

Elements and methods of organization, design and management of extracurricular sports activities

VISCIONE ILARIA¹, ROMANO EMANUELA²

¹University of Salerno, ITALY

²MIUR Campania, ITALY

Published online: October 22, 2019

(Accepted for publication: October 15, 2019)

DOI:10.7752/jpes.2019.s5259

Abstract:

In secondary high schools, in Italy, there is the custom of organizing physical and sports activities in extracurricular time, with the main purpose of spreading the sport practice as a lifestyle. To be effective, teaching for starting sports must be focused on innovative proposals, able to involve the student and make the teaching-learning path easier. For this purpose, the recent theories about learning and physical control provide interesting insights for the structuring of the didactic action. It becomes necessary to provide the student concrete play situations, without leaving out the theoretical knowledge, in order to reach a real and conscious competence.

The objective of this study is to identify innovative methodologies for the organization of sports activities, in extracurricular time, in secondary high schools. The method of documentary and theoretical archive research with an interpretative deductive approach consulting the reference literature.

Key words: physical education, secondary high school, teaching games for understanding.

Introduction

In Italy, during the school year, many secondary high schools organize sports activities in extracurricular time, which take the form of an expansion of the didactic curriculum proposals of the Departments of Physical and Sport Sciences. Activities are frequently organized according to traditional teaching methods risking to present limits that affect their potential. Often these activities come together in the Student Sports Games and aim to achieve performance goals or to participate in championships and tournaments. To avoid that these activities remain stable, it would be opportune to structure methodologically a stimulating path that is useful for a conscious participation of each student.

The objective of this study is to identify innovative methodologies for the organization of sports activities in extracurricular time, in secondary high schools. The method of documentary and theoretical archive research with an interpretative deductive approach consulting the reference literature.

Reference theoretical features

In this perspective, the concept of learning evolves with explicit references to the theories of Ausubel (1963; 1968), which operates a meticulous distinction between mechanical learning and meaningful learning (Varisco, 1995). The first one occurs when the student makes little or no effort to associate the new information with the significant concepts he already has or when the previous knowledge is limited and / or poorly structured. On the other hand, meaningful learning occurs when the learner has a considerable and above all conscious commitment, in order to correlate and incorporate the new information into his / her knowledge structure (Novak, 2001). Learning, in the teaching-motor field, would become "located": it is structured thanks to social co-participation. The classical and reductionist conception of the simple transmission of knowledge is overcome in order to highlight the role of the circumstances in which the learner is inserted. Therefore, even if the protagonist of learning is the individual, the process of construction of knowledge is realized through a dense interchange with the social context (Lave & Wenger, 2006). Located Learning Episodes (EAS) (Rivoltella, 2013) should be considered as an integral and integrated approach to teaching, as part of the didactic action. An EAS is a portion of didactic action, or the minimum unit of which the teaching activity of the teacher is composed in the context. It is structured in three phases: anticipatory (in which the teacher provides the stimulus), operative (which requires a production by the students for the resolution of the stimulus situation) and restructuring (to produce metacognitive reflections). In the physical and sports field, it is essential to use strategies that go beyond traditional teaching (Raiola et al., 2018, Raiola, 2013, 2017). Learning theories can provide an important starting point for teachers of physical and sports sciences, who have the possibility to structure their didactic actions following flexible schemes and referring to innovative approaches. Especially in extracurricular activities, where it is necessary to adopt a playful and engaging approach for the student. In particular, the Teaching Games for Understanding methodology (Bunker and Thorpe, 1982) was born as an alternative to traditional approaches

(Bunker and Thorpe, 1982). The TGfU is based on situated learning situations (Kirk & MacPhail, 2002), as it foresees neglecting the technical aspects of sports activities and at the same time dwelling on the teaching of the rules of the game to be played through cooperative learning and problem solving actions (Griffin & Butler, 2005).

The objective of this study is to identify innovative methodologies for the organization of sports activities in extracurricular time in secondary high schools.

Student Sports Games: organizational, technical and educational aspects

In Italy, the Student Sports Games are the privileged means for the dissemination of start-up paths for sports. They are carried out in secondary schools and promote individual and team sports activities, through extra-curricular lessons. They are promoted by the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR), with the main purpose of spreading the profound educational and training sense of sport, in the context of complementary physical and sports science activities.

In fact, the activities promoted aim to favor the inclusion to create an educational path that goes beyond the disciplinary areas, facing issues of an ethical and social nature, guiding the students to the acquisition of positive values and lifestyles and to the respect of the rules (Miur). The teaching of physical and sports sciences cannot be limited to improving the physical abilities only, but it necessarily involves the emotional, social, cognitive and moral aspects. In particular, the main aim is to promote health and a healthy lifestyle in order to consolidate a good knowledge and mastery of one's body to develop self-confidence and self-esteem and to achieve a sense of responsibility, patience, tenacity and courage. Furthermore, the aim is to develop a sense of solidarity and we take a look at the competences related to social interaction (useful for team work and team spirit) and to the respect for rules and for the others (fair play) (D'Elia, 2019, D'Elia et al., 2019). With the legislation August 4, 2009, prot. 4273, MIUR issues the Guidelines on the reorganization of physical education and sports activities in secondary schools. It also provides indications on the reorganization of physical and sports education activities, setting the conditions for an effective use of the extra hours of start-up to the sporting practice and to allow a suitable programming to be included in the plan of the educational offer of schools. At the discretion of each educational institution, the reorganization of the sports practice can be achieved by the establishment of the "School Sports Center", understood as "structure organized within the school, aimed at organizing school sports activities". This approach has the nature of spontaneous associationism, which well represents the value of the "educating community" within which the students must develop their growth. In this sense, school sports centers are intended as an organic organization for the school itself depending on it, and not as a stand-alone association. From the legal point of view, their main characteristic consists in a voluntary association that promotes organizational moments inside the school, following the institute regulations and the same regulations respected during the use of school sports facilities in school time. Whenever the Scholastic Sports Center adopted internal operating rules, always in compliance with the institute regulations, the approval of the Institute Council would be still required, a collegiate body called by law to deliberate on everything concerning the organization and the school functioning. Not by chance, it is clear the reference that the guidelines make in relation to the inclusion of motor activities in the Plan of the educational offer, whose elaboration is procedurally governed by the D.P.R. 275/ '99 and the accounting regulation of educational institutions (Ministerial Decree of February 1, 2001, No. 44). For high schools, the need to set up the Scholastic Sports Center is generated from the now obvious and unthinkable truth that sport is one of the most effective tools for the physical, human and cultural education of adolescents.

The aspects affected by a good teaching of sports practice are wide and decidedly transversal with respect to a healthy and balanced growth of the student. In fact, the latter is called in first person to learn to positively manage his own body and emotion, identifying and implementing strategies suitable for achieving a good degree of development. The extracurricular sporting activity is therefore framed in the context of continuity with what was done by the teachers during the morning lessons and it is essentially aimed at confirming what is stated above. This continuity is guaranteed to all students, including those with disabilities, to whom particular attention is paid, given that sport is a privileged vehicle of inclusion. The extracurricular time sport also allows the possibility of realizing effective interactions with other schools, with local authorities and with sports bodies of the territory and / or neighbouring countries with which, in respect of reciprocal institutional aims, a synergy of interventions is implemented through an organizational and financial complementarity. In this context, teachers of physical and sports sciences play a fundamental role. In fact, they have the delicate task of identifying in each student the propensities and aptitudes for a particular discipline and, consequently, directing everyone towards the sporting practice that would best succeed in making their personality and attitudes positively emerge. With the related project of the Sports Group, the School Sports Center finds a legitimate place in the Educational Offer Plan, since it is an integral part of the overall educational process and not an accessory moment without an interdisciplinary dimension. One of the objectives of afternoon sporting practice is the continuity of morning teaching. The aim is to bring out in the pupils the habit of physical activity as a moment of bodily and socio-affective growth. The activities attended by the student in the context of the Scholastic Sports Group could be certified within the framework of the training credits, where the results of the same should be considered particularly significant and functional for the development and maturation of the students involved.

Generally, the additional hours of starting sporting activities are recorded and documented by the teacher of sport and sports sciences involved, on a special register, together with the attendance of the students. Moreover, the hours are monitored and reported by the School Director who communicates them to the competent territorial bodies. For minors, participation in activities is authorized on the appropriate form by parents or guardians. Students over 18 years of age could personally sign the appropriate authorization form. Pupils are required by law to be in possession of a medical certificate of fitness for non-competitive sports, provided free of charge by their doctor on presentation of the form prepared by the Institute.

The Teaching Games for Understanding methodology in Student Sports Games

The activities proposed in the Student Sports Games are set up as a starting point for sports practice (Gaetano, 2012ab). Their main goal is to give students concrete play situations, without forgetting the theoretical knowledge, in order to reach a real competence of the activities planned within the Department of Physical and Sport Sciences of the school of reference. Therefore, Student Sports Games represent the ideal context for structuring activities with the Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) methodology (Bunker and Thorpe, 1982). This method aims to involve the student in the didactic-educational action, making him / her independent in the choices and protagonist of the teaching-learning process (Thorpe & Bunker, 1983). The didactic action is no longer focused on the role of the teacher, but on the development of the students critical thinking and physical problem solving strategies (Tan, Chow & Davids, 2012). Moreover, the TGfU allows the adoption of a more inclusive approach in the teaching of physical and sports sciences, as it allows everyone to give their own personal support: teachers encourage students to create their own games, they help them to develop the respect for rules and other people, in order to make them appreciate and understand their responsibility to protect their own and others' rights and individual and collective freedoms. As in a community where democracy is ensured, students engage in the participation of activities for the creation of a shared experience and not to achieve a performance or prevaricate over the adversary (Butler, 2006).

Planning an activity with the TGfU methodology also makes it possible to combine technical and educational aspects, as it tends to enhance students' motivations which will be encouraged to make correct decisions by virtue of the tactical awareness gradually acquired. Students will then gradually learn to analyze the different game situations and to select the specific techniques required by the context, thanks to a decision-making process that makes the students increasingly aware of their abilities and increasingly involved in the game. Therefore, the student is not simply asked to reproduce a specific physical-sports technique, he is invited to reflect and produce personal insights to improve his physical skills according to a specific game situation. Gradually the student becomes aware of the physical behaviors that put him in a position to reach the educational goal and he realizes mainly what he must do, based on intuitions derived from the observation of the game itself, while it is no longer strictly and immediately necessary how must perform the requested physical task. On the other hand, the teacher will focus on the "thing", leaving aside the technical-tactical aspects and soliciting a scrupulous and global observation of the aspects of the game, able to lead the students to reflect on the physical gesture to be performed and on the cause and effect dynamics.

Student Sports Games: activity hypothesis

The TGfU technique allows the student to analyse the tactical elements of the game situation and its assessment (D'Isanto et al., 2019), and, at the same time it allows the teacher to be able to plan activities with increasing tactical complexity according to pedagogical value of physical activity (D'Isanto, 2016). For this reason it represents a valid technique for Student Sports Games in secondary school (Viscione et al., 2019).

In relation to the TGfU methodology, Butler & Mcahan (2005) identified six fundamental characteristics for the structuring of activities:

1. To teach the meaning of physical activity in a simplified way through games;
2. To propose games in the simplest form, then gradually increase their complexity;
3. Participants must be considered as intelligent interpreters of the proposed game;
4. To encourage the inclusion of everybody: every student is important and must be involved;
5. Participants need to learn the logic of the game (when passing the ball is more important than how passing it);
6. To match the skill and challenge among the participants, promoting healthy competition (Butler & McCahan, 2005).

Following the mentioned principles, it is possible to structure various activities for the most practiced sports in secondary high schools. Through the methods of communication between peers, borrowed from psychology, the groups of students / athletes will be guided to the circle time, cooperative learning and role play techniques to bring out educational educational proposals whose objectives are distinctly listed as spontaneously as possible for major team sports.

- Volleyball: To convey to the students the importance of the three steps before passing the ball to the opposing team, it is possible to make them practice an adapted game which consists in the obligation to pass the ball three times within his team, before throwing it to the team attacking.

In a volleyball court, without a net, there are 2 teams of 6-8 players each. In the quickest possible way, in order to confuse the opponents, the team that has the possession of the ball will have to make three passes inside it, rejecting the ball as each considers necessary. At the end of the three passes, the ball must be thrown to the opposing team. It is essential that the student identifies the most appropriate time for the launch, analysing the game situation that is constantly changing as soon as possible. You have the penalty when the ball is thrown out of range, or when you cannot catch it.

Volleyball

<i>Objectives</i>	To control and to manage the ball, both in reception and in attack.
<i>Methods</i>	Solving tasks and guided discovery.
<i>Contents</i>	In a volleyball court, there are 2 teams of 6-8 players each. Each team must pass the ball three times before throwing it to the opposing team.
<i>Expected results</i>	To convey to the students the importance of the three steps before passing the ball to the opposing team.

- Basketball: Following the technical sheets proposed by the Ministry of Education (archive of the Education area, the Being & Wellness section), it is possible to offer students a simplified game for basketball preparation. In a basketball court, using a ball, two teams of 6-8 players each stand in their own half.

One of its components (the king) is located behind the baseline line on the opposite side and stands upright or sitting on a chair. Each player will have to move around the gym, with the aim of trying to reach his King to pass the ball to him. Each time the King receives the ball while standing and balancing on the chair, the team wins a point. Players can only move by passing the ball and cannot move with the ball in their hands for more than two steps.

Basketball

<i>Objectives</i>	To consolidate the motor scheme of launching and grasping.
<i>Methods</i>	Solving tasks and guided discovery.
<i>Contents</i>	In a basketball court, two teams of 6-8 players each compete for the ball and must pass it to the partner in the chair.
<i>Expected results</i>	To coordinate between them the movements required by the game, and seize the right moments to dribble and to pass the ball.



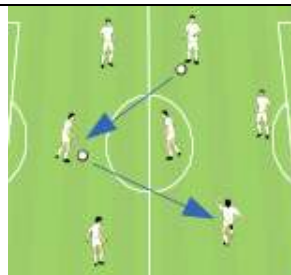
- Soccer and five-a-side football: "Torello" is a game that was born as a soccer training method to improve the ability to pass and intercept. With the necessary adaptations and with the proposal of some variants, it is a well appreciated activity in schools. The number of players can vary depending on the number of the group or the need to divide the players into more subgroups for a possible tournament.

At the start of the game all players, minus one, are arranged in a circle. The player excluded from the circle goes to the center and tries to intercept the ball that the players placed in the circle pass between them. When the central player manages to intercept and block the ball, the thrower takes his place and starts a new game.

It is possible to introduce the elimination variant, rather than the exchange so as to have, at the end of the game, two winners.

Soccer and five-a-side football

<i>Objectives</i>	To learn the technical fundamentals of the game of football.
<i>Methods</i>	Solving tasks and guided discovery.
<i>Contents</i>	The players arrange themselves in a circle. A pupil positions himself in the center, and tries to intercept the ball that the other players pass between them.
<i>Expected results</i>	Refine the skills of passing and interception.



- Handball: To refine the speed and coordination necessary for handball play, it is possible to propose an activity that sees a variable number of players, divided into two teams (possibly around 10 per team). The aim of the game is to pass the ball to the teammates, as soon as possible, and running around the gym (using the playing area of the basketball court). When the ball falls, the player who threw it is eliminated, until only one winner remains. It is important that each student is able to assess the most appropriate time to launch the ball, in relation to the variability of the environment. In a second moment and after a phase of acquisition of the necessary basic skills, it is possible to add a door to which to throw the ball from a minimum distance of 5 meters.

Handball	
<i>Objectives</i>	To sharpen speed and coordination.
<i>Methods</i>	Solving tasks and guided discovery.
<i>Contents</i>	Two teams compete for a ball. You need to make passes within your team as soon as possible, trying to keep the ball.
<i>Expected results</i>	To refine the patterns of throwing and grasping; being able to master the ball so as not to let the opposing team take it.



Conclusions

In adolescence, the interaction between peers is fundamental to know each other. Being part of a group is a necessary condition in physical activities and sports games and in which everyone can make their own contribution. Team play allows you to bring out the best in you; physical and sports situations also represent the ideal context for listening to the other and for building respect, tolerance, cooperation and solidarity (Bertagna, 2004).

In secondary high schools, it is possible to propose activities that can refer to the TGfU methodology to enhance the attitudes of each and to encourage inclusion. Through the methods of communication between peers, the groups of students will be guided to the circle time, cooperative learning and role play techniques to bring out educational educational proposals whose objectives are distinctly listed as spontaneously as possible for major team sports.

	<i>Volleyball</i>	<i>Basketball</i>	<i>Soccer and five-a-side football</i>	<i>Handball</i>
<i>Objectives</i>	To control and to manage the ball, both in reception and in attack.	To consolidate the motor scheme of launching and grasping.	To learn the technical fundamentals of the game of football.	To sharpen speed and coordination.
<i>Methods</i>	Solving tasks and guided discovery.	Solving tasks and guided discovery.	Solving tasks and guided discovery.	Solving tasks and guided discovery.
<i>Contents</i>	In a volleyball court, there are 2 teams of 6-8 players each. Each team must pass the ball three times before throwing it to the opposing team.	In a basketball court, two teams of 6-8 players each compete for the ball and must pass it to the partner in the chair.	The players arrange themselves in a circle. A pupil positions himself in the center, and tries to intercept the ball that the other players pass between them.	Two teams compete for a ball. You need to make passes within your team as soon as possible, trying to keep the ball.
<i>Expected results</i>	To convey to the students the importance of the three steps before passing the ball to the opposing team.	To coordinate between them the movements required by the game, and seize the right moments to dribble and to pass the ball.	Refine the skills of passing and interception.	To refine the patterns of throwing and grasping; being able to master the ball so as not to let the opposing team take it.

In fact, based on the experience gained in 2004, "European Year of Education through Sport", the European Commission also encourages to support sport and physical activity through various initiatives in the field of education and training, including the development of social and civic competences in accordance with the "Key competences for lifelong learning" (European Commission, 2018). The practice of a sporting discipline and the collaboration within a team allow the diffusion of principles and values such as active citizenship, respect for rules, for oneself and for others, solidarity and discipline. They can also help to keep children away from illegal activities, to promote equal opportunities, to combat racism and violence and to encourage sustainable development (European Commission, 2007).

Even more, the school represents the ideal context of aggregation and participation in sporting life. An "engaging" teaching able to excite students with innovative and playful methods represents a winning weapon for teachers of physical and sports sciences.

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