

REPRODUCING GENDER NORMS THROUGH PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT PEDAGOGY IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: This paper aims to identify and analyze the ways in which physical education and sport pedagogy in Romania currently contribute to the reproduction of gender stereotypes. Sport opportunities are limited by the separate expectations of males and females in physical education and sport settings, leaving little room to challenge the meanings of masculinity and femininity through physical activity in the Romanian society.

Key words: equity, gender norms, masculinity, femininity, physical education, sport.

1. Introduction

The topic of gender in physical education is important because, at present, in most Romanian schools differences are still being made between male and female pupils during the physical education and sports class, despite the fact that teaching, in Romania, respects the principle of coeducation (common education for both genders).

School, as an educational and formatory element, is the medium in which moral, civic, educational values are learned; however, in the didactical activity, gender differences appear at various levels, such as promoted values and culture, types of relationships etc. The physical education lesson through its mixed characteristics allows the socialization of male and female pupils with the purpose of reducing social as well as other differences between the two categories: “female” and “male” (Delphy 1991; Mathieu 1991) but also “girl-pupil” and later “woman” and, respectively, “boy-pupil” later “man”. Gender studies can be approached from the perspective of physical education through the analysis of gender stereotypes regarding the sports branches and disciplines which are not recommended for girls, as they are considered to be “masculine” (Mennesson, 2005) and can be incorporated into what is known as *feminist studies*. However, the same rules also applies to boys that wish to practice sports branches or disciplines considered to be “feminine”, such as dance, ballet, even volleyball and this can be incorporated

into *masculine studies*. Gender differences are defined as the product of the interaction between the biological characteristics of women and men and the environment. They reflect individual differences regarding biological, psychological and behavioural variables (Ruble & Martin 1998).

Through gender identity, one understands the process of social construction of the differences between the two categories: “feminine” and “masculine” (Delphy 1991; Mathieu 1991). However, the differences at the level of cognitive abilities of girls and boys explain the different needs in their learning process, including those related to physical education. Through cognitive abilities, one understands the set of processes involved in the processing of information (reasoning, memorising, attention, language use etc.) and the physical education teacher must create and offer learning contexts suitably adjusted for boys and girls respectively, in order to ease and improve this process. As regards the motive abilities, it has been noticed that boys have more developed overall motive abilities, while girls have more developed specific motive abilities (Gurian 2001). The different development of motive abilities facilitates the different development of cognitive abilities: boys will get involved specifically in developing spatial abilities, while girls will engage in social and interactive abilities, with the purpose of developing their verbal activities (Gurian, 2001). In view of this, team games are recommended for girls with the purpose of stimulating cooperation and competition, while for boys pair games are recommended for stimulating communication (Chiriac 2004). At a pedagogical level, during the physical education class it has been noticed (Balica et al., 2004) that boys aged between 10 and 14 do not know how to cooperate, but only to compete, having predominant traits such as competitiveness and combativity (Chiriac, 2004). The educational system itself is structured around the notion of competitiveness and not around the notion of cooperation and the search for a role and status suitable to every pupil within the group is not seen as an optimal variant. Girls, who generally do not adapt to the competitive system during the physical education class generally register poorer results than boys (Davis 2000) and the girls that manage to adapt are labeled as “sportive” or “boyish”. From gender studies into education, a few stereotypes about boys and girls detach themselves, such as: boys are strong and brave, while girls are attentive to the boys’ needs, sensible, caring and they have artistic manifestations (Chiru & Ciupercă, 2000), boys are the one who “get the job done”, while girls are “those that simply are” (Grünberg, 1996). It has been noticed that some girls wish to practice certain sportive activities labeled as being “masculine” (Mennesson 2005) even from an early age, but certain stereotypes do not encourage them to take on the venture. If boys must be “tough”, “strong”, “combative”, “competitive” in the physical education class, then girls are required to be “delicate”, “feminine”, to have “posture”, to “be good” and a girl that plays football will be labeled as a tomboy.

Research show that women have a much more positive attitude towards cooperation than men, while males have a much more positive attitude towards competition than females (Ahlgren 1983, Boehnke & al., 1989, apud Hoyenga & Hoyenga 1993). Often, boys get involved into games of a competitive nature. Even in the situations in which girls and boys play the same game, the boys get competitive with everyone else, while the girls form cooperation groups. (Parker, 1984, Hughes, 1988, apud Hoyenga & Hoyenga 1993).

Through gender education, one also understands the appropriate education of the different learning needs of boys and girls, with the purpose of assuring them equal changes of development. Furthermore, the analysis of the school curriculum represents a current topic. (Balica ş.c.2004). If, up to 2010, the specifics of the curriculum regarding physical education in Romania consisted of guidelines and recommendations regarding the practice of various sportive branches for girls and others for boys, the 2010 curriculum has eliminated these recommendations, complying with the European and national requirements of education. It should also be noticed that in the past, in certain schools, if the space and material conditions would not allow them, the physical education lessons were organized completely unmixed, the timetable was built as to schedule a physical education class for two parallel classes, including the fact that a male teacher would take over the boys and a female teacher would work with the girls when this was possible, if the school had a male and female physical education teacher. These practices are not recommended presently, because they no longer comply to the current educational requirements, it being thought that by working on an unmixed basis, much is to be lost from the boy-girl interaction, even if something is gained at a motive or organizational level. The main problem encountered in physical education and sports can be noticed in the “feminisation” or “masculinisation” of certain sportive disciplines and the work with mixed groups during the physical education lesson is important even from the start of the pupils’ educational path and throughout its duration, with the purpose of avoiding the formation of gender stereotypes.

We consider this subject to be important because at present in the majority of Romanian schools differences are still being made between boys and girls in the physical education class and, if in the introductory part of the lesson, frontal work is conducted, in the learning-consolidation of some specific motive abilities of some sportive games, the groups are formed on a gender basis and not according to value or preference (Combaz 1991). It is important that each lesson of physical education be conducted according to the gender characteristics of the group and this way of working should be permanently applied, regardless of the content of the lessons. If at the moment of developing certain psychomotor abilities, the repartition on groups of value according to gender can be justified, because pupils’ development from a physical point of view

is different according to gender, that of the general or specific motive abilities is not justified according to this criterion (Davişse & Louveau 1991). Some teachers prefer to practice football with boys and volleyball with girls (Griffin 1984); this stems from the stereotype that boys are more “aggressive” so the physical contact in football encourages their participation, while girls are more “delicate” and are guided towards volleyball. These teachers do not take into account the other factors that can be resolved by working with mixed groups, such as: learning to communicate verbally and non-verbally with the opposite sex, respecting the civic and moral rules of behaviour, accomplishing the general objectives of education, but also the specific ones of physical education and sports and, last but not least, developing psychomotor abilities but also of basic and specific motive abilities (Cogérino, 2005). It has been noticed that (Coupey 1995) an early practice on mixed groups, especially from the age of 9 – the start of the preadolescent period – will yield major results as regards the resolution of inequalities (Lentillon & Cogérino 2005) and promotion of equity.

The scholastic sports activities are segregated on a gender basis as well. Thus, “easy” sports are recommended for girls, with a low level of competitiveness, and boys are encouraged to practice sports which are strongly competitive. When it comes to education for the formation of abilities (including technical ones), it is oriented, in its practical aspects, through industrial work for boys and manual activities for girls (especially for the role of housewives). The same situation of segregation is also evident when it comes to sexual education (Ştefănescu 2003). By eliminating these gender stereotypes in the physical education class, pupils are allowed to develop their social mobility, defined (Sorokin 1959) as the movement of individuals within a social structure with the purpose of occupying a position suitable to their qualities and abilities (studies, competences, social class, political power and, in the case of our field, motive abilities and qualities). The status represents the position or rank of an individual within the group and generally, in the case of physical education, it is prescribed and gained according to gender (the one in which the individual develops through his/her own efforts and requires creativity, initiative, competition). The status represents an ensemble of duties and privileges and the role represents exercising them and defines the expected behaviour from the one that has acquired a certain status.

1.1. The purpose of this research is to dispute gender stereotypes within the physical education class through working with pairs, groups and mixed teams and to analyse the way in which acquiring the status of leader is made on a gender basis.

1.2. The object of the study constitutes the analysis of the boy-girl relationship within the pairs, groups and mixed teams within the physical education class and the way in which female pupils will improve their status by assuming active roles.

2. Material and method

The experiment took place in the local school from Jamu Mare, Timis county, during the 2009-2010 scholastic year, on a class of 15 pupils (5th graders) – 6 girls and 9 boys with the age of 11-12.

As methods of research, the observation method (systematic method) and Moreno's sociometric method (Moreno, 1934; Georgescu, 1979) were used. The sociometric test was applied, the sociometric matrix has been created and the sociometric indexes have been calculated: the Index of Social Status (ISS) and the Index of Social Preference (ISP) on the basis of the total number of preferences (TPref) and rejections (TRej). The sociometric test used for determining choices and rejections contains 4 types of questions: a) *Whom would you choose to be part of your football team?* b) *Whom would you not choose to be part of your football team?* c) *Who do you think will choose you to be a part of his/her football team?* d) *Who do you think will not choose you to be a part of his/her football team?*

Three variants of answers are provided, each being graded with 3 points, 2 points and 1 point in the order of preference and -3, -2 and -1 for the rejections. These choices will be represented by a sociometric matrix in which only the choices and rejections between girls and boys will be presented.

In the tables presented below, the boys are registered in blue and the girls in red. An initial testing has been conducted at the beginning of the scholastic year and also a final one has been conducted at the end of the same year (Tables 1-4).

3. Hypothesis

Even if initially, in the physical education lesson the statuses are distributed traditionally according to sex and physical abilities, which mean that the boys with skills are the leaders, after working with mixed teams, one can notice that the distribution is made according to gender and physical abilities which means that the girls with physical abilities will be recognised by their pairs and will be part of the leaders.

4. Results

4.1 Initial testing

4.1.1. Choices and rejections

Following the initial testing, it can be noticed (Table 1) that the formal leader of the group is PD (a boy) with an ISS of 0,85 followed by SS (a girl) with an ISS of 0,35 – they are the most popular pupils of the class. It can be noticed that PD received choices from both boys and girls,

while SS is only chosen by girls and rejected by boys. The next boys that have a high social status are two: GV (0,28) and GS (0,14) and the girls next in rank when it comes to a high social status are four: SP (0,21), CL (0,21), NL (0,14), SM (0,14).

Table no. 1

Class	SM	ML	IL	KC	TI	GI	GV	AR	CL	NL	SS	SP	PR	GS	PD
SM	0			-3					1		3	2	-2	-1	
ML	3	0		-1					2	-2	-3	1			
IL	-1		0	-2	-3	3	1								2
KC	-2	-3	1	0		3				-1					2
TI		-1	1	-3	0						-2			2	3
GI	-3	-2	2			0	3			-1					1
GV			1	-2	-3	3	0						-1		2
AR				-3	-2			0			2	1	-1		3
CL	-1	-3			-2				0	2	3				1
NL	-2	-3			-1				2	0	3				1
SS	2			-2	-3					3	0	-1			1
SP		-3			-2	1		-1			3	0			2
PR			1			3	-1	-2					0	-3	2
GS				-1	-2	3	1	-3						0	2
PD		-1	3			2	1			-3	-2				0
T. Pref	2/5	0/0	7/7	0/0	0/0	7/7	4/6	0/0	3/5	2/5	5/14	3/3	0/0	2/2	12/22
T.Resp	5/7	7/7	0/0	8/8	8/8	0/0	1/1	3/3	0/0	4/7	3/7	1/1	3/4	2/4	0/0
ISS	0.14	0	0.5	0	0	0.5	0.28	0	0.21	0.14	0.35	0.21	0	0.14	0.85
ISP	-0.21	-0.5	0.5	-0.57	-0.57	0.5	0.21	-0.21	0.21	-0.14	0.14	0.14	-0.21	0	0.85

When it comes to preferences, it can be noticed that PD has the highest ISP (0,85) – he is the most popular pupil in the class and he is followed by three male classmates (IL-0,5, GI-0,21) and three female classmates (CL-0,21, SS-0,14, SP-0,14) that represents the chosen and integrated pupils in the group of pupils. The pupils with 0 ISS are indiferent for the group; among them are: KC, TI, AR and PR and only one girl: ML and those with a negative ISP are those who have been rejected: SM, ML and NL.

Noticing the mutual choices and rejections between boys and girls from Fig. 1, it can be observed firstly that they are made on a gender basis (boys choose boys and girls choose girls) and secondly it can be noticed that the preferences are manifested between pupils of the same gender and thirdly, the rejections are targeted at the opposite gender.

4.1.2. Presumed choices and rejections

From Table 2 it can be noticed the girls presume that they will be chosen by girls and rejected by boys. The presumed ISS places PD on the first place (0,57), which indicates the central spot the

he occupies within the group, 8 of the pupils thinking that they will be chosen by PD to be part of his team, which denotes his status as leader and the others' desire to be chosen by him. On the second position are two boys GI and IL (0,42) who, as is PD's case, are preferred by boys and rejected by girls and on the third place is a girl – SS (0,35), who is preferred by girls and rejected by boys.

On the following position is a boy – GV (0,28), together with a girl – CL, followed closely by three girls: SM, NL and SP (0,28).

Table no. 2

Class	SM	ML	IL	KC	TI	GI	GV	AR	CL	NL	SS	SP	PR	GS	PD
SM	0	1				-3	-1			3	2				-2
ML	3	0				-1	-2		1			2		-3	
IL	-3	-1	0	-2		3	1								2
KC	-3		1	0		2	-1							-2	3
TI			-3	-2	0	3		-1						1	2
GI		-2	3			0	1		-3			-1			2
GV			1	-2	-3	3	0						-1		2
AR	-2	-3	1				-1	0			2				3
CL						-2			0	2	3	1	-1		-3
NL			-1			-3	-2		2	0	3	1			
SS	2	-1		-2					1	3	0				-3
SP	2					-3			1		3	0		-1	-2
PR			1	3		-3	-2						0	-1	2
GS					-2	3	1	-3		-1				0	2
PD	-1	-2	1			3	2		-3						0
T. Pref	3/7	1/1	6/8	1/3	0/0	6/17	4/5	0/0	4/5	3/8	5/13	3/4	0/0	1/1	8/18
T.Resp	3/8	5/9	2/4	4/8	2/5	6/15	6/9	2/4	2/6	1/1	0/0	1/1	2/2	4/7	4/10
ISS	0.21	0.07	0.42	0.07	0	0.42	0.28	0	0.28	0.21	0.35	0.21	0	0.07	0.57
ISP	0	-0.28	0.28	-0.21	-0.14	0	-0.14	-0.14	0.14	0.14	0.35	0.14	-0.14	-0.21	0.28

The index of preferential status places SS (a girl) in the center of the group's preferences, even if it indicates the fact that the girls would like to be chosen by their classmate, they do not think that SS would choose them, as opposed to PD who has 8 pupils that think they will be chosen by him and other 4 that think they will not be chosen by him, which lowers his preferential status index.

Among the accepted boys, IL and PD (0,28) are also present. Among the accepted girls are CL, NL and SP with an ISP of 0,14 and one boy (GI) and one girl (SM) are indifferent to the group of pupils. Those rejected by the group of pupils are: KC (-0,21), TI (-0,14), GV (-0,14), AR (-0,14), PR (-0,14) and GS (0,21), the same as ML (-0,28).

Given that the boys are more numerous than the girls, the preferences and choices between them are not in the favour of SS, a girl with the highest ISS and ISP among the girls. Due to not

knowing the group of pupils and working with an unmixed group, the boys prefer to have a boy leader, while the girls naturally prefer a girl and thinking that they will be chosen by girls, while boys prefer boys in their turn.

4.2. Final testing

4.2.1. Choices and rejections

From Table 3 one can notice that PD has remained the pupil with the highest status (0,78) but shares this position with SS, who is chosen the same number of times as PD. It can be noticed that SS is chosen equally by boys and girls, the same way as PD. On the following position come two boys: GI (0,57) and IL (0,50).

Table no. 3

Class	SM	ML	IL	KC	TI	GI	GV	AR	CL	NL	SS	SP	PR	GS	PD
SM	0	-3	1	-2							3		-1		2
ML		0	2						-1	-2	3			-3	1
IL	-3	-2	0			1		-1			2				3
KC				0	-1	1	-2	-3			2				3
TI			3		0	-1		-2		-3	1				2
GI			1			0		-2	-3		2			-1	3
GV			-1			3	0		-2		2		-3		1
AR	-3		-2		-1		2	0			1				3
CL	-1		1		-2	2			0		-3				3
NL	2		-3				-2			0	3			1	-1
SS		-3				2		-2		3	0		-1		2
SP	1		-2			2	-1				3	0			-3
PR	-1					1				-2	-3		0	2	3
GS	-1		2	-2		3	1				-3			0	
PD		-1	1					-2	-3		3			2	0
T. Pref	2/3	0/0	7/11	0/0	0/0	8/15	2/3	0/0	0/0	1/3	11/25	0/0	0/0	3/5	11/26
T.Resp	5/9	4/9	4/8	2/4	3/4	1/1	3/6	6/12	4/9	3/7	3/9	0/0	3/5	2/4	2/4
ISS	0.14	0	0.50	0	0	0.57	0.14	0	0	0.07	0.78	0	0	0.21	0.78
ISP	-0.21	-0.28	0.21	-0.14	-0.21	0.5	-0.07	-0.42	-0.28	-0.14	0.57	0	-0.21	0.07	0.64

The index of preferential status places PD (0,64), SS (0,57) and GI (0,5) as being the most popular, followed by IL (0,21) and GS (0,07) as being accepted and SP, who is indifferent to the group. The following boys are excluded: KC (-0,14), TI (-0,21), GV (-0,07), AR (-0,42) and PR (-0,21), together with the following girls: SM (-0,21), ML (-0,28), CL (-0,28), NL (-0,14).

It can be noticed that the girls receive rejections from boys and the boys receive besides rejections (as in the initial testing), also choices.

4.2.2. Presumed choices and rejections

As regards the presumptions about whom would choose them and who wouldn't, the two leaders (PD – a boy and SS – a girl) lead by far from the rest of the group. However, SS (0,71) is perceived better by the group than PD is (0,50).

Table no. 4

Class	SM	ML	IL	KC	TI	GI	GV	AR	CL	NL	SS	SP	PR	GS	PD
SM	0	1	-3			-1			3		2				-2
ML	2	0		-2			-3		1		3	-1			
IL		-3	0			1		-2			3		-1		2
KC			3	0	-1			-2		-3	1				2
TI	3	2	-1		0				1		-2				-3
GI			3			0	2		-1		1			-2	-3
GV	-1			-2		3	0				-3			2	1
AR			3		-2	2		0			-3		-1		1
CL	3	2	-1						0		1	-2			-3
NL			-2					-1	1	0	3	2			-3
SS	-1		1			-2				3	0	-3			2
SP		-1		-2			2		-3		3	0			1
PR			3	-1		-2		-3				1	0		2
GS	-1		-2			2	3				1			0	-3
PD			2			1	-3		-1		3		-2		0
T. Pref	3/8	3/5	6/15	0/0	0/0	5/9	3/7	0/0	4/6	1/3	10/21	2/3	0/0	1/2	7/11
T.Resp	3/3	2/4	5/9	4/7	2/3	3/5	2/6	4/8	3/5	1/3	3/8	3/6	3/4	1/2	6/15
ISS	0.21	0.21	0.42	0	0	0.36	0.21	0	0.28	0.07	0.71	0.14	0	0.07	0.5
ISP	0	0.07	0.07	-0.28	-0.14	-0.14	0.07	-0.28	0.07	0	0.5	-0.07	-0.21	0	0.07

As regards the index of preferential status, it can be noticed that SS (0,50) is the leader of the group. The group of accepted pupils consists of two girls: ML (0,07) and CL (0,07) and three boys: IL (0,07), GV (0,07) and PD (0,07). The group of indifferent pupils consists of two girls: SM (0) and NL (0) and one boy: GS (0). The group of the rejected is formed by five boys: In KC (-0,28), TI (-0,14), GI (-0,14), AR (-0,28), PR (-0,21) and one girl: SP (-0,07).

5. Discussions

One can notice that, if upon initial testing, the girls rejected the boys and the boys neither chose nor rejected girls, after working with mixed teams, the boys choose SS, highlighted as a leader with real sports abilities, but they do not choose other girls and the number of rejections towards them increase. This could be explained by identifying the sport and especially team sports, due to the existing contact as being male sports and by competitiveness – at this level only SS manages to rise but the other colleagues do not identify with the competitive model of the sportive person. If upon initial testing none of the boys think that they will be chosen by SS, upon final testing the majority of the boys (with the exception of one) think that they will be either chosen or rejected by her.

ML goes from being rejected by the group to achieving acceptance upon final testing.

6. Conclusions

It can be noticed that if initially boys and girls did not express any opinion towards the opposite sex (in the case of boys) or, on the contrary, they rejected them directly (in the case of girls) based on stereotypes, after working in pairs, groups and mixed teams, the boys and girls get to know each other and express their choices and rejections according to the abilities and the boy or girl's way of communicating. By working on a mixed basis with a group of pupils, a better development of the capacity of communication and competition is encouraged for boys and girls, respectively. This determines a better mutual knowledge and implicitly paves the way to finding a role within the team for every boy and girl, regardless of gender.

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