INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES: THE ROLE OF S3 VOLLEY

PRATICHE EDUCATIVE INNOVATIVE: IL RUOLO DEL VOLLEY S3

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ABSTRACT
The use of game-based training in the field of sport contributes to the personal growth path of the individual and is extremely topical in the field of Education Sciences. It requires, however, multiple insights when creating additional innovative approaches within intra- and extra-school educational design. The selection of the S3 Volley discipline stems from an intention to go beyond the schemes traditionally used in schools, aiming to demonstrate how the domains of teaching/learning and the development of motor skills are interrelated.

L'utilizzo di attività basate sul gioco-sport contribuisce al percorso di crescita personale dell'individuo ed è una tematica estremamente attuale nel campo delle Scienze dell'Educazione. Richiede, tuttavia, molteplici approfondimenti per la creazione di ulteriori approcci innovativi nell'ambito della progettazione didattica intra- ed extra-scolastica. La scelta della disciplina del Volley S3 nasce dalla volontà di andare oltre gli schemi tradizionalmente utilizzati nelle scuole, con l'obiettivo di dimostrare come i domini dell'insegnamento/apprendimento e dello sviluppo delle abilità motorie siano interconnessi.

KEYWORDS
Pedagogy of Motor Activities, Sports Educational Approach, Developmental Age
Pedagogia delle Attività Motorie, Approccio Educativo Sportivo, Età Evolutiva

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Introduction

Globalization and technological innovation have opened up new perspectives for access to knowledge and, at the same time, have underlined the importance of developing specific skills (Roodbari, Sahdipoor, & Ghale, 2013) that can enable young people to adapt to an ever-changing society (Bauman, 2000). These competences are defined as "life skills" or "soft skills" depending on the theoretical framework of reference (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012). According to the World Health Organization, such emotional, psychosocial and cognitive skills (Unicef, 2012; 2019; WHO, 2003) – also referred to as "skills for life" – enable people to cope with daily challenges effectively, developing positive and adaptive attitudes to maintain high psychological well-being and manage meaningful relationships (WHO, 1993). When, especially among young people, the personal baggage of "life skills" is lacking, in response to stressful situations an increase in risky behaviors is observed, among which it is possible to mention drug addiction, smoking and alcoholism (Puspakumara, 2011).

If we define "life skills" as those skills that are considered fundamental to face daily challenges, it becomes clear how motor-sports activity can be an effective tool to promote the development of these skills (Gould & Carson, 2008): in fact, in addition to promoting the interaction between motor performance, physical skills and positive social behaviors (Colella, 2011), Motor and Sports Sciences have unique characteristics that allow for the transformation of the knowledge, attitudes and values acquired during lessons into practical skills and actions that can be applied in everyday life (Gould & Carson, 2008); In particular, the introduction of game-sports as a didactic strategy in the educational field serves to integrate the importance of movement with the pedagogical requirements entrusted to the school context, recalling both the playful elements and the disciplinary aspects of sport. In fact, if on the one hand play represents a source of growth and fun for the child, since it offers the opportunity to discover his/her own characteristics while interacting with peers in a context of light-heartedness and flexible rules, on the other hand sport requires discipline, commitment and sacrifices in order to achieve the set goals: in other words, using the game-sport within the didactic design means teaching pupils how to "play with sport" (Casolo, 2011). Sports facilities are thus transformed into real learning places where children can feel free to express themselves, improving their communication and relational skills and consequently overcoming the discomfort and insecurity typical throughout the growth process: it is therefore clear that the focus is not on early specialization in sport, on training for performance purposes or on the improvement of the most talented subjects, but these are activities that slowly and progressively bring children closer to the world of sport and its benefits, with the aim of promoting a future orientation to an active and healthy lifestyle during growth.

In the light of the current literature, the study described aims to highlight the correlation between the teaching-learning spheres and motor development. It goes beyond the traditional limited approaches to the executive assessment of specific motor tasks with the aim of legitimizing the importance that knowledge of one's body can have in terms of personal, social and emotional maturation. Such results are obtained through a project based on the use of the game-sport of S3 Volley.

1. Minivolley = Volley S3?

The concept around which the entire structure of the proposed activities revolves is the following: Minivolley and S3 Volley are not the same thing (Tab. 1). Minivolley was certainly an important initiative that allowed many children to approach the world of volleyball but it is not in the least comparable and cannot be assimilated to S3 Volley (D'aniello, Filomena, &, Ruscello, 2024) which is, instead, a real educational-training path: in fact, following the fundamental principles of motor learning "from easy to difficult", "from the simple to the complex" and "from the general to the particular", all activities are proposed in such a way as to always be adequate and appropriate to the abilities of those who have to put them into practice (Pesce, Marchetti, Motta, & Bellucci, 2023).
In summary, S3 Volley introduces the discipline of volleyball through:
1) a focus not on training exercises but on recreational activities;
2) facilitation, with the modification of some key rules of volleyball;
3) flexibility, because the number of players per team will be determined by the number of children participating and the number of balls available.
Compliance with these three principles will ensure:
a) the opportunity to start playing right away, precisely because no specific preparation is required other than knowledge of the game itself;
b) concentration on the development of one's own body patterns rather than on the technical gestures per se;
c) the possibility to switch progressively from individual to team play, modulating the number of passes required (based on skills: in the white, green and red versions) and the number of team members so as not to exclude anybody.

Tab. 1 – Minivolley versus S3 Volley

Minivolley	S3 Volley
• Standardized field dimensions (9 meters x 4.5 meters) • Standardised net height (2 metres)	• Variable field size depending on age and type of game • Net height varies depending on age and type of play

• You play with 3 people on the court • The list of players ~~is~~ needs to be defined in advance • The matches last for 1 set at 25 points and are played with the Rally Point System formula, which assigns one point for each game action	• You can play 1vs1, 2vs2, 3vs3 or 4vs4 depending on your age and type of game • There is no list of players, as there are no numerical constraints • "Matches" can be played either on a score or a half-time basis

2. S3 Volley S3 up close

The whole project is based on the game: in fact, in order to create the most "complex" game-sport of S3 Volley, it is necessary to practice - in a consequential and preliminary way - three other types of games:
1. Introductory volleyball games;
2. Games for the introduction of fundamental techniques;
3. The game of Spikeball.
As for the game dynamics of S3 Volley, it maintains the same basic structure as volleyball: serving, receiving, lifting, attacking, blocking and defense. The point is scored every time the ball falls to the ground in the opponent's court or a mistake is made.
The didactic progression then provides for the subdivision into three levels of increasing ability:
a) the basic "white" level, for the youngest and the least experienced;
b) the intermediate "green" level, to begin to learn more specific techniques;
c) the advanced "red" level, which uses the same volleyball dynamics as the adult game.
Close analysis of the three levels allows for a summary of the main differences:

1. White: a level where the ball can be blocked at all times.
   The "White" level reduces almost all technical demands in favor of simple situations that grant continuity to the game:
   - the throw in the serve can be performed in free form to facilitate the start of the game;
   - when receiving, blocking the ball allows for greater attention on the trajectory;
   - the lift, with the upward throw, helps to finalize the entire game action;
   - the attack must be interpreted in the broadest sense of the term, i.e. with any gesture, in free form.

2. Green: a level where the ball is allowed to be blocked once, except for a return touch in the opponent's court.
   The "Green" level represents the transition from a motor game to a more structured game; in fact you begin to use the basic techniques of volleyball:
   - when batting, it is necessary to hit the ball, with an open or closed hand, from below and out of the field;
   - when receiving and lifting, you are required to start using the specific techniques of bagher or dribbling to clear the ball;
   - in the attack, the one-handed blow is introduced, while always taking into consideration the acquired motor skills.
3. Red: a level where you are not allowed to block the ball.
   At the "Red" level you reach the real S3 Volley stage, a dynamic game that uses volleyball techniques.

This subdivision allows for both the composition of homogeneous groups in terms of ability, and heterogeneous ones to encourage interaction between players with different skill levels: the result is greater speed in organization and a general motivational drive in children to improve their performance and progress from "white" to "green" and "red" (Lucchetta, Mencarelli, & Barbiero, 2018). All these differences, in the eyes of the less experienced, may seem trivial but they in fact highlight a significant turning point in the design of a didactic and educational path.

3. Characteristics of the experimental project

Five primary schools in the province of Isernia were involved in the research protocol, with an experimental group of 200 children (participants in the game-sport program) and a control group of 200 children (who did not join the project): the average age within the two groups was 8 years (experimental group) and 7.5 years (control group) with an equally uniform gender distribution (respectively: 45% males and 55% females; 43% males and 57% females).
The dual purpose of the project was: on the one hand, to verify the possible variations in the educational development of the "life skills" of the subjects involved in the experimental study– both by comparing the initial assessment with the final one and in relation to the maturation experienced by the control group – and, on the other hand, to structure an appropriate docimologic scheme for this evaluation.
To do this, the process established in the implementation of the project was divided into five phases:
a) creation of an ad hoc docimologic approach;
b) initial evaluation of the experimental group and the control group;
c) administration to the sample group for a period of 6 months of an S3 Volley activity protocol, structured specifically for the age target;

d) final evaluation of the experimental group and the control group;
e) comparison and consideration of the results obtained.

4. Description of the experimental activity of S3 Volley

The S3 Volley sessions have always presented a certain degree of variability in their didactic structure: this is due first of all to the educational-recreational nature of the discipline as well as to the multitude of activities of which the practice of S3 Volley is composed. Right from the start, in the initial phase of the lesson, the proposals were made in the form of a game: initially, mostly basic motor patterns were recalled but, as the meetings progressed, gestures closer to S3 Volley were inserted. The second phase of the lesson was generally linked to the learning of the specific techniques of the discipline: some activities were carried out in solo mode but most of the proposals were designed to allow the involvement of classmates: once they had become familiar with the various games, the students themselves were then asked to give vent to their imagination in the creation of new activities. The last part of the lesson, in fact, was always purely recreational. Both the beginning and the end of the lesson were marked by a particular ritual: the "greeting" in a circle, or a codified series of gestures to be performed together as a group.

5. The Evaluation Process

The evaluation process allows:
1) the student to get to know himself and find ulterior motivation;
2) the educator to grasp further indications in order to determine if and how processes and behaviors are significantly influenced.
By adopting this perspective, motor learning can be appropriately assessed and the possibilities offered by the body in motion can be exploited to attribute broader, multidimensional and multisensory meanings to knowledge itself.
The questionnaire that has been selected for administration is an adaptation, developed by the authors, of the Life Skills Assessment Tool (Subasree, Nair, & Ranjan, 2014) and consists of 13 questions that focus on the practical value of "life skills" and verify the achievement of benefits ranging from the school sphere to everyday domestic life. The questionnaire presents three possible answers articulated in the following way and with the following score: agree = 3 points; partially agree = 1.5 points; I don't agree = 0 points. The questionnaire was proposed at the beginning and at the end of the S3 Volley project to the teachers of the classes involved, for a total of two administrations.

6. Results

The results achieved following the questionnaire proposal are as follows:

Fig. 1 – Results of the E.G.

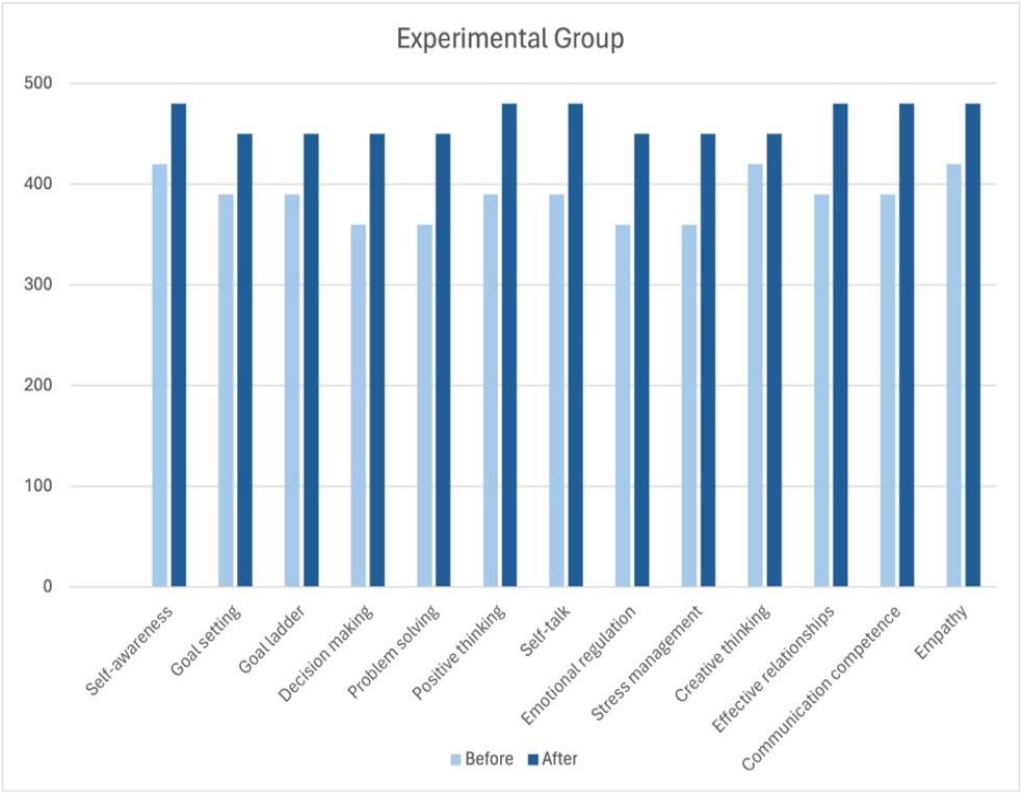
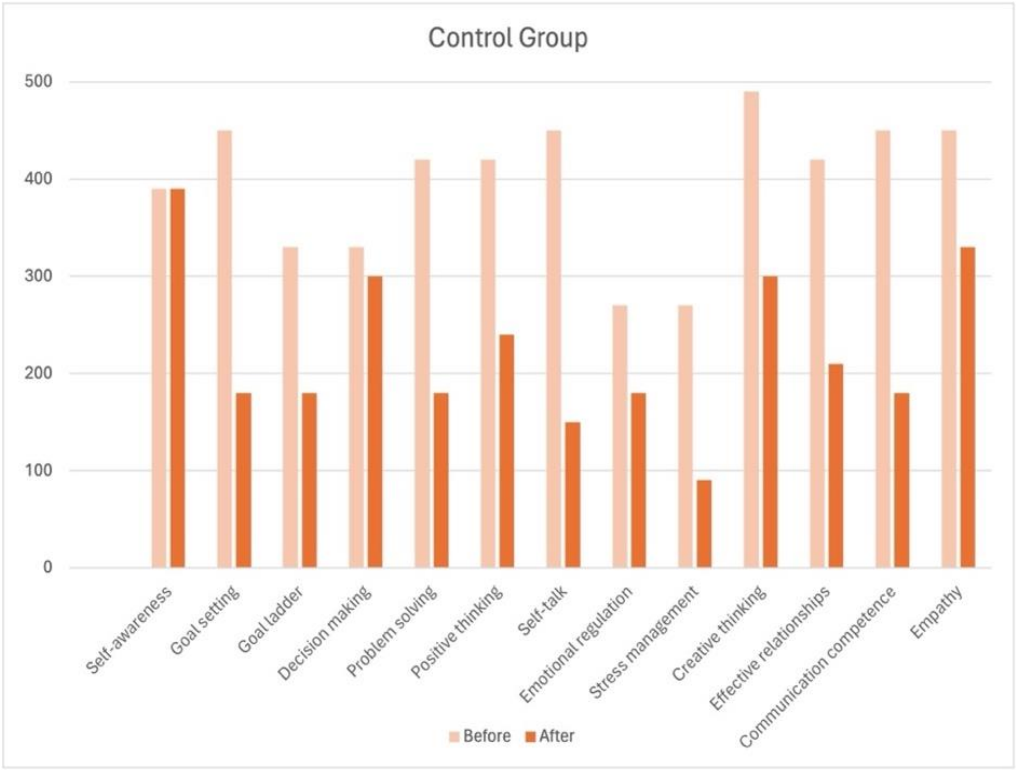


Fig. 2 – Results of the C.G.



7. Discussion of the results

The activities covered by the S3 Volley educational path show how, through movement games, we can promote the development of the full range of "life skills" that are indispensable for the individual well-being and social effectiveness of the child and the future adult (Marchetti, Bellotti, & Pesce, 2016). It follows that the educational process, as a whole, represents the tool through which the individual gives shape to his or her personal identity, integrating all those knowledge, skills and competencies that allow him or her to live and mature an increasingly complete self-awareness.

The results of the questionnaire completed by the teachers show that the classes of children who practiced S3 Volley reported benefits not only within the school environment but also on a psychological, relational and learning level and to a greater extent than those who did not participate in the project. By overcoming the idea that the child is a "miniature adult", the practice of S3 Volley can allow for a

higher quality in the teaching of motor-sports activities and in the transmission of the values contained therein (D'aniello, Filomena, & Ruscello, 2024).
Specifically, within the structured educational path, given the specific experiential characteristics of the discipline, S3 Volley helps to develop transversal skills capable of allowing students to transform the knowledge, attitudes and values acquired into real skills, i.e. what to do and how to do it, in every circumstance of life.
In accordance with the studies of Cronin et al (2019), the discipline of S3 Volley thus conceived and experimented puts into practice a didactic pathway that becomes a tool for the metacognitive development of the body and mind, able to allow learners to achieve an ever greater awareness of their body in order to obtain not only the intrinsic pleasure of movement but the achievement of cultural factors, social and expressive skills that identify the value aspect of motor and sports activities.
The body and movement are, therefore, two fundamental elements of both the individual and social dimensions in the overall development of the person: it inevitably follows that motor-sports activities provide a special contribution to the creation and strengthening of skills that can be used in other life contexts (Pesce, Marchetti, Motta, & Bellucci, 2023).

Conclusions

Preparing people for life through an educational approach focused on the development of "life skills" is an essential guide when facing the unpredictability of the contemporary world. Specifically, in the light of what has emerged from the analysis of the previously described project, it is clear how necessary it is - especially in the early age groups - to insist on educational proposals that take into account the irreplaceable role of motor-sports activity when training young people: in fact, taking into consideration the individual on the basis of a holistic approach and teaching "life skills" through game-sport activities such as S3 Volley promotes an inclusive and sustainable learning environment, highlighting the crucial role of interactions with teachers and peers in the educational pathway.
It would therefore be desirable to develop more proposals for work programmes which favour the recreational and multi-sport context, in view of the transferability of "life skills" aimed at improving the psychophysical well-being of young people. Such proposals would guarantee their success both in the school context and from a future work perspective.
Finally, since educational processes are characterized by the dynamism of the society into which they are inserted, a further starting point for future research could focus upon a project that involves the combination of some of the playful activities that pertain to the game-sport of S3 Volley combined with the use of

technology, in order to monitor how the individual involvement of participants and the ways of relating to their peers change during the proposed activities.

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