SAMMER SPORTS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION THROUGH ERASMUS+ PROJECTS

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Abstract

The purpose: Blended Erasmus Intensive Programme at a seaside resort between four universities of different countries Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, and Macedonia.

Project Subject: Sammer sports and sports animations/game activities for children on the beach. The aim of the training program was for students to organize and implement sports animation programs for children and to teach them water sports, outdoor games, and other physical activities on the beach.

Method of work: The number of students who participated in this project was 24. In the project with multiethnic composition participated students of different ethnicities. While the staff and expertise numbered 9 professors from the four aforementioned universities. Practical lessons in outdoor/indoor contained sport animation activities for children: games, water sports, animations, and traditional dances of different Balkan Ethnicities. The program allows for presentation and integration as well as the exchange of good practices and experiences from different participating countries.

Results and conclusion: Professional development of the students for sports animation for children water sports and games on the beach, social and communication competencies, recognition of intercultural values through traditional games and dances, learning through observation using workshop and video recording on methods of training, etc.

Keywords: International cooperation, Water sports, Activities on the beach, Dances, Indoor/Outdoor activities.

1. Introduction

After two years of improvisational work in educational institutions especially in those where practice dominates, such as the Faculty of Physical Education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, for the first time, we started with the realization of projects of an international character. After the realization of the first international project Winter Sports in March 2022 (Fadil at al. 2022), the second project titled Summer Sports followed successfully. It was a long period of interruption of meetings with a physical presence as well as the exchange of knowledge in the practical part both between local institutions and with foreign ones. Another important characteristic was the fact that the students spent two years not having the opportunity to use the various projects that have an international character and thus to experience the opportunities offered by the international projects.

Returning to the practical part of education was not easy, firstly the work habit had been lost, and secondly, the motor skills, as well as the general physical preparation, had stagnated. Cooperation between educational institutions, Faculties of Physical Education, teaching staff, and students was limited and only from a distance. This was also the reason why we were looking for a way out of this created situation that was not in anyone's favor. That's why we continued with the search for institutions with which we will be able to restore ties and conduct certain joint programs. We conducted something like this in the second semester of 2022 and immediately decided to be more pragmatic in the realization of joint projects.

As it is known Erasmus+ is the EU's program to support education, training, youth, and sport in Europe (Erasmus+...). Groups of higher education institutions will have the opportunity to organize short blended intensive programs of learning, teaching, and training for students and staff. During these blended intensive programs, groups of students or staff as learners will undertake a short-term physical mobility abroad combined with a compulsory virtual component facilitating collaborative online learning exchange and teamwork (Erasmus+...).

According to European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, the case studies examined in greater detail the findings that emerged from the survey results. They showed that the motivations for getting involved in the ERASMUS program vary. One group of universities sees ERASMUS as an opportunity to improve the quality of the institution and to support its modernization efforts. Others see ERASMUS as an important tool to offer students international study opportunities that may be required in their course programs. Yet, some universities see ERASMUS as a way to contribute to their profiling at the international level, and in some countries, universities face pressure from national policy-makers to get involved. Others indicate their ERASMUS involvement is related to national expectations to get involved in the program. Despite the varied motivations to take part in the program, the case study visits found evidence that higher education institutions have benefited from their participation in the ERASMUS program in terms of teaching, learning, and student services Key impacts were reported in respect of improvements in teaching and learning. Interesting developments were found primarily in terms of curriculum development. Specifically, new modules and study programs were set up in collaboration with other international partners, and modernization and internationalization of the curriculum have occurred (The impact of Erasmus...).

Through these programs, students have the opportunity to participate in international teamwork during the program, learn specific activities and skills related to organizing activities for children in a seaside resort, practice their English language skills, te receive certificates for participation in an international project - Blended Erasmus intensive program. Therefore, in the following, we will present the joint project that we realized between the universities of four different countries.

2. The purpose of the paper

The purpose of the Cooperation was the realization of a joint international 5 days project Erasmus+ at a seaside resort Kiten in Bulgaria between four universities of different countries St. Cyril and St. Methodius" University of Veliko Tarnovo Bulgaria, University of Pitesti Romania, University of Elbasan Albania and the University of Tetova Macedonia. The project subject was "Water sports and beach activities" within Joint Blended Intensive Programs. The aim of the training program was for students to organize and implement sports animation programs for children and to teach them summer sports and activities on the beach, games, animations, and other physical indoor and outdoor activities, including for children with special educational needs.

The Objectives of the program are including innovation, transdisciplinary content, added value, etc. The most important are the following:

I. Professional development of the students for sports animation for children at a seaside resort. The programme is designed to develop: skills on how to compose a sport animation programme for children at a seaside resort; skills to organize programme activities; knowledge and skills on how to train children: in beach tennis, beach volleyball, water skiing, canoe and kayak, windsurfing, orienteering, king-ball on the sand, team-building games, relays-teams and evening sports animations; knowledge and skills how to integrate children with special needs in the activities.

II. Development of social and communication competencies. The programme is based on teamwork and communication improves English language skills. New contacts are established which expanded the current own professional network with other participants, sports animators, and therapists of the hotel. III. Development of intercultural skills. The programme is designed to include social activities: evenings of the nations where each team will represent their own country. Participants communicate with representatives of other countries and lifestyles.

IV. Exchange of good practices and experience in different countries. The programme allows for the presentation and integration of good practices in sports animations from the participants from different participating countries.

3. Method of work

In this project participated 4 universities from 4 different countries: "St. Cyril and St. Methodius" University of Veliko Tarnovo Bulgaria, University of Pitesti Romania, University of Elbasan Albania and the Faculty of Physical Education, University of Tetova.

The number of students who participated in this project is 24 from both genders. In the project with multiethnic composition participated students from different ethnicities, this is also the beauty of Erasmus+ which enables the expansion of friendship and the recognition of other cultures. While the staff and expertise numbered 9 professors from the four aforementioned universities.

The method of teaching/learning was used, as well as the opportunity for innovation and creativity is provided. Practical lessons in outdoor/indoor contained sports activities for children at a seaside resort: beach tennis, beach volleyball, water ski, canoe and kayak, windsurfing, orienteering, kin-ball on the sand, teambuilding games, swimming, free diving, relays-teams and evening sports animations as well as traditional dances off different Balkan Ethnicities were implemented.

It is worth emphasizing that all the aforementioned sports have an educational and recreational character, even though some of them are competitions at high national and international levels, such as the world and Olympic ones. Therefore, teaching methodology and pedagogical principles as well as demonstration and practical work have been given a lot of importance. It should be emphasized that during the entire educational process the safety of the students was in the first plan. In the following, all the water sports and activities on the beach and in closed spaces that were carried out within the days provided by the project are presented.







Beach Tennis

Beach tennis is played in over 50 countries and by more than half a million people, with its greatest popularity occurring in Italy, Brazil, and Spain. Beach tennis offers a highly aerobic cardio workout with low impact on the knees and joints because it is played on sand.

The sport preserves most of the rules and scoring of traditional tennis, though modifications have been made to adapt to movement around the sand court and to the faster pace of the game. As the ball may not touch the ground, the game is played entirely with volleys, which makes for a quicker game than traditional tennis. Points start with a serve and end when the ball touches the ground, forcing players to dive to reach difficult plays in a similar manner used by volleyball players. The objective is to return the ball with only one hit so that it reaches the opposing side of the net.

A depressurized tennis ball, which travels more slowly through the air than a regulation tennis ball, is used for beach tennis to allow for longer rallies. The sport is usually played by two-person teams on a regulation beach volleyball court with a 5-foot-7-inch-high net (170.18cm) (ITF...).

Beach Volleyball

Beach volleyball is a team sport played by two teams of two or more players on a sand court divided by a net. Similar to indoor volleyball, the objective of the game is to send the ball over the net and ground it on the opponent's side of the court. Each team works in unison to prevent the opposing team from grounding the ball on their side of the court.

Teams are allowed up to three touches to return the ball across the net, and individual players may not touch the ball twice consecutively except after a touch off an attempted block. Making a block touch leaves only two more touches before the ball must be hit over. The ball is put in play with a serve—a hit by the server from behind the rear court boundary over the net to the opponents. The rally continues until the ball is grounded on the playing court, goes "out", or a fault is made in the attempt to return the ball (Rules...) The team that wins the rally scores a point and serves to start the following rally. The players serve in the same sequence throughout the match, changing server each time a rally is won by the receiving team.

Beach volleyball most likely originated in 1915 on Waikiki Beach in Hawaii, while the modern two-player game originated in Santa Monica, California. It has been an Olympic sport since the 1996 Summer Olympics. The Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) is the international governing body for the sport, and organizes the FIVB Beach Volleyball World Championships and the FIVB Beach Volleyball World Tour (FIVB...).

Water Skiing

Water skiing (also waterskiing or water-skiing) is a surface water sport in which an individual is pulled behind a boat or a cable ski installation over a body of water, skimming the surface on two skis or one ski. The sport requires sufficient area on a stretch of water, one or two skis, a tow boat with tow rope, two or three people (depending on local boating laws) (Water Skiing...), and a personal flotation device. In addition, the skier must have adequate upper and lower body strength, muscular endurance, and good balance.

There are water ski participants around the world, in Asia and Australia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas (International Waterski...). In the United States alone, there are approximately 11 million water skiers and over 900 sanctioned water ski competitions every year.[3] Australia boasts 1.3 million water skiers (USA Water Ski Profiles...).

There are many options for recreational or competitive water skiers. These include speed skiing, trick skiing, show skiing, slaloming, jumping, barefoot skiing and wakeski. Similar, related sports are wakeboarding, kneeboarding Australian Waterski... discing, tubing, and sit-down hydrofoil.

Canoe and Kayak

Canoeing – recreational boating activity or paddle sport in which you kneel or sit facing forward in an open or closed-decked canoe, and propel yourself with a single-bladed paddle, under your power. Canoeing is an activity that involves paddling a canoe with a single-bladed paddle. Common meanings of the term are limited to when canoeing is the central purpose of the activity.

Kayaking – use of a kayak for moving across water. It is distinguished from canoeing by the sitting position of the paddler and the number of blades on the paddle. A kayak is a low-to-the-water, canoe-like boat in which the paddler sits facing forward, legs in front, using a double-bladed paddle to pull front-to-back on one side and then the other in rotation (IFV Canoeing...). Most kayaks have closed decks, although sit-on-top and inflatable kayaks are growing in popularity as well (Kayak Review).

In short; Canoe: Usually open deck boat, seated or kneeling rowing position, one-bladed paddle. Kayak: Closed deck boat, seated position with legs stretched out, double-bladed paddle.

A canoe has an open-top, which means the deck inside is less protected from the elements than a kayak, which is closed-top. Because of this, a canoe has high sides, so that it's harder for water to jump up and splash you while you paddle.

A kayak is lower, so you'll be closer to the water than if you were to paddle in a canoe. In a kayak, there is only a small hole where water can enter the boat (the same place you'll be sitting!). But it's harder to get water out if it does get in so many kayakers wear a spray deck to prevent water from getting into their boat.

Kayaks are a lot nimbler and speedy than canoes, due to their shape, lighter weight, and double-bladed paddle, which allows for quicker and more agile piloting than a canoe. Canoes, meanwhile, are more stable and harder to capsize.

For people new to water sports, the difference between a canoe and a kayak can be quite confusing. Canoes and kayaks are both normally lightweight boats propelled and controlled by people using paddles, but each boat is unique in its way. While both can be used for recreation as well as water sports, fishing, and traveling, there are a few key differences to look out for when distinguishing one from the other.

Windsurfing

Windsurfing is a wind-propelled water sport that is a combination of sailing and surfing (Windsurfing...). It is also referred to as "sailboarding" and "boardsailing", and emerged in the late 1960s from the aerospace and surf culture of California (Origins of windsurfing...).

Orienteering

Orienteering is a group of sports that require navigational skills using a map and compass to navigate from point to point in diverse and usually unfamiliar terrain whilst moving at speed. Participants are given a topographical map, usually a specially prepared orienteering map, which they use to find control points (About orienteering...). Originally a training exercise in land navigation for military officers, orienteering has developed many variations. Among these, the oldest and the most popular is foot orienteering. For this article, foot orienteering serves as a point of departure for a discussion of all other variations, but almost any sport that involves racing against a clock and requires navigation with a map is a type of orienteering. Orienteering is included in the programs of world sporting events including the World Games

Kin-Ball

(Orienteering...).

Kin-Ball, is a team sport created in Quebec, Canada in 1986 by Mario Demers, a physical education professor, in which the main distinctive characteristics are the large size of the ball (1.2m (48 inches) in diameter)[i][1] and that the matches are played by three teams at the same time. The International Kin-Ball Federation counts 3.8 million participants, primarily from Canada, the U.S., Japan, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Spain, Germany, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Malaysia and China (including Hong Kong). The newest country is the UK; Kin-Ball UK was formed in 2018 (Official Kin-Ball...).

Team-building games

Team building is a collective term for various types of activities used to enhance social relations and define roles within teams, often involving collaborative tasks. It is distinct from team training, which is designed by a combination of business managers, learning and development/OD (Internal or external), and an HR Business Partner (if the role exists) to improve efficiency, rather than interpersonal relations.

Many team-building exercises aim to expose and address interpersonal problems within the group (Salas et al 2008).

Over time, these activities are intended to improve performance in a team-based environment (Creative Team Building Activities and Exercises...). Team building is one of the foundations of organizational development that can be applied to groups such as sports teams, school classes, military units, or flight crews.

Swimming

Swimming is the self-propulsion of a person through water, or other liquid, usually for recreation, sport, exercise, or survival. Locomotion is achieved through coordinated movement of the limbs and the body to achieve hydrodynamic thrust which results in directional motion. Humans can hold their breath underwater and undertake rudimentary locomotive swimming within weeks of birth, as a survival response (McGraw, Myrtle, B 1939).

Human swimming typically consists of repeating a specific body motion or swimming stroke to propel that body forward. There are many kinds of strokes, each defining a different swimming style or crawl.

In high school, collegiate, and Olympic swimming, there are two undulating strokes (breaststroke and butterfly stroke) and two alternating strokes (front crawl and backstroke).

Most strokes involve rhythmic and coordinated movements of all major body parts — torso, arms, legs, hands, feet, and head. Breathing typically must be synchronized with the strokes, too. It is possible, however, to swim by moving only legs without arms or only arms without legs; such strokes may be used for special purposes, for training or exercise, or by amputees (paralympians) and paralytics.

Front crawl: the fastest style for swimming on the surface. The arms alternate while the legs perform a flutter kick.

Butterfly stroke: performed face down in the water. The legs perform a dolphin kick while the arms move in a forward circle at the same time.

Breaststroke: performed face down in the water without rotating the torso. The arms stay in the water and move synchronously, while the legs perform a whip kick (which is sometimes called a breaststroke kick). It is possible to keep the head elevated out of the water throughout the stroke, although the head usually dips in and out.

Backstroke (Back crawl): Done while lying on the back. One arm reaches behind the head with a fingertip entry while the other arm is by the side. The legs perform a flutter kick.

Free Diving

Freediving, free-diving, free diving, breath-hold diving, or skin diving is a form of underwater diving that relies on breath-holding until resurfacing rather than the use of breathing apparatus such as scuba gear. Historically, the term free diving was also used to refer to scuba diving, due to the freedom of movement compared with surface-supplied diving [Rebikoff, D 1955].

Evening sport animations

Folk Dances

A folk dance is a dance that reflects the life of the people of a certain country or region. Not all ethnic dances are folk dances. For example, ritual dances or dances of ritual origin are not considered to be folk dances. Ritual dances are usually called "Religious dances" because of their purpose. The terms "ethnic" and "traditional" are used when it is required to emphasize the cultural roots of the dance. In this sense, nearly all folk dances are ethnic ones.

Some original photos of the International Blended Erasmus Project:













4. Results and recommendations

Every well-planned and successfully conducted work undoubtedly brings results, especially when it comes to joint projects of an international character. Learning and teaching methods and expected outcomes (knowledge, competencies, and abilities to be acquired by learners).

From the material presented in this paper, the following results or benefits can be seen:

I. Practical lessons in outdoor sport animation activities for children at the seaside: water skiing, canoeing, and kayak, and windsurfing.

Outcomes: Knowledge and skills for practicing water sports activities for outdoor sport animation for children at a seaside resort: water skiing, canoeing, and kayak, and windsurfing.

II. Practical lessons in beach sports activities for outdoor sports activities for children at a seaside resort: beach tennis, beach volleyball, orienteering, kin-ball on the sand, team-building games, relays-teams.

Outcomes: Knowledge and skills for practicing beach sports activities for outdoor sport animation for children at a seaside resort: beach tennis, beach volleyball, orienteering, kin-ball on the sand, teambuilding games, relays-teams.

III. Practical lessons in evening sport animation activities for children at a seaside resort: games and exercising.

Outcomes: Knowledge and skills for practicing evening indoor sport animation activities for children at a seaside resort.

IV. Workshop on methods of training.

Outcomes: Knowledge and skills of methods on how to teach the activities for children at a seaside resort: beach tennis, beach volleyball, water skiing, canoe and kayak, windsurfing, and orienteering. Kin-ball on the sand, team-building games, relays-teams, and evening sports animations.

V. Simulation workshop

Outcomes: Raising the capacity of organizing, promoting, and conducting a sport animation programme for children at a seaside resort.

VI. Presentation of sports animation experience in different countries.

Outcomes: Exchange of good practices implemented in each country on sport animation. Increase students' knowledge database.

VII. Evening animation for the family at a seaside resort hotel.

Outcomes: Students develop intercultural competencies by participating in the evening of the nations – event which is organized in the form of evening animation, and folk dances of different ethnicities and cultures. In addition, the social programme includes a visit to Sozopol which enriches students' life and raises cultural awareness of the host country.

VII. Video recording of the Erasmus intensive programme activities.

Outcomes: Learning through observation.

From what we saw above, we can conclude that professional development of the students for sports animation for children, social and communication competencies, recognition of intercultural values through traditional games and dances, learning through observation using workshops and video recording on methods of training etcetera, all this accompanied by innovation and creativity was the main goal of the aforementioned project.

The socialization of young people and the exchange of experience between students from different countries is one of the main points of such collaborations.

The realization of this project and similar international projects justifies the impact of the ERASMUS programme on quality improvement in European higher education in particular in the areas of teaching, research, student services, and openness to society with a focus at the institutional and system-level, for which it is best written in the paper "The Impact of ERASMUS on European Higher Education: Quality, Openness, and Internationalisation" (2008).

Through these projects realized in the winter and summer period, once again it was proven that the best way to learn is the exchange of experience between different universities, especially with those of foreign countries, this was best proven with international cooperation between four different universities in four different countries.

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