

INTEGRAZIONE SOCIALE E CULTURALE ATTRAVERSO LO SPORT

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION THROUGH SPORT

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Abstract

Motor and sport activity is increasingly used as an effective tool for the social and cultural integration of categories in conditions of disadvantage or difficulty.

In particular, where the conditions present obstacles of a linguistic or different cultural nature, and "traditional" educational tools fail to be effective, sport, especially team sports, can represent a precious tool for breaking down barriers and becomes a language common and easy to understand for all.

Among the most significant experiences in the European panorama, the "RETE Project" implemented by the Italian Football Federation, now in its seventh edition in 2021, has seen an evident increase in the number of participants and is to all intents and purposes to be considered as one of the European best practices in terms of social and cultural integration through Sport.

L'attività motoria e sportiva è sempre più utilizzata come strumento efficace per l'integrazione sociale e culturale di categorie in condizioni di svantaggio o difficoltà.

In particolare, laddove le condizioni presentano ostacoli di natura linguistica o culturale diversa, e gli strumenti educativi "tradizionali" non sono efficaci, lo sport, e in particolare gli sport di squadra, può rappresentare uno strumento prezioso per abbattere le barriere e diventa un linguaggio comune e di facile comprensione per tutti.

Tra le esperienze più significative nel panorama europeo, il "Progetto RETE" realizzato dalla Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio per il tramite del Settore Giovanile e Scolastico, giunto alla sua settima edizione nel 2021, ha visto un evidente aumento del numero dei partecipanti ed è a tutti gli effetti da considerare come una delle best practices europee in termini di integrazione sociale e culturale attraverso lo sport.

Keywords

Sport, Inclusion, Migrants

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2 Author of Conclusions and paragraphs 2

Introduction

Sport and physical activity are now global, which thanks to their enormous diffusion all over the world, are an integral part of the lives of billions of people. The great ability to penetrate into the social fabric makes the sports medium an important tool from an educational point of view. Sport therefore has all the characteristics to represent a valid pedagogical tool capable of obtaining results even in contexts of hardship and social exclusion. This is even more true in team sport, where the cooperative aspect of the activity facilitates the processes of inclusion and highlights the positive values deriving from sporting practice. And among the positive values that sports practice has are social participation, the search for meaning, culture, discipline and the learning of correct lifestyles.

In 2003, the United Nations didn't say I show it off as a tool for social development and pace in the world. Subsequently, in 2005, it was declared the year of sport. This climate of promotion brought together various international and national actors (Giulianotti, 2004; Kidd, 2008; Levermore, 2008; Webb & Richelieu, 2016). This type of recognition provided information to a non-governmental organization (NGO) movement responsible for using sport as an inclusion mechanism. Anteri and the Red Cross, the International Olympic Committee, the World Labor Organization, the Sports and Cooperation Network, FIFA, SOS Children's Villages, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UEFA have made the institutions ever since they committed the Magglingen conference on the movement in 2003 (Giulianotti, 2004).

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees recognizes "the power and importance of sport" (UNHCR, 2008) and stresses that sport can play "a particularly important role" for refugees, migrants and asylum seekers.

For these reasons, in recent years, several European national sports federations of various sports disciplines have developed programs and projects that put physical activity and sports at the center of the social integration process. These initiatives were mainly developed in the area of the countries of Northern Europe, and in those of the Mediterranean basin, which is increasingly a crossroads for the arrival of migrants from Africa and the Middle East. The results in terms of participation and improvement of integration processes are encouraging and this type of projects are more and more numerous.

1. Football as a vehicle for integration

The educational component is an integral part of the methodology and practice of any motor and sports activity: the pedagogical role of sport is evident starting from various aspects, such as the process of acquiring technical and tactical rules, but also of life skills and others parameters relating to the formation of the athlete's personality under development. With reference to the value component of sporting practice, it should be highlighted how many of the technical values typical of various sports can be transferred into daily life as skills that contribute to the formation of athletes' personalities.

Another important aspect of sporting practice lies in the intrinsic ability to improve the relationship with the social and natural environment of those who practice it, such as in creating new friendships between teammates, in their collaboration in the game to achieve a common goal. Even the training and competition preparation phase, constituting most of the hours of practice, is a vehicle and pedagogical tool, as bonds are created between practitioners that will last over time and because the instructor can be a fundamental part of the educational process. Furthermore, another educational aspect that should not be underestimated is the encounters with opponents: they are opportunities for socialization, as the right value that sporting practice must convey is to see the other not as an opponent to be beaten, but also as the one who offers stimuli to achieve the set technical objectives.

Sport is therefore important for the development of social relationships: all this, however, occurs only when the approach to sporting activity takes place through some educational standards. It therefore appears necessary to put the question of education back at the center of

sport, and to do this it is essential that the idea of human capital be abandoned, aimed above all at enhancing the economic aspect of sporting competition, offering a way of seeing sporting practice. exclusively economic, enhancing the athlete in terms of costs-benefits, gains-losses, advantages-damages, initially aimed exclusively at professional-agonists and, unfortunately, subsequently also at amateurism, youth sport and sport for all.

In this context, football, being one of the most widespread and practiced sports in the world, simple by rules, practicable even at amateur technical levels and not requiring expensive equipment, becomes an ideal tool to convey training messages and to be a natural catalyst of dynamics of social integration.

According to Fodimbi (2002), it can be said that football can be an excellent means for the development of personality in young people in situations of vulnerability and discomfort. In fact, it promotes:

- • Respect for the other, acquired by learning the rules of the game; these skills can be transferred to the ability to respect the rules of society and civil life;
- • Self-respect through correct sports practice and a healthy life: this leads to greater self-awareness and greater self-control;
- • Respect for the referee, who represents the rules in the game context;
- • Relational respect, therefore the value of friendship;
- • The qualities of “employability”, punctuality, adaptability, tenacity;
- • Moral values such as commitment, honesty and self-denial.

However, Fodimbi states that “nothing allows us to think that the social behaviors enhanced by the game of football will be incorporated by adolescents to the point of becoming role models in their daily life” (2002). In this sense, it is common ground, as also stated by Isidori (2009), that the positive values linked to sport are not automatisms given by sport in itself, but educators, technicians and instructors have a fundamental role.

In the same way, playing or practicing football does not in any way guarantee full social integration nor does it include all the dimensions that Schapper (2007) evokes about integration: the cultural, economic or social dimension. However, football as a collective sport can stimulate the creation of social bonds and this can lead to various forms of social reintegration (Segura, 2018).

2. “RETE!” Project

In some particularly challenging integration contexts, sport has proved to be a very performing tool for catalyzing and optimizing inclusion processes; this aspect is particularly emphasized when the sporting discipline underlying the intervention is particularly appreciated by the recipients: this is the case of football. The Italian Football Federation, through the Youth and School Sector, has developed “RETE!” Since 2015 a project that uses football as a facilitator for the social inclusion of migrants and minors seeking asylum. The project was conceived and launched in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and Anci and aimed at asylum-seeking minors housed in the SPRAR and SIPROIMI centers, holders of international protection and for unaccompanied foreign minors). Through sports practice, addressed and guided by specially trained instructors of the Federation, those processes of inclusion that otherwise would have hardly occurred are successfully initiated, increased and accelerated.

The technical-training format of the project includes three different phases, each of which is carried out under the technical and methodological supervision of the Youth and School Sector of the Italian Football Federation. In the first phase, the SPRAR and SIPROIMI centers carry out motor activities with a football orientation guided by the technician assigned to them by the regional coordinators: this is the most important phase from an educational point of view, since relationships are established between the group formed by the children and their educators and federal instructors, which is why this first approach is often supervised by a sports psychologist

as well.

The training sessions take place 1-2 times a week, in which Italian children from local football schools are also involved. The second phase takes place through interregional concentrations during which the various teams representing the participating SPRAR and SIPROIMI centers compete in a 7-on-7 football tournament to define the teams that will access the third phase, or the final tournament, which decrees the winner of the national tournament.

The children involved have the opportunity through sport to improve their psychophysical well-being, establish relationships with other members of the community of their peers and to feel part of and not excluded from society. Football, therefore, becomes the key to convey positive and educational messages, as well as to break down barriers and stimulate integration in an increasingly multicultural society.

Conclusions

As part of the numerous sports projects that use physical activity as a vehicle for social integration, those related to the game of football are increasingly widespread. When it comes to social integration, numerous types of intervention areas can be taken into consideration, one of which, of particular interest especially in European countries, can certainly be that linked to migrants and asylum seekers. With this in mind, “RETE!”, Constituting one of the longest-running sports integration projects on the European scene, is undoubtedly a best practice, both in terms of the number of participants involved and in terms of improving the psychophysical state of the participants. , both for the results of integration of the athletes in the social fabric where they are inserted. For this reason, football, due to its widespread worldwide diffusion and the intrinsic ability to involve practitioners, even those with little technical experience, can undoubtedly constitute an effective tool for promoting and mediating the processes of inclusion and social integration.

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