

Sport & Guidance for the Construction of Life-Project: the Pedagogical Perspective

Sport e Orientamento alle scelte per la Costruzione del Progetto di Vita: la Prospettiva Pedagogica

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Abstract

Una visione dell'apprendimento lifelong, lifewide e lifedeeep è divenuta una condizione formativa imprescindibile del vivere contemporaneo. Più che in passato, infatti, il transitare sempre più frequentemente da un ambito dell'esistenza all'altro richiede una maggiore flessibilità e adattabilità dei soggetti al fluire della propria vita, la qual cosa necessita, in via prioritaria, dell'acquisizione di un bagaglio di conoscenze, abilità e competenze sempre più integrate e diversificate. Se la complessità è la dimensione che più caratterizza la postmodernità e che, specularmente, apre il soggetto a molteplici contesti d'esperienza, a diversi percorsi formativi e a differenti strategie d'intervento, allora l'orientamento assume uno spazio educativo di grande importanza in ogni contesto del vivere quotidiano, dunque anche nello sport. Unire l'orientamento allo sport assume un preciso valore educativo se i contesti sportivi pongono al centro i soggetti con i loro percorsi di vita e la loro tensione costante a determinarsi continuamente, in modo da star bene nei differenti contesti del vivere sociale.

A lifelong, lifewide and lifedeeep point of view about learning has become an indispensable educational condition of contemporary living. More than ever before, in fact, increasingly transit from a context of existence to another requires more flexibility and adaptability of the subjects to the flow of their lives, which requires the acquisition of a huge variety of knowledges, skills and competences. If complexity best characterizes postmodernity, opening the subject to multiple contexts of experience at different educational paths and different intervention strategies, then guidance takes a space of extreme importance in every context of everyday life, even sport. Matching guidance and sport assumes a specific educational value if sport contexts putting at the core the subjects with their life and their constant tension to determine their lives, in order to feel good in the variety of social contexts.

Keywords

Education; Pedagogy; Guidance; Life-Project; Sport

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1. Introduction¹

Guidance has assumed in recent decades a considerable importance within the psycho-pedagogical literature, in relation to the increasingly need of the younger, but not only, to acquire competences useful to make choices more responsible and aware than the past. The increasing of choices, as well as the centrality of the subjects in operating it, has overwhelmed them of a burden so large that it bring out many criticalities.

The word “guidance” is polysemous and for this reason it refers to very different issues affecting both the professional and the personal sphere, as demonstrated both from the practices that guide the subject to the educational and employment choices and to the foster of metacognitive strategies in support of reflexivity (Cunti, 2014). Differently from the past, guidance does not lay in a specific moment of the life of the subject, such as at the end of education or career. It rather concern the entire lifespan and it seems to be as the need to cope with the many psychosocial transitions that mark the whole trajectories of identity, which means to build autonomously and responsibly the own life-project (Pombeni, 2008). Guidance needs to be put then within the broad framework of psycho-educational processes of natural and critical *developmental tasks* (Havigurst, 1953), considering the subjects in their wholeness and not just for their closely formative and professional dimensions.

All this gives a leading position to the pedagogy. From this perspective, it is necessary to help every single subject to cope with the different existential transitions at various levels and in different contexts. In other words, it could be said that there are many “shades” of guidance (personal, professional and contextual) as many as the territories of education involving the need to choose in a more specific and adequate way, even sport. From this perspective, we can say that there is the need for a guidance that overcome the different periods of life and the specific contexts, formal, non-formal and informal and, because of this, sport can be a context of guidance for the construction of life-project too.

2. Educational Guidance and Postmodernity. The Need of a Subjective Life-Project

The urgent need of educational guidance can be attributed to the fact that, more than ever before, the contemporary existential trajectories require an increasing educational support, in light of the fact that the life itself is deeply changed, becoming more liquid and complex (Bauman, 2005; Beck, 2000; Lyotard, 1979). The liquidity of life determines the liquidity of identity itself, whose constitutive characteristics almost stable seem to dissolve before the melting of the world, of life, of relationships, even time (Bauman, 2008). The critical step from modernity to postmodernity (Lyotard, 1979), therefore, requires a rethinking of the categories of identity too, not to be understood as a destination to get to but as a path of continuous research (Lo Presti, 2009).

If in the past life was to be considered as already written by social and family contexts of belonging, namely as a natural continuation of an evolutionary path already marked out by their predecessors, nowadays happened that the construction of life is passed directly into the hands of the subject (Demetrio, 2003). It is for these reasons that today, more than yesterday, it is necessary to speak in terms of *life-project*, where the subjects becomes the artisan of their own existence, which requires all educational settings an important pedagogical challenge: guiding the subjects in the construction of this project.

If complexity is the dimension that best characterizes this historical moment (Bauman, 2005; Beck, 2000) and that, conversely, opens to multiple contexts of experience, at different educational paths and at different intervention strategies, then educational interventions take

1 The manuscript is the result of a joint work of the Authors to attribute to Sergio Bellantonio for the paragraphs 1 and 2 and to Domenico Tafuri for the paragraphs 3 and 4.

more and more importance (Cambi, 2006). The subject first requires of a cognitive and emotional-affective “equipment” in order to learn how to cope with the criticalities that more and more frequently emerge by the multiplicity of roles that he/she assumes daily and the contexts in which he/she makes experience. In this situation the subject, pushed from the natural need to have certainties useful to imagine the future, wonders some fundamental existential questions that do not meet more certain and single answer compared to modernity. These questions unfold along a very articulate historical period that very often prelude to varied forms of discomfort. Because of this, making choices has become a lifelong characteristic of postmodernity and it is connatural to contemporary living. From a pedagogical perspective, it requires to acquire a critical-reflexive *habitus* that needs to be educationally learned, today more than yesterday (Cunti, 2008; Loiodice, 2004, Lo Presti, 2009).

All this recalls into the question a *systemic approach to education* (Cunti, 2014), to be understood as the chosen point of view on educational facts that can articulate the multiplicity of subjective and environmental components to develop a life-project able to foster individual and social wellbeing. In this regard, becomes more necessary than ever to refer to a pedagogical perspective of this type, where the epistemology of the *ecology of mind* (Bateson, 1972) encourages us to think about the triplet *individual-society-ecosystem* as inseparable parts of the contemporary educational project. If postmodernity has created increasingly discontinuous paths, which can no longer offer existential planning harbingers of wellbeing, then a systemic point of view on education seems to be the best way to overcome these criticalities. In this regard, we refer to a way of intending education that can take firm both components of the subject – as condensed of body, emotions and cognition – and contexts in which he/she lives, formal, non-formal and informal.

This pedagogical point of view affects all those educational settings participating in a decisive way to the *bio-psycho-social balance* of the individual, not neglecting the fact that all of these are, however, contexts of guidance, thus of education.

It becomes essential that all educational contexts may accept the challenge of guidance, contributing to help the contemporary subject to build his/her own life-project. From this point of view, guidance is characterized from an intentionally directed educational practice, harmonizing the various aspects that make up the subject existence. Guidance becomes a pedagogical theory and an educational practice to put into close relationship with the continuous process of change of the subject and of contexts, recalling the specificities of different spheres of life that the subject daily experiences.

It is impossible to think a subject who lives his/her life as separate in different compartments, albeit a recurring educational culture has frequently led us to think that way (Morin, 1991). It is widespread experience a strongly traditionalist didactic and educational practices, in some ways still very common in educational contexts and that in various ways contribute decisively to the formation of the subject, which uncoupling what happens inside and outside school. It happens that practices and contents that are put in place outside of formal learning environments are not taken into account inside the formal context of education, not recognizing their extraordinary richness (Bellantonio, 2015).

This disjunction seems to be fictitious and anachronistic as ever. If the identity has to be considered as the plural dimension of being that is inclusive also of what a person knows and knows how (Sciolla, 2010) it becomes an educational imperative of the contemporary education to lead the subject to reflect on the different contexts of experience. In this way is possible to enhance knowledges and competences that the subject experiment in the totality of his/her experience, becoming some useful tools to guide the subject towards the future.

3. Guidance and Sport. An Educational Chance

The different contexts of life are always involved in the educational processes and they quite decisively contribute to build a system of knowledges and competences at the base of the

subjectivity (de Mennato, 2003). Starting from these conditions, the human knowledge always assumes an existential value, which means that it is always characterized from a personal point of view on the world due to the quality and significance of life experiences (Neisser, 1976). The individual process of formation is literally “rooted” in the subject through a relationship of co-adaptation between the mind and the environment (Bateson, 1979). It expresses a personal way to live and to know the world starting from individual autobiographical repertoires that constitute a sort of “subjective keys” to access the real world. Every act of knowing, then, makes no sense in itself, but assumes it in reference to the mental processes that connect all the new knowledge with the old ones (Neisser, 1976), creating a network that articulates a recursive relationship among environment, identity and alterity.

Guidance becomes a practice of *lifelong learning* aimed to identify and empower integrated competences that can decisively contribute to the development of the community in its wholeness (Chianese, 2015). Because of this, guidance can be considered as an intrinsic contemporary education tool that transcends the singularity of contexts. From this perspective, guidance becomes transversal to all educational and formative contexts. If guidance is an educational practice to put at the base of every contemporary educational context, accompany the subject to build his/her own life-project, all this becomes an educational imperative that can be transferred also to the sport context.

At this point, it seems to be interesting to deep this matter from the point of view of sport pedagogy. Matching guidance and sport assumes a specific pedagogical value if the educational contexts put at the core of the contemporary education the subject with his/her life and his/her constant tension to determine their lives in order to feel good in the variety of social contexts (Cunti, 2016). Such a dimension, however, still seems to be poorly disseminated within the most significant educational contexts, from school to university. It happens very often that sport seems to be considered as an exclusive life context that preclude the opportunity to gain experience in other areas of existence. Mostly it happens because it is thought that the latter may “distract” young athletes to pursue their sporting goals, as it vice versa happens at school and university, which consider other activity as a sort of “waste of time”. This educational vision does not certainly highlight the complexity of the human and it is able to strongly influence both the life-project and the identity transition process (Bellantonio, 2018).

In this regard, valid examples are the young athletes involved in early sports specialization, where the most delicate phase for the development of sports skills corresponds with the transitional phase toward late adolescence. It requires adequate coping strategies to overcome this problematic situation and sport could become an educational context able to do it (Bellantonio, 2014). Regarding guidance, it follows that not being able to handle the complexity of these developmental tasks urges the subject to have a defeatist attitude than what he/she is and whom he/she could be. Those athletes, no longer very young, who are called to make fundamental existential choices, also represent another good example. Some of them could leave their sports careers to research a job (Sapp & Haubenstricker, 1978) other, instead, could abandon higher education not giving up the sports career (Amara, Aquilina, Henry, 2004; Aquilina, 2013).

Such examples bring us into thinking that this “kind of sport” poorly guide the subject to choose, or better, it guide to choose between sport and education, because these two contexts of living are still too hard to combine (Bellantonio, Tafuri, 2018). For this reason, guidance in sport context does not concern only a precise moment of athletes’ career, but it interests the entire athletes’ career, calling into question the theme of the life-project deepened previously. In this regard, it is necessary that the subject is pushed to live a life that contemplates all the spheres of everyday life, without that a dimension prevails over the others, like education, sport, family, peers, and so go on.

This change of perspective may allow the subject to express with greater autonomy and freedom, doing diverse experiences and planning life in a more agentive way (Bellantonio, 2018). A pedagogical perspective of lifelong, lifewide and lifedep guidance in sports context requires a harmonious integration among the different educational and formative contexts.

It requires a decisive change of functions and relations between sport and education, where guidance represents a quality of the educational process to put at the core of the contemporary educational process, even in sport.

4. Conclusions

There is the need to reflect on how the educational systems, from education to sport, think about the subject, in order to discourage fragmented forms of knowledge that does not pay attention to the complexity of subjectivity. The guiding value of sport needs a teaching and didactic quality focused on subjectivities, on the analysis and the choice capabilities that needs to be sustained and educationally oriented. It becomes more and more important that all teachers and trainers who work in sport context may use appropriate educational tools able to promote the expression and the emancipation of the subject, promoting the integration of all the different experiences. The solution is to re-think from a *systemic perspective* the relationships established in these contexts and, from a pedagogical perspective, guidance becomes one of the most significant educational tool (Bellantonio, 2017). From this point of view, guidance and sport should be an inseparable couple, because it is through such an idea of sport that is possible to sustain the construction and consolidation of identity, inside and outside sport. Such educational competences represents an opportunity to lead in a conscious and professional way the relational process in sport. For this reason, trainers' guidance competences represent a benefit to their professionalism, in order to foster athletes' personal resources to cope with difficulties, consciously choosing and blurring anxieties and tensions arising from sport. In the end, the competences that all trainers should daily act refers both to *systemic* and *guidance* competences. The former concerns a wise interconnection among the athletes' personal and environmental developmental needs and desires, in and outside sport, and the latter refers to an adequate fostering process of choice about the own athletes' history through a critical-reflective perspective.

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