



GAMES IN MILITARY PHYSICAL EDUCATION LESSONS

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The relationship between social reality and the formation of intellectual-educational and motor skills in participants in military education and not only, information and behavioral transfer between the two environments, is based on creating viable connections and finding applicable solutions from one environment to another, on a definite anchorage of the knowledge acquired for the real world. This relationship can be strengthened through a multidisciplinary approach, in which each field studied, each subject covered within the educational program can contribute to strengthening the reality-training bond. In military education, this relationship acquires complex valences and connotations, if we look at the purposefulness of the educational act, in which each subject covered will influence the finished product. This material offers another perspective of a means specific to the military physical education subject in military education, that of games in the training during physical education lessons.

Keywords: *game; movement; education; physical education; military.*

Expressing the option to access one of the forms of education in the military environment is a first step towards entering a world full of unknown, a particular environment, where intellectual, mental and physical development, based on the reality of the field, is the foundation for training those who will serve the interests of the country. This training requires a major involvement of both those who prepare and serve the training and education act and those to be trained.

If the transmission of specialized theoretical knowledge is still done in most of the learning process according to the classical model (teacher/instructor – knowledge – "student") in classrooms and ends with a form of assessment, in the case of practical knowledge, the information must be transmitted in laboratories, on training grounds, in polygons, on fields and gyms etc. Creativity, the level of knowledge reached, the responsibility and the involvement of those who lead the training or teaching activities, either theoretical or practical, are essential factors for those in the training process to become proficient at the end of the educational stage. Whether we use classical teaching or learning methods, or we use the latest methods and resources, it is important to reach the right end in relation to the social requirement.

The training of those accepted in military education must not be one based only on the transmission of theoretical and practical specialized knowledge, it must also manifest itself for cultivating the interests and passions of those who are trained, for extracurricular development, for awareness and expression of the biological model according to which, we, as human beings, work, for finding the optimal and efficient solutions of a correct relationship between psyche-body and social need.

The development and cultivation of this relationship can be achieved using a whole range of means in many fields but also those specific to the field of physical education and sports, by finding those solutions in military physical education lessons and sports activities which materialize the training act for real military life. In fact, Billie Jean King¹ stated that "sport teaches you to characterize, it teaches you to play by the rules, it teaches you to know how it feels when you win or lose, it teaches you about life".

Games in the military physical education lesson

The activity of high-performance training, of education, of the participants in military education, is conditioned by the rational behavior of teachers and instructors, by their concrete actions, by adapting the content to be transmitted according to real social requirements, by the existence of reality-

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training/education relationship. In fact, the actions of teachers or instructors are obviously conditioned by the social and human environment in which the activity takes place, all on a rational-intellectual foundation. The actions and the result of their actions, that is "the end-product", are permanently assessed by society, in terms of their concretization according to the social need. Their actions "influence the persons themselves and/or their environment..., optimize the person-environment relationship, form the basis for material, personal or social experiences"².

Such actions, under the obvious influence of the mental and physical component, are all the more important when they take place in the military environment, where the maximum grade obtained is of little relevance compared to rescuing the comrade from difficult situations of a real fight, population at risk, intervention in special situations. The military environment requires a total mental and physical involvement of both those who lead the training/education activity and those who "undergo" this act, in absolutely all specialties of this system, because the military must train "the way they fight, because historical experiences show a direct correlation between realistic training and success on the battlefield"³. And military physical education⁴, being a military specialty, whose importance is recognized by most of those in the system, is no exception to the need to involve all resources in order to achieve necessary and useful ends for the military environment.

Being an activity organized and structured on logical sequences, in which the basic unit where the information is transmitted is the military physical education lesson or session (the most used form of organizing the teaching act itself), it provides the right framework for creating basic and specific motor skills so necessary to the military environment. "Military physical education if carried out continuously and systematically (and if conducted on a scientific and solid bases) guarantees a good level of physical condition, which facilitates the execution of the missions entrusted in crisis or war situations, but also allows the accomplishment of tasks in time of peace or those imposed by everyday life"⁵. Thus, its content is in a permanent modification and adaptation to the requested realities, the achievement of the established objectives and the proposed goals being

the essence of the training act in this field. Their achievement can be done by finding adaptable solutions and implementing them in lessons, by using training means, the means specific to military physical education (A/N—the fundamental means by which military physical education operates is physical exercise, "the recognized and standardized didactic instrument with the help of which the didactic tasks are performed"⁶) that have a concrete purpose, closely related to the requirements of the military environment. By realistic training, "the forces are provided with the combat capability necessary for action in the conditions specific to contemporary war, in a dynamic, complex environment, characterized by danger, uncertainty, intense psychophysical demand"⁷.

One of the specific means too little approached and used in physical education lessons is the game, not just the sports games themselves (football, handball, volleyball, hockey, basketball, rugby). The discovery and rediscovery of playful behavior and manifestations among young people creates an emulation around the physical education subject and, finally, the military specialty, a so much needed manifestation. The game is an essential feature of childhood, through which the little ones unconditionally express their feelings and joy, but also of other ages seeking to meet the movement needs. If in childhood and adolescence, when the child or young person defines himself/ herself as an entity, the game has an educational-formative role from a mental, motor and social point of view, during midlife, adulthood and senescence, the game is a motor complex with hedonic implications⁸, mainly seeking neuropsychic relaxation, fun, socializing, entertainment, recreation, active rest, mental recovery etc.

Mihai Epuran considers game as "a free, autotelic (A/N – defined by one's own purpose having an inner aim) manifestation, producing health, joy of movement, physical and mental recreation, good mental tone, a better quality of life, in which the intentionality and pursuit of the specific goals of each type of activity are of multiple interest, theoretical, methodological, psychological, social and methodical, including the concepts of plan, forecast, strategy, decision, control, execution, assessment"⁹.

Gheorghe Cârstea considers games to have "special implications on the development of



the executors' personality ... including that of contribution in terms of social integration"¹⁰, while Ursula Şchiopu admits the importance of the game and places it on the same level of value with the learning and work activities.

Other theorists of humanism, in their specialized works, consider and explain the essence of game, regardless of the age of the participants, as follows¹¹: H. Spencer considers game as a means of consuming unused energy surplus; Lazarus understands the game as an essential

Looking at these explanations or theories of the game it can be seen that each of the theorists tried in his own way to refine and revise the definition and finally the essence of the game. The role of the game itself, given the above theories, can be very well summarized and concluded in Figure 1, understanding by catharsis a spiritual and mental state obtained as a result of the release of feelings and passions, of purification through movement, through an active and intense involvement in the development of the game, provided that the partners

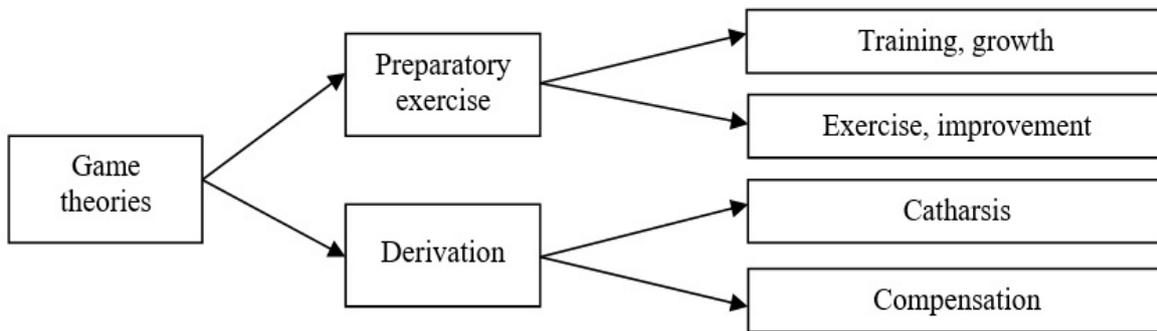


Figure 1 The essence of game¹⁴

way to satisfy the desire for rest or relaxation/recreation, addressability being predominant for adults; Karl Gross identifies the game in its own way, from a biological perspective, resembling the child's behavior during his time with the primary-instinctual expressions of animals, in which playing is an exercise for life. Carr H. considers playing as "the activity of acquiring a tendency of general variability of instructive reactions and skills"¹². Adler understands the game as expressing a child's sense of inferiority to an adult. Chateau J. considers that by playing the child expresses his/her desire to reach adulthood. Lange K. regards game as a substitute for real life, while Leshaft P. states that game creates optimal conditions for the child's development for life. Piaget J. sees game as a "process of assimilating impressions and reactions, but also one that improves development, functionality and mental organization"¹³. According to Freud S., game is a form of human adaptation as a result of which practitioners can get rid of some of the anxiety disorders, while Claparede E. understands game in terms of compensation (filling in certain shortcomings, failures) and restoring psychological balance.

(or opponents) in the game have not destroyed the sense of friendship, of camaraderie.

In the context of military physical education, I consider game a specific means of objective attraction of participants in the training act and fulfillment of operational objectives by transforming and adapting the military reality to the peculiarities of the games, with viable results applicable to the military environment. The achievement of the goals proposed within the lesson must be done through a spontaneous, voluntary, active, conscious involvement on the aims, limited in time, all based on the concept of fun and entertainment of those involved in the activity.

Regardless of the theories mentioned above, regardless of the age of the practitioners or the nature of games, they have a number of features, in which the formation and mental and physical modeling of their social effect are essential elements to follow beyond their playful effect. Thus, games, as activities, are¹⁵: *natural* – its necessity springs from the human being itself, our evolution not being conditioned by playing as a mandatory requirement; *free* – in the game, outside the training framework, people participate voluntarily, the decision being

made without any constraint; *spontaneous* – we, humans, are willing to participate in various games whenever an opportunity arises; *attractive* – games have almost always created positive mental states in which success has always led to emulation around this concept; *total* – games engage the human being in all its aspects: mental, physical, social; *disinterested* – the purpose of the game differs from that of the mandatory social framework, seeking only the intrinsic joy of an independent activity; *recreational-compensatory* – man seeks release from the social tension to which one is exposed, both during work and in current activities.

From the perspective of the characteristics mentioned above, we can see that the game is a means used mainly by humans, to meet their various needs. The game, by its structure, aims to obtain results from a mental, physical and social point of view on humans. They perform a number of functions that can lead to the emergence of influences on the human personality. The functions of games¹⁶, according to Ursula Şchiopu (1970), are essential or main, secondary and marginal.

Thus, *the knowledge function* "is expressed through the practical and intellectual acquisition of the properties of the surrounding world"¹⁷, of reality. The function of stimulating complex growth and development represents, finally, the essence and purposefulness of movement, in the context of human biology according to the period of human development; the aims of the movements must be cultivated extremely early and continued even in the period of senescence. *The formative-educational function* expresses through this instrument, through the game, the modeling of the intellect, the education and cultivation of the personality, the formation of a conduct and an acceptance and integration social behavior.

The balancing and toning function, together with the *hedonic* and *compensatory* one, represents a cumulation of functions that, together, become very important in the context of a stressful social reality, in which we look for those moments of mental and physical rebalancing, of psychophysical compensations by carrying out recreational and fun activities using the game as the main tool for achieving neuromuscular relaxation. *The therapeutic function* can be best understood in the case of assisted application and in special conditions of games in patients in an unhealthy

situation, which allows them to perform some basic movements.

Each historical period and geographical region influenced the diversity and typology of the games, each age through its peculiarities gave rise to games suitable for it or adapted the existing ones, obviously conditioned by the material basis available. The period, age, geographical region and material basis led to the creation of a multitude of games. The games have been classified, over time, according to several criteria, the systematic distribution itself being a real challenge.

From the multitude of classifications stated by the humanists mentioned above, from the perspective of this material, I consider that a mention of these types of games is not so relevant compared to trying to frame some of the types of games according to combat situations and basic and utility-application motor skills specific to the military environment (Table no. 1):

In support of the use of games for specific military purposes but also for entertainment, "Highland Games" sports competition can intervene, for example, held in TO Afghanistan in 2015. "This activity was attended by soldiers from 2 battalions, a Romanian one and an American one, combat structures forming at that time the Polar Bear-Dragons Task Force. The participants were divided into 10 mixed teams, consisting of eight competitors – 4 Romanian soldiers and 4 American soldiers. The tests of the competition were varied: throwing a 4 m long log and a 25 kg weight at a given distance, running with their partner on their back, turning around a hammer tail followed by running, throwing and catching fresh eggs at various distances, carrying a fighting machine wheel, holding their breath underwater, carrying 8 different weights (ammunition crates, food packages) and pushing a bus...rope pulling, in teams"¹⁹.

Methodical aspects of games

Games in their complexity have many features that can be useful or recommended in the training activity. In order to be effective, some very important aspects must be pursued in order to achieve the objectives.

Thus, a first idea that must be taken into account starts from the objectives of the training process and requires the correct choice of games



according to the purpose of the lesson. They must ensure complete training, both physically and mentally, morally and volitionally; captivate the interest of the participants; take into account their

the participants; as far as possible, there should be an equal number of participants in each team; also, where appropriate, a team captain may be appointed by the leader of the activity or he/she may be elected

Table no. 1

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN VARIOUS COMBAT SITUATIONS – GAME – BASIC AND UTILITY-APPLICATION MOTOR SKILLS¹⁸

POSSIBLE COMBAT SITUATIONS	TYPES OF GAME	PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS
Throwing hand grenades	Games for learning, consolidating and improving basic and utility-application motor skills Handball-specific games Motion games Individual games Rules games Games in various geographical areas and environments	Walking, running and cargo carrying, jumping, crawling, climbing, pushing, pulling, crouching, lunging, starting, stopping, changing direction, throwing.
Individual movement techniques Movement from one point to another Movement under enemy fire	Games for learning, consolidating and improving basic and utility-application motor skills Individual games Special or hereditary games (hunting) Moments reproduction games Motion games Games in various geographical areas and environments	Walking, squatting, running and cargo carrying, jumping, crawling, climbing, pushing, pulling, crouching, lunging, starting, stopping, changing direction, ascending and descending.
Hand-to-hand combat	Special or hereditary games (combat) Moments reproduction games Motion games Games of will Individual games Games in various geographical areas and environments	Reactions in hand-to-hand combat: pushing, pulling, stepping, walking, running, rolling, throwing, lifting body weight, crouching, lunging, turning, bending, blocking, kicking, hitting, stopping, changing direction.
Assessment and response to threats Reaction to direct contact with the enemy	Special or hereditary games (combat) Moments reproduction games Motion games Collective games Games in various geographical areas and environments	Walking, squatting, pushing, pulling, running, rolling, throwing, lifting body weight, crouching, lunging, turning, bending, blocking, kicking, hitting, changing direction, weight carrying, jumping, crawling, ascending, starting, stopping.
Evacuation of the wounded	Moments reproduction games Motion games Individual games Collective games Rules games Games in various geographical areas and environments	Lunging, crouching, weightlifting, walking, running, carrying.

age and sex, physical training level, quantity and quality of motor skills and qualities possessed by that time; take into account safety and accident prevention rules, the ambience must be in line with the proposed objectives; the material basis available must also be taken into account (land, spaces, objects and sports materials etc.). Another important aspect that we must take into account throughout the training process is represented by the health of those who participate in the activity.

When it comes to preparing for games, there are times when teams need to be made. When playing team games, one must follow a few rules: teams can be established by the game leader or even by

by the team members; they must be homogeneous in value, motor and anthropometric dimensions as far as possible; all participants must be involved in the activity; if they are special (combat) games, the weight and height of the participants must be taken into account; at an unequal number of participants in a team, a member can perform twice the task received; time should be allowed for the choice of tactics, if appropriate, and it must be made by either the team captain or determined by the team members.

The leader of the activity has a very clear role in coordinating and carrying out the game. He/she must specify the name of the game, explain the rules

and how it takes place, the special actions during the game, the safety measures, where applicable, the conditions under which a game is won and, also, the score, penalties and sanctions, disqualifications, signals for the beginning, the interruption and the end of the game. If necessary, the leader of the activity will demonstrate parts or motor actions during the game for a correct understanding. He/she will follow during the game, the correctness and observance of the rules, applying the sanctions specified at the beginning if a violation of the rules is found, he/she must be impartial, pay attention to the evolution of the teams, follow the observance of discipline in a yet relaxed environment. If the effort is too great or too small for the participants, he/she can reduce the size of the playing field or increase it, reduce or increase the game time, repetitions, complicate or simplify the rules. At the end of the game, the leader must announce the winners. If the situation requires it, he/she can use the referees within the group available throughout the game.

Conclusions

I have previously presented a series of features of the games as well as their role in physical education lessons, elements that lead to awareness of the importance of this specific means in the training act. By involving the anatomical and functional component of the human body in the development of games, a series of benefits and favorable results can be obtained, starting from the sanogenetic effects of the motor activity itself. Thus, games can help maintain good overall health, contributing to the development of the body according to the age at which games are applied, remove excess fat, stimulate and proper functioning of the body's major systems.

By soliciting the psyche and intellect of the "practitioner", motion games contribute to better education and time management, being known that games take place, in many situations, against the clock, under its pressure, in which the possibility of making very fast action decisions appears. Also, the focus on accomplishing tasks and making decisions during a game creates premises for improving concentration and developing leadership skills as well as other directions of interest. Thus, the use of motion games can be a helpful and useful element in the long run.

By successfully fulfilling the duties, the encouragement received during the game, the level of confidence may substantially increase simultaneously with the sense of responsibility, thus strengthening self-esteem, satisfaction taking the place of dissatisfaction. Another important aspect of motion games is the fact that their conduct, in most cases, requires the presence of a larger number of participants, a larger group, in which the distribution of tasks and their achievement pursue the same purpose: team victory and, why not, individual satisfaction. Victory, in such situations, is determined by the involvement of team members, the interaction between them, teamwork and mutual help. All these elements lead to the increase of the level of socialization between the participants in the game, socialization that can be transposed in other moments of life, other than the physical education lesson and motion games.

NOTES:

1 Billie Jean King, former great field tennis player, winner of no less than 39 Grand Slam titles (12 singles titles, 16 women's doubles and 11 mixed doubles) and of the first edition of the Champions Tournament, in 1971.

2 M. Epuran, *Motor Skills and Psychism in Body Activities – Prolegomena to a Meta-Theory of Body Activities*, Vol. 1, FEST Publishing House, Bucharest, 2011, p. 125

3 *** *FM 7-0: Training the force*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington DC, 2002, 1-2.

4 G.C. Ciapa, *Physical Training of the Romanian Army Military Personnel in Modern Conflicts*, "Carol I" National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2018, p. 40. "The planned, organized and individual or collective training activity, capitalizing on the system of forms of physical exercise in order to train, develop and improve the motor and mental skills of the military and civilian personnel in the army, in order to conduct armed combat and to improve their health".

5 G.F. Băițan *Physical Training of the Romanian Military Personnel in the context of NATO Integration*, "Carol I" National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2019, p. 31.

6 Gh. Cârstea, *Theory and Methodology of Physical Education and Sports*, ANDA Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000, p. 40.

7 A.D. Pelmuș, *The Influence of Effective Training in the Field of Military Physical Education on Combat Potential*, "Carol I" National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2020, p. 53.

8 Hedonism – "Ethical conception according to which the purpose of life is pleasure, release from suffering. 2 (Aesth.) Theory considering that the main function of art is to delight. 3 Exaggerated tendency to seek pleasure, common in manic states", www.dexonline.ro, accessed on 07.04.2020.



- 9 M. Epuran, *op.cit.*, p. 189.
- 10 Gh. Cârstea, *Theory and Methodology of Physical Education and Sports*, ANDA Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000, p. 128.
- 11 T. Predescu, E. Jianu, C. Grădinaru, S. Grădinaru, *Sports Games in School*, Polytechnic Publishing House, Timișoara, 2010, p. 73.
- 12 *Ibidem*, p. 70.
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- 17 T. Predescu, E. Jianu, C. Grădinaru, S. Grădinaru, *op.cit.*, p. 77.
- 18 *** *FM 7-22: Army Physical Readiness Training*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington DC, 2013, pp. 1-4 and reinterpretation of game classifications.
- 19 M. Istrate, *Scientific communications session – Land Forces Tactics and Operational Art*, Faculty of Command and Staff, "Carol I" National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2020, p. 546.

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