Sport Paths To Overcome The Diversity

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to analyze a combination of sport methodologies able to pursue the multiple (social, sporting and education) objectives of the sport system.
If managed inefficiently and ineffectively, diversity represents a barrier to the sustainable development in any context, especially in sport, which is full of sporting, social and educational relationships between subjects considered different from each other.
In this regard, the research proposes an approach to sport capable of generating the many benefits that this system can potentially reach.

Keywords

Diversity, Sport Methodologies, Education, Social Benefit.

Introduction[1]

Over the past few decades the participation of women, minorities, older people and people of different nationalities in the sports world, as well as in business in general, has increased (Bollinger & Hofstede, 1989; Cesareo, 2000).

Infact, the increasing diversity of today's society, both in social and cultural terms and in skills, makes it increasingly important to focus on the aspects of interculturalism, transfer and management of diversity in all those contexts that have educational tasks, such as school and sport (Granata, 2012). A constructive management of diversity, whether it is social or cultural, does not involve only the comparison with others and their differences, but also the recognition of the shared common goals and interests.

Precisely sport, in fact, is one of the main sectors characterized by a plurality of relationships between individuals of different races, cultures, social statuses, physical and mental characteristics, economic conditions, etc.

As a consequence, if such diversities (of whatever kind they may be) were a critical issue, as unfortunately often happens during sport events, there is the risk of undermining the sustainable development of sport over time, also from a socio-educational point of view.

A possible solution may be the adoption of paths and specific methodologies in sport which aims at valuing diversity.

1. Sport for valuing Diversity: a potential yet to best exploit

The research methodology used is based on a study of the literature regarding the relationship between sport and diversity in order to locate a management model efficient.

The current socio-economic environment with which every individual deal everyday is now strongly influenced by the phenomenon of globalization, and by an elimination of any distance in the communication processes generated by the technological progress. As a consequence, this implies the presence of a plurality of subjects that the individual considers different from himself for a variety of characteristics (racial, ethnic, cultural, social, physical, etc.) with whom he establishes a series of relationships of different kind, including those social, educational, working, recreational, etc. (Alberici, 2007; Ambrosini, 2001; Di Palma, Ascione & Peluso Cassese, 2017).

In this sense, for its nature, sport is a primary context where what has been described above increasingly occurs, with the aim of pursuing not only an athletic performance outcome, but also socio-educational and economic objectives (Caselli, 2003; Di Palma, 2014; Di Palma et al, 2016).

Sport shows how the conflict can be disciplined and streamlined through rules that ousted violence, define roles, and determine diversities. It is the accomplished allegory of a restricted democracy, which strives to build a set of rules and principles that can regulate the social conflict in an unbloody manner. The sport game becomes an exemplar configuration, through which the reasons for cooperation and those for the conflict are acknowledged and implemented regardless of the diversities between individuals (Di Palma, Raiola & Tafuri, 2017; Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999; Farinelli, 2005).

Sport should always make emerge the need to excel, cooperate, respect the rules and laws of the community, its role as a support for a policy of health and hygiene and, above all, the cohesive function with respect to the ethnic, religious and social diversities, which would allow

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1   The manuscript is the result of a collective work of the authors, the specific contribution of which is to be referred to as follows: Davide Di Palma: Introduction and paragraphs n. 1 and 3 – Patrizia Belfiore: paragraph n. 2 and Conclusion

it to provide a major contribution to the set up of modern nations (Houlihan & Malcolm, 2015; Isidori & Fraile, 2008).

Sport understood as an institutionalized game reproduces more or less the norms, values and mechanisms of reward and sanction of the social structure. Its rules and rituals generate identification and integration processes which strengthen the dominant hierarchies and values. The culture of competition makes social distances explicit, producing sub-cultural membership circuits. It often provides the symbolic apparatuses useful to generate the illusion of the vertical mobility like the myth of the non-white champion in the USA that, in the public imagination, feeds the rhetoric of the unlimited opportunities, namely the ideological foundation of the American Dream (Porro, 2001).

Moreover, through sport, it's possible to get a cross communication among all the nations, religions, ethnicities, even in the cases of physical and mental disabilities with the awareness that the comparison, knowledge and exchange are the foundations of all the projects and actions that aim at fighting against the problem of discrimination. The meeting and interweaving of relationship generates chance to get to know each other and overcome fears and prejudices which, in most cases, give rise to the phenomena of social exclusion (Isidori, 2012; Light & Dixon, 2007; Raiola et al, 2015; Di Palma et al, 2016; Tafuri, Di Palma & Raiola, 2017).

As pointed out before, it is clear that sport should facilitate the process of global integration, able to consider every diversity as a resource to be exploited in order to achieve positive outcomes effectively and efficiently both in economical and social terms, as well as in terms of physical performances; yet it often happens that in the stands, in the comments of the media, in the same rules governing federations up to the small amateur leagues, there are episodes of exclusion.

This denotes a diversity management that is not able to exploit the enormous potential of the sports sector and that raises real barriers to the development of this sector from all the previously described standpoints.

2. Approach to Diversity in a Social System

Managing diversity in educational key within a social system is something more than just understanding and accepting diversity as such. The main question is analyzing how a social system can actively and strategically deal with diversity. So it is about identifying what activities need to be placed into motion, in order to implement effectively a socio-educative strategy which integrates diversity as an asset into its identity (Mathews, 2010; Tafuri, Di Palma & Raiola, 2017).

First of all, in this regard, a social system needs to know whether and why it needs a strategy for diversity; secondly, it must carry out a self-analysis in terms of accommodation since, in order to accommodate certain differences, such system has to acknowledge and respect them. Thirdly, the integration process could be accompanied by tensions which should be accepted and resolved in a positive way (change management) Fourthly (and finally), probably the whole system will have to change somehow, otherwise there would not be the cultural change needed for valuing diversity and the social system itself (Bombelli, 2003; Castellucci et al, 2009).

In fact, once the focus of a social system is on recognizing relevant differences and similarities within the social system and in its environment, the next question is how to manage it all; the sensitivity to differences is necessary but not sufficient to make positive processes happen.

As a result, Diversity Management is about integrating the ideas and practice of diversity into the managerial and learning processes within a social system and its environment. All decisions need to be taken in an atmosphere of trust, acceptance and appreciation. Thomas & Ely (1996) sum up this point very clearly: "Yet this new model for managing diversity lets the organization internalize differences among people so that it learns and grows because of them. We are all on the same team with our differences not despite them".

Policy makers aim at getting results. They are normally not interested in the apparently pleasing grand theories. In contrast, educators, in order to reach their goals and obtain social advantages, must understand the external environment, educational institutions, the mission of the social system, his vision, strategy and culture. Therefore the main aim is to be able to identify which is the mix of diversity with the potential to create for the social system an educational benefit sustainable and increase the capacity to achieve the objectives (Di Palma, Ascione & Peluso Cassese, 2017).

Having said all that, Diversity management can be considered a process which creates added value for the social system through an active and conscious development of a future-oriented, strategic and communication management process of accepting and using certain differences and similarities as a potential in a social organization (Buemi, Conte & Guazzo, 2016; Raiola, Tafuri & Di Palma, 2017).

3. Educational and Social Benefits in Sport System

It is important to emphasize that the model of diversity management has the ability to develop a series of potential benefits in the sports sector.

It can generate a number of social and economic benefits that are perfectly contextualized in the sports sector too and, therefore, can act positively on diversity understood as a critical issue in sport. The following table shows in detail its educational and social benefits which can be potentially transferred to a sport level (Buemi, Conte & Guazzo, 2016; Castellucci et al, 2009; Laurinig, 2013; Raiola, Tafuri & Di Palma, 2017).

Table n. 1: The educational and social benefits

EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL BENEFITS
·   Encourage team spirit ·   Promotion of the interaction between different ethnic groups; ·   Incentive to cultural change; ·   Fight against prejudices; ·   Increased *commitment* of employees; ·   Set up of a more harmonious working environment. ·   Favor processes of inclusion

Source: Our Elaboration

For what concerns the social benefits, their direct contribution refers to the possibility to reach efficiently the social and educational goal that represents one of the pillars of the sports system.

The items listed in the table, in fact, represent a greater possibility of guaranteeing the acceptance and inclusion of diversity in sports, no longer conceived as an obstacle or a limitation, but as a resource on which to bet for a cultural progress. The set up of a more harmonious sporting environment, able to foster collaboration between individuals different from each other for various reasons, is an incentive to behave correctly towards others without any form of prejudice.

The social benefits are also the basis for the achievement of the economic ones, and the potential pursuit of a sporting goal plays an important role too. A sports reality managed through the respect for others, the social inclusion and the enhancement of the diversity of its human resources fully embodies the key principles able to go over the natural limit of the physical

performances of any athlete (Di Palma, Raiola & Tafuri, 2017; Isidori, 2012; Tafuri, Di Palma & Raiola, 2017).

The team spirit is enhanced, because every single unit maximizes its productivity, that is, provides a valuable contribution to the final outcome; this also happens in individual sports as the concept of "team" is understood in an expression that is very close to that of "company team" and takes into consideration, in fact, the entire group made up of the management, the coaches/instructors, the athletes and all those who contribute to the functioning of the sporting activity.

In addition, Diversity Management also contributes to a financial equilibrium in the long term that guarantees a structural solidity in the planning and investment over time, on which the athletes and the managers can rely for the preparation and planning of their sports and company activities (Tafuri, Di Palma & Raiola, 2017).

Conclusions

To date, the achievement of an athletic, individual or team performance, superior to that of an opponent, is no longer the main objective of the sport activity. In fact, it goes hand in hand with socio-educational and economic goals that become particularly important in the organization and management of sport.

Starting from this assumption, it was analyzed that a non-performing management of a diversity (be it racial, sexual, physical, cultural, social, economic, etc.) in the sports sector, both in terms of effectiveness and efficiency, leads to a difficulty in pursuing these objectives (Di Palma, Ascione & Peluso Cassese, 2017).

Consequently, manage diversity in the sport system, like in other entrepreneurial contexts, has proved to be an action of fundamental importance for the achievement of an economic objective, and for the improvement of a cultural, educational and social condition.

In this regard, the paper has pointed out that through the adoption of the Diversity Management model in the sports context it is possible to value diversities, which become resources able not only to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, but also to stimulate a socio-economic benefit and make it sustainable in the long run.

In fact, the management approach of this model allows to develop many advantages both economically and socially, useful to promote a cultural development of sport which is enriched by diversity and enhances the individual characteristics of every resource in order to satisfy the general wellbeing.

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