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Silvia Sangalli
University of Bergamo
silvia.sangalli@unibg.it



Giacomo Smorgoni
University of Bergamo
g.smorgoni@studenti.unibg.it



ABSTRACT

Global changes call for a revision of educational systems so that, as suggested by UDL, they become accessible, flexible, and capable of fostering the social inclusion of disadvantaged youth. Educational sport, integrated into the welfare system, can address this need. We present the results of a study involving 15 young people in educational communities, analysing the success criteria and limitations of a socio-educational intervention based on sport.

I cambiamenti globali impongono una revisione dei sistemi educativi, affinché, come suggerisce l'UDL, siano accessibili, flessibili, capaci di lavorare sull'inclusione sociale di giovani svantaggiati. Lo sport con finalità educative, integrato nel sistema di welfare, può rispondere a questa esigenza. Presentiamo i risultati di uno studio su 15 giovani in comunità educative, analizzando criteri di successo e limiti di un intervento socioeducativo basato sullo sport.

KEYWORDS

Physical Activity and Sport; Social Inclusion; Disadvantaged Youth; Personalization
Attività Fisica e Sport; Inclusione Sociale; Giovani Svantaggiati; Personalizzazione

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Introduction

Starting from the 1980s, educational processes and the social system underwent significant transformations due to social, cultural, and economic changes that affected not only our country but also others (Maulini, 2019). Moreover, the economic crisis, alongside the crises in the labor market, the family, and the welfare system, particularly in the early 21st century, contributed to a rise in social vulnerability, accompanied by an increasingly marked tendency toward isolation, withdrawal from others, and individualism (Maulini, 2019).

The challenges we face today are increasingly numerous and varied: they concern economic issues, population aging, international conflicts, migration, the climate crisis, technological advancement, and, at the same time, growing social needs.

In this regard, it is both interesting and necessary to focus our attention on minors. As for the mental health index, 2023 saw a further decline after a slight improvement in 2022. Unlike the period between 2016 and 2020, when the index fluctuated between 72 and 74, in 2023 it dropped to 70.3, with a significant gap between girls (67.4) and boys (74.3). Additionally, there is a growing trend among young people toward social isolation, social media addiction, and difficulty in establishing constructive relationships with their parents. Issues are also emerging related to the risks of internet gaming disorder, severe food addiction, and disordered eating behaviors. Equally important are the issues of discrimination and integration, bullying, and baby gangs (Open Polis, 2024a; 2024b).

These significant issues are compounded by those related to poverty, as the hardship experienced by young people is not only social but also economic. In 2023, 13.8% of minors were living in absolute poverty, with the highest peak occurring among children aged 4 to 13. This figure is higher than the average for the general population, which stands at 9.7% (Open Polis, 2024b).

Considering these considerations, it is increasingly evident that more and more young people, coming from diverse backgrounds and in different forms, fall into the category of the vulnerable. We can only conclude that we are facing a true educational emergency, one that must be addressed as soon as possible: «dealing with and managing the distress arising from complexity thus becomes the main challenge to face in the postmodern era» (Maulini, 2019, p. 12).

1. Youth Crises and Universal Design for Learning

How can we confront the crises affecting today's society, particularly those impacting young people? There is a growing need for an educational model capable of addressing these challenges. At the same time, it is essential to ensure that everyone acquires the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate both the difficult present and an increasingly unpredictable future.

In this perspective, the educational system must be designed to be fertile (Nussbaum, 2012) and generative, not limited to providing specific or context-bound information, but oriented toward developing broad, transferable competencies. Learners must be prepared to face not only current but also unforeseen challenges throughout their lives. They must cultivate adaptability and resilience. To this end, it is crucial to strengthen their soft skills and life skills, which will support them over the course of their lives.

Simultaneously, when designing an effective educational model, we must not overlook the wholeness of the learner (Bertagna, 2018), recognizing each individual's uniqueness. This implies a shift toward increasingly personalized educational paths.

A particularly suitable model in this regard is Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which, as is well known, focuses on the learner rather than on learning as a uniform process. It considers the diverse interests, abilities, and backgrounds of students (Munafo, 2017).

Originating in the 1980s from Universal Design in architecture - aimed at making spaces accessible to all without the need for later adjustments (King-Sears, 2009; Ambretti & Orecchio, 2022) - UDL applies the same principle to education. It is an inclusive framework that seeks «to design interventions and spaces individualized, personalized, and differentiated interventions and environments for everyone, without any potentially discriminatory distinctions» (Borgogni & Giraldo, 2023, p. 167), starting from the planning phase, without requiring additional accommodations.

This approach has already made its way into Physical Education and sports, not only for students with disabilities (Munafo, 2017; Ambretti & Orecchio, 2022), though it has yet to be thoroughly tested in practice (Haegele et al., 2024). In this context, UDL has been seen as a strategy to ensure that all students actively participate and achieve success through their actions. This is especially relevant given the

importance of engaging all learners in physical education to promote an active lifestyle (Cudicio & Sangalli, 2024), where personalization plays a central role.

As an educational philosophy, UDL supports this objective by rethinking goals, methods, materials, and assessments to ensure flexibility, accessibility, and alignment with each learner's capabilities (King-Sears, 2009).

At this point, we must consider whether the UDL approach can be effective not only in addressing the general crises affecting youth, but also in responding to the needs of young people in severe hardship — those experiencing economic and/or educational poverty, living in marginal or fragile environments, and neglected by families lacking adequate educational resources.

In the following paragraphs, we will explore who these young people are and what socio-educational interventions may be appropriate.

We will also present findings from a doctoral research project involving youths from the province of Bergamo, who participated in sports activities. The study aimed to assess the success criteria and limitations of these activities, interpreting the results in light of the reflections presented here on UDL.

2. Disadvantaged Youth and Socio-Educational Intervention

In the previous paragraph, we discussed the multiple crises affecting society today, particularly those impacting young people. This section focuses on the most vulnerable among them, youth living in economic and/or educational poverty, in situations of hardship, fragility, marginalization, and deprivation. Often, when conditions worsen, these youths come under the care of social services. Living in deprived contexts, they face heightened risks that can be deeply damaging due to their vulnerability. What is most concerning is not only their suffering but also the severe risk of social exclusion (Sangalli & Borgogni, 2024b).

Bertolini (2015) described them as “difficult youth,” and Sabatano (2011; 2015) noted they are “beyond risk,” having already experienced danger. Some engage in self-harming, destructive, or delinquent behaviors, making the work of educators - teachers, social workers, and coaches - more difficult (Bertolini & Caronia, 2015).

Socio-educational action is essential. These youths face material, relational, and educational deprivation (Bertolini & Caronia, 2015). They need help recognizing and breaking free from their oppressive conditions (Freire, 1967; 1970), gaining knowledge and skills for full societal inclusion (Nussbaum, 2012). Interventions can also prevent potential future deviance, even if such outcomes aren't inevitable (De

Leo, 2002). As Don Milani stated (Scuola di Barbiana, 1967), caring for the weakest is a moral duty.

Socio-educational interventions must provide a chance for repositioning (Canevaro, 2006), helping youths redirect their paths by becoming aware of and overcoming their conditions. In line with Universal Design for Learning (UDL), these interventions must be thoughtfully designed.

Central to the process is the educational relationship (Bastianoni & Baiamonte, 2014), founded on care, warmth, and a reparative environment. Interventions require clear theoretical grounding (Sabatano, 2015) and strong pedagogical intent (Castiglioni, 2006). Reflection is also key, educators must assess their actions, considering each learner's uniqueness (Bertagna, 2018).

Every project should be well-structured yet flexible, with defined goals and methods, and regularly re-evaluated (Schenetti, 2006). Crucially, it must be personalized to reflect each youth's distinctiveness, as emphasized by UDL. Interventions should not only target young people but actively involve them to enhance effectiveness (Sabatano, 2015).

Educators must recognize the motivations behind behaviors to better understand each youth's needs (Bertolini & Caronia, 2015). They must also believe in these youths' capacity for transformation (Biffi, 2006).

Bertolini (2015) suggested engaging youth in new experiences that break with their past, offering unfamiliar perspectives and fostering a new worldview. Initially, new and old behaviors may coexist, but this transitional phase is essential to personal growth.

These transformative experiences include encounters with beauty, challenges requiring responsibility, cooperative tasks, and extraordinary or adventurous events that promote new self-perceptions (Bertolini & Caronia, 2015). Such experiences help cultivate what Nussbaum (2012) called "fertile capabilities." True inclusion means being able to make choices for one's own well-being (Sabatano, 2015) and freely exercise rights, regardless of social or physical status (De Angelis, 2020).

This is supported through "opportunities for cultural, personal, professional, and social growth" (Sabatano, 2015) that nurture capabilities, defined as «substantial freedoms, opportunities to choose and to act» (Nussbaum, 2012, p. 28). In addition to structural guarantees from the state, individuals must develop internal capabilities - personal traits, knowledge, skills, emotional and physical well-being -

fostered through education and schooling, which themselves become fertile capabilities.

The youth in focus often fail to benefit from formal education, facing difficulties in school and work (De Juanas, García-Castilla & Rodríguez-Bravo, 2018). Therefore, socio-educational interventions should begin with their free time. This time must be filled with constructive, skill-building activities to support their social inclusion (De Juanas, García-Castilla & Rodríguez-Bravo, 2018).

Free time should thus be seen as a tool for development, fulfillment, and well-being. Activities should be tailored to their interests, socially engaging, emotionally enriching, and aimed at teaching new skills and emotional regulation. These must be intentionally integrated into educational pathways for vulnerable youth.

Combining these insights with Bertolini's proposals highlights the value of physical and sports activities. These practices encompass many of the qualities discussed and will be further examined in the next section.

3. Physical and Sports Activities for Disadvantaged Youth

At various levels, physical activity and sport are recognized for their benefits across physical, psychological, and social well-being (Consiglio d'Europa, 1992). The White Paper on Sport (Commissione europea, 2007) emphasized sport's growing social role, particularly in terms of inclusion, integration, and equal opportunity. In Italy, this value has even been constitutionally acknowledged (Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana).

International and national efforts support sport's social mission. Campaigns like Sport for Development aim to meet the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. In Italy, entities like Sport e Salute and the Lombardy Region have funded projects targeting disadvantaged youth through sport, aiming to improve life quality.

Physical activity and sport possess strong educational potential (Di Palma et al., 2016; Sangalli & Borgogni, 2024a). They offer not only opportunities for socialization and rule-based behavior but also emotional regulation, responsibility, resilience, and growth from failure. Through sport, youth can learn about perseverance, managing stress, and understanding personal limits and strengths.

However, it is essential not to idealize sport as automatically educational. Sport is not inherently educational—its benefits are not guaranteed by mere participation (Mantegazza, 1999; Gamelli, 2011). Too often, projects assume sport's value without critical analysis or evidence-based design (Coalter, 2017). Outcomes

depend on numerous factors: the type of sport, the athlete's background, context, interpersonal relationships, and the approach taken by coaches, peers, and parents (Hartmann, 2003; Coakley, 2011; Coalter, 2017).

Educational intentionality is crucial: coaches and organizations must purposefully aim to make sport an educational experience (Di Palma et al., 2016; Maulini, 2019). Prioritizing inclusion over competition and profit is essential when focusing on sport's social and educational value (Coakley, 2011; Di Palma et al., 2016). Sport should be tailored to young people's needs and goals (Coalter, 2017) and must genuinely interest and engage them to ensure participation.

The coach's role is especially important. Their technical and socio-educational training, behavior, and pedagogical methods influence outcomes. A coach should foster life skills, not just technical ability. For example, teaching young people to see mistakes as learning opportunities enhances sport's educational value (Sangalli & Borgogni, 2024a). Coaches must also build positive relationships with athletes and ensure peer interactions are constructive.

Success experiences are key, especially for beginners or youth unfamiliar with sports. Activities must match their real abilities. Personalization, aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, is necessary to reflect each individual's uniqueness.

For youth in protective or social care services, collaboration between coaches and educators is particularly valuable. This partnership supports mutual knowledge exchange, facilitating the integration of technical and educational expertise. Educators can assist in identifying needs and skills, managing group dynamics, and applying appropriate strategies (Corvino, D'Angelo & Gozzoli, 2023).

While sport holds significant potential for education and inclusion, this is not automatic. As discussed, its effectiveness depends on many interrelated factors. Determining the criteria for success or limitations in sports-based interventions is complex, real-life settings don't allow for controlled variables, and individual responses differ widely.

In the following study, we examine the sports experiences of 15 youth involved in child protection services. Our aim was to explore the conditions for success and limits of a socio-educational sports project. However, we acknowledge that our findings are not universally generalizable and do not seek to present a "universal theory," as such an approach would be ethically and scientifically inappropriate.

4. Methodology

The research conducted is qualitative and idiographic, based on case studies. Specifically, it examined the life stories and sports experiences of 15 young people (7 males and 8 females) placed in day centers and residential communities in the province of Bergamo, who engaged in sports for periods ranging from three months to three years.

The sample was selected based on "representative elements" and is close to what is referred to as "purposeful sampling" (Gratton & Jones, 2010). Selection criteria were applied: for example, unaccompanied foreign minors were excluded, as their needs differ somewhat from those of disadvantaged youth. Young people who had practiced sport for a shorter period were included because, considering their fragile lives and unfamiliarity with structured experiences, even a limited period - agreed upon with their educators - was deemed meaningful.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, exploring each youth's life history and sports experience. Three young people were interviewed directly. For various reasons, such as being underage or unavailable, it was not possible to interview the others. Instead, key informants were interviewed, including service coordinators and coaches who worked with the youth during their sports experiences. Some educators and the president of a sport club were also interviewed.

The stories were reconstructed using a form of narrative analysis, integrating data from the various key informants. A paradigmatic analysis was then carried out: through a process of eidetic reduction, meaningful units were identified, labeled, and grouped into conceptual categories. The "hybrid method" proposed by Mortari (2013), which combines phenomenological methodology with grounded theory, was used.

Six conceptual categories were identified - labeled by us as continuity, sport, personalization, planning, educator, and coach - each containing further subcategories. These will be discussed in the following section.

Since the research is qualitative and based on case studies, the results are not generalizable. However, they can still be considered relevant for other young people living in conditions similar to those described in this study. The success criteria and limitations of a socio-educational sports intervention identified here, if adapted and personalized, may also be useful for other at-risk youth (Gobo, 2004).

5. Discussion

After reconstructing the stories - which we cannot report here due to space constraints - using paradigmatic analysis, the success criteria of a socio-educational intervention involving sport in a significant way, and capable of addressing and/or reducing youth distress, were identified. Six main categories, often interwoven, are briefly presented in this section.

First of all, it must be said that for sports activities to have an impact, whether positive or negative, it is essential that the young person participates with a certain regularity. The first macro-category is therefore *continuity*, comprising all the elements that support it. For instance, since these young people often come from families with limited financial resources, economic support for sports participation is essential. In some cases, child protection services financed the registration, while in others, sports clubs implemented measures to financially support the youth.

As also highlighted in the literature (Hartmann, 2003; Bertolini & Caronia, 2015), it is crucial that the proposed activity is motivating. In the examined cases, when the young people practiced a sport they were truly interested in, they engaged in it for a longer period.

Continuity was also supported by the presence of family support and appropriate actions by coaches and educators. For example, some coaches maintained regular phone contact with the youth to remind them of training days and encourage them to attend. Sometimes, to further facilitate participation, the coach even took care of the transportation.

For example, a coach, in light of a boy's relational difficulties, as described in the following excerpt, planned post-training moments to help the young person integrate with the rest of the team.

He was quite introverted, at least at the beginning; he had trouble talking to others, opening up. We decided to organize some additional meetings, beyond the hour and a half spent on the field. [...] So, we also tried to have some extra sessions where we could play, joke around, and get to know each other better... and of course, that kind of thing carries over onto the field.

As also highlighted in the literature (Sangalli & Borgogni, 2024a), the opportunity for young people to experience sporting success and to feel capable and useful encouraged their continued participation over time.

A young person's testimony at his first call-up is particularly interesting in this regard:

The first time I didn't expect it, I thought maybe I'd come in during the second half. But instead, I was in the starting lineup... yeah, it was a great feeling. The first time, you know... first times are always exciting...

The words of this coordinator also reveal how recognizing young people's skills is essential to ensuring the continuity of the sporting experience:

He needed something where he could be recognized, even just a little, because in every other situation no one had ever seen him. Here, instead, with this net of balls, he was always close to the coach and he was seen and acknowledged. He started coming regularly, went to every match, and never took off the sweatshirt the club had given him.

In some cases, external factors either encouraged or discouraged participation. For example, the presence of a friend at training sessions was motivating, while the end of their stay in child protection services often coincided with the end of sports participation.

The next category to consider is *sport* itself.

From our analysis, we found that it was important for the young people not only to choose which sport to practice but also whether to participate in sport at all. As supported in the literature (Coalter, 2017), it is crucial that the youth engage in an activity that stimulates and interests them. Therefore, educators must involve them in designing their pathway, for example by consulting them to understand which activity might interest them the most. This way, the project designed together proved more effective. In the interviews, it emerged that sometimes, to enable more informed decision-making, the youth were allowed to try several sports before choosing their favorite.

The experience should not only be built around the youth's interests but must also consider their motor skills, to avoid early dropout due to failure. Most of the young people studied, living in educational and/or economic poverty, had little access to sports activities in their lives; thus, starting a sport at 15 or 16 years old can be difficult, especially when compared to more experienced peers. This means that not only is it fundamental that the youth choose whether and which sport to play, but the experience must also be built around their motivation and tailored to their individual characteristics and skills.

In this regard, the educators and coaches themselves, together with the young person, must properly assess which sport aligns with the young person's interests and is at the same time suited to their motor skills.

Below are the words of a coordinator, referring to the assessment conducted before the young person under her care began judo:

Since he wasn't used to anything, even sports activities were something completely new to him. [...] So, in trying to figure out how to engage him, we were trying to understand what we could have him do, also to allow him to try something without frustration. Because logically, having had no previous experience in sports activities, we certainly couldn't send him to play on a soccer team—he would never be at the same level as the other kids.

Regarding the category of sport, data analysis revealed that another criterion for success is linked to the mentality of the sports club: as evident from the following excerpts, sports organizations were mainly selected for their educational purpose rather than a sole focus on winning, in order to make the sporting experience more in line with the young people's needs.

Well, we know that we are not training champions here, but we are trying to shape men. We try to provide everyone with a space where they can express themselves.

Even before going to compete, I explain that it doesn't matter whether you win or lose, but that the competition is a way to measure yourself, so that you can work on improving that performance in the next event.

This brings us directly to the category of *personalization*. As repeatedly emphasized, each young person is unique and unrepeatable (Bertagna, 2018), and a project that works for one may not work for another. The sporting experience must therefore be designed around the specific characteristics of each individual, considering their preferences, needs, objectives to be achieved, and motor skills (Cudicio & Sangalli, 2024).

For example, a young girl who had expressed a desire to play basketball, being very self-centered, was directed by the team of educators toward baskin, in order to also pursue educational objectives:

She went to baskin training sessions. In the sense that we channeled her passion for basketball... after all, she's a very self-referential person. Her keyword is "me, the rest of the world doesn't exist." We tried to bring in some attention to others through baskin instead. In fact, the engagement worked really, really well.

Another young girl had difficulty being in relationships with others, so the educational staff suggested a team sport activity where she could experience interacting with others in a still protected context:

What immediately stood out was a great difficulty in relationships, meaning that she tended to isolate herself, to stay in the parts of the house where the others weren't, basically [...] So we reasoned with her about what could be a place of socialization outside the community where she could test herself.

In some cases, to avoid difficult defeats or harmful comparisons with peers, the youth were not included as athletes or players in the team, but were instead integrated into the staff. For example, some served as assistant coaches for teams made up of younger athletes. This allowed them to feel capable and to experience the success of their actions.

To further personalize the sports experience, it was crucial to carefully evaluate the most suitable sports club and team for each youth. For example, for those entering a sports environment for the first time, educators carefully chose clubs without overly competitive goals (Coakley, 2011; Di Palma et al., 2016), instead turning to clubs open to working with vulnerable youth and coaches with the necessary skills to support them.

As previously noted, *planning* is also a fundamental phase to ensure a successful sports experience (Schenetti, 2006). Educators must first know the youth, their needs, their skills, and their interests. It is necessary, in collaboration with the youth, to define the objectives to be achieved through the sports activity. As mentioned earlier, for a project to be more effective, it is also essential to carefully evaluate the sports club and, when possible, the coach.

In the planning phase, it is important to also consider factors—such as the distance between home and training venue or the stage of the sports season—that could hinder participation.

Planning must then include certain key phases: firstly, a proper exchange of initial information between social service educators and the coach; the monitoring and final evaluation phases should not be overlooked. Clearly, both the educator and the coach must be willing to collaborate. In the analyzed cases, we noted that the monitoring and final evaluation phases were often neglected, which negatively affected the youth's sports experience.

For example, a coordinator thought that a young person from her day center had practiced kickboxing for six months, but she did not know that, in reality, as later reported by the coach, he had only attended training three times.

In this regard, the coaches themselves, as shown in the following excerpts, express the need to interact more frequently with educators and coordinators:

I definitely think it would help to have continuous or at least scheduled feedback. Yes, that could definitely support us.

What I think would be best is to already schedule possible meetings. So the first meeting would be to understand the personality of the person joining, and after the first training sessions, there could be feedback with the educators. So maybe laying out a structured meeting plan.

I don't have much contact with the educators: unless they have specific issues with the kids, we never have any exchange. This is a limitation I notice; I miss the chance to compare notes... It could be an extra tool.

Difficulties also emerged regarding the final evaluation of the experience: as highlighted in the following excerpts, there is often no planned moment for closure and assessment of the experience:

I saw the kids disappear, they didn't come to the course anymore. Honestly, I haven't heard anything since.

We now turn to the *educator* category. Interviews revealed that the support provided by educators, such as encouraging youth to attend training, was important.

Data collected showed differences between residential community educators and those from day centers, and also between educators who are sports enthusiasts and those who are not. In the first case, those working in residential communities, unlike those in day centers, spent more time with the youth and were better able to follow their sports activities. This was also true for educators who were more passionate about sports.

In this regard, below are the words of a coach who worked with a young girl attending the day center, regarding the work of the educators:

It's unpleasant to say, but she was kind of left there, without a real pathway. Even though the timeframe was short, finding even just an hour to talk face-to-face with her educators would have been more fruitful.

Also, from the words of a service coordinator, it becomes clear how important it is for educators to have a connection with the world of sports:

We had already selected two sports operators, a psychomotor therapist and someone who practiced combat sports. So they were already motivated. [...] They really believed in it, and that part worked well. I realize now that the team has changed and hasn't followed that same approach, on this, they're struggling more; they're a bit more disoriented.

As already mentioned, the support educators provided to coaches was crucial, collaborating and exchanging feedback. Conversely, when this collaboration was lacking, the youth's sports experience was suboptimal (Corvino, D'Angelo & Gozzoli, 2023).

The final category is that of *coaches*. We have already noted the importance of the support provided to the youth.

Again, the willingness to work as a team with educators, continuously exchanging feedback, positively influenced the youth's experience. The absence of this collaboration proved to be a negative factor.

One element we must focus on is training.

As reiterated in the literature, working with vulnerable youth requires more than just technical and tactical knowledge; socio-educational training is essential (Sangalli & Borgogni, 2024a). In some cases, coaches who lacked this training did not feel the need for it, believing themselves sufficiently competent. Others had attended socio-educational training courses - some alongside educators - and their skills proved more aligned with the youths' needs and project goals.

They themselves, as shown in the following excerpts, found this mixed training very useful for their work with young people:

For me it was an important enrichment, a wonderful experience.

Well, I believe that all meetings where there is dialogue are useful. I found it positive that it was done together with the educators, because it allowed us to have more information and tools. I found it very formative.

Conclusions

The global challenges, crises, and transformations affecting our society - and particularly impacting the most vulnerable groups, such as minors - generate real

educational emergencies that require a revision of existing educational systems. Disadvantaged youth, in particular, need appropriate socio-educational interventions through which they can engage in new experiences, reshape their worldview (Bertolini & Caronia, 2015), reposition themselves (Canevaro, 2006), improve their quality of life, and be included in society (Nussbaum, 2012).

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) represents an effective model for designing appropriate socio-educational interventions. These interventions can also involve physical and sports activities: given their social, educational, and inclusive value, they represent a valuable tool to address youth distress. However, we must avoid taking these benefits for granted, as the educational and inclusive potential of sport is not automatically achieved. Scientific research is necessary to identify the elements that make sports practice educational and inclusive, suitable for the social inclusion of disadvantaged youth, as well as the critical issues involved.

The results of the research presented in this paper serve as a starting point for future studies. In particular, there are plans to soon compare the data collected with findings from other studies conducted in other European countries. Specifically, the aim is to study and analyze sports-based educational projects involving vulnerable youth, and related research, carried out in Finland and Spain.

Author contributions

The authors jointly contributed to the writing of the article. The introduction and conclusions were written by both. Silvia Sangalli conceived and developed the article, oversaw the writing process, and was particularly responsible for paragraphs 1, 2, 4 and 5; Giacomo Smorgoni was primarily responsible for paragraph 3.

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