Sports and Physical Education – Forms of Socialization

Sorin Dacian BUHAȘ [1] *

1. University of Oradea, Department of Physical Education Sport and Physical Therapy, 1 University st., 410087 Oradea, Romania, e-mail: *sbuhas@uoradea.ro*

* *Corresponding author*

Abstract. Sport and physical activity can provide an appropriate environment for socialization, but it cannot guarantee, however, in a categorical sense (either positively, or negatively) this fact. This is extremely difficult to follow, since it develops on a long period of time. Perhaps there is no causal explanation of the link between the socialization process and physical activity and the fact that practicing physical exercise automatically leads to socialization. In this context, a number of authors have shown some effects of socialization as a result of sports activity, although the topic of socialization through sports is extremely complex. Sports (sports results, specifically) captures people's attention, exerting a tremendous force of social attraction (ex. large reunions in public markets in cases of won football matches). Sports activities influence in a way or another almost all individuals. Sport is present everywhere in contemporary society. With such amplitude it must have a social role, reflecting a number of norms and values present in society and developing, at the same time, specific skills, knowledge, norms and values. The purpose of this essay is to review the specific literature and to highlight the influence of sports on socialization. I will discuss general and methodological concepts basic in the approach of socialization through sports. This environment can include a number of categories (athletes, coaches, managers, fans, etc.), which will determine answers regarding *how* and *with what effect* individuals get to be involved in sports.

Keywords: sport, physical activity, socialization, forms of socialization

Introduction

"When we refer to work efficiency it is impossible not to have in mind all of the aspects which can make people be better, have the pleasure of being at the work

place, be motivated enough in order to achieve all the specific objectives of the Sport organizations" (Dragoş, 2015).

"For a significant segment of population of all ages ... sport seems to be an integral part of everyday life by involving people as participants, spectators, through specific readings and conversations with friends or acquaintances" (Coakley, 1990). It is highlighted a specific dynamism and a daily presence of sport activity. This activity is carried out by individuals who are part of social life. They relate, creating the premises of the fact that "...socialization is a scientific construct that describes a segment of reality which cannot be observed directly for descriptive and analytical purposes. Socialization is an object of investigation which exists in reality, but it cannot be materially perceived" (Hurrelman, 1988).

The term of socialization has been accepted among scientific community only in the second half of the 19th century, being introduced by the French sociologist, Durkheim. A number of other authors have addressed this issue by establishing various theories. A definition of socialization that tries to encompass this complexity is formulated by Hurrelman: "Socialization ... is the process of occurrence, formation and development of human personality in dependence and interaction with the human body, on one hand, and with the conditions of social and ecological existence at a certain point of historical development of society, on the other hand" (Hurrelman, 1988). The concept of socialization provides a wide area of action with a multidisciplinary character. The process of socialization should be approached outside theoretical perspective, that is not the most suitable in order to analyze this mechanism. McPherson (1986) states that "... during infancy and early childhood, the functional perspective that uses social and cognitive development theories may be the most suitable to explain the process, while for ages with social content, teens to adulthood, more suitable are conflict and interaction perspectives". By addressing theoretical perspectives, we can highlight a number of common elements. A defining element is that socialization is not possible without being consistent with a certain type of behavior, attitudes and values. Another important element is that learning takes place in a social frame, being influenced by the presence of other social actors; also, socialization is a complex process of interaction that plays an important role in social integration, establishing social links between individuals and groups.

Sport, as a concept represents a very broad concept, even though most who use the term, think that they manage it. The word *sport* encompasses so many meanings, thus it is extremely difficult to find a precise and singular definition. It cannot be defined by a single concept. "The spatial analysis studies of sports have in many cases a multidisciplinary character by completing and consolidating the scientific endeavor with issues and methods specific to other domains" (Llieş et al., 2014). In the context of socialization it is important to identify common elements of sports activities, affecting the socialization process. At the same time, the notion of *physical activity* is much broader than sport, being the basis of all activities of individuals. Therefore, when we refer to this concept, we will approach it under the circumstances of physical activity that are related to sports movement. Sport will be regarded as an institutionalized physical activity, with elements of competition, where the physical and psychical performance is ultimately important, and the

participation is governed by rules that have their roots in official sports organization (Coakley, 1990). In this sense, we identify as basic components of sport, the physical and psychical performance, rules, institutionalization and competition. It is more and more obvious the interaction between sport and society. Sport, as social phenomenon, must always be understood and explained in its historical, political, economic, social and cultural context. Moreover, "... the history of sport is a relatively independent history, which even marked by major social and historical events, has its own pace, its laws of evolution, its crises, in short, its specific chronology" (Bourdieu, 1978). Within the social framework (including in sport) we will always encounter conflicts of ideas between individuals and groups of individuals. This conflict will generate the context for the emergence of a sport culture. This culture oriented sports towards competition, discovering its great potential in the process of socialization and development of social behavior (Engstrom, 1989). Sport is a well-defined social framework, governed by strict regulations and precise rules; sport offers a way of learning and applying the rules in practice. In children (Martens, 1986), we observe their involvement in sport from a very young age, when they see rules as absolute and permanent, perceiving physical activity as being very rigid. As children grow, they change their perceptions, having a more evolved approach regarding sports activity, which leads to emphasizing the social component of sports experience.

Socialization is an extremely broad term, a concept within which occur countless interactions and social connections developed over a long period of time. Having this temporal expansion, it is difficult to track events that occur. Therefore, in order to quantify them, it is necessary sampling the subjects or phenomena. Cokley (1990) emphasizes that the use of preferential samples (e.g. formed only by professional athletes, or only by individual sports) leads to the exclusion of other forms of sports manifestation. We note that the study of socialization is quite difficult, often appearing uncertainties. We note that the study of socialization is quite difficult, often appearing uncertainties. In fact, a while ago, researchers stated that "... there is very little data available that participation in sport could be an important or essential element in the process of socialization, or that involvement in sport directly determines learning or leads to learning of skills that could not be acquired in another social environment" (Loy et al., 1978). Regardless of research results, sport has become a state policy, governments using it to strengthen the nation. Being widely practiced, sport continues to promote numerous values.

Socialization through sports and physical activity

Involvement in sport

As shown in the literature, it is evident the influence that sport and physical activity exerts on social framework. People are starting to practice sports due to some *needs*, *motivations* of certain objective, but also due to the *desire to socialize*. This last component emphasizes the needs and motivation, making individuals independent and possessors of skills that may become more and more complex (Patriksson, 1988). The content of socialization is important because it influences

the direction in which sport practitioners try to obtain satisfaction (e.g. whether or not sport becomes important for them).

The importance of integrating sociological factors in the context of socialization was evidenced also by Brustard (1992), who states that "the research of socialization and motivation in sport must go hand in hand."

Currently, sociological studies approach summary the relationship between *socialization* influences and *motivation* in sport. Psychological analysis regarding sport addresses the linkages between practitioners` psychological processes and motivation for physical activity. Greendorfer (1992) considers that sports` psychologists are retained in what regards incorporating existing research into a unitary vision on the socialization process.

In recent years, an important concern in sport psychology was *motivation for participation*. More specifically, finding motivation elements that determine individuals to practice a sport or a physical activity. The results of researchers like Ryckman and Hamel (1992) present a series of motivations that lead people to practice sport activity. We can mention the taste for competition, the company of friends, getting fit, entertainment, taste of victory, etc.

There are few studies that have addressed the reasons for practicing sport by age. Biddle (1992) believes that "teamwork" and "the taste for competition" are not so important for elderly people, while "social status" is extremely important for teenagers. "Participation in order to please the loved ones" exists mainly among children, while "fun" is considered important for young people and adults. Motivation regarding "health" or "physical condition" is present for all ages. These results show that motives for sports` practicing are different depending on age. Furthermore, it is proposed to be amended "the way in which advertising and marketing is being done for physical activity according to age groups and genders, fact that applies also to the distinction between competitive sport and recreational exercise. Often, an equality sign is placed between exercise and sport. Doing so, is possible that many of the potential exercise amateurs give up physical activity because of lack of motivation for sport`s image" (Biddle, 1992).

Among youth, a crucial motivation for practicing sport is given by the prospect of professional development (Nicholls, 1984). "...The sport movement, diversified as type and form, generates local, regional or worldwide activities through the manifestation which through the manifestation manner and location produces benefits and development for the Humane Society (Ilieş et al., 2014). Another motivation given by the competition is formulated by Harter (1981), which states that individuals have an inner attraction for competition. He highlights three crucial areas: *cognitive* (school), *physical* (sport) and *social* (relationships with other individuals). Hartner suggests that people who consider themselves competent in some respects, will perform in those areas and people that do not believe themselves to have control upon certain things, will not practice that activity.

Socialization through sport

Research regarding socialization through sport revealed a fundamental premise that indicates that individual`s motor baggage is inoperative unless

individuals come into contact with a social environment where they can practice a particular sport. Research took two directions: conducted on elite adult athletes, and regarding children and youth (Greedorfe & Ewing, 1981). Investigations regarding elite adult athletes show that they have started practicing sport from an early age (6-7 years). Also, many adults have started practicing sport in areas different from those in which they performed and they were encouraged by influential people from the social environmental: family, friends etc. These facts reveal a very rich social activity, individuals gaining a vast experience. Studies conducted on children show similar trends. However, there is clear evidence that the immediate social environment (daily used) is an important factor on the degree of involvement in sport. Not in all environments there is a positive influence in supporting physical activity (Patriksson, 1988).

Observing the principles of social learning, researchers found a positive relationship between the amount and type of social support that comes from influential people from the social environment, on one hand, and the degree of involvement in sport, on the other hand.

Another determinant component is related to the education level of those who practice sports in their relationships with other members of society. Individuals with a more pronounced cultural openness are more sociable (Allison, 1982).

Unfortunately, in recent years we observed a decline in physical activity among children. Even if they are legitimated at sports clubs and take part in training and competition, sports activity decreased significantly (Engstrom, 1989). Also in schools is an accentuated decrease in the number of hours of physical education. All these are also connected to an obvious lack of physical culture. In this context, is important to mobilize all resources in order to increase the interest for practicing sport for all categories of individuals. Habits related to physical activity are learned in childhood, which results in further involvement of the adult in practicing sport (Greendorfer, 1992).

Socialization by means of sport

This component of socialization includes a wide range of reactions: from learning motor skills, to the acquisition of social values and norms.

Individuals socialized through sport can improve or not their personality development through the social environment in which they are active. Sport has the ability to generate positive or negative consequences. "Socialization by means of sport was treated as a subject completely detached from the socialization through sport. Most research on the positive or negative consequences of involvement in sport did not take into account to what extent those consequences can be linked to the manner, nature and type of supported influences, which explains what happens during socialization in physical activity" (Greendorfer 1992).

A premise underlying the socialization by means of sport is that *playing* and *games* are important ingredients of the socialization process, helping individuals acquire complex social skills (Sage, 1986). It may be helpful, states (Chalip et al., 1984) to ask what kind of feelings, conditions and motivations do sports generate:

"it can be argues that the sum of discrete, immediate experiences is as important, or even more important, than long term effects".

Another hypothesis which supports socialization by means of sport indicates that *fun* and *pleasure* are important motivations for the involvement of youth in sports. Adults (parents and coaches) have an important impact on the *pleasure* felt by young athletes. Scanlan and Lewthwaite (1986) observed that youth sports activity induces satisfaction among parents and a positive interaction with adults. As a result of his research, Wankel (1990) concluded that: "analyzing the accumulated research about fun and pleasure in sports, although many of the methods of analysis and evaluation can be criticized and considered questionable under the aspect of reliability and validity, the consistency of results is impressive ... The ability and the perceived competence, the real incentive effect of the assignment and an encouraging environment are very important for the pleasure of sport".

The concept of *fair play* and moral behavior are also supporting the idea of socialization by means of sport. There are several theoretical approaches regarding moral behavior in sport. In a series of studies, Smith (1983) showed that violence in different sports is often the result of imitating prior experience (hockey, handball, etc). When children, athletes have other values, but as they grow up, they observe seniors` behavior which they imitate. Violence present in some sports made it to become normal for that sport (getting into those sports` culture). The danger arises when this culture becomes a model behavior (Smith, 1983).

A study conducted by Pilz (1992) on fair play events manifested by German football players, shows that, with age, players tend to violate the rules in order to subordinate their victory. Based on these data, Pilz concludes that a sports club can be a very effective agent of socialization, in order to develop fair play. Wandzilak et al. (1988) also provide evidence that athletes trained in this spirit have improved their moral and sporting behavior.

Conclusions

The present analysis is the result of literature review. In recent years, there is a deeper concern regarding the study of the process of socialization through sport. If in the past the effects of practicing sport were considered to be negative, nowadays, due to the dynamics of social development, but also to the increase in the level of education, sports` practicing is seen to have positive components. Values acquired in sport are now transferred also on daily activities.

Practicing sports does not automatically lead to positive results, but specific motor skills are acquired exclusively through sports` practice. In fact, studies show that training is a factor for performance improvement, as in all other activities.

Research has shown that socialization can occur also in sports activity context. Its effects are not always the best. Differences occur due to the value of each personal judgment. Some appreciate value by achieving a personal goal, others appreciate cooperation and mutual support at the expense of performance. Both approaches can be positive, being directly influenced by the social environment. What we learn will certainly be modified by the direct influence of individual experience. Types of experiences change depending on the situation (club

organization, organizational tradition, sports` culture etc) and are influenced by determinant individuals from the immediate environment (parents, coaches etc).

For children, forms of social interaction are more important than the type of sports activity. They put more emphasis on fulfilling their task, and not the result, and on realizing the purpose of training.

The relationship between sport and morality should be strengthened and developed. It is observed that with age, the violation of norms is more pronounced, as an immediate aim in achieving results. Sports environment imposes different opinions concerning morality, according to the culture of each sport (boxing, hockey, etc). It is noted that the leader of an organization is the one who marks the development direction for moral values. Through his or her pedagogy, one can inoculate the idea of fair play, a highly promoted concept in society. In this context, greater attention should be paid to the training of teachers and coaches.

Following the research conducted on socialization, it appears that the majority of sports and physical activity can contribute to a better physical, mental, psychological and social state among children, youth and adults. In a sedentary society, sports become more and more important as a socializing environment, in promoting primary motor skills that are necessary for a healthy life.

The effects of socialization through sports will be stronger for those who engage themselves in sports for longer periods of time and with more intensity.

References:

Allison, M., (1982), *Sport, culture and socialisation.* In International Review of Society, 4, pp. 11-38;

Biddle, S., (1992), *Sport and exercise motivation: a brief review of antecedent factors and psychological outcomes of participation.* Physical Education Review, 15, pp. 98-110;

Bourdieu, P., (1978), *Sport and social class.* In Social Information, 17, pp. 819-840;

Brustard, R.J., (1992), *Integrating socialisation influences into the study of children's motivation in sport.* In Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 14, pp. 59-77;

Chalip, L., Csikszentmihaly, M., Kleiber, D., Larson, R., (1984), *Variations of experience in formal and informal sport.* In Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 55, pp. 109-116;

Coakley, J., (1990), *Sport in society.* St. Louis: Times Mirror/Mosby College Publ.;

Dragoş, P., (2015), *Aspects regarding efficiency at work in certain Sport organisations*. In Geosport for Society, 2 (1), pp. 21-26;

Engstrom, L. M., (1989), *The process of socialisation into keepfit activities.* In Scandinavian of Sport Sciences, 8, pp. 89-97;

Greendorfer, S.L., (1992), *Sport socialisation.* In Horn (Ed.): *Advances in sport psychology,* Champaign Il: Human Kinetics;

Greendorfer, S.L., Ewing, M.E., (1981), *Race and gender differences in children's socialisation in to sport.* In Research quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 52, pp. 301-310;

Harter, S., (1981), *A model of mastery motivation in children: individual differences and developmental change.* In Collins (Ed.): *Minnesota Symposium on Child Psychology.* New York: Erlbaum, 14, pp. 215-255;

Hurrelman, K., (1988), *Social structure and personality development.* Cambridge University Press;

Ilieş, A., Dehhorne, O., Wendt, J., Kosma, G., (2014), *For Geography and Sport, Sport Geography or Geography of Sport*, In Geosport for Society, 1 (1-2), pp. 7-18;

Loy, J., McPherson, B., Kenyon, G., (1978), *Sport and social systems: A guide to the analysis, problems and literature,* Adisson Wesley Publishing Company;

Martens, R., (1986), *Youth sport in the USA.* In Weiss &Gould (eds.): *Sport for children and Youths.* Champaign IL: Human Kinetics;

McPherson, B., (1986), *Socialisation theory and research: toward a "new wave" of scholarly Inquiry in a sport context.* In Ree & Miracle (Eds): *Sport and social theory.* Champaign, Il: Human Kinetic;

Nicolls, J.G., (1984), *Striving to demonstrate and development ability: a theory of achievement motivation.* In Nicolls (ed.): *The development of achievement motivation.* Greenwich, CT: JAI Press;

Patriksson, G., (1988), *Theoretical and empirical analyses of dropouts from youth sports in Sweden.* In Scandinavian Journal of Sports Sciences, 10, pp. 29-37;

Pilz, G.A., (1992), *Performance sport - Education to fair play?* Paper presented at the Olympic Scientific Congress, Malaga, July, pp. 14-19;

Ryckman, R.M., Hamel, J., (1992), *Female adolescents' motives related to involvement in organised team sports.* In International Journal of Sport Psychology, 23, pp. 174-160;

Sage, G.H., (1986), *Social development.* In Seefeldt (Ed.): *Physical activity wellbeing.* Reston: AHPERD;

Scalan, T., Lewthwaite, R., (1986), *Social psychological aspects of competition for male youth sports participants: Predictors of enjoyment.* In Journal of Sport Psychology, 8, pp. 25-35;

Smith, M.D., (1983), *Violence and sport.* Toronto: Butterworth;

Wankel, L.M., (1990), *A season- long investigation of fun in youth sport.* In Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 11, pp. 355-366;