

NON-FORMAL PHYSICAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES - ADDED VALUES

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Abstract:

This study represents a part of our PhD thesis where we have analyzed the educational, social and axiological phenomenon defined by the non formal aspect of the physical education and sports field. We consider the spectrum of socio-moral values and proactive mobility attitudes as well as the connections between physical education activities and the effects having formative valences on the young people's personality, especially on the students'.

Keywords: *non-formal activities, pro- social behavior, values, attitudes*

Context

The Physical education and sports (that we are going to refer to as EFS), an important curricular part of the educational process in teaching establishments, has an important place in the young generation formation. The enlargement of school or college physical education setting in order to promote the non-formal area values is the answer to the necessity to practice physical exercise independently, to educate

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attitudes of responsibility towards the development of a healthier lifestyle. Marked by modern technology, by the pace of work and life imposed by a dynamic and ever changing society, modern people seem to have less time for physical exercise; therefore they expose themselves in the long term, to health risk factors.

The phenomenon of practicing physical exercise in non-formal systems is presented as a complex of varied and "apparently heterogeneous" activities. In this sense, we may talk about activities practiced in sport assemblies and sport clubs, as individual or team sports, as trips or camps, as deployment of playful and athletical recreational activities practiced during free time, maintenance and therapeutic gymnastics, sports for everybody.

The non-formal physical education activities create specific ways for the practitioners to act effectively in order to reduce the magnitude of these problems. They help the practitioners to identify and cultivate optimal match between interests, motivations and skills, but also offer them the opportunity to practice and develop these skills, thus enriching the formal EFS formative effects on young people. We expect these activities to produce positive changes in young generation's behavior, both in the favorable attitudes of EFS practicing and in their personality.

In the context presented above, we believe that physical education through non-formal activities could achieve priority objectives such as:

- promoting continuous, systematic, rational, habitual movement which has as targets the health maintenance and/or improvement;

- making positive changes in attitudes, values, behaviors, lifestyle;
- cultivating moral, social and characterial values, necessary for the young generations in their relationships;
- training/developing a set of mobility and attitudinal skills that will enable young people to practice independent EFS activities, to successfully carry out specific activities in the profession they have chosen or to integrate in society.

1. The stage of the research on the non-formal physical education impact in human space

Physical education and sport are essentially important factors in preparing young people for work and life, representing an integral part of the educational action. This explains why, the physical education is a concern of national interest for more and more countries and the non-formal sports activities, as promoter of health and as an effective way of filling in the spare time, is the focus of the policy agenda of the advanced countries.

The interest and concern of authorities and other organizations in the various indicators of population health is based on a large amount of information gathered in figures collected throughout various studies. Statistical data have a value of alert and argument in favor of the support to practice physical exercise at individual, group and community level.

The summary of the conclusions offered by the research in the mobility activities area reveals the following issues:

- 25% of the worldwide population are considered overweight (World Health Organization, 2005);
- In countries like Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand, England and Germany, this is a major public health problem (Low et al., 2009);
- over 35% of young Americans aged 6-17 years have weight problems or are already overweight. Studies have shown that the population with weight problems tripled to the number of people of same age group during 1976-1980;
- in Romania, there is a poor representation of the phenomenon of practicing mobility activities in adult consciousness, the existence of only a few people who practice these activities being the proof (Bota, 2006).
- there is a correlation between the practice of various physical activities, socialization and social integration. Studies show that "youth participation in sports is associated with lower deviant behavior and high academic and social performance (Dumitrescu, 2010). Surveys also show that parents consider extracurricular sports activities as a "socializing arena for children in the spirit of values and skills that go beyond mere benefits of participation in athletic activity."

Researches in the physical activity field have identified ways in which physical education through non-formal activities contributes in

shaping some attitudes favorable to social integration and in satisfying some health-related needs of people of all ages.

2. The pro-social, actional behavior

In what follows, we will present a research cutout including results and preliminary interpretations of our scientific approach. The issues we have approached aimed at analyzing the variable defined as "pro-social, actional behavior", the way it was investigated, the operational indicator and the interpretation of the collected data.

From the social psychology perspective, the pro-social behavior refers to acting by virtue of the values promoted and accepted by the society, those positive values which act implicitly or explicitly in groups or society etc. (10).

For an effective overview on my research, we pursued the objective of identifying the range of social values present in students' lives. The basic sample consists of a number of over 250 students in the 1st and 2nd years of study, girls and boys, from the Technical University of Civil Engineering - Bucharest, the Academy of Economic Studies - Bucharest, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Police Academy -Bucharest, the Polytechnic University of Bucharest.

2.1. Preliminary results

We investigated the variable with the abovementioned theme through an opinion questionnaire which helped us get acquainted to the

students' views on the social values promoted as a result of practicing formal or non-formal physical education activities (in text the AEFS acronym), values which are present in their lives and behavior. To measure this variable, we established the following operational indicators:

- the quality and the combination of the social values present in young people's life;
- levels of involvement in social solidarity and mutual assistance.

The population investigated expressed their opinion by answering the next item from the questionnaire addressed to 1st and 2nd year students C.VAOP (I-II): *"To what extent are the following values of social life, developed by practicing physical education and sports activities present in your life?"*

We compiled a list of 13 social values promoted by the AEFS, and the respondents rated on a scale from 5-1, to which extent they were present in their everyday lives.

Table 1 shows the social values recognized by students as effects/results of formal or non-formal AEFS practice, according to their ordering related to the ranks obtained by calculating the average frequency on the maximal cumulative intervals (5 and 4) and the values recorded on the average interval of the scale ("equally").

Table 1. List of social values-sorted by the rank they obtained

RAN K	The intervals average (5+4)	Medium interval, "equally"
I	Correctitude towards the regulated social norms	Cooperation capacity"
II	Assuming responsibility in accomplishing personal projects"	Capacity of initiative, entrepreneurial behavior
III	Respect for others, (young people, adults, old people)	Resistance to social pressure
IV	Courage in taking decisions which require risk taking	Citizenship
V	Responsibility in accomplishing tasks/objectives	Availability for social solidarity and mutual aid

From the above data we find that the value "correctitude towards the regulated social norms" is situated at the first rank. This value is followed in decreasing order by values such as: "assuming responsibility in accomplishing personal projects", "respect for others", "courage in taking decisions which require risk taking", "responsibility in accomplishing tasks/objectives". On the average level of scale, ("equally"), "the cooperation capacity" gets the first rank, followed by: "the capacity of initiative, entrepreneurial behavior", "resistance to social pressure", "citizenship" and "availability for social solidarity and mutual aid".

The diagram distribution of the social values in the students' life as a result of practicing AEFS is shown in figure 1:

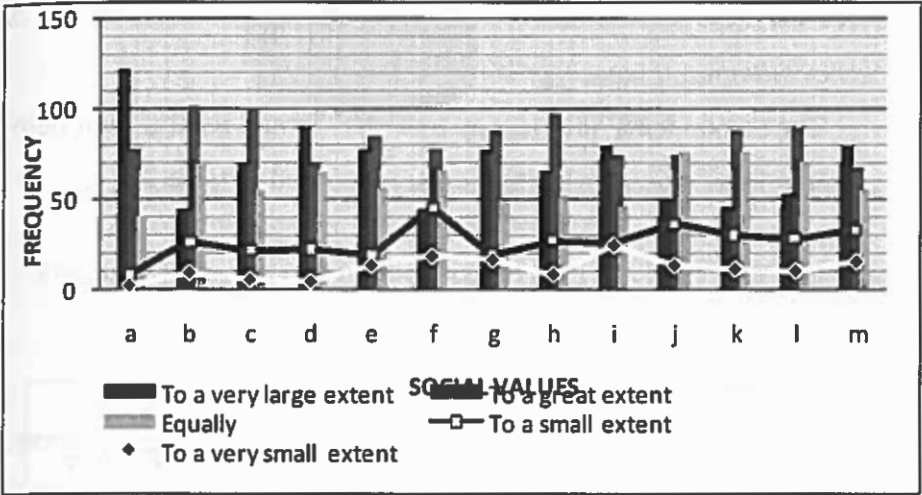


Fig. 1. Social values which are present in the lives of young people and promoted as a result of practicing AEFS

From the graphical representation of recorded options regarding the social values which are recognized and promoted as a result of practicing AEFS, we may note the high frequency ranges above 5 and 4 and the median 3 for most values listed, the frequency decreasing to lower levels of scale, ("to a small extent ") and ("to a very small extent ").

Low frequencies recorded on levels 2 and 1, proposed by most social values, reveal that they are well distributed on the upper ranges. The decreasing distribution of the diagram for the maximum to minimum levels, shows that for most of the surveyed young people, the content of social values system is well defined and also they recognize that these values are assimilated and promoted as a result of practicing AEFS.

In order to find the level of availability for social solidarity and mutual assistance, we applied an opinion questionnaire, and students answered the item I.17 of C.VAOP (I-II) *"How do you respond in an emergency situation if your help is required?"*

The respondents' answers on how they would react if their help was required in an emergency situation are recorded in table 2.

Table 2. Frequency of responses on the students' availability of involvement in an emergency.

Possible answers		Frequency	
		Absolute	Relative
3	I intervene immediately	182	72,8%
2	I think a lot before taking action	49	19,6%
1	I do not get involved	7	2,8%
	Non - answers	12	4,8%
Total		250	100%

Our data shows that 182 of the respondents would intervene immediately if help was required, 49 think more before intervening and only seven of the respondents do not engage in such a situation. To this item, 12 students did not answer.

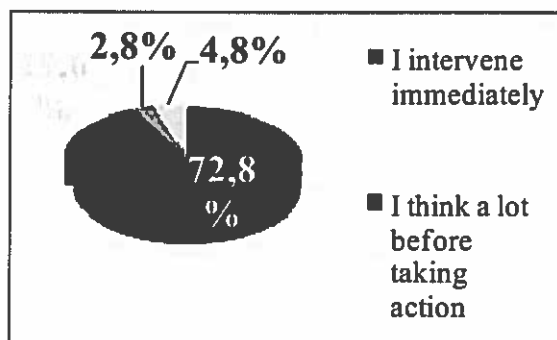


Figure 2. The students' implication level in an emergency situation

After analyzing data recorded in table 2 and from the graphical representation, we can state with satisfaction that the percentage of 72.8% of the questioned young people would immediately engage in a critical situation, which is a high level of positive attitude towards the others.

We also found that, on the list of the 13 social values previously presented and discussed, the value of "availability for social solidarity and mutual assistance", obtained the V rank on the interval 3of the scale ("equally").

The statistical description may also have the following configuration (Table 3):

Table 3. Statistical indicators for the items analyzed in CS (I-II) VAOP

Indicators/ Items	Arithmetic mean \bar{X}	Median Me	Module Mo	Standard Deviation S	Skewness Assymetry Indicator	Kurtosis Vaulting Indicator
I 15	3,70	4	4	1,116	-,618	-,331
I 17	2,74	3	3	,505	-1,746	2,218

In the characterization of the position indicators, we can see that for item I.15 the arithmetic mean exceeds 3, indicating that most of the options expressed on social values promoted by AEFS ranges from 3 to the maximum range 5. The arithmetic average value obtained for item I.17, indicates the central tendency of students' responses towards levels 2 and 3.

For the items we analyzed, the median values point out that half of the respondents' options are recorded on the scale intervals of 4 and 3. Modal values obtained for items subject to discussion shows that the highest frequency of responses is recorded between 4 and 3 of the scale range.

The standard deviation of 1,116 indicates that responses to I.15 have a pretty widespread of data around the average, while for I.17, the relatively small standard deviation value (,505) shows high homogeneity of the sample concerning the answers given.

We are also interested in determining the concentration of frequencies in the center of distribution. The negative indicators of asymmetry mean negative asymmetry with lower values to the left (elongated left tail).

The vaulting Kurtosis coefficient, has a negative value, for item I.15, indicating that the distribution is flatter, with values scattered over a larger range around the average. For I.17, positive Kurtosis indicates a higher distribution, with values centered on the average.

2.2. Interpretations and comments on the variable defined by pro – social and actional behavior

We wanted to highlight the values associated to the practice of non-formal EFS activities and their manifestation in the youth's social life. The purpose of socialization through non-formal activities is to train a person to know and recognize the society's values, norms and behavioral patterns and, on this basis, to integrate the society's requirements. The analysis of the results we obtained from the abovementioned investigation revealed that:

- Students have got well-established social values, they correlate them with steady and systematic practice of formal or non-formal AEFS;
- Values such as correctitude for regulated social norms, respect for others, responsibility in fulfilling their tasks/objectives, the ability of cooperation, the citizenship occupy top positions in social values in the lives of young people;
- A percentage of 72,8% of respondents say they would intervene immediately if there appeared a critical situation or emergency, which indicates a high level of mutual aid capacity;
- Regarding the statistical data obtained for the items that we have analyzed, we can say that the values of statistical indicators focused between the limits considered acceptable for a normal distribution of a number/series data.

Through this research we considered it necessary to know and identify other issues that are connected to EFS specific events, especially with those taking place in a non-formal framework. We want our research results to have an impact on the mentality of young people and adults, on the teaching personnel from specialized departments concerning the organization of their work so as to stimulate the youth's interest in practicing physical exercise independently and non-formally.

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