

Educational and Social Perspectives in Sport

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Abstract

Sport is an educational and cultural tool for the pursuit of a harmonious psycho-physical balance, but it is also indispensable for learning, from the sports confrontation-clash, the respect for the rules, for the game opponents and for transparency and loyalty of one's own actions. Educating to sport means making the interaction between peoples and individuals effective. The work of good trainers, teachers and instructors should be precisely that of favoring these processes, trying to connect the emotions to the learning dynamics and putting into practice techniques related to movement and sport. It is also essential to encourage active participation, by optimizing the space of individuals in any context. From this point of view, sports practice is a tool for promoting educational interaction and the social inclusion of people.

Keywords: *Education, Culture, Movement, Participation, Learning, Sports Practice.*

Introduction

For contemporary man, physical activity and sports practice seem to become increasingly important, both for improving life quality and, to a greater extent, for preserving one's own well-being and physical/mental health. This is a considerable activity not because it is projected towards the fulfillment of aesthetic values (often temporary and changeable), ready to shape the body or achieve increasingly extreme victories, but it is an important practice as it allows the connection of the emotional sphere to the cognitive one; it develops psycho-physical well-being, promotes learning, strengthens personality, supports integration with different personal and social dimensions through a different way of seeing things, that is, a way that considers the person as a whole.

It is not only by multiplying knowledge that the individual will feel closer to himself and to the other, but it is by making personal-social experiences and rethinking one's own behavior and that of others thanks to which he will better understand his own instincts, his own feelings and those of others. The educational factor of sport consists in promoting a development process able to unite relationships, emotions, affectivity and intelligence; experience is the first phase, but the reflection, analysis and re-evaluation of attitudes and ideas previously expressed are steps that must follow. The opponent must be respected not only as such in the competitive arena, but above all in his own uniqueness and originality. Today we can aim at peace, dialogue and protection of human rights, by reflecting, re-evaluating and drawing elements from the past that stimulate moments of concentration in us, then turning from the analysis to the concrete improvement of daily life conditions.

Educational Processes in Sport

Sport favors interaction, relationship and encounter-clash with others; an activity to be used as an antidote to restlessness, upsets, anomia, and disorientation that seem to characterize today's

society. Solidarity, symbolically represented by teamwork, the challenge with oneself and with others, the moral; these are ethical and authentically aesthetic virtues which could then become, in addition to explicit values, the working method that runs through and shapes all actions and relationships, being them everyone's co-responsibility. The sports action can connect education and training, civil society and institutions.

Since moving the body can also open the mind, it is therefore essential to educate simultaneously to diversity and similarities, interdependencies and differences between people. We are not supporters of a multicultural approach, but we aim at an intercultural model that puts people in interaction with each other, without caring so much about refuting or eliminating conflicts, but particularly about considering them the great creative force of humanity, crossing and managing them in the appropriate way to avoid them becoming destructive. All this in the awareness that through the understanding of "the generalized other", the individual understands what kind of behavior is expected, in line with the different social contexts. In such a new perspective, the exchange of social positions is the mechanism to be adopted. In this way, if cleverly experienced, sports experience could be an exceptional formative occasion. It needs to cooperate for an educational system characterized by a polycentrism, represented by institutions and training agencies spread all over the territory, in which it is concretely possible to link learning to discovering, getting involved, existing and learning together. A process of fusion between mind and body, social politics and school politics, between school, extra-school and political, economic and social fabric, in the citizen's family and life. A process capable of sustaining an educating society, working in such a way as to make sports practice an opportunity for encounter and global and harmonious evolution for the individual and for the individuals, but also the symbol and essence of knowledge. It needs to start taking actions, identify the athletes for what they are, with the multiplicity that characterizes them; it requires a broader, more positive vision to legitimize linguistic differences and the various family structures, to learn to understand the opponents' attitudes and the determined will to leave aside the small and large manifestations of denigration, due to diversity and unfounded hierarchies. It is important to restructure society and, consequently, this must start from school, the place where the trainer's act, in which to identify the tools needed to observe people for what they are, in their differences and singularities. The values and ideals in which we believe are what unites people. The values of sport are manifold and have universal character and meaning.. In order to find a friend there is nothing better than playing together, and sport is a game anyway. Team members are almost always united by a great friendship: understanding, respecting, holding in high esteem each other are essential factors to compete together; moreover, the fact of practicing the same discipline, sharing passion and hardships, brings together and joins the opponents too. Sports events promote friendship and dialogue also among spectators: an entire country is united in supporting national teams and athletes; sport fans, even if supporting different athletes, share many interests. Talking about sport is a good starting point for getting to know each other.

The most important element that should emerge in sport is fair play. What distinguishes sport is the respect for the rules and for the opponent.

The goal is not to win at all costs; a victory achieved by intimidating opponents is not a sports victory, nor is a victory the one obtained by deceiving the referees and breaking the rules. Curling players are perhaps the best example of fair play: if they notice they have violated a rule they report it and, at the end of the game, it is a tradition that the opposing teams celebrate together. Another concept to analyze is honor. Winning with honor is equivalent to winning fairly; losing with honor means competing with commitment and accepting a defeat serenely. The opponent is honored by holding him in high esteem, and one's own country of belonging

is honored by giving the best of oneself. The last concept to be considered is the glory. It is the goal of the athlete; when he manages to achieve great successes, he is admired and remembered by everybody. The "Olympic Medal", for example, is a symbol of glory. Considering these prerogatives, we can easily understand how essential it is to reach a full awareness in urgently attaching meaning to sport. Personal success in sport, like in life, often comes before everything else; before the respect for oneself, for others, and for the rules. The latter are seen as an obstacle to victory. Through sport, one measures himself up against the other. It is in sport that the "I" and the "You" are mixed, united by the same objective. Reflecting on them two leads us to discover that huge world of interpersonal relationships, helps us accept and being accepted, eliminate inequalities (which is a value judgment) and affirm diversity (that is a fact). Without such knowledge and spirit, in a sports competition, the opponent will be only an enemy, and the other will be only someone to be brought down and destroyed. It needs to make sure that sports facilities become a meeting point among cultures, claim the supremacy of actions on words and make sport not only a practice but a discipline, spreading the compliance with the rules not as an exception, but as a normal fact. It is through the respect for the rules that the conditions of equality come to life; it is through a peer relationship that democracy is affirmed. It is only by respecting others that we can demand respect. By accepting of the otherness, peaceful coexistence takes life between peoples, and it is precisely starting from this consideration that we embrace the sport-peace combination, since tending towards peace means choosing to live and help to live, deciding not to die nor to kill. We make choices, starting from the acceptance of diversity through a peaceful sport, to bear witness to a culture that is not afraid, and which therefore does not escape the encounter. We must want to feel promoters of peace not by avoiding conflicts, but by facing them, while implementing the choice of non-violence. We need concrete training policies to stimulate long-lasting changes in the social perception of the sports phenomenon, and to implement them, we need to invest in the quality and quantity of sports education to provide to young people in schools and sports clubs, starting from primary school, where this aspect is still underestimated. There an increasing need to regain possession of this tool and use it as a means for spreading: creativity, civilization, acceptance of the foreigner and respect for the other. Sports practice is an experience of life and growth for the human being. It must never lose its playful spirit, while maintaining a strong educational and intervention mark on the subject's training process. Today, unfortunately, sport has been strongly deprived of these elements and often turns into spectacularization, stardom and/or business tool. Purifying it partly from deviant superstructures that differ from its true essence is a cultural operation of great significance, which implies the assumption of responsibility, collective consciousness and precise educational practice. Speaking of the assumption of responsibilities leads to think of a pedagogy of responsibility, a tool of action in life practice, in addition to knowing how to use pedagogical tools in sport.

The concept of Playing in Sport

Sports activity is unquestionably an effective tool of the pedagogical action; educational practice requires a synergy of interventions between all the training agencies: families, schools, cultural associations, training bodies, sports clubs, etc.; improvisation and unpreparedness are obstacles to an effective improvement of society. Sports practice, events and competitions are opportunities for implementing this educational project. This is the new adventure of humanity and society, which becomes a community in ongoing training. It is a risk and a cultural challenge, which must develop new strategies and build a new identity in the light of a balanced and thoughtful relationship among all of its parts. Being sport built on the concept of *playing*, it sets the subject's comprehensive education as primary educational purpose, since it is not simplistically considered as a means for the reductive overcoming of the other, but it is

synonymous with commitment, sacrifice and love. Socialization is a further educational goal for both sport and playing. They are opportunities to relate with others and to deal with different situations. Sport and playing stimulate the subject's intellectual skills, encouraging his intellectual-cognitive growth and developing creativity by affecting various levels: comprehension, memory, reasoning and spatial orientation.

Thanks to the sports-recreational path, the student increases his own creativity and originality; moreover, through the competition, a person gains awareness, team spirit and solidarity. A formal sociological approach shows at least four key themes related to the relevance of sport. The first concerns the game. The characterizing elements are: its use (which can be absolute), a greater symbolic component, and the identification of latent stakes. Even in gambling, what is sought is not the gain itself, but the possibility of experiencing an activity which is dynamic (never repeated twice in the same course) and risky (the outcome is uncertain and never completely predictable). On the one hand, there is an event that is generated and internally located in society, as a tool to satisfy expressive needs such as those of action and risk. On the other hand, the players in a game make up society themselves. Their activity is a manifestation of that play strategy that encompasses the notions of "getting involved" and "playing a role". In the network of social relationship occurring in a sports group, it is possible to identify all the key elements of the collective action. A team game reveals, more than any other collective experience, the dynamics of group relationships. A second pivotal point is the concept of conflict. This element is considered as a decisive factor of social change, as a symbolic place of elaboration of the rules that lead collective life, governing and thus highlighting an intricate system of relationships among groups. Sports competition, especially in relation to team games, can be an example of the effectiveness of a regulated conflict. The third key theme concerns the understanding of the growing value that industrial companies attach to leisure time. In a given social environment governed by routine, homogenization of work and productive imperatives, sports activities become opportunities for re-gaining individuality. The importance of the notions of space is also emphasized, since for various social practices, sport can be both inclusive and exclusive. Sometimes it is even too much to think that game and sport are something neutral, linked to the clear taste of having fun, and then disconnected from the environment in which they are practiced.

Conclusions

The education to sport is a plausible means for promoting a coexistence based on cooperation, exchange, and productive acceptance of a difference, considering them as values and opportunities for democratic growth. Sport is a universal language, which unites everything and everyone. Respecting human rights means believing in the cult of dialogue, equality and mutual respect. The education to sport is a probable tool for implementing this life project. Sport and sports practice are inalienable rights of the human being. Practicing sport and projecting young and old people to physical education is a clear sign of human awareness and critical-autonomous training. In today's society it is essential to promote positive and critical behaviors, which hold a civil education based on the respect for body and mind, both individually and collectively. It is essential to support the quality of interpersonal bonds between people through growth paths characterized by sports educational activities and intercultural practices; physical activity brings people together and facilitates the understanding of particularities and different cultural behaviors.

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