

The core curriculum of University training to teach physical education in Italy

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Abstract

The effective practice of Physical Education (PE) at school is the result of various elements such as National aims and strategies, taught time for PE in compulsory education curricula, initial education and qualification of teachers, continuing professional development, etc.

In Italy physical education has a consolidated tradition in ministerial documents concerning the school, from inclusion of physical education in the school programs as a compulsory discipline to current recommendations, projects and guidelines. However this tradition was not adequately reflected in the training courses for teachers. The present work therefore aims to identify some fundamental aspects of the University curricula of Sport and Exercise Sciences degrees with particular reference to part of curricula related to the training programs to teach physical education in school context, basing on a study of ministerial documents and normative devices which, from the early nineteenth-century formative experiences, led to current scientific-cultural and social configuration.

Keywords PE, Exercise and sport sciences, curricula, education, training

National Aims and Strategies for Physical Education and Sport in the Italian school

The Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research, for what concerns the Education take action to improve the quality of the service inherent to physical and sport activities in the schools of each level (degree) both for the curricular activity (D'Isanto, 2019) and for extracurricular projects and activities. For the curricular activities the teachers refer to national recommendation differentiated according to the cycle of school in which the specific learning aims in physical education are defined as well as the skills development goals at the end of the school cycle (Cirillo et al, 2016). We have two cycle: primary and middle school constitute the first cycle, high school represents the second cycle. In the primary school and in the middle school the specific learning aims and skills development refer to four areas: 1. The body and its relation with space and time; 2. Body language to express and communicate (D'Isanto, 2016); 3. Game, sport, rules and fair play; 4. health and wellness, safety and prevention. While in the secondary (high) school aims and skills development refer to: 1. The body, its expressiveness and skill conditioning; 2. Movement, space, time and coordination; 3. Games, sport-games and sport; safety and health. It is interesting to observe that, as we will deepen later, despite the fact that the middle school is with the primary school a part of the first cycle of education and shares the specific national recommendations on the learning outcomes and the skills to be developed in each subject, the organizational structure of the two level of education is very different: in the primary school physical education is taught by the generalist teacher in a flexible programming that sometimes does not allow the practice of the subject, while in the middle school physical education is taught by a specialist teacher in less flexible programming but which guarantees the weekly taught time for PE.

The extracurricular activities consist of several national projects aim to promote physical education and sport to spread more active and healthy lifestyles and highlight the values related to physical and sport practices (Viscione et al, 2019). In primary school it has been significant the projects on "Physical literacy" aimed at improving the motor skills of students and encouraging active lifestyles through specific physical education and sport programs. Through movement the child can explore space, learn about his body, communicate and relate to others; physical education, in a playful and entertaining form, becomes the opportunity to promote cognitive, social, cultural and affective experiences. Also sport represents a valid strategy to prevent and oppose disadvantages, school dropout and social marginalization. Finally, one of the mainstay of this project is the addition of external experts to provide curricular and sports educational activities. After a first pilot phase the experience of "Physical literacy", from the A. 2014/2015, has changed to "Sport class", a project aimed at promoting physical education and sports as educational and training opportunities to stimulate children's reflection and convey key values such as inclusion, integration, and fair play. Also "Sport class" project foresees the involvement of a specialist: the School Sports Tutor, a graduate in Sports Science or an ISEF graduate, properly trained. The Tutor supports the generalist teacher for an hour a week, collaborating in the planning and implementation of physical activities; organizes year-end games; promotes class participation in the value

process; supports teachers to encourage participation in physical activity and the inclusion of students with disabilities; it represents a connection between the school and the sports system of the territory.

For the high school the Ministry of Education has issued specific guidelines (2009) to carry out an intervention plan aimed at enhancing school sports activity and giving the same character of continuity during the entire school year and in the overall educational path. These guidelines have created the premises for the establishment of the School Sports Centers which, as a rule, constitute the preliminary condition for participation in the Student Sports Games which promote individual and team sports activities in order to create an educational path that deals with ethical and social issues with students, guiding them to the acquisition of positive values and lifestyles.

Initial training and qualification of PE teachers in Italy

In Italy the initial training and qualification to teach physical education depends on the level (degree) of school. At primary level no specific preparation was ever required for the teaching of physical education, but currently there are two possibilities: physical education can be taught by a generalist teachers graduate in Science of Primary Education or, depending on school staff resources, by teachers with certified competences according to the Law n.107 of July 13, 2015, paragraph 20 that states "For teaching [...] physical education in primary school are used, within the school staff resources available, teachers qualified to teach for primary school with certified competences, as well as teachers qualified to teach also for other levels (degrees) of education as specialists". The teachers with certified competences are those who are graduate both in Science of Primary Education and in Sport and Exercise Sciences, or who have an ISEF diploma or who is specialized to teach physical education in secondary school. The master's degree in Science of Primary Education certifies *generalist* teachers, trained over five years through lectures, workshops and internships at school. The internship is carried out for a total of 600 hours, one part *directly* at school to observe and to learn by doing, and the other part *indirectly* through courses and workshop held by tenured teacher to process the experience. The lectures and the connected workshop are mainly related to generalist disciplines that train the pedagogical, psychological and didactic cross-competences to teach in nursery and primary school, instead, there is a lower incidence of specialist disciplines, including physical education to which about 200 hours are dedicated in academic class, individual study for exam preparation and workshop activities, against a training course that involves overall the student for 7500 hours including academic class, individual study, workshops and internships. However, these possibilities are not satisfactory, and physical education is still a little practiced school subject. A possible solution, that it is being discussed (D'Elia 2019) is to introduce the specialist teacher in primary school (Decree Law 992/2018) but this proposal is not easy to implement because of the organizational and didactic structure of the primary school that is characterized by a flexibility that clashes with the implementation of the model proposed in the bill (D'Elia, 2019; Raiola, 2017, Gaetano, 2012)

At secondary level instead physical education is taught by specialist teachers with a master's degree in Exercise and Sport Science and a specialization course for teaching. The need to entrust the teaching of physical education to a specialist was born already towards the end of the nineteenth century, when in Italy the first schools of physical education were founded with function of military preparation. Starting from the experiences of Physical Education Schools in Bologna and Turin, we find a first attempt to systematize the specialization of teachers, continued with the establishment during the Fascist period of the Academy of Physical Education, while from the second post-war from the second post-war period was founded the ISEF (Higher Institutes of Physical Education) that have specifically trained the teacher of physical education for about fifty years focusing teaching/learning mainly on practice activities. In 1998 the ISEF were transformed in faculties and degree courses in Sport and Exercise Sciences and this transformation has extended the areas of training and the employment opportunities for the graduates. In its first configuration, the four-year degree courses in Sport and Exercise Sciences were aimed at acquiring adequate knowledge and developing skills in the prevention and adapted physical education area, technical-sportive area and managerial area.

Following the reform of the Italian university who introduced the "3 + 2" European system, bachelor's degrees in Exercise and Sport Science are grouped in a single class of degree labeled L22, whereas master's degrees in Sport Science are grouped, according to the different and specific learning outcomes, in three classes of degree: 1. Management of Physical and Sports Activities (labeled LM47); 2. Preventive and Adapted Physical Activity (labeled LM67); 3. Sports Science and Techniques (labeled LM68).

The curriculum of Sport and Exercise Sciences master's degrees and the "core" to teach Physical Education

Sport and Exercise Sciences degrees are not limited to train PE teacher but they offer curricula aimed for training of various graduation profiles for job positions in management of sport, sport science and adapted physical activity and sport.

In each class of master's degree Physical Education teacher is one of the graduation profiles, although in order to teach the graduates must qualify through specialization courses (Raiola et al., 2018). In particular, according to the "Determination of master's degree classes" established by the Ministerial Decree n. 155 of

March 2007, the curricula of the LM47 courses include activities aimed at acquiring specific knowledge in physical and sports activities, as well as in the economic, legal and psycho-sociological field. Graduates of master's degree in Management of Physical and Sports Activities (LM47) reach skills:

- to design, organize and manage the various types of services and facilities to do sport and physical activities;
- to carry out functions of management, planning and coordination of sport organizations;
- to organize and manage sport events;
- to operate effectively within the institutional and legal frameworks of sport organizations;
- to manage, from a business-economic perspective, the sport organizations;
- to carry out consultancy, representation and / or assistance in the sports justice authority, as well as in the negotiation activity on behalf of individuals operating in the sports contexts, as experts in: sports tourism services, management of installations; media and communication, major events and events; sports arbitration agreements and procedures;
- to carry out planning, coordination and management activities at companies that provide tools, technologies, goods and services for sports;
- to carry out planning, coordination and managerial functions of sports activities in the various disciplines at sports associations and societies, sports promotion institutes and sports organizations in general;
- to develop the institutional, economic and legal structures of communication and information in the sport context.

Graduates of master's degree in Preventive and Adapted Physical Activity (LM67) must possess in-depth knowledges related to the modifications and functional adaptations deriving from physical exercise; on the methods of evaluating the state of physical efficiency and of scheduling of the exercise, both for healthy subjects and for disabled or limited individuals functional stabilized of various types, deriving from pathologies that can take advantage from physical exercise; on methodologies and educational, communicative and psycho-motor techniques aimed at individuals practicing the exercise. They also reach skills:

- to design and implement physical activity programs aimed at achieving, recovery and maintenance of the best conditions of psychophysical well-being for subjects in various age groups and in different physical conditions, with attention to gender specificities;
- to organize and plan particular activities and lifestyles useful for prevention of diseases and improvement of the quality of life through physical exercise;
- to prevent postural defects and post-rehabilitative motor recovery aimed at maintaining physical efficiency
- to plan, coordinate and evaluate physical activities adapted to disabled people or to individuals in clinically controlled and stabilized health conditions.

Graduates of master's degree in Sport Science and Techniques (LM68) must possess specific and in-depth knowledges in the field of movement and sports activities with attention to the different disciplinary types and, in the context of the concept of protection of the psycho-physical health of the practitioner, to differences related to age, gender, to the socio-cultural context of belonging, to the level of psycho-cultural maturity and to the presence of physical disability. They also reach skills to design, coordinate and direct technical sports activities:

- in the competitive field in the various levels, up to those of maximum competition, at associations and sports companies, institutions and specialized centers;
- in various sports and at various levels, up to the professional level, at associations and sports clubs, institutions and specialized centers.
- in the physical and athletics preparation and competitive sports activities for the disabled;
- in the physical preparation activities at the Armed Forces Training Centers to guarantee security and defense of the state.
- in the physical and technique preparation aimed at individual and competitive competition team.

The current curricula lack contents and learning outcomes centered on the teaching of sport and PE in school context, in spite of the possibility for graduates in each master's degree in Sport and Exercise Science (LM47, LM67, LM68) to be able to become PE teachers. Physical education and sport at school set specific learning goals that covers a broad range of skills, as bodily, emotional, social, cognitive and moral concepts that cannot be limited to improving just physical or sport skills. The *physical, personal* and *social* development of children and youth cannot be achieved by relying only on the specialization course for teaching, since in approaching this training course the will-be teacher must already have the theoretical, technical, didactic and methodological basic elements to teach the PE and sport.

Core curriculum should consider specific contents about knowledges and understanding in sport science and PE for educative aims, such as the promotion of health and wellness, the awareness of active lifestyles, the development of psychological and social attitudes (i.e. psychological like self-confidence, self-esteem, mental balance; social like solidarity, fair play, respect of rules and others), discovering the enjoyment in doing physical education and sport.

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