the facility offered by the sports phenomenon.

In the second chapter we want to present the sport in our contemporary society. So we present the development of the role of sports in society, while presenting the characteristics of the sports phenomenon that helps to build a social environment in which the member's of athletes-students groups, socialize and not in the least communicate.

In this context we present the characteristics of social groups in general and athletes and students groups in particular, also we discuss the notion of communication as a key means of socialization in social groups. Since Romania joined the European Union, we considered important to present the concept of EU and Romania citizens about sport, based on a study of the union in 2009, at the request of the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission.

In chapter three we highlight some basic ideas related to cultural and ethnic diversity in the European Union and Romania. In this approach we analyzed the concept and fundamentals of culture; we tried to present the differences between multiculturalism and multiculturalism, continuing with the foundation of notions like ethnic, minority and attitudes towards ethnical groups. However the desire that these theoretical concepts to be supported by the social reality in Romania and the European Union, we have presented the situation of ethnic groups in Romania, and based on studies at Union level we have highlighted the social climate in UE and Romania, finalizing with presenting the spread of discrimination in the European Union and Romania.

In chapter four we presented several studies conducted in Europe which have approached the sport in the context of inclusion and exclusion. Thus, it is studies by Pierre Weiss who emphasis on participation of Turks in France and Germany in sport clubs, especially football; Sabrina Granata, her research examines the phenomenon of "sport for immigrants" (Immigrant deporte) in the urban context in Madrid and highlights the role played by sports associations networks; and Ian P. Henry presents a picture of policy options in sports and cultural dialogue in the European Union. Also to highlight the strength of the sports phenomenon in terms of socialization and social integration based on concrete studies, we presented the social action through sport of Strasbourg in the French context, then social inclusion through sport in the project entitled "Sport Inspires Me" in the city of Lisbon in Portuguese context, and finally the project entitled "Neighborhood Sport" in the city of Iași Romania.

Chapter five develops inter-ethnic relations in Romania on the basis of studies presented in the Ethnic Relations Barometer editions 1994-1996, 2000, 2001 and 2002. At the same time we want to outline some concrete ideas about social cohesion and interethnic climate in Romania. For this we used public opinion poll conducted in 2008 by the Centre for Research on Ethnic Relations from the Institute for the Study of National Minorities.

Part II of the thesis

Part II details the study conducted to highlight sports among high school students in a multicultural and multiethnic environment. The main premise was that the sport has all the characteristics of a phenomenon that can be used for socialization in a diverse society as Romania. In order to actually use this possibility, in our opinion, it is important to understand

the perceptions, attitudes and preferences of the target group, which in this preliminary study were high school students from Cluj-Napoca.

Premises

One of the most important factors of sport –its addressability – contributed to the development of contemporary sport, so diverse and widespread, otherwise expressed, practicing physical exercises specific to sports, is addressed to the entire population of all ages. At the same time thousands of practitioners and fans are involved in the excitement of the race, not only following the athletic performance, but also getting physically and psychosocially balanced. Thus, it highlights the sporting phenomenon swept across the world and it is practiced by tens of millions of people all over the world.

The purpose of the research

Highlighting and creating a clear picture of the sport phenomenon among high school students in a multicultural and multiethnic environment. For this purpose we uphold the centralization objective and relevant information about the sport, sport in a multicultural and multiethnic environment from the perspective of high school students.

The objectives of the research

- Determining the composition of the school population by ethnicity and preference for sport;
- Delimitation of the interference between ethnicity and sport;
- Establishing the inter-ethnic climate at the high school level in schools with Romanian and Hungarian teaching language, on a representative sample.

Research tasks

- Establishing the research sample;
- Establishing the research methods;
- Centralizing information in a database;
- Highlighting the opinions of the students from the two ethnic groups on sports;
- Listing of practiced sports;
- Establishing an organizational framework for practicing sports by students;
- Highlight the favorite sports;
- Representation of the attitudes of high school students on the practice of sports (preferred) in a multicultural and multi-ethnic group.
- Determining the high school student's motivation to practice sports.

The basic method in this study was a questionnaire of 12 items formulated both in Romanian and Hungarian language. The research place was Cluj- Napoca in high schools with teaching in Romanian and Hungarian language, ie schools with Romanian language teaching- George Șincai High School, Nicolae Bălcescu High School, Mihai Eminescu High School; schools with Hungarian language teaching - Brassai Samuel High School, Báthory István High School, Apáczai Csere János High School, János Zsigmond Unitarian College, Reformed High School; school with Romanian and Hungarian language teaching (simultaneously) - Onisifor Ghibu High School. Research subjects were high school students (grades IX - XII) in educational institutions teaching in Romanian and Hungarian language, on a sample of 1574 subjects (762 subjects in schools with Romanian language teaching and 812 subjects from schools with Hungarian language teaching). The subject's ages were between 14 and 20 years, the average age being 16.3 years (in schools with Romanian language teaching) and 16.5 years (schools with Hungarian language teaching).

Conclusions

Among the subjects of the research, from the high school students, very few practice sport at competition level (20.16% of students in schools with Romanian language teaching, and 19.32% of students from schools with Hungarian language teaching). However, the students who practice sports at competition level in Romanian schools practice it sports clubs (73.03%), and in Hungarian schools in sport classes at school (58.82%).

All students have a favorite sport, or more, and the ratio between the two ethnic groups is almost identical.

The variety of sports that students could practice is very large, with different weights, especially for the swimming sports branch (23.60% and 31.95%).

Students would be willing to practice their favorite sport in a multiethnic and multicultural group (77.45% and 67.82%) and also are aware that the practice of sports is healthy. Thereby the students consider it a pleasant way to spend free time, it gives you the opportunity to meet other people, otherwise formulated to socialize with fellow group.

Because Cluj-Napoca is a multicultural and multiethnic center, but at the same time due to the region's history, students have friends from other ethnic groups, so Romanian students have Hungarians friends (50.11%) and Rroma (23.13%) and Hungarian students have Romanian friends (74.40%). However nearly 70% of students surveyed would choose the group of friends as a target group to practice their favorite sports. But also students would agree to practice their favorite sport in a multiethnic and multicultural group with a positive attitude and the attitude of their parents would be as positive as theres.

Students know how to communicate in languages other than their mother tongue, such as English, but in a multicultural and multi-ethnic group the majority would like to communicate in their mother tongue (64.49% -77.22%) but also at a close equality could communicate in English (56.12% -48.06%).

Part III of the thesis

Part III contains details of the experiment conducted to study the effects of sport on ethnic socialization and the harmonization of interethnic relations in a multi-ethnic group.

The purpose of the research

Presentation of the sport phenomena as a factor of socialization which shows characteristics worthy taken into consideration when discussing about harmonization of interethnic relations among high school students in a multicultural and multiethnic environment.

The objective of the research

- Highlighting the fact that the practicing sport activities in an organized setup has an important role in the socialization of individuals;
- Determining the effect of organized physical activities in harmonizing relations in a multiethnic group in a multicultural environment.

Research tasks

In order to achieve the above objectives emerge certain tasks, of which we present:

- Planning and organizing the framework for the selection of subjects;
- Compiling a set of tests and control samples to assess subjects;
- Designing a sport activity program for high school students;

- Establishing the research sample;
- The implementation of the specially designed program;
- Application of the assessment tools and data collection;
- Processing and interpreting data, drawing conclusions.

The achievement of the tasks arising from the research objectives, we consider:

- The subjects participating in this research should be involved in sports activities at least 3-4 times per week;
- It is beneficial using resources from several sports branches;
- It is required a systematic unfolding and appropriate framework;
- It is necessary directing the activities by a sports specialist to make the students aware of the physically, mentally and socially benefits of practicing sports.

Research Hypotheses

In a world of diversity, sports represent a bridge of communication between different groups and individuals with different ethnicity, but also with different cultures and religions. In this context we wanted to know what effect it may have practicing different sports branches in a multi-ethnic group (in our case a group of people belonging to Romanian and Hungarian ethnic group).

For this purpose we make the following assumptions:

Hypothesis no.1. Practicing organized sport activities influences the perception of the participants about ethnicity and inter-ethnic relationships;

Hypothesis no.2. Practicing organized sport activities have a positive influence on the practitioners sociability;

Hypothesis no.3. Practicing organized sport activities have a positive influence on the acceptance and tolerance of others in the peer group;

Hypothesis no.4. Practicing organized sport activities have a positive influence on the development of the biomotor abilities;

Hypothesis no.5. The level of development of the biomotor abilities can influence the level of acceptance and tolerance of the participants.

Research methods

For this purpose the main method at this stage of the research was the experimental method. Another method used was a questionnaire that contained 10 parameters that measured prejudice about their own ethnic characteristics and the other ethnic group characteristics.

Item No.3 measured subjects' perception of the relationship between Romanian and Hungarians. Item No. 4 presents nine statements related to ethnicity, answer possibility with True/False, and it presents the true personal relationship with individuals of other ethnicities.

Items No. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 measured on a 5-level Likert scale the social distance between the two ethnic groups in specific situations.

We have also used three tests namely: first test applied was entitled “How sociable are you?” which measures the subjects sociability, the second test applied was “Acceptance of others”, which uses a scale of acceptance of others, third test applied was “Are you tolerant with others?” which measured the subjects' tolerance towards their peers. Duration of the experiment was 05.iunie.2011 - 12.august.2011.

Location and subjects

The location was the city of Cluj-Napoca at “Iuliu Hațieganu” Sports Park. The research subjects were high school students with Romanian and Hungarian ethnicity from high schools in Cluj-Napoca. The age of the subjects were between 16 and 18 years and the average age of the experimental group was 17.05 years (17.2 years Romanian ethnicity and 16.9 years for Hungarian ethnicity) and the control group 16.95 years (Romanian ethnicity 16.8 years and Hungarian ethnicity 17.1 years) it had been used two samples of 20 subjects, 10 Romanian ethnic and 10 Hungarian ethnic, divided into two groups - an experimental group and an control group.

Experimental research conclusions

In terms of their perception of their own ethnic characteristics and the other's ethnic characteristics it can be seen that the students from both ethnic groups after training together had changed their minds about both ethnic groups, this is clear from the various attributes listed at the initial testing and final testing. We can assume that these changes in the way they see themselves and the way they perceive others ethnic characteristics has been caused by sports, namely the workouts that they spent together.

Regarding the perception of the relationship between Romanian and Hungarians we can conclude that between the initial and final testing is a significant difference, the opinion of those surveyed changed over the ten weeks of the questionnaire application.

Regarding personal reporting of the subjects to people of Hungarian/Romanian ethnicity in the both cases, there were differences between the responses given at the initial and final testing, but the responses had a similar trend. Thus we can deduce that the collective trainings had an effect on their perception of the Hungarian/Romanian ethnics, but this effect wasn't so strong to radically change the student's perception.

Regarding the acceptance of persons of Hungarian/Romanian ethnics as neighbours, friends, teammates, sharing wardrobe, family and friends can conclude that Romanian students, after completing ten weeks of training would accept in a lesser extent Hungarian people as neighbours, friends, etc. than at the initial testing, while Hungarian students, after completing ten weeks of training, would accept in a greater extent Romanian ethnics, even in the family or as a friend.

Regarding the sociability of the subjects in conclusion, we can state that the ten weeks of training are beneficial to students sociability, while we have seen a change in students tolerance, data in the initial and final testing indicate this fact.

To verify the statistical Hypothesis no. 4 and 5 we formulated the following null hypothesis:

Hypothesis no.4. Practicing organized sport activities has no influence on the development of the biomotor abilities;

Hypothesis no.5. The level of development of the biomotor abilities has no influence upon the level of acceptance and tolerance of the participants.

If we analyze the results obtained in experimental research reported to the formulated hypothesis and the statistical characteristics of the data, we can state the followings:

- For both ethnic groups, after attending training conducted together had changed their minds about both ethnicities, it is apparent from the different characteristics they listed at the initial testing and final testing, also in the perception of relations

between Romanian and Hungarian can be concluded that between the initial and final testing is a significant difference, the opinion of those surveyed changed over the ten weeks of the questionnaires so we can assume that the hypothesis no. 1 – “practicing organized sport activities influences the perception of the participants about ethnicity and inter-ethnic relationships” - it can be considered assumed.

- Regarding the subject’s sociability it can be stated that it is obvious that the ten weeks of training are beneficial to student’s sociability, therefore hypothesis no. 2 – “practicing organized sport activities have a positive influence on the practitioners sociability” - it can be considered assumed.
- Regarding the acceptance of others in the fellow group it can be enounced that it isn’t a notable difference between the initial and final testing, but in terms of tolerance the subjects can highlight a change, evidenced by the data from the initial and final test thereby hypothesis no. 3 – “practicing organized sport activities have a positive influence on the acceptance and tolerance of others in the peer group” - can be assumed only on tolerance.
- To verify the hypothesis No. 4 – “practicing organized sport activities has a positive influence on the development of the biomotor abilities” we had formulated the following null hypothesis: “practicing organized sport activities has no influence on the development of the biomotor abilities” Thus, the data obtained by Eurofit tests show that between the two tests carried out there is a statistically significant correlation for both Romanian ethnic subjects (maintaining balance: $\rho = 0.95$, $p < 0.001$; trunk mobility: $\rho = 0.95$, $p < 0.001$, lower limbs strength: $\rho = 0.96$, $p < 0.001$; abdominal muscle strength: $\rho = 1$, $p < 0.001$; cardio-vascular resistance: $\rho = 0.85$, $p < 0.002$) and for the Hungarian subjects (maintaining balance: $\rho = 0.99$, $p < 0.001$; trunk mobility: $\rho = 0.99$, $p < 0.001$; lower limbs strength: $\rho = 0.99$, $p < 0.001$; abdominal muscle strength: $\rho = 0.97$, $p < 0.001$, cardio-vascular resistance: $\rho = 0.95$, $p < 0.001$), which disproves the null hypothesis. Under these circumstances we can state that the hypothesis No.4 “practicing organized sport activities have a positive influence on the development of the biomotor abilities” is confirmed.
- To verify the hypothesis No.5 – “the level of development of the biomotor abilities can influence the level of acceptance and tolerance of the participants” we have formulated the following null hypothesis: “the level of development of the biomotor abilities has no influence upon the level of acceptance and tolerance of the participants”. So the data obtained by performing Spearman correlation between the acceptance and the biomotor abilities, the tolerance and the biomotor abilities indicates that there is no statistically significant relationship between them, so the null hypothesis was confirmed. Under these conditions the hypothesis no. 5 – “the level of development of the biomotor abilities can influence the level of acceptance and tolerance of the participants” is not confirmed.

As a final conclusion we can highlight the fact that sport is emerging as a favorable factor of socialization, this is apparent both from the theoretical foundations of the thesis and from the studies presented in Europe regarding socialization and social integration of ethnic minority groups, but in terms harmonization of interethnic relations through engagement of

people of different ethnicities in the same sporting activity, in our view can be achieved, but throughout the bibliographical study and the experiment itself, we had realized that in fact is required a long period of time (10 weeks is not enough), but also requires a team of specialists in sport, sociology, psychology, etc. because in our opinion for the actual realization of such an approach needs much more information from the people's social environment, family environment and from the environment of institutionalized education.