

PODIUM

Journal of Science and Technology in Physical Culture

Volume 19
Issue 2

2024

University of Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca"



Leisure and recreation in the context of Basic Sport Formation Schools

El tiempo libre y la recreación, en el contexto de las Escuelas de Iniciación Deportiva

Tempo livre e recreação, no contexto de escolas de iniciação esportiva

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Received: 02/05/2024

Approved: 31/05/2024

ABSTRACT

Free time and its adequate use through recreation constitute a problem that has been given great attention in recent years by some institutions and authors from different parts of the world, which acquires greater significance when it is approached in the context of educational centers, due to its evident relation with the integral formation and quality of life of these schoolchildren. Within the educational centers, the schools of the sports education and training system deserve special attention, where the demands become more complex when academic education is harmoniously combined with sports practice and training. That is why the objective of this article focuses on assessing the importance of the use of



Recreation in an educational and creative free time, from the context of the Basic Sports Formation, in terms of the integral formation of student-athletes. Starting from the analysis of published works related to the subject, the article makes an assessment in the context of the reality of student-athletes in these educational-sports centers. The need to deepen in the study of this population, their particularities and needs to provide them with an adequate use of their free time through varied recreational activities that contribute to their recreational satisfaction, integral formation and improvement of their quality of life is glimpsed.

Key words: recreational activities, student-athletes, recreation, leisure time

RESUMEN

El tiempo libre y su adecuada utilización por medio de la recreación constituye una temática a la que se le ha conferido gran atención en los últimos años, por numerosas instituciones e investigadores de diferentes partes del mundo; lo que adquiere mayor significación cuando se aborda en el contexto educativo, por su evidente relación con la formación integral y la calidad de vida de los estudiantes. Entre los centros educativos, merecen singular atención las escuelas del sistema de enseñanza y formación deportiva, donde se complejizan las exigencias al combinarse de forma armónica la academia, la práctica y la formación deportiva. Es por ello, que el objetivo del presente artículo se centró en valorar la importancia de la utilización de la recreación en el tiempo libre educativo y creativo, desde el contexto de las Escuelas de Iniciación Deportiva, en función de la formación integral de los estudiantes-atletas. Se partió del análisis de trabajos publicados que abordaron la temática en los centros de enseñanza deportiva, para efectuar una valoración. Como resultados, se vislumbró la necesidad de profundizar en las particularidades y necesidades para propiciar un aprovechamiento adecuado del tiempo libre, con actividades recreativas variadas que contribuyan a la satisfacción recreativa, la formación integral y el mejoramiento de la calidad de vida.

Palabras clave: actividades recreativas, estudiantes-atletas, recreación, tiempo libre



RESUMO

O tempo livre e seu aproveitamento adequado por meio da recreação é um tema que tem recebido grande atenção nos últimos anos por inúmeras instituições e pesquisadores de diversas partes do mundo; que adquire maior significado quando abordado no contexto educacional, devido à sua evidente relação com a formação integral e qualidade de vida dos estudantes. Dentre os centros educacionais, merecem especial atenção as escolas do sistema de educação e treinamento esportivo, onde as demandas tornam-se mais complexas quando a academia, a prática e o treinamento esportivo se combinam harmoniosamente. Por esse motivo, o objetivo deste artigo centrou-se em avaliar a importância da utilização da recreação nos tempos livres educativos e criativos, a partir do contexto das Escolas de Iniciação Esportiva, a partir da formação integral dos alunos atletas. O ponto de partida foi a análise de trabalhos publicados que abordavam o tema em centros de ensino esportivo, para fazer uma avaliação. Como resultados, viu-se a necessidade de se aprofundar nas particularidades e necessidades de promover o uso adequado do tempo livre, com atividades recreativas variadas que contribuam para a satisfação recreativa, a formação integral e a melhoria da qualidade de vida.

Palavras-chave: atividades recreativas, estudantes-atletas, recreação, tempo livre

INTRODUCTION

Free time is understood, in a general way, as that part of the social time that the subject has to carry out activities that are not part of their obligations, once their basic needs are satisfied; For its part, recreation refers to those activities that individuals carry out in their free time by their own choice, for fun, entertainment or personal improvement. Both constitute closely related themes that have been addressed by a great diversity of authors throughout history, whose conceptions vary depending on a given situation and historical formation and respond to an existing socio-political reality, a problem that currently remains its validity, interest and controversy.



As Melendez (2008) refers, free time is important in all phases of life, from childhood to old age, in both urban and rural environments, and presents the possibility of enriching oneself through participation in recreational activities, including the arts, sciences, contact with nature, travel and physical activity, among many others that offer human beings the opportunity to develop their essential faculties, the free exercise of will, making considered decisions, wisdom, the sense of social responsibility and creative capacity.

In this sense, Villa *et al.* (2017) propose that the conscious use and incursion of healthy physical activities in free time constitute a pillar of utmost importance that affects the training of individuals and the development of capacities, by experiencing bodily and social experiences, through recreational and fun activities.

Consequently, recreation as a means of using free time is a social need that allows for the permanent physical and spiritual enrichment of man, and its positive use is an important condition in his integral formation; therefore, it is necessary to motivate and properly guide its use towards activities that serve as pleasant, creative and educational recreation.

In summary, as expressed by Carmona (2015), "(...) the good use of free time, which includes physical activity, can lead to improved quality of life, reduced stress, and healthy mental and physical development" (p.17).

There are numerous publications that have been carried out about free time and its use in recreation, these cover various aspects and age groups. In recent decades, the treatment of this topic in educational centers of different teachings is notable, among which authors such as Arriagada and Fuentes (2023); Camargo and Berjas (2021); Camino *et al.* (2021); Carreño *et al.* (2011); Lugones *et al.* (2020); Martínez and Caraballo (2023); Sarrate (2008); Suárez and Moreno (2022); Vera (2018) can be mentioned.

In these works, it is evident the recognition that is currently given to this topic and it is glimpsed the importance of attention to the recreational use that students assign to free, as well as the educational profile of recreation that enhances a recreational experience, enriching and integrating personal values and the meaning given to life; which contributes



to the formation of the person and the reinforcement of values such as creativity, solidarity and tolerance.

In this sense, educational centers where academic activity is combined with sports practice are of particular interest and, in particular, those of the initiation stage that includes the population of children, adolescents and young people. These are student-athletes who begin to train sports systematically in a sports school, with a schedule of activities that organizes life, from school training, sports, eating and grooming processes, and free time.

These students have to combine their studies with high-level sports practice, two equally demanding activities that, without appropriate support and accompaniment, can hardly contribute to comprehensive training, and can even hinder their harmonious inclusion in the curricular and extracurricular context (Álvarez et al. 2022).

Academic and athletic demands together impose burdens that are difficult to bear; the high expectations of the people who surround the student-athlete (family, coaches, teammates, and even the community in general) can affect their functioning in various areas or dimensions of their life that can even lead to self-esteem problems (Álvarez et al. 2023).

For this reason, it is essential to pay attention to the use of free time available to these student-athletes, and to identify what makes possible the design of a recreation contextualized to their particularities and interests, so that the spaces and activities that compensate for the demands of the study and training loads to which they are subjected are provided, and their leisure needs are satisfied and, at the same time, contributes to their comprehensive training.

Therefore, the objective of this article focused on assessing the importance of using recreation in educational and creative free time, from the context of Sports Initiation Schools, based on the comprehensive training of student-athletes.



DEVELOPMENT

The appropriate use of free time is a topic frequently addressed from an educational perspective, both from an individual and collective point of view, around its rationalization and positive experiences to fully enjoy it, with dignity and based on the comprehensive training of students.

As stated in the International Charter of the World Leisure and Recreation Association (WLRA, 1994), the general objective of free time in schools is to help students achieve a desired quality of life through its use, which can be achieved through the development and stimulation of values, attitudes, knowledge and skills, for the sake of personal, social, physical, emotional and intellectual development. This has an impact on the family, community and society.

In this sense, Arráez (2013) expresses that the good use of free time as a socializing agent must be applied by teachers in the educational area, to ensure the harmonious development of all human dimensions: aesthetic, cultural, social and the recreational aspect. Hence, they take into account the interests, expectations and needs for personal and group satisfaction and the strengthening of values, through actions and activities chosen consciously and responsibly, in constructive free time, with assimilation of standards of life, coexistence, social interrelation and knowledge of the importance of the socialization process. In addition, the development of potentialities and comprehensive training without limitations, which strengthens self-realization and human development.

Comprehensive training is assumed to be a way of providing education, a style that aims not only to instruct students in its mental, memorizing, repetitive aspect, with the specific knowledge (cognitive aspect) of science, but also to offer them the necessary elements to that they grow internally and develop all their characteristics, conditions and potential (Guerra, et al., 2014).

Comprehensive training is a continuous, permanent and participatory process that seeks to harmoniously and coherently develop each and every dimension of the human being:



ethical, spiritual, cognitive, effective, communicative, aesthetic, corporal and sociopolitical, to achieve the full realization of the person as an active part of society (Rivera, et al., 2016).

For its part, recreation has been identified for many years as a web of relationships where the person, through experiences, finds rest and use of free time in social and cultural contexts (Quintero, 2011). Meanwhile, Pérez (2010) considers that recreation is:

"the set of phenomena and relationships that arise in the process of taking advantage of free time through therapeutic, prophylactic, cognitive, sports or artistic-cultural activity, without the need for an external compulsion and through which happiness and satisfaction immediate and personality development are obtained. (p. 15)

In the educational context, recreation was at the time recognized as an educational strategy to promote social control, and rationally occupy lazy and idle time with activities considered useful or healthy, activities of a physical, moral and social nature (Elizalde and Gomes, 2010). According to the criteria of these authors, recreation is synonymous with pleasurable activities with a purpose, not specified from an educational perspective, but as an intervention for the use of free time and its good use.

In an approach to the theory of educational recreation, Waichman (2015) refers to recreationism, which usually considers recreation as a sum of activities whose sole purpose is to have fun, they are imposed, and those who direct them tend to act as a "showman"; therefore, it is considered that the name educational recreation supports a different approach and in many aspects opposite to recreationism. In the conception of educational recreation, the aspiration is that it collaborates in the transformation of the time available or free of obligations of the participants, into the praxis of freedom and generates protagonism and autonomy.

For this author, recreation obtains the educational character, as there is an external direction to people; establishes qualitative transformation objectives; it is carried out in specific structures, referring to the scenarios where it is carried out; it has action methodologies to achieve the objectives; and has professionally trained staff. From this perspective, the best



recreational activity is the one that is yet to be invented, to decide its conditions, rules, the quality of participation of each member of the group and the way to evaluate it.

For their part, Carreño et al. (2011) affirms that recreation acquires a central place within the school, since it is not an action that is carried out at a certain moment, but conceives the school as a context where something must be done beyond the simple and traditional. In this sense, opening the possibility of relating to the world, finding new paths of socialization, both social and cultural, and giving the possibility of creating imaginary worlds.

Recreation is seen as a means that contributes to the educational field and opens possibilities for intervention and work, contributing to training in educational processes (Lema, 2011); In the context of school, it re-creates, in certain cases, spaces of time and place to think and enjoy. This way of making spaces possible invites teachers and students to change their way of living together at school and be more involved in recreational activities that guide innovative, eye-catching pedagogical work (Carreño, et al., 2014).

The author himself adds that recreation, seen as a new subject in school, should not only be linked to the organization of activities to take advantage of free time, but also with the possibility of working on transversal projects, designs of spaces such as playrooms or spaces of pedagogical model of interaction in the classroom.

Arraez and Montes (2014) consider the construction of an ideal model for the good use of free time from school, where recreational activities are the protagonists, resorts to the active and effective participation of all social actors, is made up of specialists in the area of recreation, and integrates all teachers.

It is a great challenge to ensure that students first complete their homework and then use their free time in healthy activities; it may be difficult to get them to leave their mobile devices and share more with their classmates, the ideal is to make them understand that by making more use of their time and their tasks being more productive, they can enjoy their free time more (Prado and Sivincha , 2019).



One aspect to consider is the particularity of students who belong to study centers where academic teaching is combined with practice in sports training. These teaching-sports institutions are characterized by having mandatory regulations that standardize and regulate the organization, in correspondence with the defined school regime, whether external, semi-internal or internal, in accordance with their state mandate or social mission.

In them, active and conscious participation in study, sports and work activities is encouraged, in a pleasant and pleasant environment; furthermore, training and teaching-learning methods are appropriately combined based on the multilateral and harmonious development of the personality, as the goal of Cuban education.

Such is the case, in Cuba, of the Sports Initiation Schools (EIDE), the Sports Academies and the Higher School of High Performance Athletes (ESFAR), which are part of the high performance pyramid of Cuban sports.

Specifically, the EIDE are specialized centers within the national education system, where teaching corresponding to the established study plans and programs is offered, and in which emphasis is placed on the development of sports abilities and skills, from an early age; they have accommodation, food, sports equipment, sports medicine services, with the best teachers and technicians in each of the regions, and are free of charge. Student-athletes from primary, secondary and pre-university education arrive there with the aptitudes to become future champions, who begin a rigorous preparation stage, without neglecting teaching (Labrada et al., 2007).

The particularity lies in the fact that the students who enter these centers, based on the educational objectives and mission, go through the different categories (school, youth), with a schedule of activities that organizes life from school training, sports, the processes of feeding, grooming, and free time (García and González, 2019). At this stage they are subjected to a greater training regimen and the demands of the loads are increased, in order to perfect their sporting performance, and subsequent insertion into national teams.



Together with this training process, the educational teaching process is developed with equal rigor, including that of Pre-University Education, with its demands and the preparation for the entrance tests to Higher Education is added. All of this demands attention to the development of the life of the student-athlete, from the various factors that must guarantee an efficient training process, based on the organization of the real time available, so that teaching and sports performance are guaranteed in harmony and it is promoted the comprehensive development.

As revealed by Álvarez et al. (2022), various studies carried out on the training process of high-level athletes show that without adequate resources and proper support throughout their life path, the possibilities of effectively combining education with high-competition sports practice are reduced.

On the other hand, the comprehensive training of the student-athlete involves promoting the multidimensional growth of the person, developing aspects such as emotional, intellectual, social, moral, ethical, spatial and physical intelligence. This is a reality that increasingly demands attention, especially if it is taken into consideration that a portion of the students enrolled in sports initiation centers do not complete their adult lives as elite athletes, but instead join different education centers to then join social life from various spaces (Álvarez, et al. 2023).

That is why the correct organization and use of these students' free time constitutes a vitally important element, which presupposes a dialectical relationship with mental and physical health for the sake of a better style and quality of life. To this end, the activities planned and organized during this time must be in accordance with the sport practiced and its particularities, needs and interests, as well as the objectives of the institution.

However, in daily practice, as reflected by García and González (2019), it is observed that sometimes in sports-teaching centers there is little participation of student-athletes in various recreational physical activities due to the poor offer that is made of them, and have little educational influence; at the same time, the participation of the center staff (teachers, coaches, other workers) in the process of recreation and use of free time for students is not



always evident and there are insufficiencies in the knowledge of the former regarding the work that recreation can play at school.

These irregularities cause demotivation in students, negatively affect their performance, both in the classroom and in training, and have an impact on the fulfillment of the institution's social mission (training and education). To avoid this, schools in the sports education and training system must achieve the implementation of recreational projects and strategies for the use of free time that are based on the diagnosis of their needs, likes and preferences and the characterization of the student-athletes, taking shape in a varied program that includes artistic, historical and social offerings, in which different actors (teachers, coaches, workers, family) get involved.

It is agreed with Díaz et al. (2023) when he expresses that recreation implies a sensitive universe full of complexities and solutions that requires systematic work, nuanced by the exercise of creativity, based on novel activities, characterized by their diversity and educational orientation, from the design and implementation of proposals that stimulate the participation of subjects, as the main protagonists of this process.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the importance given in the contemporary world to the issue of the use of free time through recreation, the attention that should be paid to the recreational use that students assign to this time was recognized, based on their educational profile, and as an enhancer of an enriching experience aimed at satisfying needs and interests, as well as comprehensive training.

Given the particularities of educational-sports centers in which the demands of studies are combined with the sports training process, the need to pay prioritized attention to the use of recreation in educational and creative free time was revealed, from the context of the EIDE, in order to satisfy the needs, interests and comprehensive training of these student-athletes. For this, the achievement and implementation of recreational projects and



strategies was essential, with a varied and integrated programming, from the diagnosis, in which all the institution's personnel are involved, in coordination with other factors.

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Conflict of interest statement:

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

Author's contribution:

The author is responsible for writing the work and analyzing the documents.



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