



ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT COACH PROGRAMME AND TO WHAT EXTENT ADDRESSES SOCIAL INCLUSION AT THE ITALIAN NATIONAL LEVEL

INTRODUCTION

Sport, is not only a means of achieving the psychophysiological wellbeing of those who practice it, but also as an educational tool and a solution for social issues, since through the confrontation and interaction, it favours the development of integration and socialization. Based on this concept, sport in Italy is acknowledged and promoted by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, and its structures, such as the Office for Sport and the Department for Equal Opportunities.

On 13 September 2017, the Minister for Sport, Hon. Luca Lotti and the Undersecretary of State, Hon. Maria Elena Boschi, with responsibility for Equal Opportunities, have signed a joint commitment to combat social exclusion through sport. Following this step, the Italian government has been publishing several call for proposals aiming to support social inclusion and equal opportunities through sport, with the aim of involving in the actions individuals with fewer opportunities, due to geographical, economical or social disadvantages, mental or physical disabilities, racial discrimination, migration background or criminal record.

Even nowadays, when we talk about sport and physical activities we often associate only to the physiological aspect of the training, however sport has a strong pedagogical dimension as well. The two elements which are necessary for the learning process are: the coach and the athlete.

1. THE ROLE OF THE COACHES IN ITALY

The coach is at the same time a technician, an educator, an organizer and a leader.

What makes an coach a truly valuable and authentic professional, is the ability to fulfil the multiple functions, switch from one to another, in synchrony with the actual needs and conditions.

The role of a technician.

This role is often well-defined but less discussed. The way in which it is carried out, it depends on the experience, competence, training and skills acquired in sports.

The coach, as a technician, does not only teach the typical dynamics and movements of the given sport discipline, but also studies and prepares tactics and strategies. The impact of coaches would not be the same if they do not integrate their creativity in the elaboration of new training methods and techniques.

The role of an educator.

Coaches, even in cases when they are not aware of it, they are educators. They are making corrections, suggestions, proposing ways to carry out specific exercises and movements, but they do not only increase the sensorimotor intelligence of their athletes, but foster the development and integration of personality. The rules, the sport values, the ethical and moral aspect of the sport are all mainly transmitted by coaches. Nowadays this is a particularly crucial role. With the growing popularity of sport, started in young age, there is a huge need for meaningful human relationships and valid models (especially considering the crucial period of adolescence), which all increase the important role of coaches as educators.

The role of coaches as organizers and animators refers to the ability to promote participation in sports, to organize the lives of their athletes, to support their emotional and social well-being, to coordinate them technically, to enhance positive dynamics in the structure of the team (even in individual sports) eliminating any internal conflict among athletes, therefore directing the team towards successful competition. This role implies the global responsibility of coaches and the direct effect of their decisions, choices, directions and evaluations.

The role of a leader.

From the aspect of leadership, the main functions of coaches are the following:

- Create the unity and cohesion of the group. This can be enhanced by taking an active part in the initiatives, actions and dialogue of the group.
- Becoming a role model. By providing guidance and support in the situations, helping the group to overcome difficult situations and grow from them by approaching them with positive attitude.
- Taking the responsibility to make decisions and deal with their consequences, which provides a safe, relaxed and optimal atmosphere for the team to reach its objectives.
- Taking executive function: in order to achieve the objectives of the group, the leader must identify the strategy and the program, prepare its implementation, guide its execution.
- Representing the group and advocating for its interests in the external relations of the team.
- Safeguarding the interpersonal relationships among the members of the team. By maintaining a central position in the group, coaches have the possibility to facilitate the positive interpersonal relationships among their athletes.

So, considering the differences in character, mood, objectives, feelings and motivations and other particularities, the coaches must proceed in training with different criteria in terms of the individual athlete.

2. TRAINING OF THE COACHES

The National System of Qualifications of Sports Technicians intends to represent the general model of reference for the achievement of the qualifications of sports operators, and in particular with regard to the training of the National Sports Federations (FSN) and the Associate Sports Disciplines (DSA), given the considerable development that the sector has had. The system also intends to constitute a reference for the training of the technical figures that operate within the Sports Promotion Organizations.

The role of CONI (Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano – Italian National Olympic Committee) in this context is of high importance, by setting the reference criteria for achieving the specific qualifications. This means that CONI defines the qualifications of reference, the standards of competence and the levels at which they are located and therefore operates as an "awarding body". The direct management of the training involves the CONI only partially, through its own training agency, the School of Sport (central structure in Rome), and always in synergy with the other CONI structures and the Sport Federations. Within this very general framework, the Federations maintain all their independence in the certification of skills (and therefore in the allocation of qualifications) to their operators, as well as in the management and planning of the main phases of training. The Federations also freely decide on the possibility of incorporating training experiences external to their system (for example University) or practical experiences necessary for the achievement of qualifications or continuing education.

The identification and assessment of skills and the context in which they are expressed is crucial for the definition of training paths. When elaborating a curriculum, it is essential to start from the analysis of professionals needs. In order to achieve this complex transition from professional activity to training, a "six step" methodological approach was developed. On the basis of this process, the qualification system of the sports technicians was drawn up, divided into four levels, corresponding to the tasks of the same number of figures. The skills, defined each time for each professional qualification, are obtained through formal education and through the attainment of a level of experience and practice in the field that must be adequate for the specific tasks required. For this reason the professional training of the sports operator must be based on theoretical and practical learning, on scientific knowledge and field applications, according to a model that is able to cover the various components of the required skills.

3. IT IS MORE THAN JUST KNOWLEDGE...

The success of coaches does not only depend on their knowledge, but also on their set of skills and attitudes. The most efficient practitioners are those who can emotionally encourage and support their athletes throughout their learning paths.

It has been proved, that children and adolescents who have coaches with these skills, can gain a lot from the sporting experience in this sense, and develop more positive sense of self, compared to those young people whose coach does not express similar attitudes. This is also valid for high-level athletes, who can also perform better in the competitive environment when emotionally supported by their coaches.

Empathy is the term used in psychology to describe this type of skills which includes the ability to identify with or understand the perspective, experience or motivation of another individual and to comprehend and share another individual's emotional state.

Coaches with high empathic skills are therefore better able to understand the emotions and feelings of their athletes and express the fact of understanding through effective interventions. These actions help to develop mutual trust among the coach and athlete.

In addition to the attitudes towards the athletes, the success of coaches are also highly connected to their attitude towards the institutional and organisational context in which they operate, and even more, it is related to the attitude towards enriching and developing their professional skills in the field of sport science and by exchanging good practices with other professionals.

4. SPORT AND SOCIETY: A GOOD PRACTICE

To promote the idea of sport as a mean for social inclusion and integration, is a priority of the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI):

‘Sport is an open space in which everyone can feel included, valued and supported in their personal development, health and learning.’

It is a vehicle for inclusion, participation and social development, as well as an instrument for psychophysiological wellbeing. It has a fundamental social role as an educational tool, that enhance the development of skills and a balanced personal growth. Considering this, CONI is committed to make sport more and more popular especially among young people, promoting the right to sport even in disadvantaged areas through partnerships with public institutions and private organisations that are necessary to sustain these social initiatives.

CONI acknowledges the social power of the sport interventions, meaning that it serves as an alternative for those children who otherwise would spend their time in the streets of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The opportunities given to play sport is also considered to support the learning of coexistence, respect of rules and others, and a great chance to nurture the talent and passion of youngsters.

For this reason, CONI, together with various associations, has initiated the implementation of ‘Winning as adults’ starting from 2016 that provide access to sport for all children in suburbs and peripheral areas of Italian metropolises. The project aims to establish a good practice in areas where social exclusion and criminality is high, reaching out to families and communities aiming to involve children between in wide range of activities such as: multisport activities, national and international sport events, meeting with sport celebrities and champions and so on. The project also provide sport accessories and equipments to the participants.

Cities involved in the project:

1. Milan - Quarto Oggiaro District

Basketball, volleyball, karate, gymnastics;

2. Rome - Corviale District

Football, freestyle, gymnastics, athletic routes;

3. Naples - Scampia district

Judo and gymnastics;

4. Palermo - San Filippo Neri district (formerly the Zen Quarter)

Athletics, karate, volleyball, basketball, football, badminton, sailing;

5. Rosarno (Reggio Calabria)

Various outdoor activities, multisport

Luckily, more and more initiatives are moving in this direction, serving the integration purposes and building the relationships between communities and sport clubs. Various training courses are organised for coaches and representatives of sport clubs which serve their professional development in the aspect of integration and inclusion, give opportunity to have a better understanding, a proper methodology and approach to tackle the issue of social exclusion.

These initiatives are key elements to fight against poverty, marginalisation and deviance, they serve educational and awareness raising purposes. There is a great need to further promote the educational power of sport in order to prevent children growing up 'on the street', being under the control and the tough rules of the streets.

The teachings of sports, the respect for each other, if practiced by both children and adults, is largely serving our common future for a more inclusive society.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Madella, Cei, Londoni e Aquili – Metodologia dell'insegnamento sportivo, ed. SdS 1997 pagg. 16 – 18;
- <http://www.interattivamente.org/psicologia-dello-sport/elementi-di-psicologia-dello-sport-ruoli-e-funzioni-dell-allenatore.html>
- <http://www.scuoladello-sport.coni.it/images/documenti/SNAQ.pdf>
- <http://www.fip.it/public/41/6142/il%20profilo%20pedagogico%20dell%27allenatore.pdf>
- <https://www.sportgoverno.it/percorsi/inclusione-sociale-attraverso-lo-sport.aspx>
- [http://www.coni.it/images/BilancioSostenibilita2016/capitoli/Il CONI e il ruolo sociale dello sport.pdf](http://www.coni.it/images/BilancioSostenibilita2016/capitoli/Il_CONI_e_il_ruolo_sociale_dello_sport.pdf)
- <http://www.vaccarinict.gov.it/wp/wp-content/uploads/Modulo-di-Pedagogia-per-il-Liceo-Scientifico-Sportivo-G-B-Vaccarini.pdf>
- <https://www.slideshare.net/GEORGEDIAMANDIS/promozione-dell'integrazione-sociale-attraverso-la-formazione-degli-allenatori-e-delle-societ-sportive>
- <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/empathy>