



MODERN DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION OF CRICKET SPORT IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

M. Nedkova*

Department of Sport, Sofia University „Kliment Ohridski” Sofia, Sofia, Bulgaria

ABSTRACT

An up-to-date approach is an innovation with the introduction of non-traditional sports, such as cricket, which arouses interest among students according to their preferences and motor abilities. The new non-traditional sports fill a gap in the attitude of students toward conventional physical education activities – emotional. Acquaintance with the unconventional always carries a positive emotional charge. This, combined with active sports–competitive activity, helps to a greater extent to fulfil the main goals of physical education in high schools. A retrospective of the cricket sport in higher education institutions in Bulgaria as part of the education system was made. The attitude of students toward non-traditional sports and their popularity has been studied.

Key words: innovation, cricket, education system, students, physical education, higher schools

INTRODUCTION

The radical changes in the social and political life of the country had an impact on the attitude of students toward the content of the educational process – preference for special sports training, desire to engage in sports – competitive activities [6]. Preferences for individual sports have changed, with increased interest in sports, which are a product of countries with developed economies and an established education system [4].

This paper aims to trace the modern development of cricket as an innovation in the educational system and to study the opinion of students participating in Physical Education and Sports classes about their attitude towards new and non-traditional sports. To achieve the goal, the following tasks were set:

1. Study of the problem in published and online sources.

2. Establishing the attitude of students towards the sport of cricket and introducing novelties in the training of Physical Education and Sports
3. Analyzes the obtained results.

The object of study is the modern development of cricket sport in high schools. The element of the study is the indicators (answers) of the respondents about the novelties, innovations, and their knowledge about cricket sport. The subjects of research are students participating in Sports classes.

In 2022, the Bulgarian Cricket Federation started to work on two long-term projects for the initial training of children "Cricket 10 X 10 X 10" and the start of a university cricket league. The project's main objective is to start working on cricket training in a proven in-practice program for the initial training of children. With the expectation that these young sports people will continue their occupation with sports in universities, where they will be able to practice the desired and liked by their sport – cricket? To participate in student competitions and tournaments and be part of university cricket teams.

*Correspondence to: Department of Sport, Sofia University „Kliment Ohridski”, Sofia, 15 Tzar Osvoboditel Blvd., 1504 Sofia, Bulgaria, marina_nedkova@yahoo.com, phone +359 885 035 858

Work is also being done in the direction of the University Cricket League, which is a joint project of the Bulgarian Cricket Federation and the Academic Student Sports Association. The project aims to launch in autumn 2023 with the participation of at least 6 teams at the University Cricket League [5].

Demonstrations and seminars are organized several times a year for the training and qualification of teachers in physical education and sports from high school education institutions in Bulgaria for teaching and conducting cricket training with students from different specialities. The management and lecturers of the Department of Sports at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" are known for their desire for diversity and enrichment of the curriculum in physical education and sport to motivate students to practice sports. Thanks to this, from 2014 to 2019, "At the five Universiades held in 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2019, Sofia University occupied the second place after NSA "Vasil Levski" [3]. The offered new sports disciplines are consistent with the capabilities of the facilities and the availability of trained professional staff [10]. On this basis, in the last nine years the students from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" are allowed to choose and practice the sport of cricket.

For the first time in the summer semester of the academic year 2013/2014, students are offered the opportunity to choose the sport of cricket, which is one of the oldest sports in the world but unconventional and unknown to Bulgaria. The first teachers and cricket classes leaders were Marina Nedkova and Lyudmil Trenev (Chief Assist., PhD at the NSA with a degree in cricket), who volunteered to introduce the new sport into the curriculum, as well as his students – specialists in this speciality at the Coaching Faculty of the NSA. They will work together in the next school year 2014/2015. The Bulgarian Cricket Federation supplies the necessary sports equipment for the practice of cricket at Sofia University [8].

During the training process, students expand their sports knowledge and enrich their general culture in an unconventional and new Bulgaria sports area which is gaining popularity very quickly.

Chief Assist. Marina Nedkova, PhD, develops a methodology for initial training in cricket for the students at Sofia University which is adapted and consistent with the capabilities and physical capacity of the trainees. She also agreed it with the cricket specialist Chief Assist. Lyudmil Trenev and Bulgarian Cricket Federation [9].

In a previous post together with Prof. Irena Peltekova, PhD for the new and non-traditional sports and sports disciplines in 2015, Chief Assist. Marina Nedkova shares her goal for the upcoming years – to form female and male student cricket teams at Sofia University, and to participate in local and foreign students' competitions and tournaments.

This goal was achieved that same year when the women's team from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" was formed. It took part in the 1st European University Cup in cricket T20 in 2015.

The ups and popularizations of cricket continue in 2022 when it was first included in the program of the National Universiade, organized by the Academic Student Sports Association. SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" participated with one women's team, which took second place, after the final with Trakia University – St. Kliment Ohridski. Zagora (score 45:44).

The next objective of Marina Nedkova is to form a men's student cricket team at Sofia University with which to participate in student competitions and tournaments in Bulgaria and abroad.

The organized cricket at the Medical University - Plovdiv dates to the end of 2015 due to the great interest of English students. In 2016 year, the First Cup Tournament of the Rector of the Medical University - Plovdiv was organized in which representatives of the medical universities in the country participated.

7 teams from five universities participated in the second tournament for the Cup of the Rector of the Medical University – Plovdiv in 2017. This increased interest in cricket in medical universities led the management of the Bulgarian Cricket Federation to pay attention to such performances and helped student teams in organizing and conducting their championships

and tournaments and found an option to include them in the events of the State Sports Calendar.

On April 22, year 2018, for a third consecutive year, the traditional tournament for the Cup of the Rector of the Medical University - Plovdiv was held. In this third edition, 8 teams from five universities in our country were divided into two groups.

Another tournament for the Cup of the Rector of the Medical University - Plovdiv was organized on 30.11.2019 with the participation of 6 university teams.

The first Indoor-League / cricket in the hall/starts at the Medical University - Plovdiv at the beginning of each academic year. With the help of Assoc. Prof. Albena Ivanova, Head of the Physical Education and Sports Department and naturally with the support of the Rectors of the university, students are allowed to hold matches in this league twice a week. In 2018, 6 teams were playing each other, and since the 2018/19 school year, 8 teams have been participating with a partial break during the Covid pandemic 19.

At the Medical University - Varna until 2017 cricket was played episodically and unorganized by foreign students. In 2018 a team was formed which participated in the tournaments organized by the Medical University - Plovdiv and played outdoors with each other. In 2020 students from this team together with students from the Medical University – Pleven formed a team that participated in the European Cricket Series in Sofia and ranked 5th.

Since 2020 the Medical University – Varna has had activities for female students who play several tournaments with each other. In a tournament for the Cup of the Rector of the Medical University - Varna in 2020 4 women's teams participated, in 2021 - 6 teams and in 2022 - 6 men's and 8 women's teams.

The Varna Women's Cricket tournament was held on April 2, 2022, on the indoor playground of Trinity Park Sports Complex in Varna where 8 teams were divided into two groups.

At the Medical University – Pleven, cricket began to develop from international students who are predominantly from the UK, India, Pakistan, and

NEDKOVA M.

Sri Lanka. The organizer and captain of the formed team is Akshay Harikoumar.

Until now, cricket was not very common at the university although there were many talented players, it was rarely played with one tournament per year. A year later, in 2019, the two enthusiasts felt that there was a huge potential to make cricket a developing sport in Pleven. That is the reason why they, together with their colleagues, founded the Cricket League at the Medical University – Pleven. Playing in the University Cricket League, the students at the Medical University – Pleven are well prepared for the tournaments organized in Plovdiv and Sofia. In 2020, together with students from the Medical University - Varna they formed a team that participated in the European Cricket Series - Sofia 2020.

In all participations in competitions of any rank, cricketers from the Medical University – Pleven have the support of the Rectors, the Department of Physical Education and Sports Assoc. Prof. Iskra Ilieva and the cricket teachers who are responsible for sports.

A group of English-speaking medical students studying at the Faculty of Medicine at Trakia University set up a cricket team in 2019.

The interest from students was huge and the sport became popular at the University. In the summer of 2019, it participated in its first national tournament under the auspices of the Bulgarian Cricket Federation. The ensuing pandemic slowed down the development of the team slightly, training sessions were interrupted for several months. Participation in several tournaments in Sofia followed.

The representative cricket team of Trakia University took part in the tournament dedicated to the European Week of Sport held in Sofia (02 – 03.10.2021). The competition is formed by the teams of the Medical University – Sofia, Pleven, and Plovdiv, as well as by Barberians and IBCC. The team of Trakia University ranked in 3rd place due to the good game of the English-speaker students at the Faculty of Medicine and the Veterinary Medical Faculty. Its representatives from the United Kingdom, Great Britain, India, Pakistan, and Ireland, formed the team captained by Dave Patel – a student from the Faculty of Medicine and a coach – Todor Tsvetanov, a lecturer from the Faculty of Medicine [11].

In the autumn of 2021, cricket is included in the sports calendar of the Academic Student Sports Association with the main merit for this being the chairman of the sports club at Trakia University and part of the board of the Academic Student Sports Prof. Dimo Girginov.

2022 is the most successful so far for cricket at Trakia University. A women's team was formed at the university with coach Nela Gocheva. Both teams took part in the National University Championships. The women's team became champion, and the men's team won bronze medals in this tournament.

In the summer, the men also won the bronze medals in the T20 state cricket championships. The team of Trakia University acquired the right to participate in the European Cricket Series in 2023 and it is the most progressive university in the development of cricket sport in the country [11-14].

The students from the Medical University – Sofia under the name "Medic" are participating in the state championships of Bulgaria from the very beginning since 2004. Their ranking has almost always been in the called trio of the indoor and outdoor championships.

In 2022, medical students achieve their greatest success yet. They became champions of the first

National University Championships and state champions in T10. The cricket players from the Medical University – Sofia have the full support of the Rectors, Department of Physical Education and Sports headed by Assoc. Prof. Ani Bozhkova and the responsible for cricket Chief Assist. Petya Slavcheva.

METHODS

We conducted an independent up-to-date survey during the summer semester of the academic year 2021/2022 in May and June. The survey was conducted with students from the Medical University – Sofia and Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The developed questionnaire contains 20 questions but four of them are related to the attitude of students toward non-traditional sports in the educational system and to the sport of cricket. 200 students from I to IV courses participating in physical education and sports classes at both universities were surveyed [7].

RESULTS

To the question "Do you have any information about the listed types of sports?", where non-traditional for Bulgaria sports are listed but some of the most popular worldwide: cricket, rugby, field hockey, and baseball, 73% answered for lack of information about the sport of "cricket".

(Figure 1)

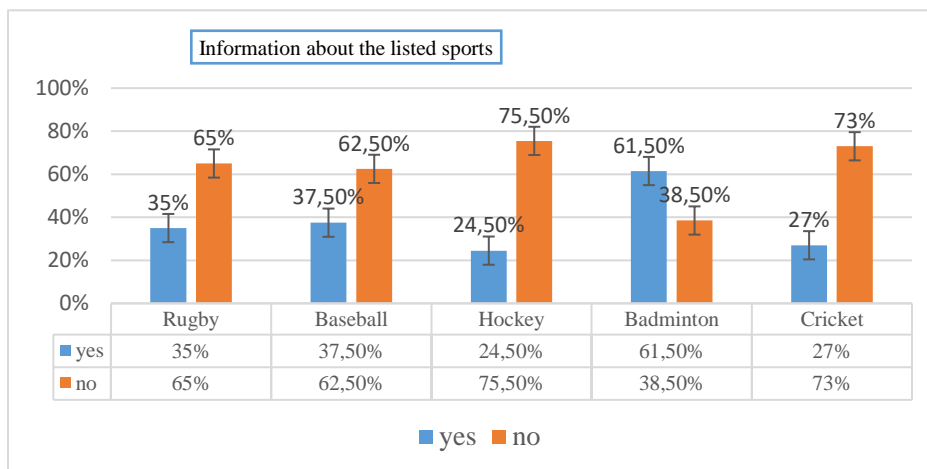


Figure 1. Information about the listed sports

Of interest are the answers to the next question "Do you consider it necessary to introduce new sports in high schools", especially after nearly two years of online training in the discipline of Physical Education and Sports, 45% of students

are willing to be introduced to new sports in the Physical Education and Sports curricula at the university. The percentage of respondents (37%) which have no opinion on the matter is not small, and 18% give a negative answer. **(Figure 2)**

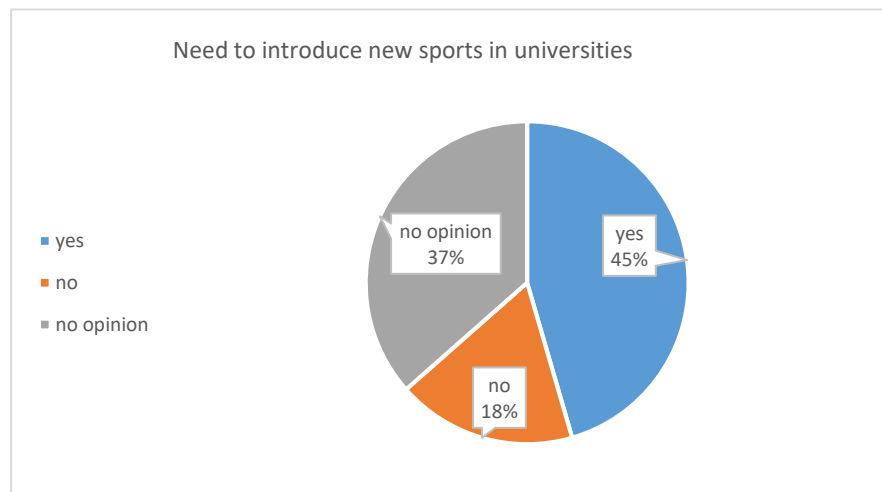


Figure 2. Need to introduce new sports in higher education institutions.

From the answers to the question "What will attract you to practice the new sports in universities?". It is seen that 31% of students know about the positive impact of physical exercise and believe that new sports will contribute to this, 93 respondents or 29% note that

the novelty would attract them to practice a new sport. Close is the percentage (25%) betting on the emotional side and 15% see an opportunity for competitive activity by practising non-traditional sports for Bulgaria. **(Figure 3)**

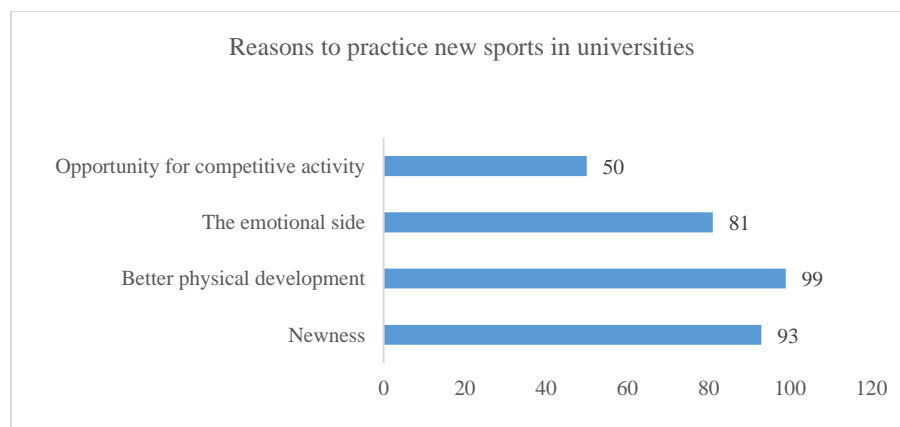


Figure 3. Reasons to practice new sports in universities.

Very interesting are the answers to the question "Which of these new sports would you attend in the Physical Education and Sports classes?". In this regard, it is clear from the previous answers that students are open to new sports, but 28% of them answer that they would not choose any of the above. 35% would take part in badminton classes, 12% in baseball almost the same part 11% in cricket. A small percentage of 8% and 6% choose the sport of field hockey and rugby, respectively. The results of this question are logical, taking the data from the question about the information and knowledge that students have

about the non-traditional sports presented to them **(Figure 1).**

CONCLUSIONS

The interest in non-traditional sports and the effect of their activities directly to a certain extent our activities as sports specialists. News are frightening but also motivating. In this regard, it is necessary to offer attractive and desirable sports activities and initiatives that help maintain good health status and increase the psycho-physical capabilities of students. The generalizations and theoretical conclusions from the presented results as well as the opinion of other authors [1], using

the crisis in the so-called traditional sports in Bulgaria will contribute to updating and adapting curricula and forms of education. This will lead to the search for innovative methods and means to increase motivation and opportunities to participate in sports activities. There is a great need for renovation and modernization of the organizational and management structure of student sports in our country. Consideration and acceptance of the experience in the management of modern national student organizations of EU countries.

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