

Pedagogy and didactics of motor activity for social intervention

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to identify some of the possible fields of application for the Pedagogy and Didactics of Motor Activity, in order to promote Inclusion and Integration. When we talk about Motor Activity we refer to a discipline that has a universal language among its characteristics, and therefore is particularly recommended in contexts where there is a need to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers. And this is why sports practice is increasingly used in situations of social hardship to improve the inclusion and integration of those subjects who would otherwise be excluded due to their linguistic, cultural, economic or social conditions. From a pedagogical point of view, several authors agree on the need for the discipline to pay attention to new stimuli coming from different disciplinary fields: the methodology used should also be integrated and open to new contents coming from other disciplines. Starting from the assumption that the areas of intervention of Social Pedagogy cannot ignore multidisciplinary, we aim to underline the importance of the pedagogical-sports intervention in situations of difficult Inclusion and Integration, and to analyze the so-called "Progetto RETE!" (GOALS Project), which the Italian Football Federation has been carrying out since 2015 with unaccompanied minors hosted in the Sprar/Siproimi System (Protection System for beneficiaries of international protection and for unaccompanied foreign minors) facilities, considering it the best practice to be adopted in this case. This project is part of a broader program that the FIGC has conceived and has been carrying out for several years and which has as its ultimate goal the promotion of the values of inclusion and integration through sporting practice.

Key words: Social Intervention, Sports, Sports Pedagogy, Inclusion, Integration

Introduction

Motor and sports practice understood as a privileged educational means of immediate spreading is becoming one of the most important areas of intervention and application of Social Pedagogy. In fact, one of the main characteristics of motor and sports activity is that it is linguistically universal, and can therefore also be used in contexts where cultural and idiomatic barriers could make the work of the educator and the student difficult. Since Sport is a consolidated cultural phenomenon that embraces different aspects of modern society and forms an integral part of it, due to aspects that go well beyond simple physical activity, it is clear that a pedagogical approach to social intervention cannot disregard motor and sports practice.

The educational approach in situations of particular discomfort, such as those in contexts involving migrants and asylum-seekers, can be facilitated and mediated by motor and sports practice: sport thus becomes a key tool for facilitating the social inclusion of these people, but it can also be an excellent viaticum for an "Antiracist Sports Pedagogy" (Isidori E., 2009). In particular, because of its wide popularity, the game of football can be considered a tool with great educational potential: in this context, the "Progetto RETE!" (GOALS Project), which the Italian Football Federation has been carrying out since 2015 in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior, is aimed at unaccompanied foreign minors hosted in the Sprar/Siproimi (Protection System for beneficiaries of international protection and for unaccompanied foreign minors) System facilities, and is considered a best practice both for the number of subjects involved and for the educational results achieved.

In the FIGC idea, football plays an important role in promoting integration between peers and the processes of social and intercultural inclusion. Among the objectives of the projects implemented there is also the involvement of local companies from all over Italy, which thanks to "RETE!" they were able to put into practice "mixed" activities involving Italian and foreign minors, some of whom were also registered with the companies themselves, demonstrating the great inclusive value of physical activity.

The interdisciplinary approach of Pedagogy

Speaking of where pedagogy should be placed at a scientific level, more than one author has urged the search for its "independent" status, regardless of Philosophy, Psychology and Sociology. According to V. Sarracino (2011), other authors such as M. Corsi and R. Pagano stressed the need for Philosophy and all that knowledge that "can help man find a more 'human' way". In short terms, Pedagogy should pay attention to new

stimuli coming from other disciplinary fields such as Economics and Politics, and at the same time should be receptive in terms of contents and methodology.

This means that it would be limiting to think of approaching the problems linked to social intervention exclusively through disciplinary knowledge, since the latter cannot represent and define society comprehensively (Sarracino V., 2011); instead, an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach has the appropriate methodological characteristics to achieve integrated educational solutions, which are better suited to the complexity of contemporary society.

In this perspective, the pedagogical approach based on Motor Activity can represent an ideal leverage, relatively simple to implement and which can lead to important results in relation to the energies employed, especially in a context where it needs to promote social inclusion.

In fact, it is social pedagogical knowledge that most favors cooperation; the training process then becomes permanent in those who undertake it, with positive repercussions even outside the scope of intervention. This concept, contextualized in the educational field, takes the form of an "educational lever with positive balances", where the intervention in the sports field brings results also - and above all - outside the competitive context. It is enough to think of the advantages that the social integration process of migrants and asylum-seekers - in this case carried out through Sports - can bring to local communities, especially in those contexts in which the Third Sector companies dealing with these issues operate.

Sport as an inclusive tool

The very nature of the sports phenomenon reveals its extraordinary educational potential. As a matter of fact, sport is "the most characteristic social phenomenon of today's societies" (Garcia, Ferrando, Puig, Lagardera, 1998). According to Isidori (2019), behind its seemingly simple form, sports practice hides a learning process that, despite its complexity, can be experienced by anyone, regardless of his/her social and cultural level. This "passepartout" in the learning of sports activity has made it possible for recreational activities to be linked to the cultures of different people throughout history, thus facilitating intercultural communication. From this point of view, Sport is a universal phenomenon in all respects, linked to the very nature of man, and has the great advantage of being conveyed and taught in ways that go beyond cultural barriers.

Besides being a universal phenomenon, Sport also has intrinsic multicultural and transcultural characteristics that Isidori summarized in the following points:

- Through sports practice, human beings reveal themselves and develop communication skills allowing them to connect with others;
- Its nature, based on competition through rules, has historically allowed different groups of people and communities to confront each other's diversity by means of body language;
- Representing an expression of human creativity in all respects, it allows to enrich the cultural background of those who practice it, increasing their communication and relationship skills.

However, at the same time, just because people come into contact with cultures that are often different from their own through Sports, some Authors claim that the sports phenomenon can emphasize the concept of "race" and increase the stereotyped visions of society (Barbujani, 2006), by sometimes underlining the differences of performance in certain disciplines by different human beings.

Obviously, in an increasingly multiracial society where different cultures, traditions and languages coexist, we cannot leave aside a Sports Pedagogy that tries to bring out the positive values of Sport Activity, using it as an educational means with all the great potential it carries.

In this sense, there is an increasing number of educational initiatives that, by means of sports practice, aim to intervene socially in terms of integration and fight against prejudice. There are several National Sports Federations and Supranational Sports Organizations that employ human and financial resources to pursue these objectives. In this case, the Italian Football Federation has been implementing an important integration and social inclusion project called "Progetto RETE!" since 2015.

The "Progetto RETE!"

The "Progetto RETE!" was launched by the Italian Football Federation in 2015 and seeks to support the recognition of the rights of foreign citizens applying for asylum, by aiming at their integration and inclusion in the national society.

The principle on which the project is based is that, through the practice of football and the educational content embedded in it, social inclusion processes can be promoted.

This project is aimed at foreign unaccompanied minors who apply for Asylum in the Italian shelters belonging to the Sprar/Siproimi (Protection System for beneficiaries of international protection and for unaccompanied foreign minors) system; from 2015 to date, the "Progetto RETE!" has involved about 2,000 foreign minors, who, thanks to a technical-training course and the collaboration of the youth and school technicians of the Italian Football Federation (F.I.G.C.), have managed to regularly practice football activities, succeeding in many cases to integrate within the social fabric in which the hosting facilities operate, as well as to join the local sports clubs as athletes.

This project is structured in 3 phases:

1. a regional phase, during which the technical interventions of the experts of the Youth and School Sector are activated, who carry out training sessions on a regular basis either at the Sprar/Siproimi facilities or in collaboration with local sports clubs, in order to encourage a mixed activity between foreigners and Italians;
2. an inter-regional phase, in which the first phase is purely playful-competitive, with a series of stages in which different regions compete against each other in matches by lining-up mixed teams of foreign and Italian minors;
3. a national phase, which represents the sports climax of the season, constituting a real final phase in which the winner is decreed.

It can be clearly asserted that football activity essentially represents the key to convey the positive educational message of integration and inclusion. Through the "Progetto RETE!", the Italian Football Federation manages to provide an opportunity to carry out sports activities, and to promote a multicultural exchange of views, enriching both the foreign minors involved and the local communities in which the shelters operate.

Conclusion

Since it was launched by the FIGC in 2015, the "Progetto RETE!" has seen its numbers increase year by year, managing to involve more and more SPRAR centers and more and more unaccompanied minors in sports and physical activities. The positive trend saw the number of participants increase from 237 in 2015 to 560 in 2019, effectively doubling the number of minors involved.

The positive consequences from a social point of view were evident, with the activation of a special staff inside the FIGC that deals with the organization and implementation of the project. Furthermore, the creation of an organizational model of sporting practice in which young Italians and young foreigners in difficult situations collaborate and coexist has strengthened social intervention in difficult situations, where a "classic" approach would not have given such positive results.

The integration process is completed every time an unaccompanied foreign minor has been registered with the sports club of his territory: the quantification of results such as this constitutes the starting point for subsequent studies, to verify also in numerical terms how much the motor activity can affect the integration and inclusion processes in situations of severe social distress.

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