

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, RESEARCH, YOUTH AND SPORT
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT

**EXTRACURRICULAR SPORTS ACTIVITIES - OPPORTUNITIES FOR
PSYCHOLOGICAL, PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF 10 TO
12 YEAR OLD STUDENTS**

Thesis Advisor:

PHD Teodorescu Silvia

Doctoral Candidate:

Stănculescu P.A.Laura Mihaela

Key words: Physical education, curriculum in United Kingdom and Romania, extracurricular activities in schools.

The Romanian education system is trying to implement change, through adaption and re-organisation of the whole structure of the curriculum. It is necessary to understand its direction and dimensions by comparing it to other European education systems. This comparison makes the changes more readily understandable in the Romanian education system and strives to embrace the strategies and effects that education practitioners have developed all around the world.

The education system, curriculum and extracurricular activities have a major influence on the physical, psychological and social development of a child, adolescence and later on in their adult life.

The research is divided in three major parts:

Part I contains the theoretical aspects of the research and is structured in six major chapters. The research starts with a historical description showing the evolution of

physical education and sports around the world with the study's focus on the Romanian and United Kingdom (UK) curriculums.

The Romanian and UK physical education and sports curriculum's structure are examined closely including planning and assessments procedures. The National Curriculum of England and Wales which is central to raising standards *lies at the heart of all policies. It sets out a clear, full and statutory entitlement to learning for all students. It determines the content of what will be taught, and sets attainment targets for learning. It also determines how performance will be assessed and reported. An effective National Curriculum therefore gives teachers, students, parents, employers and the wider community a clear and shared understanding of the skills and knowledge that young people will attain at school.* It allows schools to meet the individual learning needs of students and to develop *a distinctive character and ethos rooted in their local communities.* Furthermore, it provides a framework within which *all partners in education can support students to further their learning. It must be robust enough to define and defend the core of knowledge and cultural experience which is the entitlement of every pupil and at the same time flexible enough to give teachers the scope to build their teaching around it in ways which will enhance its delivery to their students.* The focus of this National Curriculum of England and Wales, together with the wider school curriculum, is therefore to ensure that students develop, from an early age, the essential physical education skills they need to learn; to provide them with a guaranteed, full and rounded entitlement to learning; to foster their creativity; and to give teachers discretion to find the best ways to inspire in their pupils a joy and commitment to learning that will last a lifetime.

This National Curriculum of England and Wales includes for the first time *a detailed, overarching statement on inclusion which makes clear the principles* schools must follow in their teaching right across the curriculum, to ensure that all students have the chance to succeed, whatever their individual needs and the potential barriers to their learning may be.

When planning, schools should also consider the general teaching requirements for inclusion, use of language, use of information and communication technology, and health and safety that apply across the programmes of study.

The ***Knowledge, skills and understanding*** in the programmes of study identify the aspects of physical education in which students make progress:

- acquiring and developing skills

- selecting and applying skills, tactics and compositional ideas
- evaluating and improving performance
- knowledge and understanding of fitness and health.

The attainment target for physical education sets out the ‘knowledge, skills and understanding that students of different abilities and maturities are expected to have by the end of each Key Stage.’ The attainment target consists of eight level descriptions of increasing difficulty, plus a description for exceptional performance above level 8. Each level description describes the types and range of performance that students working at that level should characteristically demonstrate.

To conclude the theoretical part, a detailed comparative study between the Romanian and UK curriculums comes to reinforce the differences and similarities of both countries. In this chapter, the importance of extracurricular activities in British schools is examined in comparison with Romanian schools.

Part II - contains the preliminary research focusing on the role of extracurricular sports activities and the physical, psychological and social development of students in Romanian and British schools. This part lays the foundation of the thesis by setting the hypotheses and research tasks. It also describes the group of students involved in the research, location, duration and methods used, tests applied to equipment used and the preliminary research’s results.

Preliminary research hypotheses were:

1. The physiological development in children between 10-12 years old involved in the research presents important changes because of the multicultural background and different geographical locations of the students such as Europe, Asia, Africa and America.
2. The multicultural structure of classes involved in the research and how, at a young age, students (10-12 years old) influence their social relationships in a negative way.

Involved in the research were students from the International School of Bucharest (ISB), Spectrum School of Bucharest and the International Computer High School of Bucharest (ICHB).

Spectrum is the junior school of ICHB where students attend up to the age of 11 following a similar Romanian curriculum. ISB uses the British curriculum.

ISB had 40 students (20 girls and 20 boys) tested, comprising of two Year 4 and two Year 5 classes aged between 10 and 11 years. Over the course of the study some students reach the age of 12. A similarly balanced group of students was selected from Spectrum and ICHB.

At ISB, the *Active Play programme* was applied whereas at Spectrum and ICHB no programme was applied which acted as the control. Initially, the research came to the conclusion that Year 4 boys in the Spectrum school were taller ($X=145.73\text{cm}$) and heavier ($X=37.93\text{kg}$) than students at ISB. There were no noticeable differences in the girls in the undertaken somatic tests. The effort capacity investigated by the Ruffier test did not show any relevant results in any of the students involved in Year 4 or 5 from all schools involved.

From the physical development aspect of the testing, differences in Year 4 boys in push-ups, flexion and extension of the trunk from ISB gave better results. The ISB girls in Year 4 obtained better results in push -ups, extension and flexion of the trunk, mobility and flexibility comparing to Spectrum and ICHB.

Year 5 boys did not show any relevant differences between each other in height but ICHB students have a higher Body Mass Index ($X=37.93$) than students from ISB. The girls did not present major differences in height and weight but with arm span there was a difference of ICHB ($X=141.33$) and ISB ($X=148.36$). With endurance it was clearly noticed that ISB's girls registered better results ($X=2.75\text{min}$) in comparison with the other schools.

Therefore the first hypothesis has been demonstrated by stressing that *there are differences in the biological and physical development of students at this age group because of the multicultural background of the children*. The calculation of the preferential indices shows a disorganisation of the groups both in Year 4 and 5 in students at ISB due to the cultural and social differences and the multicultural backgrounds, demonstrating that the second hypotheses is also valid.

Part III of the research involved the role of the Active Play programme in students' (aged 10-12 years) development and the results of the experiment.

The research hypotheses are:

1. The elaboration of a special physical exercise programme called *ACTIVE PLAY* performed during extracurricular activities will develop children (aged 10-12) psychologically, physically and socially.

2. The extracurricular physical activities performed systematically and structured will improve the interest of students and encourage them to perform a variety of physical activities out-with normal school schedules.
3. The participation in the Active Play programme will increase social communication and interaction leading to better group relationships between children.

The Active Play programme was specially designed for the International School of Bucharest to help develop students' physical fitness, psychological and social skills. This programme includes different tests from *Eurofit testing battery* tests used for measuring balance (Flamingo Test), hand/eye coordination (Alternate hand wall toss test). Questionnaires for teachers, parents and students along with sociometric tests were used during the research. The Active Play programme contains exercises and invasion games played after school in an extra-curricular club with a variety of activities all set up in an original school sports' calendar such as ISB Sports Day, Ice Skating Week, Interclass competition week.

Research Conclusions

The data for Year 4 students at the end of the research shows that:

Physical fitness

At Spectrum School, there were measurable increases in height and weight with the boys over the duration of the research.

Boys registered minimal statistical improvements in results in throwing the ball from standing position, the Matorin test and long distance running over the duration of the research. The girls registered results showing a reduction in performance in sprinting 5x5m, long distance running, throwing the ball from standing position, and flexion of the trunk from sitting.

Somatics and body functionality

After training with the Active Play programme ISB students registered superior results comparing to the other school in height, Ruffier test with both girls and boys, sprinting 5x5, push ups, throwing the ball from standing, long jump from standing, Matorin test and long distance running. The International School of Bucharest students showed better coordination, balance, abdominal and back strength as well as better resistance with aerobic effort. The ISB girls obtained statistically better results than girls from Spectrum School in sprinting 5x5m, push ups, throwing the ball from standing position, long jump from standing,

extension of the trunk from lying on the front, flexion of the trunk from lying on the back, running for long distance and Matorin test. It was noticed that an improvement in speed and coordination, strength of upper and lower limbs, strength of the abdominal and back muscles and improved resistance of the body to physical effort.

The data for Year 5 students at the end of the research shows that:

Physical fitness

Year 5 boys at ICHB registered showed a greater increase in height and weight than boys from ISB. However, sprinting 3x10m, throwing the ball from standing position, long jump from standing, abdominal and back strength ISB boys obtained greater results. ICHB girls obtained higher results in height but not in sprinting 3x10m, throwing the ball from standing, standing long jump, flexion and extension of the trunk.

Somatics and body functionality

The statistical results show ISB boys have increased body length and reduced weight since the beginning of the experiment. They also recorded an improvement in endurance, strength in both upper and lower limbs, sprinting, coordination and mobility of the body, Matorin test and long distance running (800m).

The ISB girls have increased body length and reduced weight since the beginning of the experiment. Ruffier test showed an improvement in the results comparing with the beginning of the experiment. They obtained better results than ICHB in sprinting 3x10, push ups, throwing the ball from standing position, standing long jump, Matorin test, long distance running (600m), abdominal test and back extension. All the mentioned results will confirm the first hypotheses of the research.

Questionnaires

After analysing the responses of all questionnaires addressed to parents, teachers and students, the conclusion was that the participation of students in extracurricular activities organised by the school influenced positively on the children's academic results. Parents, in general, encourage and influence students' decisions in choosing their after school activities and they think that their school should offer compulsory 3-4 hours of Physical Education and Sport per week. ISB teachers participate in sports activities of approximately 2-3 hours a week comparing to teachers at Spectrum who have minimal input to

after school physical activities. A vast majority of students in ISB mentioned that they take part in sports activities organised by their school and very few train at other local clubs.

The second hypothesis has proved that the extracurricular sports activities organised systematically can improve the children's interest in being active and also motivate them to participate in extracurricular sports activities after school.

The sociometric test applied on the ISB students showed that the social relationships between students improved considerably at the end of the experiment comparing to the data obtained at the beginning of the experiment. At the end of the Active Play programme it was noticed statistically that the group became more homogeneous and students interaction with each other improved, and social exclusion was reduced compared to the initial data.

Therefore we can firmly confirm that the third research hypothesis is valid and was proved at the end of the experiment, asserting that students participation in the Active Play programme increases social interaction whilst creating more positive relationships between members of the group.