LA ACTIVIDAD FÍSICA Y EL DEPORTE COMO HERRAMIENTAS PARA PROMOVER EL INTERCULTURALISMO EN CONTEXTOS POSTBÉLICOS, EN EL MARCO DE LA COOPERACIÓN PARA EL DESARROLLO. UN PROYECTO REALIZADO EN GUATEMALA (CENTROAMÉRICA).

TESIS DOCTORAL EUROPEA
(Con mención de Doctor Europeus)

MARÍA RATO BARRIO
LICENCIADA EN CIENCIAS DE LA ACTIVIDAD FÍSICA Y DEL DEPORTE

MADRID, 2009
DEPARTAMENTO DE FÍSICA E INSTALACIONES
APLICADAS A LA EDIFICACIÓN, AL MEDIO AMBIENTE
Y AL URBANISMO

ESCUELA TÉCNICA SUPERIOR DE ARQUITECTURA

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AUTORA: RATO BARRIO, María
LICENCIADA EN CIENCIAS DE LA ACTIVIDAD FÍSICA Y DEL DEPORTE

DIRECTOR: DURÁN GONZÁLEZ, Javier
DOCTOR EN CIENCIAS POLÍTICAS Y SOCIOLOGÍA

MADRID, 2009
SUMMARY

Title of the thesis: “Physical Activity and Sport as a tool to promote Interculturalism in post-war contexts, within Co-operation for Development. A project run in Guatemala (Central America)”.

“Sport is a universal language that can bring people together, no matter what their origin, background, religious beliefs, or economic status. Sports can play a role in improving the lives of whole communities” (Annan 2004); or “Sport is the best school of life” (Ogi, 2004); these are becoming widely known statements in the area of Sport and the Cooperation for Development, which well exemplifies an increasing interest taken in Sport connected with that field.

These statements and the organizations that are increasingly using the physical-sportive tool in their programmes and research, at times forget the ambivalent nature of Sport, which is, how it can promote inclusion as well as violence, using two examples from opposite poles. As a result, it becomes necessary to use this tool according to certain methodological models carefully chosen, and applying clearly defined strategies according to the stated objectives.

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of the Intercultural Programme through Sports (PIDE in Spanish) in four groups of research, with regards to the promotion of intercultural relations between the different ethno-linguistic groups involved in them. PIDE is part of the Project “Psychosocial, community and intercultural action in the Guatemalan post-war context” (APCIG in Spanish) run by the Cooperation Group DIM (Sports, Civil Engineering and Design) based at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (Technical University of Madrid, Spain).

To design PIDE there has been made a physical-sportive adaptation of two
integrated models advanced by the anthropologist Carlos Giménez Romero and the social psychologist Margalit Cohen-Emerique.

APCIG and therefore PIDE have been developed at the Guatemalan Republic, Region of Sololá, and have a duration of one year for the project and five to six months (depending on which case) for the programme in each of the four groups of research. There were 100 participants in total, and other 557 in the control group.

To carry out the programme, the researcher moved to Guatemala, to the research area, where she stayed continuously for the whole year.

This research has been approached via multiple case studies, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques, to triangulate the obtained data, using as verification sources tools such as questionnaires, sociometric tests, field diaries of the participants and researchers involved, audiovisual material, projective techniques, etc.

The results of this research shows a significant improvement in the second and the forth scales of the questionnaire about the attitudes towards diversity in Guatemala. These scales measure the affective, cognitive and behavioural elements of tolerance; and a positive change in indicators/categories such as a decrease in prejudices; increased knowledge and better understanding of the other cultural groups which is the object of the experiences; the building of an atmosphere of trust between them; the value of diversity as something positive and enriching; the cooperation and positive interaction between the participants from different cultural groups.

On the other hand, it has been noted that there was a tendency towards a positive change in other indicators/categories such as an increase in awareness about the convergences that exist between the different cultural groups in Guatemala; respect towards others; the ability for self analysis; the improvement of communication and conflict resolution skills.
In the Guatemalan context, the history of racism and discrimination, suffered particularly by the Mayan population, has been put behind them in its most brutal and overt form (like, for example, the systematic massacres in the 1980’s during the civil war); however it still exists in more subtle forms. For this reason, it seems likely that over a longer period of time better results could be obtained, at least regarding a deep change in attitude and awareness that would enable each person to make more positive assessments of cultural diversity, while steadily increasing positive interaction between the different cultural groups in a process that should end up in an acceptable degree of peaceful living together.

More info: mariaratobarrio@yahoo.es