

# La valorizzazione del potenziale educativo del sistema sportivo

## Enhancing the Educational Potential of Sports System

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to analyze the management methods that are effectively able to exploit the enormous potential of the sports system

To date, the economic characteristics of the sports sector are very clear, but action strategies and management dynamics cannot neglect in any way the educational components able to support the sustainable development of today's society.

In this regard, we propose a management approach that, by relying on cultural, educational, inclusive and social values of sport, can stimulate the growth of community from the perspective of education and training.

Lo scopo del paper è quello di analizzare le modalità gestionali che, in modo efficace, sono in grado di valorizzare l'enorme potenziale sportivo del sistema sportivo

Ad oggi, sono ben chiare le caratteristiche di natura economica del settore sportivo, ma le strategie di azione e le dinamiche gestionali non possono assolutamente trascurare le componenti educative in grado di supportare uno sviluppo sostenibile della società attuale.

A tal proposito, si propone un approccio gestionale che, facendo leva sui valori culturali, didattici, inclusivi e sociali dello sport, è in grado di stimolare una crescita della collettività dal punto di vista educativo e formativo

### KEYWORDS

Sport System; Education; Management; Social Development.  
Sistema Sportivo; Educazione; Management; Sviluppo Sociale.

- \* The manuscript is the result of a collective work of the Authors, whose specific contribution is to abide as follows: introduction, paragraph n. 3 and the conclusions are to be attributed to Domenico Tafuri; paragraphs n. 1 and 2 are to be attributed to Cristiana Cardinali.

## Introduction

The sports sector, over time, has undergone a continuous evolution that, to date, has led it to be a context able to accommodate great incoming and outgoing economic and financial, and to impact on the social aspects of community (Caselli, 2003; Russo, 2004).

If the dynamics of the economic dimension are found in everyday reality, it is also true that the ability of this sector to make a decisive contribution to the creation of a social and cultural benefit, driven by the ability to stimulate an educational development, must not be reduced.

The combination of “sport and education” is as important (if not more important) than that of “sport and economy”; in fact, the propensity to education is inherent in the nature and in the multiple expressions of sports activity.

In this regard, this research paper proposes a managerial model for the sports sector able to positively stimulate the educational dimension through the valorisation of some key elements of sport.

### 1. Characteristics of the Sports System

In a time of socio-economic crisis like the one which started a few years ago, also the sports sector has been called upon to rethink its role, in order to provide an effective contribution to the socio-economic, didactic and educational growth (Di Palma, 2014; Di Palma, Ascione & Peluso Cassese, 2017; Madella, 2010; Russo, 2004).

Sport has become not just a phenomenon of aggregation and education, but also a cultural moment that generates new perspectives in various sectors, including certainly that of spare time, well-being, show business, tourism and entertainment (Porro, 2006). Moreover, it can be a valuable tool for effective communication in an era of great changes, uncertainty and instability.

In addition, let's not forget the social function of sport that is confirmed, among other things, with the approval of the Lisbon Treaty, which has finally included sport in the European Constitution (which came into force on December 1, 2009).

Consequently, nowadays, the growth of the economic interests around the sports context, which has become a real communication and business driving force, is a consolidated reality (Braghero, Perfumo, Ravano, 1999, Mazza, 2007).

Precisely in that regard, by highlighting the relationship between cultural change and transformation of the managerial and organizational proposal of this area, four “sport expressions” have been identified (Heinemann & Puig, 1996):

- *Competitive sport*: it is included in the traditional paradigms of diffused recruiting, amateur base, volunteering, non-profit associations etc.;
- *Spectator sport*: it includes mainly professional sports “swallowed up” by the media entertainment, and by the strong commercial pressures absorbed by the professional clubs;
- *Instrumental sport*: characterized by a physical activity functional to the health requirements, aimed at the body care or declared as rehabilitative/inspired to the professional needs (i.e. training of the Police) treated mainly by private gyms, and only partially dealt with by sports promotion bodies and amateur network of users with social purposes;

- *Expressive sport*: it collects emotion seekers, open air activities, no limits performers who fundamentally self-manage by occasionally join competitions to share unique experiences with a strong commercial impact in terms of technical clothing and support services (eg logistics, travel, etc.).

Naturally, in present-day reality, some hybridizations of the forms of sport just described have occurred; for example, just think of the commercial incentives of the non-profit sector, increasingly linked to quality requirements, or even to the “commercial fitness sport” and to the “do-it-yourself sport”.

From a statistical point of view, sports, whether agonistic or amateur, and physical activity in general, involve 34 million people. It is estimated that, for every 390 inhabitants, there is a space reserved for sports. This spread also affects (Di Palma, 2014):

- The press, with sports newspapers boasting a daily average circulation of 2,437,000 copies, equal to about a 26% of the national total;
- The TV networks, with 5.5 million families that are Sky Sports subscribers, and over 22 thousand hours of sports broadcasting annually;
- Tourism, with a turnover of about 8 billion euros for travel and holidays to a destination closely linked to sports events.

In macroeconomic terms, sport represents the 2,7-3,0% of the Italian GDP, boasting over 15 million people employed and a contribution to the total EU employment equal to a 5.8% (Di Palma, 2014).

However, this must not undermine the potential support that the sports sector can provide to the benefit of an educational development for the whole community (Di Palma et al, 2016).

## 2. The relationship between Sports Activity and the development of Education

It is fair to state that all sports have played in Italy, as well as in the rest of the developed countries, a real educational work by supporting, for several generations, families and school in the construction of the “community of people” (Di Palma, Ascione & Peluso Cassese, 2017; Sibilio, 2005).

In fact, sport has an enormous educational potential; it manages to teach young people important (though fleeting) social values, such as having confidence in the future, assuming responsibilities, respecting legality, welcoming the “diverse”, cooperating, living together according to the rules of democracy, and playing fairly. Furthermore, it contributes to developing, in the new generations, the ability to respond to the profound and structural questions they pose about the meaning of life, its orientation and goal (Costantini, 2008; Zhong-gan, 2005).

Thus a great opportunity for education is recognized in sports, able to represent a “stage” that can contribute to generating champions for life (Farinelli, 2005; Raiola & Tafuri, 2016). Therefore, it doesn’t matter what are the reasons that lead a young person to approach a gym or a sports group, but what matters is that there is a project and a qualified staff able to propose him a sport offer which holds the so-called educational intentionality.

The educational intentionality is the element that turns sport into a real life experience, and provides that coaches are not satisfied with just taking on a technical role; their action and management of the relationship with the young guys,

through an educational attitude, must aim at their personal growth (Costantini, 2008; Di Palma et al, 2016; Light, Dixon, 2007).

In this regard it proves to be clear the importance of being able to rely on motivated and competent educators, able to work constructively with the family, with the school, and with anyone interested in working for youth education. In this time of crisis for education, sport is an appropriate (and probably more and more necessary) experience to take care back of the whole person, and to help him grow in all his dimensions.

Therefore, educating through sports requires a planning, an educational intentionality, an educational method and educators aware of the role and are prepared for it.

Unfortunately, we often make the mistake of considering that educational processes are automatically developed through sports, as if sports activity holds in itself a power able to teach life lessons about loyalty, respect for rules, cooperation, the tension to always improve oneself, simply thanks to the mere aggregation of a group of individuals into a team (Costantini, 2008). If this were the case, there would be no episodes of violence in youth sport, nor of doping and illegality. Educating with sport, in fact, is neither obvious nor easy, and above all, it needs the ability to evaluate its educational potentiality and its management approach, and to be able to use it effectively and efficiently.

### 3. Educational Sport Management

The strong economic connotation assumed over time by the sports sector cannot (and must not) limit the educational dimension that has always characterized the different activities of this context (Isidori, 2012, Mari, 2007).

In this regard, it needs to keep in mind the management of the educational dynamics too, in addition to a strategic approach aimed at satisfying the needs of profit and at respecting market rules and economic-financial conditions. In fact, in order to encourage an educational and thus social/cultural development, which is always at the basis of the economic one, we need a management model for sport based on (Di Palma, Ascione & Peluso Cassese, 2017; Tafuri et al., 2017):

- Respect for others and rules by everyone;
- Exaltation of team spirit as an important relational moment;
- Understanding of the mistake as an opportunity for growth, regardless of its nature.

Respecting the rules is probably the key principle of any managerial approach that has, as its main objective, the promotion of the education of the individual, mainly if referring to the sports context. In fact, in its competitive sense, every violation of a rule in sports involves a sanction regardless of who has committed the irregularity, and this aspect enhances, at the same time, the principle of equality. However, it needs to extend this consideration to the whole sports world so as to include the amateur sector and that of fans and enthusiasts too, with the aim of limiting the onset of non-educational phenomena such as acts of violence and delinquency. In addition to respecting the rules, the management strategy should also include respecting others, which finds its maximum expression in the inclusive actions that sport can stimulate. The acceptance of the other and the will to enhance the forms of diversity are among the fundamental as-

pects of a context aiming at an educational and cultural development (Di Palma, Raiola, Tafuri, 2016; Tafuri et al, 2017).

Another element of fundamental importance for the management dynamics of the sports sector concerns the exaltation of team spirit, understood as the awareness that everyone has his own role to play, his own place and function, and is at the service of the team. Everyone is in a relationship with his teammate, acts according to him and his personal value is oriented to the team; hence the educational stimulus to both improve oneself personally to be an active element of the group, and to better serve the community of belonging. What has just been described fully represents one of the essential aims of education that wants to develop the subject in his individual and social dimensions, and make him a citizen with a personal wealth to be made available to the society (Light, Dixon, 2007; Zhong-gan, 2005).

Finally, it is essential that sport is managed without excluding constructive conflict and mistake. In fact, these must be contemplated as educational strata-gems able to generate a more advanced pedagogical synthesis; from the mistake it follows a choice that should be understood as a further and new possibility of positive development (Di Palma et al, 2017; Maritain, 2001; Peluso Cassese, 2011). It should be noted that, in the sports sector, managing a mistake as an opportunity for educational and personal growth must be considered as such, regardless of whether it has an athletic-physical or economic-financial nature.

A management model characterized by the key elements we have just exposed, if applied to the sports sector, would have the opportunity to stimulate an educational process capable of generating a social, cultural, and subsequently economic benefit for the entire community.

## Conclusions

The current social and cultural scenario is characterized by an increasing difficulty in developing educational processes, especially towards new generations (Palmieri, 2012). Regarding what we have just said, it seems appropriate to focus the general attention on the educational potentialities held by the sports sector. The strong economic connotation assumed over time by this sector, in fact, must not be a limit to its functionality towards the social and pedagogical sphere. It needs to fully develop the awareness of holding a privileged means for involving and educating the youths.

Sport is an important resource for education, and as such, it is essential for it to be managed in an efficient and effective way, so that it generates the outcomes it can potentially pursue. However, the management model that must achieve this task should disregard the realization of profit objectives, and concentrate on the development of the educational intentionality.

In this regard, a model has been analyzed; through the exaltation of some key principles of the sports sector, such as respect for others and rules by everyone, the team spirit understood as an important relational moment and the evaluation of the mistake as an opportunity for growth, it is able to stimulate the educational development essential for the social and cultural growth of the new generations and of the whole community.

The sports sector, besides representing a consolidated reality from an economic and financial point of view, if managed appropriately, turns out to be an "educational asset" able to support the whole pedagogical system in a sustainable long-term perspective.

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