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Chapter 4

Immigration and Social Inclusion: Possibilities from School and Sports

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Abstract

Immigration is a manifestation of cultural pluralism that crosses a transversal form, an important part of the western societies, generating consequences in political, social and cultural terms. Likewise, the evidence shows that the educational system attached to sport can be a positive context to promote inclusive processes associated to the immigrant population, due to its high social transcendence and its universal character. On the other hand, sports may act as a tool for social and cultural conflict if they focus on the imposition of a dominant culture or exacerbates the competitive sense. The present chapter has by objective to analyze the possibilities of sports as a tool for the social inclusion of the immigrant population, giving special emphasis to the educational options that were offered by the sport practice in the school context. To do this, it presents an important number of theoretical and empirical backgrounds associated with this topic, which will allow the reader to understand the existing relationship between sport, education and immigration, exposing their possible risks and virtues.

Keywords: emigration and immigration, social inclusion, sports, school, physical education

1. Introduction

During the last decades, migratory flows have increased drastically in different latitudes of the planet; process that has demonstrated to be associated with different reasons as the economic globalization; the internationalization of the media; different problematics linked to armed conflicts, imbalances and inequalities in material well-being, in addition to other causes that promote the territorial displacement of individuals and groups [1–3].

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Immigration have had as a consequence the creation and transformation of societies, giving rise to the construction of spaces in which different representations and cultural practices coexist, as well as different worldviews and forms of interaction between the subjects that participate in these realities. As a consequence, the increase in migratory movements has allowed relevant changes in different spheres of Western societies, making them even more plural with respect to ethnic, social, and cultural [4–6].

Likewise, the boom in immigration rates and the continued international mobility of the population has generated concern in the States, and in different private entities, for their possible consequences in economic terms. Specifically, this uncertainty lies in the potential micro and macroeconomic effects that can have in the host countries, as well as in the countries of origin, the existence of a constant migratory flow [7]. However, the evidence shows that immigrant labor activity helps in development and economic stability, both in the countries where they currently reside, as in their own countries of origin, in which there is more preponderant their impact on local regional economies, were the monetary capital from abroad is invested [8, 9].

In spite of the above, the growing migratory phenomenon continues to encounter detractors in different fields, since it not only conditions economic factors, but also has important cultural, political, social, and media consequences; both for foreigners and for the native population. Often, immigration is perceived as a threat by the population, which humper the processes of integration and social inclusion of migrants [3, 10–14].

Immigration, as well as the existing resistance to it, has permeated all social institutions, the educational system being one of the areas where it reaches the greatest impact. It is undeniable that the presence of a significant number of foreign immigrants in the school space is an important factor of cultural diversity, being a manifestation of plurality that crosses the whole social reality, but which finds in the school the opportunity to be understood and valued. Although in this scenario it will also be able to deepen the discriminatory practices already existing in the social environment, we do not opt for approaches that really promote the positive interaction between the different cultural expressions existing in the classroom.

With respect to the recently mentioned, the evidence expresses that the sport, as well as different practices linked to the physical activity, can have a positive impact in the insertion of the immigrant population, being the sports clubs and the educational system, the contexts where they can reach a greater favorable impact.

Sport is an activity with a high social importance [15] and a practice of universal characteristics, which is present in all cultures [16–18]. These characteristics make it a common meeting space, as well as a tool with a high potential for the inclusion of cultural diversity, especially in contexts associated with the phenomenon of immigration [19].

The specific literature on this matter indicates that sport offers important possibilities for the contexts that present immigrant population, because it favors: (a) the acquisition of social and cultural capital [20–23]; (b) the maintaining of cultural identity and cohesion around it [10]; (c) the interaction between "culturally different" [18, 24–26]; and (d) the creation of intercultural networks [27]. However, there are also antecedents that point to sport as a space that can produce or deepen cultural conflicts, because of its excessive competitive sense, gender stereotypes, elitism, and disproportionate exacerbation of rivalries in the field of game [21, 27–29].

In view of the above, it is especially interesting to examine and understand the motives that can make sport an instrument that favors the inclusion of cultural diversity. Also, the aspects that can transform sports practice into an element of segregation and discord among those who are culturally different identify with clarity.

It is clear that the development of studies and discussions around immigration not only responds to scientific or academic purposes, but also to the generation and propagation of knowledge that allows to answer in a pertinent way to everyday social situations, particularly in those contexts or communities that coexist with the obligation and need to relate to individuals with different cultures; therefore, with different customs, beliefs, practices, stories, worldviews, etc.

The present book chapter has an objective to analyze the possibilities of sport as a tool for the social inclusion of the immigrant population, giving special emphasis to the educational options offered by sports practice in the school context. To do this, we present a significant number of theoretical and empirical antecedents associated with this topic, which will allow the reader to understand the existing relationship between sport, education, and immigration. Also, the text does not only pretend to attend to the intellectual or epistemological interests, but also contribute to the development of practices that allows an intercultural coexistence based on respect, dialog, and democratic construction of social spaces.

2. How are relationships configured in culturally diverse societies?

Before analyzing in specific terms, the link between sport and immigration is necessary to understand how individual and collective relationships configure in societies that harbor different cultures.

In spite of existing common spaces densely populated by individuals of different origin and cultural habits, the way to confront cultural diversity is unequal in each context, also giving space to negative practices such as different forms of discrimination, xenophobia, racism, social exclusion, labor sectoralization, and spatial segregation [2, 12, 30–36].

The evidence shows that the relations built between subjects of different cultures and national origins are conditioned, in important measure, by the characteristics of the social space where these interactions are developed; therefore, there are contexts and strategies that can facilitate, hinder, or preclude the relationship between the culturally different. For Flecha and Puigvert [5], there are three major approaches to classify forms of cultural interaction and discrimination: (a) ethnocentric approach; (b) relativistic approach; and (c) communicative approach.

The *ethnocentric approach* understands that the relations between the different cultures must be based on a process of assimilation, in which the immigrant groups must be submitted to the system of hegemonic cultural practices that prevail in that society. This approach is based on the subordination of one culture to another and, consequently, understands that immigrants should adopt as their own the cultural system that prevails in the society where they intend to settle (since it is supposedly "superior"); discarding in some cases an

important part of their own culture of origin, which can cause as a consequence processes of acculturation. Likewise, this approach considers that coexistence of subjects with different cultures is possible. However, these citizens cannot have an equal status, and there should be a relationship where the representatives of the "higher culture" are always imposed and favored.

Secondly, we can find the *relativist approach*, a perspective that promotes multiculturalism as an element of preservation of difference [5]. It expresses that coexistence between culturally distinct groups is unviable for two reasons: (a) because a real understanding between different cultures would be hypothetically impossible and (b) because it would be less convenient to preserve cultural and ethnic diversity in its pure state. This latter view gives space to postmodern racism, which, unlike modern racism (which was theoretically based on racial problems), is based on the alleged antagonistic and irreconcilable differences that would exist between different cultures, as an argument to avoid their coexistence and interaction [37, 38].

For Flecha and Puigvert [5], ethnocentrism and relativism are two sides of the same coin, since in both cases, equality (especially of rights) is impeded for the different cultural forms presents in society. The above is based on the fact that ethnocentrism excludes diversity, betting on a process of homogenization. While relativism regards cultural equality and interaction as harmful, betting to avoid the relationship and pollution (*sic*) between cultures with the objective of preserving them in their original state.

As an alternative to these two options above, the *communicative approach* appears which considers that there are no superior or inferior cultures, but different cultures. Likewise, it promotes "equality of differences", betting on promoting equality, but in no case homogeneity. This approach is based on the thesis that accepting difference as a principle of equality will cause the maintenance and development of cultural identities. In addition, the communicative approach assumes an ideological position, characterized by its antiracist, critical, and transformative nature; encourages dialog, understanding it as an opportunity to build consensus from an equal plane and not as a space of imposition. Therefore, it favors coexistence and the different types of interaction that cultures may have [5, 39].

In relation of the recent approaches described, it is evident that cultural, ethnic, and national diversity can be appreciated from different perspectives and, therefore, there are different ways to act against it. In short, the way in which immigration is viewed socially will be largely determined by the approach from which the phenomenon is viewed.

The above as an impact on the configuration of the societies where the interactions of different cultures occur, as well as the degree of depth that these links reach (if they really exist). That is, one can speak of different "types" of societies (or social spaces) according to the way in which the relations between migrants and non-migrants are configured, thematic in which two concepts must be clearly differentiated: *Multiculturalism and Interculturalism*.

A *multicultural society* is one where individuals and groups of different cultures coexist within a common territory, but this does not necessarily imply that there is a communication or relationship between them. That is to say, a society that possesses immigrant population, but does

not promotes the interaction or cultural exchange with the native population or between their own groups of foreigners; giving with it space most of the times to ethnocentric practices, which can be decisive in the future generation of conflicts.

Taking into account the characteristics and risks of the multicultural society, as well as the subordinate and exclusive consequences of the ethnocentric approach, it is evident that there is a high risk that problems of coexistence can be generated if this way of understanding cultural diversity prevails. For this reason, Díaz [31] expresses the need to overcome multiculturalism in order to advance toward interculturalism, that is, toward the construction of social systems that promote interaction between the cultures that live on a common space.

The above requires that the representatives of the different cultures that inhabit a determinate context acquire mutually the responsibility of know and understand the systems of customs, practices, and beliefs that each group possesses. This increases the possibilities that positive interrelationships are developed between members of different cultures, allowing us to welcome and value the "difference" without viewing it as inferior or superior.

However, talk about interculturalism is not enough that there is communication between different cultural groups that occupy a territory (e.g. migrants and non-migrants). But it requires the existence of a dynamic process of social and cultural interaction, in which individuals become interdependent and bet to construct from an equal plane a shared reality, emphasizing the aspects that unite and define their cultural singularities [40, 41]. What has been described above usually gives way to two-way processes of cultural feedback and fusion, that is, cultures become reciprocally permeable and appropriate elements with "alien" cultural origin, which in the field of anthropology is usually categorized under the concept of *transculturation*.

Despite the opportunities offered by interculturalism around coexistence and the development of intercultural relations, Tubino [42] states that it is necessary to overcome functional interculturalism and move toward a critical interculturalism, consequently of transforming, emancipatory, and egalitarian character. As is evident, this view is closely linked by its critical nature to the communicative approach, since it not only bets on fostering interaction between different cultures, but also raises the need for these relationships to be built on a level of mutual respect that promote the individual and collective development of all cultural forms present in the context.

Given the antecedents expressed so far, it is evident that there are multiple perspectives to explain the cultural relations that occur in societies due to migration processes. Likewise, these approaches account for how the relationships between different cultural groups should be configure, representing each of these positions an ideological stance against the phenomenon of immigration or other expressions of cultural diversity. It is then evident that social spaces based on interculturalism and the construction of cultural relations based on the principles enunciated by the communicative approach turn out to be the only alternatives that can allow the immigrant population an equal participation and development in society, as well as promoting positive exchange among cultures.

3. Is the school an effective space for the social inclusion of the immigrant population?

As mentioned above, immigration is an expression of cultural diversity that crosses all social reality, a space in which the educational system occupies a preponderant role. As a consequence, immigration deeply permeates school institutions, being one of the main manifestations of cultural plurality present in educational centers [43, 44].

The school system has a high incidence in the processes of integration of foreigners, since it will influence their social insertion in the present, as well as determine their future, since it will largely define their participation in the labor field and, in consequence, also in the economy [45]. However, despite the socializing and inclusive potential of the school, it has been opted usually to carry out integration processes for the immigrant population based on an assimilative logic, using the privileged platform that the educational system possess as a means for the immigrant population adopts as its own the dominant cultural features of the host society. This is detrimental to their original culture [13, 46] and is a constant challenge for the integration processes that take place in the school, as well as the transfer of the same to the daily life, being able to cause cultural conflicts [47, 48].

Due to the difficulties that are generated in the integration or inclusion (as applicable in each case) of the immigrant students in the school space, some negative social representations have been generated with respect to the foreign students, as well as to the interculturality itself, calling it complex and negative, even by teachers themselves [49]. This has generated "culturalist" discourses that label immigrant students as harmful and detrimental agents in educational and social terms for the rest of the students [50–52]. It is precisely these kinds of speeches about immigration that give foreign students a negative, stereotyped, and homogenized connotation, generating conflicting situations between the educational system and immigrant students.

The above has generated problems of exclusion and segregation, existing educational centers that are similar to ghettos, since the presence of foreign students predominates, as well as the absence of schoolchildren with nationality of the host country [53]; it is a problem that is getting worse as families avoid sending their children to schools in which they should share classrooms with immigrant students [45], a scenario that is often seen in educational public centers [51].

The school should not only cooperate to develop positive social integration processes in the school context, but also has the duty to help build socialization processes that grant autonomy tools to immigrant students, in order to enable them to position themselves as citizens in society.

However, talk of integration is not the same as inclusion. Although both terms have been misused as synonyms many times in the educational context [54], they are concepts that have differences that go beyond mere semantics.

Although both words have similar definitions, they should neither be used interchangeably, nor should they be interpreted as analogous terms in the educational scenario. The term integration simply refers to "fitting in" or inserting into a particular social system, such as school,

an individual, or group that previously had no access to it. While discussing inclusions recognize and respect, the right of all groups and individuals to participate in a common space built on the similarities that such subjects or social groups possess [55]. In other words, a school that responds to the expectations and needs of all those who are part of it, including knowledge, content, and practices are associated with the cultures of immigrants, as well as non-immigrants who participate in the context.

However, should we make the mistake of stigmatizing the concept of integration. Since the evidence shows that integration is an important initial step in the construction of inclusive social spaces [56]. Specifically, Poon-McBrayer [57] mentions that to achieve an education of inclusive characteristics, usually the educational systems live three stages, being the inclusion the final phase of this process: (a) integration; (b) integration in transition to inclusion; and (c) inclusion. In few words, it is necessary to ensure that the educational system assumes in the first instance the need to integrate "to the different", to later bet on the development of processes that allows the immigrant and non-immigrant students to jointly build processes of mutual inclusion; although this does not always follow strict linear logic.

However, the processes of integration that are developed from the school context have been faced with hard questions. Specifically, during the last decades, discourses close to the social criticism current have appeared, in which the educational system is accused of being a space destined to the production, transmission, and distribution of the dominant ideology, which translates into practices of cultural homogenization [58] and, therefore, in actions that prevent the development of possible processes of school and social inclusion.

Regard to mentioned in the previous paragraph, it seems necessary that in order to develop truly inclusive processes, be prevailing to consolidate an education with intercultural characteristics, and based on the principles established by the communicative approach [5], which results transcended when it comes to contexts hosting individuals of different nationalities [59]. This means a school built under an equal and inclusive vision that promotes interaction between different cultural agents and bets on a project for all the cultural diversity present in the educational context, and not an exclusive one for the "culturally different".

Likewise, intercultural education must also include the design and implementation of an intercultural school curriculum, which implies not only transforming the ways in which relationships between individuals belonging to different cultures are constructed, but also the incorporation of content that are directly related to the cultural diversity present in the classroom. This would translate into a curriculum that shelter both, cultural knowledge linked to immigrant groups and the culture of the host society. A curriculum of these characteristics will enable students to acquire intercultural competences [41] and, consequently, be citizens prepared to tolerate and value the cultural diversity present in society.

In virtue of all the antecedents exposed so far, it is evident that the school as a social institution has a transcendent relationship with the immigration phenomenon. This not only refers to the fact that the educational system must respond optimally to the cultural diversity it has today in the classroom, but also because it is also a space that has a high importance in the processes of integration and social inclusion of the population. Likewise, the school does not

prove to be an intrinsically inclusive space around the phenomenon of immigration, however the potential of such a context is evident, especially when it is committed to the construction of educational environments that as by objective the development of interculturalism.

4. Can sport help in the social inclusion of the immigrant population?

Sport is a social and cultural practice that has symbols, mechanisms, and a language with unique characteristics. It has also shown to have an important role in the production and reproduction of interpersonal relationships, and can act as an element that facilitates the integration and differentiation in social terms [15]. In addition, in the vast majority of cultures, it can be observed that the existence of sporting activities, games, dances, and other corporal practices constitute motor habits, which form part of the identity of these cultural groups, due to the social value of sport in the collective consciousness of these groups [17].

At present, it is possible to affirm that the sport is a supracultural and global activity; that is, an element that crosses transversally to different cultures and that is practiced in all the latitudes of the planet. In addition, language proficiency does not usually condition the participation of subjects and often has a playful dimension. All the aforementioned characteristics allow to visualize the sport as a space with high options to favor the socialization between the different cultures [18].

It is evident that sport, in its different modern expressions, transcends borders and countries, being practiced in most of the nations of the world [17]. Precisely because of its universal nature, sport can be a meeting point for different cultures [19], favoring sociocultural interaction [60], and acting as a universe of common references for individuals who are carriers of different cultures [29].

Considering these virtues and possibilities, sport proves to be a field with real possibilities of favoring the social integration and participation of the immigrant population [61, 62], as well as promoting intercultural and interethnic relations [47, 63]. In a similar line, other authors mention that physical activity and sport have a high intrinsic value for the development of intercultural practices, having the capacity to generate equal scenarios and networks above ethnic and cultural characteristics, as well as being potentially favorable for the acquisition of social capital in culturally diverse environments [27, 47].

Díaz [31] explain this is possible thanks the fact that behind the simple structure of sport and physical activity is a great sociocultural complexity that is based on the language and symbolism of human kinetics. In other words, sport becomes a meeting place for the diverse cultures because it is composed by a universal language associated to the corporeity, crossing transversally all the existing cultural realities.

During the last years, different studies have been developed in order to analyze these theoretical statements empirically. An important part of the results of these investigations has indicated that sport is a favorable element for the contexts related to the phenomenon of

immigration. In concrete terms, these studies show that sport cooperates positively with: (a) the acquisition of social and cultural capital [20–23]; (b) maintaining cultural identity and cohesion around it [64]; (c) the interaction between "culturally different" [18, 24–26]; and (d) the creation of intercultural networks [27].

In relation to the above, Tirone et al. [65] express that sport has shown to be a tool that can facilitate the inclusion of the immigrant population, either recreationally or in high performance contexts, showing evidence. Likewise, Theebom et al. [22] have demonstrated how sports clubs cooperate positively in the processes of acquisition of social capital of the immigrant population and in the interaction of foreigners with the native members of society. Results that coincide with a study by Forde et al. [66], which conclude that community sports programs prove to be important spaces for the social inclusion of the immigrant population; although Makarova and Herzog [63] express that such spaces will be effective as long as the immigrant population is prevented from living in segregation or marginalization during sports practice.

However, it precipitates to consider sport as an intrinsically positive tool for environments where there is an immigrant population, since as mentioned earlier, evidence also indicates that sports activities can produce or deepen cultural conflicts due to the exacerbation of the competitive sense, elitism, rivalries, and gender stereotypes linked to physical activity [21, 27–29].

In this same plane, it is important to consider that each culture has singular customs and beliefs about corporality, which consequently translates into different ways of understanding the sport itself and its practice, analyzing it from its own cultural codes. Therefore, to express that sport is a positive tool for the development of interculturality would be a hurried act, since it can also be used for hegemonic purposes, using the privileged social position of sport to transmit and impose the dominant culture, disfavoring and acculturating minority immigrant groups [28]; which has demonstrated to negatively condition interpersonal relationships and the distribution of social capital among the immigrant and non-immigrant population [21]. It is also transcendent to consider that the adoption of foreign cultural ideals about the body and movement by immigrants could produce a rupture with some deeply rooted cultural elements and values [27].

For this reason, sport can only be useful for these purposes if it helps to overcome the prejudices, stereotypes, and social discourses that in a explicitly and implicitly way pretend to put one culture over the other [67]. For this, it is coherent to consider that in the contexts where different cultures coexist, sports forms are also linked to all the cultural systems present in that space and not only those arbitrarily imposed by the hegemonic culture. That is to say, to promote the practice of activities with diverse cultural origin, using games and motor expressions with diverse cultural origin, in order to promote an approach and reciprocal recognition among the cultures [68, 69].

In relation to the background previously reviewed, it can be seen that there are two positions regarding the use of sport as a tool in environments associated with immigration. On one side, there are authors who defend its use, exposing evidence regarding its positive effects, while on the other side, we can observe a current that shows suspicion and caution regarding the idea of viewing the sport as an element intrinsically favorable for the development of interculturality.

However, much of the empirical studies in which sport has proven to be a beneficial instrument for the cultural interaction between immigrants and the native population express that the characteristics of the context are determinant so that the sport can be successful in this task [21, 25, 63, 64, 70–73]. In concrete terms, research in which sport has proven to be an effective means (in different contexts) for the construction of relations between immigrants and non-immigrants, as well as for community and educational integration, affirm that the inclusive potential of sport in the face of cultural diversity can be significantly reduced when the necessary guarantees are not granted for the existence of an environment based on mutual respect for cultural differences that individuals or groups may have.

This view has been reinforced by different theoretical and empirical background, which raises that sport can increase its intercultural potential in contexts that promotes the development of social values and mutual respect [25, 74], as well as facilitating the acquisition of social capital transferable to everyday life [22] and better adaptation to contexts that possess cultural diversity [64]; aspects that in their totality facilitate the social inclusion of the immigrant groups [65].

In this sense, it is therefore necessary to understand that sport by itself cannot be considered an effective element for the development of interculturality, since it is a tool that can be used to serve different interests. However, sport or physical activity that is practiced within school centers cannot be subject to the same logic, since that context as for objective to educate, and therefore cooperate for the development of positive social values versus diversity.

According to the above statement, physical education (PE) is a tool that can significantly contribute to the development of an intercultural educational project (see **Figure 1**), by having intrinsically educational principles and objectives [69, 75] as a consequence, to strengthen the processes of integration and inclusion of the immigrant population [16, 18, 27, 29, 31, 75–79]. For this to happen, the creation of environment in which cultural diversity must be promoted, as well as pay attention to the possible conflicts or cultural shocks that can occur when cultural and corporeal realities are confronted in a common space [77]. It is therefore very important that the professionals in charge of these contexts are competent in intercultural terms [80] so that they can deal with this type of situations and are able to reciprocally incorporate elements from all cultures present in the educational context [81], transforming cultural diversity into an opportunity for continuous learning.

In addition to the PE class, school sports can play an important positive role in the realities that harbor school sports, collaborating in the development of socio-educational values associated with diversity and providing space for the execution of activities of diverse cultural origin that promote the rapprochement among the culturally different [82–84]. However, in order for school sport to actually carry out an educational work and consequently cooperate in the development of values, this concept must be understood as any type of physical activity developed during the school period, in a complementary way to the class of PE, and, therefore, for educational purposes the concepts of "school sport" and "school-age sport" should not be confused with each other, since the latter is related in most cases to an activity that does not necessarily pursue educational purposes, but usually has a competitive logic and is usually carried out outside school centers [85].

It is precisely for these reasons that school sport, as a motor practice and formative in terms of value, is a space that collectively harbors the positive potential of school and sport for the

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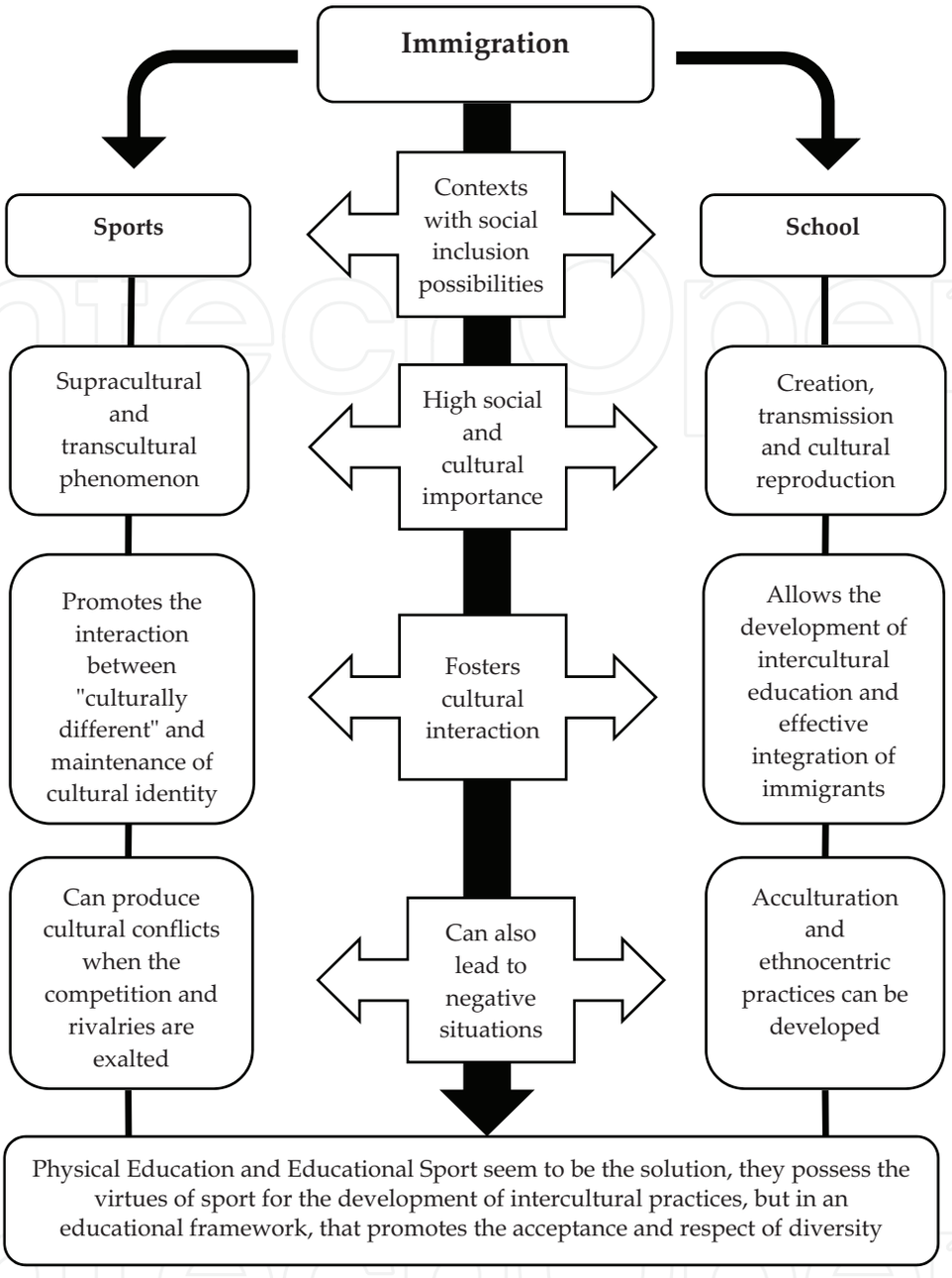


Figure 1. Description social inclusion possibilities of immigrant population from sports and school.

inclusion of the immigrant population (see **Figure 1**). Owing to the previous reasons, Soler et al. [80] argue that it can favor the participation of immigrant students, although for this to occur, it must be safeguard that the intervention proposals promote and ensure participation, transversality, and continuity.

5. Final considerations

As it has been expressed, the evidence shows that sport has positive effects in contexts linked to immigration when it is used from an educational perspective and focuses its efforts

on building environments underpinned on mutual respect and the acquisition of values. However, this is a still incipient line in research terms, since an important part of studies on immigration and sport tend to ignore the educational potential of sports in contexts with cultural diversity [19]. Proof for this is a systematic review carried out by Fernández et al. [86], who pointed out that most of the studies associated with "immigration, sport, and physical activity" carried out until 2011 had centered until then on three major lines, without the educational dimension of the sport being one of them: (a) high performance sport; (b) talent migration; and (c) research of a sociological nature.

For this reason, it is imperative to carry out studies and practical proposals that help to understand in greater depth the effects of sports practice, in its different manifestations, as a means for the social inclusion of immigrant groups in different contexts. Although it is clear that sport has a high potential for these purposes, however, it will depend on the objectives with which it is used and could act as a negative element if it is focused from only a competitive, exclusionary, and elitist perspective. It is for this reason that PE and school sport seem to be viable and concrete alternatives for the development of interculturality under a climate of mutual respect and educational practices that guarantee on a greater extent a positive interaction between cultures, simultaneously using the virtues of sport and the school for the development of inclusive processes.

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