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## Sport in the Technological, Social and Inclusive Development

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### **Abstract**

*The aim of this research work is to highlight the contribution that sport, understood in its educational, training and pedagogical meaning, can provide in the technological, social and inclusive development. In this regard, the combination of sport and technology and the ability of sport to guarantee support in equal opportunities in terms of gender and inclusion of the disabled will be analyzed.*

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**Keywords:** *Sport, Technology, Equal Opportunities, Inclusion, disability.*

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### **Introduction**

The continuous expansion of sports in general has made it become part of many different sectors of our society, and consequently, the latter has had to adapt to this new reality. For this reason, sport has established itself as an element of fundamental importance and no longer placed at the margins of multiple contexts of social interaction.

This work aims to highlight a growing expansion of this phenomenon starting from women's sport practice and from athletes with disabilities, in order to enhance the protection and promotion of human rights.

### **Sport and Technology**

Sports activity was born in Greece in the Eighth century A.D. with the advent of the Olympics, which consisted of athletic competitions carried out with religious purposes and as a means to reach its goal; just think about the myth of Achilles, and then about the link between human being and divine nature.

Nowadays, however, sport must be understood as a path that allows reaching the established goal through physical activity, training or competitions; therefore, it must be that meeting point and the educational means that, thanks to physical and cultural actions, can also be highlighted in common everyday life actions. So the educational purpose must be the founding nucleus of sports activity and consequently, in a hypothetical scale of values, it must be in first position with all the other factors at its service; it is the fulcrum of sports helping generate the educational project, but that simultaneously needs a cultural anchoring in order to understand which human being, or in a wider perspective which society, wants to train to prevent his/its miseducation.

Sport must be understood as "action", and as such it recalls the "need to act", making lose sight of the huge problem of the educational purpose itself, which often translates into a package of sports services for sale, becoming an purpose that follows only the shallow economic dimension and overlooking the most authentic phenomenon of the intentionality that lies in the educational action.

Over the centuries, this sense of sacredness has dissipated to the point of vanishing to make room for the spectacularity of modern sport, thus moving from the "sport for the Gods to that for men". It can be summarized in three points:

- The combination of sport and mass media;
- The relationship between sport and economics;
- Information technology

The first point can be seen as a perfect synergy as these two topics are closed linked to each other: sport is the raw material that mass media sell to viewers, and at the same time, mass media encourage the increase of the audience (to the benefit of sports activity).

The second point results from the first as, with the introduction of the media dimension in sports, the economic interests consequently become part of the sports world, causing the creation of an autonomous circuit that, as described above, uses sport to promote economic development; vice versa, sport uses economy to expand.

The third point can be considered as the fusion between sport, economics and mass media generating information technology, the goal of which is to enter the heart of the sports event to contaminate it with virtual elements, and offer the viewer a product in which physical performance and technological processing tend to be indistinguishable.

Based on the above, it is clear that mass media, economics and information technology are changing sport; the latter preserves the educational importance, but at the same time allows us speaking of new frontiers for sport, because these factors highlight the creative ability of the mass media exploiting both the economic component and the contribution of technology. So this new frontier for sport can be considered as a more complex evolutionary model that enhances the educational aspect inherent in motor activity, and at the same time, represents the evolutionary change of modern sport, creating a link between the rediscovery of the original epic of Olympia and a window on the near future of sport to create more boundaries between the real and the virtual, eliminating any partitions and consequently favoring a total interaction between sport and spectator, (who, however, cannot clearly distinguish these new ethical values).

### **Equal opportunities and women's sport**

Sport can be defined as something extraordinary that goes beyond the simple practice of any physical activity, since it allows dreaming and therefore creating life projects for teenagers, young people and adults.

Today's sports world is manifold, varied and open thanks to the appearance of new games and sports practices (compared to the past), and for the presence of lifestyles and gestures allowing us understanding towards which horizons we move as sportsmen and citizens.

In 1978, sport was recognized by UNESCO as a fundamental right for all. It is seen as a means for improving health, but above all it gives women the opportunity to participate in the cultural and social life of the community, fostering interpersonal relationships, freedom of expression, greater opportunity for education and expansion of useful skills for everyday life. The possibility of women's participation in sports has challenged all gender discrimination and the stereotypes that had developed over the years, thus becoming a means to support the promotion and diffusion of gender equality, and consequently of women's emancipation.

The recent European Union 2014-2020 programming once again highlighted the importance of gender equality opportunities but, in Italy, despite the efforts made, equal opportunities still remain an issue to be solved. In fact, problems concerning gender equal opportunities also exist in the sports context; just think that, in Italy, women are not recognized as professional athletes

because of Law 91/1981, which regulates and defines the professional sportsman including, in addition to the athletes, the coaches, the technical staff and trainers, and the rights / duties resulting from the employment relationship equated with that of the employed person. The problem, unfortunately, is that women are not mentioned (thus they are excluded), and that Law, as regards the distinction between competitors and amateurs, refers to the CONI (the Italian National Olympic Committee) and Sports Federations regulations. The above highlights real gender discrimination, and as regards team sports, the difference between men and women is further increased by the disparity in economic treatments; in fact, within the same discipline, the compensation for a male athlete is on average 50% higher than that of a woman athlete, except for water polo.

Another discriminating point, with regard to the employment relationship of women athletes, is the presence of an anti-maternity clause that favors the resolution of contract law, even if Article 3 of the Italian Constitution states that "All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex [...]. It is the duty of the Republic to remove those obstacles of an economic and social nature which, limiting the freedom and equality of citizens, impede the full development of the human person [...]".

While in Italy, from a government point of view, we are still working work to eliminate this gap for women, in Europe, the athlete-society relationship does not raise any problem as the latter was eliminated once it emerged, creating no distinction between professional and amateur athlete.

### **Sports inclusion and disability**

Modern society is always looking for perfection, also because of the too much popularity given by the mass media especially with regard to models aiming at satisfying the results, both for the working world and for the sports one, but everything happens with particular care for those who have difficulty in adapting to contexts that are not suited to their needs, such as people with disabilities. This term, over the years, has been defined several times and, with the same frequency, it has been changed up to reach a definition set by the United Nations: disability refers to all those persons showing long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments related to various barriers preventing their full and effective participation in society, on a basis of equality with others. As mentioned, this definition is the result of a long process that eliminated the indifference and contempt for people with disabilities, which inevitably provoked an exclusion from social life and therefore a denial of their humanity. Over time, the concept of disability has undergone a considerable change, moving from a charitable and compassionate conception of the disabled to one in which he must be an integral part of society, with the aim of enhancing the person by exploiting any skill of the disabled in any context of life, such as sport.

The relationship between sport and disability involves considering the disabled subject as "a person" with unique and unrepeatable peculiarities, and therefore as someone who possesses both potentialities and poor skills; starting from this principle, therefore, even a tennis champion could be poorly equipped in some other fields, such as in the ability to kick a ball like a professional footballer. This principle explains how and why disabled people are encouraged to become part of the world of sports, since they are considered as people who are equal to everyone, and therefore they have the right to develop their physical, motor, intellectual and social skills. A further help has been provided by the simplification of the access to sports practice for even the weakest social groups, thus generating a change from sports practice intended exclusively for competitive purposes, to the enhancement of the educational and social value inherent in sport.

Over time, the idea of sport for everyone, and therefore for disabled people too, has gained a significant value as they possess specific characteristics (overall picture of things, global perception, ability to read situations in broader way) which allow creating unusual connections that "normal" people would be hardly able to develop, facilitating the interpretation of things from different perspectives and therefore facing various situations with different approaches and methods.

It is known that from the point of view of learning, for people with intellectual disabilities or those who have a lower IQ than the norm, it needs greater time and high attention resources, and it is for this reason that physical activity is important, because, thanks to the use of a type of motor learning, whether simple or complex, it is possible to "train" different and important aspects of the executive system, such as the management of frustration, the control of interference and the development of resources, by simply calibrating the difficulties on the real resources of the subject and engaging him with exercises that gradually range from the simplest to the most complex ones.

Once understood the importance of sports activity for people with disabilities, it needs to underline which kind of sport (played in team or individually) is more profitable. It is usual to lead the person with disability towards team sports, because it is seen as the best way to learn to be in the world and socialize, even if it is sport in general that is actually useful to learn to live according to rules, acquire the sense of discipline and respect for oneself and for the opponents. In fact, individual sports seem to be more useful, precisely because they are based on a type of training aimed at stimulating the disabled to achieve and maintain the maximum limit of the current attention resources as long as possible. Moreover, for the coach, it will certainly be more difficult to calibrate the physical exercises to be proposed to the group and not to the individual, thus highlighting an additional factor, i.e. the importance of a prepared coach, since if he will not be able to provide the right motivations or the correct exercises, both from the point of view of the technical gesture and of the degree of difficulty, there will be the risk of generating negative effects in the disabled person, like the loss of self-esteem and the reduced sense of self-efficacy, resulting in an even more devastating effect: the marginalization from the game and the subsequent abandonment of sports practice.

### **Conclusions**

Sports activity practice inevitably involves the respect of the values inherent in sports. The relationship between sport and the educational/social growth of a young athlete is not predictable and simple at all; in fact, it needs to overcome some social and cultural problems, such as the idea of sport read only in a competitive, technological and lucrative key, or some discriminatory other ones like the case of women not recognized as competitive athletes according to law, or the case of people with disabilities. This relationship shows an imbalance between the world of sport and the various contexts of everyday life, even if attempts were made to activate a real process of inclusion aimed at enhancing the new frontiers for sport.

Sports play a fundamental role in the life of all people through the multiple body experiences; in the various contexts of everyday life, people can become aware of their own body and enhance these skills conveyed by sports activity.

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