

EMANUELE ISIDORI

Outline of Sport Pedagogy

Introduction and Research Essays



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Part I

Introduction

Introduction to Sport Pedagogy

Emanuele Isidori

1. The concept of Pedagogy

Pedagogy is the science of education. This science became independent in the XIX century, but of course education existed as early as in the primitive life of society. As a rule we take for granted that education includes up-bringing, that is influencing the personality of the individual. The sources of pedagogical knowledge are: practice, literature and research. Its conceptions come from philosophy, psychology, sociology, biology, etc. and also of course from experience. General pedagogy can be divided into:

- basic pedagogy (general, comparative, historical);
- border pedagogy (social and psychological);
- applied pedagogy (family, preschool, and also sport pedagogy).

The aim of education is nowadays defined as a purposeful social acting towards socialization processing individually at optimal possible rate and relatively autonomously, indirect influence. In pedagogy we speak especially about: concepts, facts, theories, knowledge, skills, performances, attitudes, traits and behaviours. More generally we discuss:

democratic thinking, humanistic approach, peace education, critical thinking, globalization, creativity, multiculturalism, etc.

In research we face difficulties connected with qualitative and quantitative diagnostic methods. The main and traditional theories of pedagogy are today:

- a) *pedocentric pedagogy* whose representatives are Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) and Maria Montessori (1870–1952). This pedagogy is regarded as a reaction to Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841), best characterized by the idea that the child is the sun around which everything turns: in fact it is a pessimistic theory from the point of view of the educator; it refuses any punishment and is useful especially in the early age of childhood;
- b) *sociocentric pedagogy*, whose most important representative is Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), founder of the Sciences of Education. This pedagogy can be summarized through the following concepts: individual is valid when becoming useful member of the society, stress on collective, punishment, moral education; pedagogy and education are an important part of human culture;
- c) *pragmatic pedagogy*. Among the most important authors who inspired this theory, there are the American philosophers and psychologists William James (1842–1910) and John Dewey (1859–1952). We can sum up this theory as following: communication is the basis of pedagogical process, and true is everything that works in the practice; experience is then supported and success is deciding. *Learning by doing*

is the main and most effective way we learn and *critical thinking* is a tool for learning and connecting theory and practice. In this pedagogy, school should become a workshop for democracy;

- d) *behaviouristic pedagogy*, inspired by John Watson (1878–1958) and Edward Thorndike (1874–1949), and the new behaviours (Skinner, Tolman and Guthrie), it comes from to behave and it is based on the concepts of: stimulus (S) and reaction (R). This pedagogy focuses on quantitative approach, test and measurements in educational research. The aim of pedagogy is to create habits in behaviours. Personality is a black box, human learning is based on specific laws.

But there are other important contemporary tendencies in Pedagogy that can be used as a tools for better understanding education, sport and their connection. The most important are:

- e) *performance pedagogy*, it proceeds from pragmatism and accepts all new technologies. The main aim of this pedagogy is how to increase knowledge and skills. It gives preference to empirical investigation and it is typical of performance society;
- f) *theoretical and socio-critical pedagogy*. In this theory, social relations, personal, in school and into the community, are regarded as the main problem. This theory is in opposition to performance pedagogy and positivism in general. It is interested on discussions on the sense of education and teacher training and, in Physical Education, the stress is on well-being in-

stead of performance, on emotional experience and intelligence;

- g) *postmodern pedagogy*. Postmodernism is quite a new approach, a form of cultural criticism concerning social, economical and scientific aspects of the era of global capitalism and individualism. It is in fact a challenge for better understanding of social world. The main requirement here is critical reflection and self-reflection. As ever there is the problem of values (we find here a simple explanation): a value is anything that is worth doing and what does not stand against humanity. The attack against democratic principles provokes, in postmodern pedagogy, the development and commitment for a reflective and critical education.

2. Pedagogy, sport and physical education

We can define sport pedagogy as the study of the processes of teaching and coaching, the outcomes of such endeavours, and the content of fitness, physical education, and sport education programs.

It is very difficult — if not impossible — to distinguish between the manifold activities that may be enrolled into the field we call sport, physical exercise, physical and sport education, Physical culture, etc. Not to speak of definitions of those terms.

The Council of Europe (Sport Unit) offers a simplification calling every activity as sport and defining it as «all forms of physical activity that are directed to presentation or improvements of physical fitness and mental

well-being forming at the same time social relations and attaining some performances in competitions of all levels». About sport we can say that it is a field that nowadays:

- extending widely: nearly everywhere in the world you may find some people active so that they may be included into sporting and/or physical exercises. Especially when adult and even older people participate more and more often—not to speak of children and youth;
- it is also difficult to distinguish which activities should be regarded as sports. So that we are now hardly able to make some classification, when some old sports begin to split into two or more independent sports (beach volleyball, for example).

As an example only we introduce this taxonomy of sports and their characteristics:

- a) elite sports: known for professionalism and commercialism;
- b) competition sports: satisfaction from performance and club social contacts, relaxation and excitement;
- c) recreation sports: activities for health, relaxation and cohesion in different groups;
- d) fitness sports: purpose is development of fitness;
- e) adventure sports: risk in adventures and different tensions;
- f) lust sports: exclusive hedonistic purposes, designated as “S-sports” (sun, sand, snow, sex, speed, satisfaction);

g) cosmetic sports: body building, model body image.

Most physical activities require some social organisation (clubs, sport centres, associations, etc.). In some sports there is also a great interest of spectators — the numbers go to thousands and, mediated through especially television, to millions. The original purpose of sport and physical exercises was to enhance all-round capacity of especially physical abilities — however nowadays we record a growing specialization and also some aspects of mental participation. As far as the top sport performances are concerned it is no doubt that a full engagement of the athlete's personality is needed. Both sport performances, but nearly all new exercises, are more and more demanding. Several scientific disciplines participate in consequence of that in those processes. We speak therefore about sporting life and point out pedagogical approach in application of all those findings. This is the difficult assignment for teachers and even coaches to mediate all findings to interested persons in an acceptable and understandable way.

3. A critical approach to sport and physical activities

It is especially sport for spectators and some great performances which become frequent target of criticism coming from variegated social circles and publications. The following consequences of sporting are as a rule the most frequent:

- sport is a mechanizing factor and some athletes regard their body as a “vehicle” for money;
- rivalry is growing and brings aggression since envy suppresses sociability; it even deletes instincts of self–safety, sometimes instigating masochism. It may cause some deterioration of personality;
- the fans sometimes change into stupid spectators.

Besides critical views, there are of course also authors who, based on investigations and their own experience, introduce evidences of positive influences. They say that sport helps the:

- increase of assertiveness, self–confidence, emotional stability, self–control, and efficiency, etc.;
- decrease of: alcohol abuse, anxiety, depression, phobia, tensions. The contribution of sporting and exercising is based theoretically on the thesis of specific activities. The impact on personality development exists, however is not necessarily existing and not always positive.

Today commercial sport is a reality. From the point of view of sport pedagogy we are interested above all in the future. As a rule modern sport is regarded as a product of industrial development of society. Most common features are seen in: importance of performance, individual products as the main aim, permanent progress, rational approaches, complex methods in preparation, regeneration. However we find both positive and negative developments.

- a) positive contributions: a lot of money flows into sport through television; expansion of sport active and passive interest; athletes become models for youths and there is a great social respect of the best ones; Sport develops healthy family and personal living styles. There is also a growing industry of sport materials (better facilities), medical science and care, etc.;
- b) negative consequences: Criticism from all sides, especially for change of values; business interests are prevailing. Problematic interest of media influencing sport; expectation of ever better performances. Growing threats to the health of athletes and enormous expenses for training and competitions. Premature participation of children in competitions. A growing frequency of competitions, etc.

4. Sport, education and human development

In the development of man we distinguish phylogenesis which deals with the development of man since the beginning of mankind and ontogenesis which concerns the development of individuals since their birth. There is also a difference between growth and development. For development it is characteristic that:

- it is a whole process concerning the whole personality;
- it continues in stages;
- it is coherent and irreversible;
- it is differentiating.

As a rule we recognise 3 deciding factors for the development of every individual. These are:

- 1) heredity;
- 2) environment;
- 3) education.

- 1) *Heredity* is an endogenic factor: it is a tendency of organism to transfer features from parents to the descendents. Transferred are mostly the physical features like height, body structure, race, hair colour, eyes colour, blood group blood pulse, blood pressure, salivary reflexes, some dynamic characteristics. As far as motor capacities are concerned only the dispositions are inherited. Temperament is conditioned to some extent, but undergoes in life to some development. Character traits are mostly influenced by individual education and environment.
- 2) *Environment* is an exogenic factor: there is a scale of stimulation and inhibition influences fairly well known. Mental capacities and emotions could be mostly stimulated, much less the instincts and drives. Important is socialization which means in fact becoming a member of society. Examples of children living outside human society and, for example, cared and influenced by wolves never become full members of humans especially if they are found in their later years; they are not able to learn how to speak. Communication both verbal and non-verbal is connected with imitation, sympathy and suggestibility.

- 3) *Education* is also exogenic: the difference from environment is in the purposefulness of education. Nowadays, we define education as a social acting leading to relatively autonomous behaviour with the purpose of socialization. Drill is no more accepted although we know about the interference with heredity and environment. There are of course great differences in values and outlook which must be taken into consideration.

There are two main tasks in education: not to harm or damage anything and stimulate what should develop. There are three main stages in development:

- 1) youth: the interactive stage;
- 2) adulthood: the age of culmination;
- 3) old age: the age of involution.

We are of course interested above all in youth:

- 1) childhood: up to 11 years;
- 2) pubescence: 11 to 13–14 years;
- 3) adolescence: 13–14 to 18–20 year.

The aspects that should be followed are:

- 1) physical and motor development;
- 2) social and emotional development;
- 3) mental development;
- 4) pedagogical problems of the stage.

Younger school age (6–11 years). Typical is progressive development; every year children put on weight, as

well as height, improving is resistance, pulmonary capacity, etc. However ossification is not yet finished. When they like physical activity it is possible to support exercises of speed and coordination, not of strength and endurance. They are socially dependent and when they start the school attendance it is for them in their egocentrism quite a new situation. Important is their basic growth of emotions — after recognizing only good and evil, now they understand the sense of truth, justice, courage, given word, friends. The characteristic of this period is a transition from fairy tales to reality, logic, adventure, acceptance of attitudes of adults, generalizing and beginning of abstract thinking, number of active words grows twice; and happy period of life, optimism, activity, period of realism, influence on life style, on concentration and will.

Older school age (11–14/15 years). In pubescence we are witnesses of their very important biological changes influencing sexual maturation. The consequences of those changes appear in disharmony of physical development, thanks to especially growth of body height. Motor discoordination is of course typical of individual who avoid exercising and sporting. At first, children have an inclination to extraversion and later on to introversion. The development of abstract thinking comes, with rational approaches and critical evaluations. Educators should regard behaviours of pubescents as phasic problems.

Adolescence (14/15–18/20 years). All disproportions are balanced, it is a period of full physical powers which may after all be proved by many sport records of boys and girls of this age period. However that development is evidently a little one-sided as the development of personality is

slower. To show the progress at this period it may be mentioned that their muscles make with 15 years 32,6% approximately of body weight and with 16 years 44,2% of body weight. It is a period of completing and also full capacity of abstract thinking. A strong striving for social independence brings frequently civic problems which results in vandalism, lies, stealing, etc. Only an impressive and tolerant personality of educators is therefore accepted.

Hebetic age (20–30 years). That is an age of complete physical and mental powers. The difference is between the beginning and the end of the period mostly in the social sphere. Evidently this is the period of preparation to profession and of beginning of the family life. Responsibility and change of thinking appears in the progress of attitudes from revolutionary ideas to compromising. In professional sporting the end of short-term sport career is coming and the athletes face the second long lasting occupation.

5. Motivation, education and sport

Sport and physical education offers a lot of possibilities to all individuals to participate. For instance, we frequently do not doubt that children like to take part in any moving, but in fact it is so that some of them feel not to be capable to take part in games or activities — we should understand that they are demotivated since they regard themselves as not qualified.

Bad experience leads those children to demotivation which is the loss of motivation. It is important especially in youth. Children live in their ideas in the present, whereas adolescents in the future and old people in the past and

when they see their personal inadequacy they do not find necessary “psychical strength”.

Motivation comes from Latin “*motum*” that equals *movement, passion*. We distinguish intrinsic, inner and extrinsic, outer, motivation. Intrinsic motives have as purpose the activity itself, extrinsic motives come from outside (money, popularity, evaluation by mates, etc.). It is evident that it is questionable to speak in commercial sport about intrinsic motivation and coaches studying expressed in great majority that the principal task for them is to secure motivation for their athletes.

Extrinsic motivation. We should not regard it as not commendable. Sometimes, in fact, a child starts an activity unwillingly (request of parents) and only after some time — which may last even years — it creates an intrinsic motivation. An instigation for all educators: extrinsic motivation should bring the individual to the activity in a proper manner. It does not mean to push the young individual. A real motivation is the art to create a space where the individual finds him/herself the will and relation to the activity itself.

Intrinsic motivation. So we have to help everyone to find some attitude to a relevant activity. It is necessary not to forget that sport itself attracts youth quite differently with less enthusiasm to all the required demands connected with long-term preparation for the performance. Also it happens that if a long perspective of winning prevails then disappointment and demotivation may appear. We distinguish three types of intrinsic motivation:

- 1) inquisitiveness, that is searching for new experience;
- 2) competence, when someone wants to show his abil-

ity. Of course tasks of medium difficulty are the most effective;

- 3) personal causality means an endeavour to show own control of the activity. This is true especially in adolescence age in the effort of an individual to present so his/her independence. In team tasks it is important that every member obtains a personal aim and task, and also that the progress in performance is controlled and appreciated.

Apart from classical division of motivation on intrinsic and extrinsic, also other approaches appear. In all human activities we meet some expectations which are always connected with chance for success and failure. This is an old concept of achievement motivation, but it is evident from the everyday life that our behaviour is greatly socially determined and a result of the two contradictory tendencies to attain success and to avoid failure. This concept can be extended to the whole life career and this is interesting mainly for athletes since sport is a short-term career and professional athletes are facing a retirement from superior sport at an age when the other people have already solved their long-term career.

There are many different influences in our lives which we call incentives. These are, for example, sensorial, pleasure, social recognition, affiliation, material, etc. All that is connected with emotions both positive and negative which play important roles in continuation of all activities /emotions is a reaction to some stimulation, real or imaginative, which brings changes in internal organs and in muscles; expressed by change in face and behaviour; it may also influence the coming behaviour.

It is true that very strong emotions may help in any performance growth, but it should not be forgotten that similar situations may block a fluent progress of muscular movement and derogate so the performance. High emotions are frequent in sport and they may bring not only positive but also detrimental consequences connected with anxiety, aggressiveness, loss of courage, etc.

Moreover, it is necessary to distinguish between physical and psychic fatigue. There are of course individuals who like a little drudgery, a hard work — and those have a great advantage in any activity. The trouble that appears in some activities is monotony. When anything lasts too long, uninterruptedly in a same manner, then you will find individuals who feel fatigue very quickly. For someone this is a nuisance and a psychic fatigue follows (when a teacher or coach loses attention of the members of his group he should try to attract the attention by some story or anything amusing). So he may find very soon how it is in fact with the fatigue of his group.

6. The process of learning

Learning accompanies our whole life. The process is mostly explained as a relatively steady improvement in behaviours as a result of practice or experience. It is possible to deduce it from the behaviour or performance of the individual, but of course the process of learning itself is not observable.

That is the source of troubles and questions like: how in fact people learn? What processes and mechanisms they employ and how they work at different stages of develop-

ment? What differences appear in different individuals? All these and other questions are important for education.

Children inherit a set of motor schemes which help them in their development when these are gradually differentiated and developed. There are two kinds of learning that follow:

- 1) the C-learning, based on perceptive differentiation; the weak schemes are strengthened;
- 2) the L-learning, when the schemes assimilate in combination and consolidation, reciprocal assimilation.

There are several theories of learning, so we mention only the classical which follow:

- *associationism*, is based on finding that learning is advancing when the law of similarity or law of contact are applied;
- *reflexive theory*, based on the research of Ivan Pavlov (1849–1936) who derived from his investigations the importance of external stimuli, of strengthening, and above all information nowadays called feedback;
- *behaviouristic theory*, connected with names like Watson, Thorndike, and Skinner who formulated, on ground of their observations of behaviours after some influence on them, the law of effect, the law of readiness, and the law of exercise;
- *cognitive theory*, in contrary to regarding learning only as reacting to stimuli (behaviourism) it points out the so called insight. Refusing trial and error as a basis of learning, it believes that it is the structure

that represents the function and it is important for teaching.

In order to make the process of learning more understandable it is possible to point out some important agents.

Schmidt (1988) has defined motor learning «as a set of internal processes associated with practice or experience leading to relatively permanent changes in the capability for responding» (p. 346). The motor learning depends on:

- 1) characteristics of the person;
- 2) nature of the task;
- 3) structure of the environment (Fig. 1).

Key elements in Schmidt's definition of Motor learning are:

- aspects of practice or experience;
- a set of internal processes;
- relatively permanent changes in the capability for responding (Fig. 2).

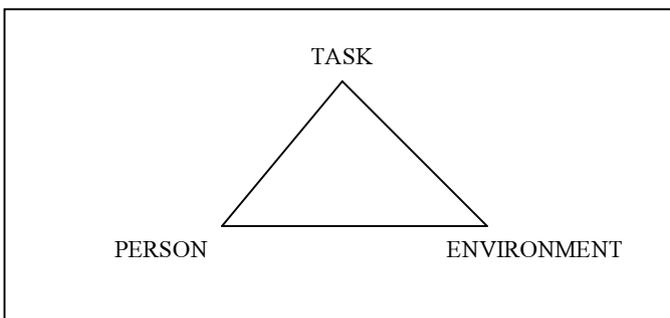


Figure 1 – General scheme of motor learning.

Outline of Sport Pedagogy. Copyright MMIXARACNE editrice S.r.l. www.aracneeditrice.it info@aracneeditrice.it. We can define sport pedagogy as the study of the processes of teaching and coaching, the outcomes of such endeavours, and the content of fitness, physical education, and sport education programs. It is very difficult if not impossible to distinguish between the manifold activities that may be enrolled into the field we call sport, physical exercise, physical and sport education, Physical culture, etc. Sport Pedagogy is the academic field of study, which is located at the intersection between sport and education. As a discipline, sport pedagogy is concerned with learning, teaching and instruction in sport, physical education and related areas of physical activity. Whilst sport pedagogy is mostly regarded as a sub-discipline of sport science (in North America frequently referred to as kinesiology), its theoretical grounding is also underpinned by the general education sciences. As a scientific