

ICPESK 2017
International Congress of Physical Education, Sport and
Kinetotherapy

SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF THE YOUTH THROUGH THE
FOOTBALL GAME

Grigore Gheorghe (a)*, Dan Badea (b)

*Corresponding author

(a) National University of Physical Education and Sports, 140 Constantin Noica Street, Bucharest, Romania,
gh.grigore@yahoo.com

(b) National University of Physical Education and Sports, 140 Constantin Noica Street, Bucharest, Romania,
dan_badea14@yahoo.com

Abstract

Starting from the central aim of the project “Strategies for the Future, Strategies for Youth”, which is to develop methodologies and specific strategies based on the game of football in order to enhance social inclusion and combat exclusion for young people who are in risk categories generated by disabilities or the economic situation, we propose: to gather technical and tactical information related to young people in the study; to present the methodological marks by which football, a very good way of socialisation, can make possible social integration for both the beginners and the advanced and can prove positive benefits for people practicing this game. This scientific approach targeted a number of 85 eligible young people out of a total of 128 subjects enrolled in the project, aged between 16 and 29 years. The dominant aspect of the research was focused on applying 4 specific tests aimed at checking some basic procedures specific to the football game. The research methods used were: scientific documentation, observation, recording, statistical and mathematical calculation and graphical representation. The purpose of the research is reflected by setting a sample of beginners and one of advanced, so that the obtained results help develop a specific work methodology for people at risk of social exclusion and integrate them through the football game.

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Keywords: Methodology, inclusion, means.



1. Introduction

Starting from one of the important goals of sport, as defined in the European Sports Charter, namely the development of social relations, we ask ourselves whether the football game can be, through its specific components, a mass phenomenon that can lead to increasing social inclusion and combating exclusion for young people at risk because of disabilities or the economic situation.

We believe that football, a part of sports activity, can be an optimal way to get in touch with other people, to establish connections in a common area of motor and psycho-social manifestation. Through its great integrity character, sport becomes an ideal support for manifestation and expression, for self-discovery (Badea, 2011, p. 5).

The motivation to socialise through the football game and the interest in this type of activity, even in the presence of a complex and stressful social environment, give youth in risk categories due to disabilities or the economic situation the opportunity to get involved emotionally.

Within the project mentioned before, social integration determines the young people to accept a series of elements specific to the football game, elements that can represent integrated parts of a model. We can say that the phenomenon is based on the selection model, which is made up of several characteristics (structure and quality parameters) and information of a different nature, as sub-objectives to be solved after a multi-step strategy (Atkinson & Hilgard, 2005, p. 495).

For the male subjects included in the study, the training process (with reference to all training components, but within some limits) is channelled into several main directions:

- Positive evolution for:

- motor skill development;
- physical development;
- the development of muscular groups frequently used in football;
- the execution of the main technical-tactical procedures specific to the football game;

- Increased potential for:

- participation in football competitions that are characteristic to the social activities of the program RO 010;
- specific fair-play behaviour in all circumstances in which young people want to integrate through football.

Objectification of the main directions of training specific to the level aimed in the present research, once implemented, can contribute to enhancing social inclusion ability and combating exclusion for young people in risk categories due to disabilities or the economic situation.

2. Problem Statement

Pedagogical mastery through which specialists develop methodologies and strategies specific to the football game and the different methods used to increase the degree of social inclusion and combat exclusion for young people in risk categories due to disabilities or the economic situation can be successful if:

- it is applied to a selection process centred on the testing of basic technical procedures;

- both beginner and advanced samples are established.

3. Research Questions

The formation of personality and psychomotor development can be influenced by major educational activity (Tüdös, 2000). In this context, the question is: can football, through the interaction of a young person or a group of young people in risk situations caused by disabilities or the economic situation, and the sports environment (the social environment specific to the activities carried out under the program RO 010) provide a functional balance and thus a wider social integration?

There are a number of positive effects of practicing sports in the process of integrating through the representative nature of sport, namely the progressive rapprochement between different cultural or social human communities.

4. Purpose of the Study

Determining the level of training and selection of 85 young people (males between 16 and 29 years old) in two groups – beginners and advanced – using four tests with specific content:

- foot and head juggling 30” – test no. 1
- passing the ball at two panels placed at 6m one from another; the tested subject, who will be in the middle, alternately passes the ball from one panel to another 30” – test no. 2
- dribble through 5 cones (3m one from another) and scoring – test no. 3
- auto-pass (from 5 m) and head scoring (the ball must enter the goalpost; 4 reps) – test no. 4

The research period was 6 months, and the experiment was observational.

The use of the above-mentioned design of the selection process (specific to football) has the role of shaping the technical-motoring level that can make it easier for a young person to practice the game with certain efficiency both in play and in training.

The conjuncture imposed by the distinct activities included in the project “Strategies for the Future, Strategies for Youth” emphasises the role of technical execution in relation to competitive conditions, the opposition of the direct opponent and the adverse team (Manno, Beccarini, & Ottavio, 1992, p. 24).

Choosing a player on an important position in the structure of a team (even in a social competition) may change the system of cooperation relations between those who practice the football game (Ciolcă, 2004, p. 33).

5. Research Methods

The following methods were used in the research: the bibliographic study, the observation method, the recording method, the statistical-mathematical method, the graphical representation method.

6. Findings

Since “the process of evaluation is a fundamental teaching operation aimed at measuring and assessing predisposition and availabilities of youth for sports activities” (Badea, 2016, p. 119), we made four value areas (two for each group):

1. very weak and weak - 20 young people - the beginner group;
2. well and very good - 65 young people - the advanced group.

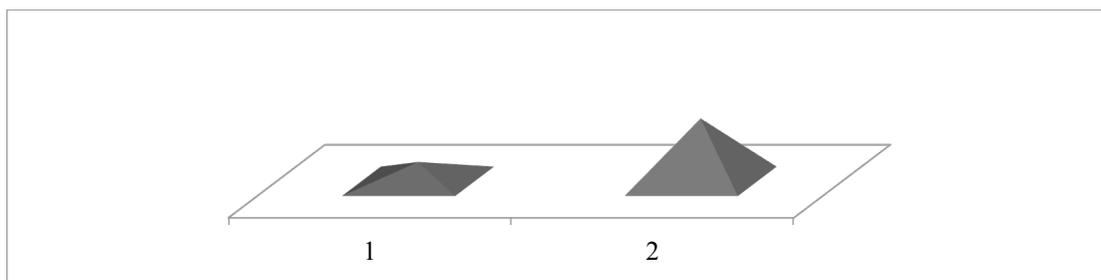


Figure 01. Distribution of subjects by value group

Table 01. Juggling the ball for 30 seconds

Indicators/tests	Juggling the ball 30” No. of juggles	Juggling the ball 30” Penalisation/sec	Passes between panels 30”	Dribbling – scoring	Head scoring
Overall average	44.14x	9.70”	18.61x	6.27”	3.30x
Beginner average	30.05x	14.4”	15.5x	6.65”	2.9x
Advanced average	48.47x	9.94”	19.56x	6.13”	3.43x

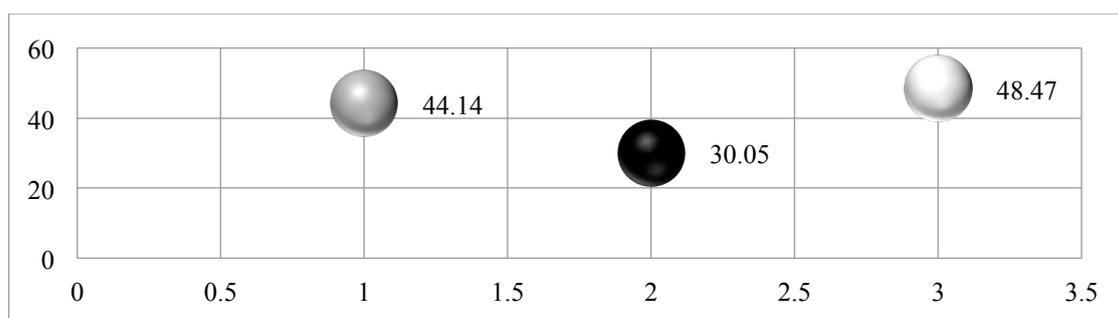


Figure 02. Number of juggles 30” – Chart

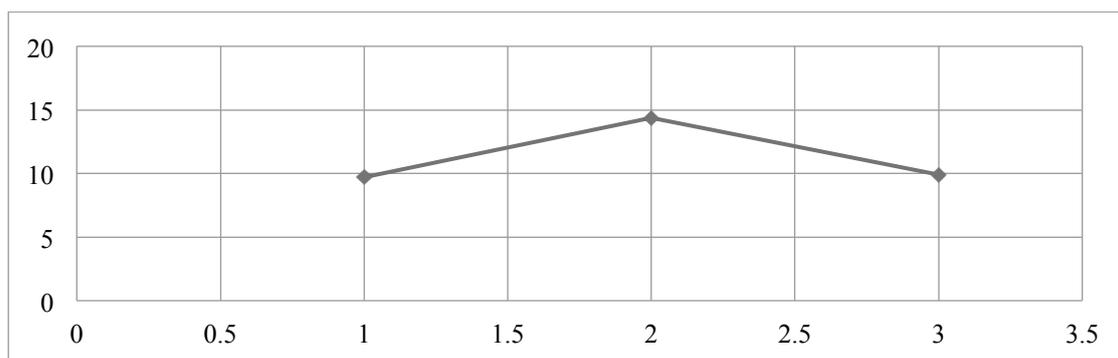


Figure 03. Penalties converted into seconds – Chart

In the test “keeping the ball in the air for 30 seconds”, the 44.14x overall average recorded by male students in the study proves an acceptable level of ball sense and control. However, the player distribution in two groups shows a high lack of homogeneity due to the smaller number of subjects in the beginner group (20) - difference from the average: -14.09x, compared to the group of advanced (65) - difference from the average: +4.43x.

As to the results obtained for penalties converted into seconds, the difference between groups is important: $-14.4 - 9.94 = 4.46$. We consider that the lack of homogeneity is also present for this indicator.

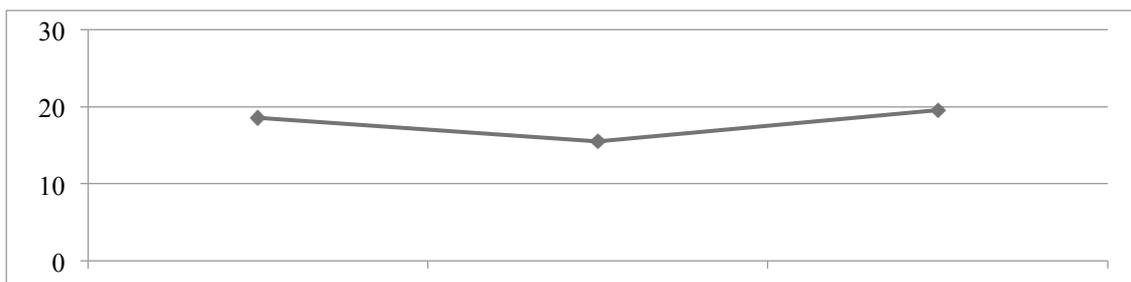


Figure 04. Passes between panels 30'' – Chart

On the chart above, we note that the results of youngsters in this test are closer to the overall group average. These data indicate a better level of homogeneity than in the previous test (-3.11x or +0.95x, compared to the average).

But attention should be drawn to the fact that a higher number of advanced players (65) makes the difference from the average smaller than the number of beginners (20), where the difference is higher than the average.

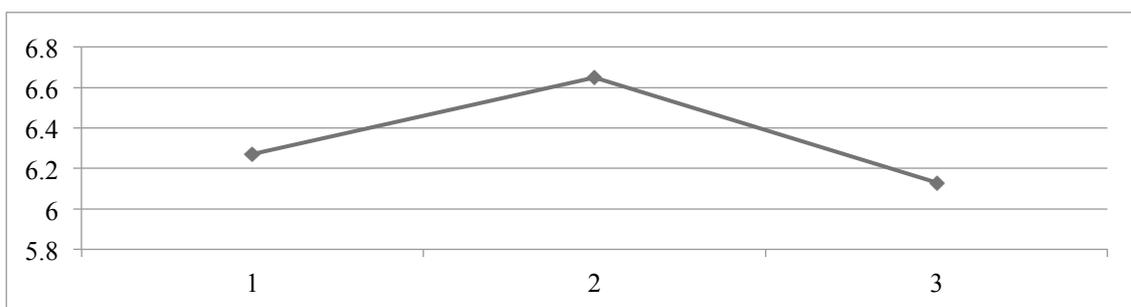


Figure 05. Dribbling – scoring results – Chart

The test with the most significant technical-tactical content, the dribbling-scoring, shows the closest values to the two value groups, the difference being 0.52". In this situation, we consider that there is a good homogeneity in the young males, the reason being the high number of advanced young people achieving a better average (65 young people - average 6.13, compared to 20 young people - average 6.65). We notice however that the overall average of 6.27" represents an appropriate value for the level of training of the subjects involved in the project.

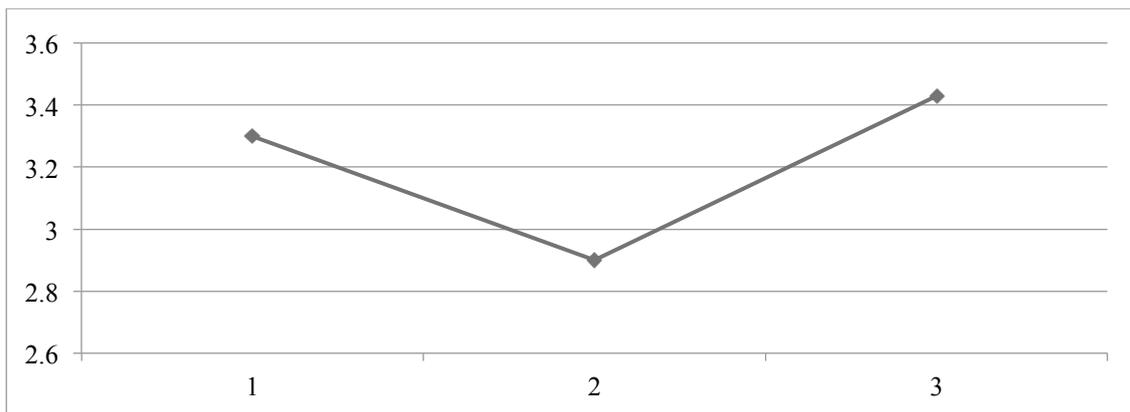


Figure 06. Head scoring results – Chart

The overall average of 3.30 goals scored by the observed youngsters is a very good one, with both samples exceeding 50% of the number of attempts: advanced 85.75% and beginners 72.5%. Since the test is one with a high level of difficulty, if we take into consideration the fact that hitting the ball with the head is not a convenient method to use, we believe that the level of homogeneity for the young members of the two value groups is acceptable.

7. Conclusion

Through its increasingly evident quality and sociability (potential interaction with people from different backgrounds in relatively facile material and environmental conditions), the football game can increase social inclusion ability and combat exclusion among young people situated in categories of risk generated by disabilities or the economic situation.

The distribution of male youths in two value groups outlines different abilities to practice football, with particular reference to the technical-tactical capability, but with a common final goal: improving interpersonal relationships.

The results obtained by the 85 young people based on the application of technical-tactical tests allow the development of a differentiated methodology to improve the ability to play football in general (sportive ambiance) and social purposes in particular (events, celebrations, team building, etc.).

The distribution of subjects in two value groups, beginners and advanced, confirms the necessity of a specific approach in the development of technical-tactical training methodologies (volume, intensity, complexity, difficulty) in order to raise the young people's awareness of the level and characteristics of using football in social activities.

Also, the research results highlight the importance of constantly improving the homogeneity of the group of young people studied, homogeneity which confers the group of football players, at any moment and thus in the context of performing sports events with a social character, trust, satisfaction and energy for subsequent activities.

The assessment tests allow the technical and tactical knowledge of motor abilities specific to an atypical age segment, which subsequently leads to designing a differentiated work methodology for beginners and advanced.

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