

SPORTS – A SOCIAL INTEGRATION FACTOR IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract: Sport is one of the most dynamic social activities aimed at improving the human being in all aspects. In a world of political change and socio-economic transformations, different religions, multiple cultures and ethnicities sports can be a universal communication language understood by the whole world. It is well known the beneficial influences of practicing sport. However accession to the beneficial influence requires time, continuity, and not least of direction by a specialist in sports. But often it has been forgotten that sports has a very dynamic social side. The social side of the sports is highlighted best in his integrative force. So we want to present the sport as a factor of social integration in multicultural environments with practical examples from the European Union. At the same time we want to present some results from the research conducted to study sports in multicultural environments (in this case the city of Cluj-Napoca), but also the effect of sports on individual integration in a multicultural group.

Keywords: sport, social integration, integration factor, multicultural environment.

Introduction

In all cultures of the world, since antiquities, physical exercises had been practiced with very diverse objectives and forms. For example in ancient Greece it had been practiced some physical exercise in a competition form, but it was not sport, because the term of "sport" was not known at the time. The ancient Olympics were the major competition of the Greeks and offered the opportunity of demonstrating the high qualities and skills in agonistic competitions.

At the end of the nineteenth century, with the emergence of physical education system of Thomas Arnold, with the reform from the Rugby School is shaping a social phenomenon called sport. From the entire activity of Thomas Arnold can be inferred an own definition of the term "sport" that has a playful competitions pleasure, but focuses on moral formation through training the body helping to shape the lifestyle in his contemporary England. (Kirişescu, C., 1964)

The theoretical and practical approaches about practicing physical exercise in the form of sport, had witnessed a great development. The best known synthesis of these ideas was made in the early twentieth century, by Pierre de Coubertin, who brought to live the Ancient Olympic Games in a modern form. Coubertin takes over and develops the ideas formulated by Arnold. In his opinion "sport pedagogy as Thomas Arnold understood it is the best and most active leverage that educators can use in any country to form moral adolescents in accordance with their physical capabilities. Nothing is solid or lasting in physical education, if not accomplished in collaboration with sports" (Dragnea, A., C., Teodorescu Mate, S., 2002, p.4).

The most important factor that contributed to the development of sport as we know it today, so diverse and widespread, was its addressability, because practicing physical exercise as a sport is addressed to the entire population of all ages, so thousands of practitioners and fans are involved in the emotion of the race; aims not only athletic performance, but also

obtaining the psycho-physical balance of all participant. (Dragnea, A., C., Teodorescu Mate, S., 2002)

Romania, in the course of European integration, had made steps in adopting “legal” norms concerning sports: European Charter for Sport, Sports Ethics Code, the European Convention on the fight against doping, World Anti-Doping Code, International Convention of October 19.2005 against doping in sport, White Paper on Sport, Lisbon Treaty. From these documents, in particular from the White Paper on Sport we can conclude the followings:

- ➔ „Sport is an area of human activity that greatly interests citizens of the European Union and has enormous potential for bringing them together, reaching out to all, regardless of age or social origin.” (Comisia Europeană, 2007, p.8);
- ➔ „As a tool for health-enhancing physical activity, the sport movement has a greater influence than any other social movement.” (Comisia Europeană, 2007, p.8);
- ➔ „Sport makes an important contribution to economic and social cohesion and more integrated societies.” (Comisia Europeană, 2007, p.14);
- ➔ „Sport can also facilitate the integration into society of migrants and persons of foreign origin as well as support inter-cultural dialogue.” (Comisia Europeană, 2007, p.14);
- ➔ „Sport involves all citizens regardless of gender, race, age, disability, religion and belief, sexual orientation and social or economic background.” (Comisia Europeană, 2007, p.16);
- ➔ „Through concrete actions, sport has a considerable potential as a tool to promote education, health, inter-cultural dialogue, development and peace.” (Comisia Europeană, 2007, p.17).

Sport makes a substantial contribution to education through promoting sports ethics code, which records the participation in sport activities in a moral climate which the participants learn to appreciate and apply the principles of ethics.

We agree with the statements that sport can be defined as “physical activity whose practice requires a methodical training, compliance to certain rules and a certain discipline, based on the competitive element and aiming to obtain performance” (Stănciulescu, A. et.al, 2005, p.1317) and “a race specific activity in which is intensive harnessed all forms of physical exercise practice to obtain by the individual or collective the improvement of morph-functional and psychological possibilities, resulting in a record, overcoming themselves or a partner ”(Nicu, A. et.al, 1973, p.7).

In the White Paper on Sport the term of “sport” is used upon the definition established by the Council of Europe: “all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organized participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels.” (Comisia Europeană, 2007, p.7)

In the reference system of relations between man and society, the role of motor activity, from the social point of view increases. Social reality must correspond to human possibilities. This parallel requires constant adaptation of the physical education and sport resources to the needs and the social realities, accomplished on the bases of permanent bounds of the human body with the environment. (Nicu, A., 1971)

Nowadays, sport is a dynamic social activity whose aim is to improve the human being in all its aspects – biological, psychological, sociological, educational, etc. In a world characterized by rapid political and socio-economic transformations, of different religions, multiple cultures and ethnicities the universal language understood by the global population is sport. From this point of view, “it is part of a common culture that accompanies the development of ancient civilization and participate in the creation of art by living” (Dragnea, A., Teodorescu Mate, S., 2002, p.20). Although today it can be found in very diverse forms – sport performance, high performance sport, school and university sport, sport for all, etc.-sport stated in recent decades “as a constant and popular mass phenomenon” (Dragnea A., Teodorescu Mate, S., 2002, p.20). Thus we can say that sports reflect the society that creates it.

Sport, socialization and social integration

Sport as socialization and social integration factor is greatly influenced by the society in which it functions, which is the organized manner of the existence of social life. The essence of society is given by individuals engaged in a series of activities. A society exists only as a plurality of interactions of individuals who achieve things that they might not accomplish otherwise.

From the documents drawn from general sociology area, it can be inferred the idea that socialization is the process by which people “as biological beings, are modeled to complex social beings” (Mihu, A., 2002, p.177), otherwise sad socialization involves creating a social personality based on the requirements and expectations of a given socio-cultural reality. (Mihu, A. 2002)

Socialization is a fundamental process of transmitting culture and social organization to generations thus ensuring continuity, stability and perpetuation of society. Learning a language, assimilating norms and values, assuming common traditions, values and beliefs provides to children and young people the chance of participation in the collective social life. In this way all members of society accept the same values, uses the same rules in laying down interpersonal or social relationships.

Thus in sports, we can start from the premise that socialization is the process by which individuals acquire skills, attitudes, values, norms and behaviors patterns that make them able to participate as active members of their society. The socio-cultural dimension of sport presents the opportunity to participants to meet other individuals, to communicate, to take part in various sporting activities. But we believe that the most important is learning the moral attitudes - tolerance, fair-play, respect - adapting to the group affiliation goals. (Dragnea, A. & Teodorescu Mate, S., 2002, p.28-29) So the sports activity offers “a appropriate environment to acquire attitudes, social-personal values and behaviors appreciated at cultural level and that what is learned through physical activity are transferred to other spheres of life“ (as cited Sage GH in Svoboda, B., 1996, p.16).

The socialization process, because of cultural, ethnic, political and economic diversity in different countries, knows a remarkable diversity, most showing the positive influence of sport on personality and health of those who practice it. Therewith the advanced societies contour an optimal condition for the development of sporting phenomenon by facilitating access to a growing number of citizens to its benefits, based on the premises that a society

works best when its citizens are well developed physically and mentally, but adequate integrated into society.

According to the information from the special Eurobarometer survey no. 334 (Special Eurobarometer 334, Wave 72.3-Sport and Physical Activity, 2009) related to sports and physical activity in the European Union on a sample of 26788 European citizens can be inferred that the importance of physical activity and sport is widely accepted in the EU, whose citizens recognize a range of reasons. This ensures a good basis for future work in the field of sport in the European Union.

A clear majority of EU citizens (65%) practice some form of physical exercise at least once a week, however, a quarter of respondents say they are completely or almost inactive in terms of physical activity. This message indicates that the relationship between health and physical fitness hasn't reached an important segment of the EU population.

Most countries where people are physically active are generally grouped northern EU, while the least active are they mainly the southern part of the EU. It is most likely a sign that the organization of society, especially in work and leisure time planning as well as economic reasons, plays a key role in citizens' participation in sports and physical activities. It may also reflect differences in organization of physical activity and sport in Member States, including issues of funding and spending priorities in sport.

Examples of social integration through sport in the European Union

Sports and all physical experiences, is located at the intersection of nature and culture. It feeds on emotions and requires rules, focuses on competition and encourages cooperation. In this way sport creates a network of relationships in which each of these concepts is strongly influenced by the ideas and traditions. As a sensor of social change sports as inclusion and integration are a minded sensor of the society involved, and an indicator of efficiency and effectiveness of public policy.

In this context, several studies have been conducted on the integration of people who practice sports and were belonging to different ethnic groups in the countries that they have chosen to live and work.

Thereby are given as examples of Turkish football players in France and Germany (studies of P. Weiss, 2010, p.119-126), which highlights some interesting aspects. The Turkish immigrants, members of mono-community sport clubs give the impression of solidarity in a tight community, having little contact with the host society.

The German state policy related to immigration has changed and currently use policies to support collective activities of ethnic minorities in Germany. In the sports fields has introduced policies to help ethnic clubs, has taken important steps against racism on the football field, and had set up intercultural management programs. So clubs and associations based on ethnic criteria are very common, especially football clubs, because they are considered – in the context of multicultural concept of integration – the main route of immigrant participation in organized sport in Germany, and the first step towards integration in the country.

France adopted a “republican” model according to which cultural diversity through immigration is not expected to last because immigrants adopt the French culture. The existence of minority communities on French territory is not recognized and there aren't

references made to “ethnic minority” because the individual is not classified as “black, white, North African or Turkish”, but especially by self identifying themselves as members of the nation. This open concept supported by the sports movement in France lead to the opinion that “the sport community” is an institution that strives to transform all athletes who subscribe to its beliefs, values and goals of a wider 'sports community'. The practical effect is the gradual disappearance of clubs based on ethnic or national origin, in a process of cultural interpenetration.

It also highlights the ideas that sport is accepted as concrete means capable of producing real social integration process if the social and sport associations and practitioners themselves are supported by all institutional organizations.

Sport can represent a powerful factor of dialogue and integration. Sport is a universal language and can play a complete role in strengthening and coloring relationship between people, nations and races. As a social phenomenon, it represents a multilateral dimension; always promoted a strong dynamics in socialization and integration. Million migrants take part with their own culture in the evolution of the sport phenomenon, but also in the relationship between sport and multiculturalism.

In the contemporary world the number of differences increases with the needs that claim the same diversity. Multiculturalism is valued in social, political and cultural practices all over the world. The global nature that characterizes the contemporary world does not allow us to ignore the serious problems that develop in the process.

In this case are given as examples of the Latin American immigrants in Madrid (the study of S. Granata, 2010, p.127-136), which highlights the integration aspect of sports. The Latin American immigrants are involved in sport in closed sports associations that offer support and help to each other not only in sport, but also by encouraging their integration in terms of language and work. In conclusion we can emphasize that in this context the city of Madrid, the sport can't be seen as the only activity that promotes social integration rather as a component support of the activities aiming to break the barriers between different cultures.

Culture, multiculturalism and multiculturality

Culture, “as a distinct way of life of a group, provides individual and social identity” (Schifineț, C., 1999, p.159). But the expansion of social, economic, demographic and cultural diversity, “diversity imposes itself, it is inevitable, is an intrinsic attribute of the social, nature and culture” (Nedelcu, A., 2008, p.9), and diversity “always existed, it still exists and there will exist regardless of the will of individuals or groups”(Nedelcu, A., 2008, p.9).

“Multiculturality is not and cannot be anything other than the co-existence in one and the same time in one and the same overall cultural reality, more particular cultures or subcultures” (Achim, M., 2002, p.123), and multiculturalism is “a phenomenon shifted from knowledge and interpretation (namely from multiculturalism) that uses or parasites in one way or another, to the ideological and political area” (Achim, M., 2002, p.123). In this context, multiculturalism is “often materialized in programs and policy actions designed to implement desirable and beneficial frames in the intercultural relations” (Achim, M., 2002, p.123), Canada, Sweden, Australia are examples in this sense. Also multiculturalism has to be “accepted in the present as the most effective and morally desirable way to resolve cultural differences” (Nastase, L., Salat, L., 2000, p.124), because “cultural diversity between and

within societies suggests that there is no single cultural pattern, the best, that there isn't a inherently good or bad culture, the idea underlying cultural relativism" (Nedelcu, D., 2007, p.18); thereby the "values of a culture must be judged in close connection with the social context to which it belongs and not on the criteria of another cultures" (Nedelcu, D., 2007, p.18).

Because the sport is not only a physical activity but also a cultural one that presents "a favourable environment for achieving intercultural education" (Ciolca, C., 2005, p.91), the sport branches had become universal, and the great sportsmen don't belong to a single culture, country, nation or ethnic group, they "became global" (Ciolca, C., 2005, p.91). In this context, sport education is a set of activities "for the transmission and formation of knowledge, skills, behaviours and values of humankind in this area to the new generation" (Ciolca, C., 2005, p.92), but also it is process by which "forms and develops the fundamental human sides like physical, moral, aesthetic, affective, cognitive, etc." (Ciolca, C., 2005, p.92). So sport education aims the assimilation of the sports external world throughout transmitting the sport values in the form and content of the contemporary culture. Sport brings together many times individuals from different cultures, overcoming the feelings of cultural differentiation. The best examples are the professional football, basketball, handball and volleyball teams around the world, where we witness a considerable cultural, ethnic and social diversity.

The possibility of social integration through sport – the case of Cluj-Napoca

Cluj-Napoca has an important multicultural tradition. This urban center is characterized by the presence of Orthodox Christian religion (65.62%), Reformed (9.73%), Greek Catholic (4.36%) and Roman Catholic (4.60%), Pentecostal (2, 49%), Baptist (1.11%), Unitarian (0.91%), Adventist (0.32%), Mosaic (0.04%) and Muslim (0.27%). The presence of these religious communities is complemented by ethnic diversity, with the presence of multiple ethnic groups like: Romanian (75.71%), Hungarian (15.27%), Roma (1.01%), Germany (0.17%), Hebrew (0.05%), Greek (0.02%), Ukrainian (0.04%), Armenian, Arabic and Chinese. (Recensământul populației din anul 2011) In recent years, in Cluj-Napoca has increase the number of asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and the number of employees of international companies

The purpose of this research was to highlight and create a clear picture of the phenomenon of sport among high school students in a multicultural and multiethnic environment. For this purpose it was intended to centralize objective and relevant information about the sport, practicing sports in a multicultural and multiethnic environment, from the perspective of high school students. In this context, the research subjects were high school students (IX-XII grades) from educational institutions with Romanian and Hungarian language instruction, on a sample of 1574 subjects (762 subjects from schools with Romanian language instruction and 812 subjects from schools with Hungarian language instruction). Subjects were aged between 14 and 20 years, the average age being 16 years and 3 months (in Romanian schools) and 16 years and 5 months (in Hungarian schools). (András, Á., Grigore, V., 2011, p.42-48)

Next we want to present some results concerning the issues addressed in this paper.

The questioned subjects have friends of other ethnicities than their own (64.86% - 80.13%); 25.14% -17.07% answered negatively, they don't have friends of other ethnicities,

and 10% -2.8% didn't know. The subjects from educational institutions with Romanian language instruction, in a proportion of 50.11% have Hungarian ethnic friends and 23.13% have Roma (gypsy) friends. The subjects from educational institutions with Hungarian language instruction, in a proportion of 74,4% have Romanian ethnic friends. The subjects were asked in which group they would prefer to practice their favorite sport. They answered as follows: 66.63% -68.68% of the subject would choose the group of their friends, the second place goes for athletes group (23.25% -33,20%), followed by school peer group (20.63% - 21.64%), and the last is a multiethnic and multicultural group (13.75% -18,95%). In the next they had been asked if they would accept to practice their favorite sport in a multiethnic and multicultural group if they would have the opportunity. So in a percentage of 78.13 -67.89% of the respondents would agree to practice their favorite sport, if they could, in multicultural and multi-ethnic group, 2.27% -3.54% were against it and 19.60% -28.57% don't know. Their attitude to practice their favorite sport in a multiethnic and multicultural group was as follows: 24.51% -25.42% of the subjects had a positive attitude regarding practicing their favorite sport in a multiethnic and multicultural group, 53.66% -47.38% of students would present a positive attitude and behavior, and 18.29% -25.03% would be indifferent regarding the issues addressed in this question.

Based on these data, we conducted an experimental research with the objective (one of many objectives) to establish the effect of organized physical activities in harmonizing relations in a multiethnic group in a multicultural environment. So the research subjects were involved in sports activities for 10 weeks. In this sense, we made the following assumptions: practicing organized sport activities influences the perception of the participants about ethnicity and inter-ethnic relationships, and practicing organized sport activities have a positive influence on the acceptance and tolerance of others in the peer group. (András, Á. 2013) By analyzing and processing the data we obtained the following results:

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. 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 practicing organized sport activities influences the perception of the

participants about ethnicity and inter-ethnic relationships. 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 practicing organized sport activities have a positive influence on the tolerance of others in the peer group. (András, Á. 2013)

Conclusions

As a first conclusion we can present that during the evolution of physical activity to sport activity has proven to be a remarkable phenomenon which at the social level has become a factor of social integration of the individual in social groups, but it isn't the only one. This is supported both at theoretical and practical level not only by sports science but also some interdisciplinary science such as sociology of sport, sport psychology, sport pedagogy, etc. This is supported also by the European Union whom interest for the sports phenomenon shows that sport has an important contribution to social cohesion and facilitate social integration and it is a means to support intercultural dialogue, but also is a tool to promote education, health and not in least of transmitting fundamental cultural values accumulated by the world's population.

Regarding the integrative force of sport can be enounced that sports promotes the moral attitudes such as tolerance, fair play and respect both during training and during sporting events and this moral attitudes are accepted and recognized around the world. Also sport provides the organizational form for the individuals and groups where these moral attitudes can be learned, developed and improved. But their effective internalization of these moral values takes time, namely a long period of training conducted by a person properly authorized and who knows and applies in practice the social values of the sport phenomenon.

From the examples presented as social integration through sport, we can deduce that the theory can be transposed into practice but it requires involvement with social sports policies both at EU level and the member states, but also at the level of institutions with activity in the sports field and in the field of social assistance.

From the research conducted in Cluj-Napoca we can deduce that in this multicultural city, the research subjects have friends of other ethnicities (which also have a distinct culture); although practicing their favorite sports in a multicultural and multi-ethnic group is in third place, most of the subjects would agree to practice their favorite sport in a multicultural and multi-ethnic group, if they would have the possibility and also their attitude would be positive.

By engaging individuals, with different ethnic backgrounds from multicultural environments in sport activities at a long term can change the perception of ethnic characteristics and it may influence the perception of ethnic relations and has a positive influence on tolerance.

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