SPORT AS AN EDUCATIONAL INSTRUMENT IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Club-based sports life has always offered space for exerting a deliberate educational effect on the social group of children and youth. In the beginning of the modern sport in Victorian England, this purpose became one of the main tasks of sport. From that time, the educational value of sport has been in focus of many political documents of European Union as well as of the Czech Republic. Especially, the socialization and improving young people personality are stressed. The article concentrates on children's and youth organised sport where space for educational influence is very convenient. The sports in which regular competitions are organised were surveyed. The data from sport statistics were used (year 1988, 1997 and 2014). It is, above all, the commercialization, privatization and individualization of sport that has caused significant structural changes in the participation of Czech adolescents in its organized forms. Statistical data reveal that there has been a total significant drop in those who are involved in sports clubs under the supervision of coaches and are, therefore, exposed to long-term systematic educational action.

Key words: *education, sport participation, organized sport, contemporary sport*

1. EDUCATION – ONE OF THE BASIC TASKS OF CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH SPORT

The cradle of modern sport is Victorian England where sport started to be incorporated into the school system from the end of the 18th century. Not always acceptable pastimes of students had to be replaced with more noble pastimes that would instil middle-class values in the young men. Modern sport and sports games arising at that time appeared to fit this purpose very well. Aristocratic exercises and diversions and folk games were deliberately used to create specific physical activities based on competition and the observation of pre-set rules. Such activities – sport – became a component part of the education of young gentlemen. They came not only from aristocratic families, but also from the newly arising class of industrialists and entrepreneurs, which had been developing in connection with industrialization. Sport became part of education at elite higher education and secondary schools in England and it was called to help to educate young men for their service in the British Empire (Baker, 1983; Slepičková & Slepička, 2012). Students and teachers were organized in amateur sports clubs. By the second half of the 19th century, the clubs had become public institutions, accessible to everybody. Parallel to this, sponsored professional sport was developing with its professional clubs. The club members had to pay membership fee, abide by the statutes and participate actively in the club life. Our intention, however, is not to describe the history of the evolution of modern-time sport. By the above facts, we only want to remind that the attempt to seek the means of education that would instil into young men the values and rules that must be respected not only in sporting activity, but which are also desirable to be applied in the work for the empire was at the onset of amateur sport. The educational potential of sport or physical activities was the essential part of many physical educational systems, including the German Turnerism or the Sokol (Falcon) Movement, always connected with the ideology of the given time and society.

The issues of education and sport stand in the foreground in the present time as well. In many European countries, the governments have started to consider sport and leisure time a public affair (Scheerder et al., 2011). The significant initiation of this approach comes from different European structures and documents which they develop. Among other things, they also repeatedly return to the educational potential of sport and the necessity of its support. The European Sport for All Charter (Council of Europe, 1975), stressing the instrumental value of sport with an emphasis on the young

generation (and also immigrants) can serve as the first example of this type of documents. The Helsinki Report on Sport of 1999 also, among other things, demands an effort for conserving and reinforcing the social and educational functions of sport (fair play, ensuring equal opportunities, etc.) (European Commission, 1999). In the same way, the White Paper on Sport, the European Commission document of 2007, highlights three different areas. The societal aspects of sport are elaborated in detail and the educational effect of sport is strongly accented in it.

The educational value of sport was the focus of special attention in 2004, which was declared the European Year of Education through Sport by the European Commission. This certainly did not happen by chance, but as a certain reaction to the transformations in sport, including the weakening of its "right" values due to, above all, the commercialization and privatization. "The aim of the European Year of Sport in general was to increase in general the awareness of potentially beneficial links between sport and education and use the values that are conveyed by sport to provide children and youth with the knowledge and skills which are necessary to not only further develop their physical potential and willingness to perform but also to increase their social skills within the multicultural context" (Scheerder et al., 2011, 4).

The elements of physical educational systems or sport were and are included in Physical Education at schools, as the subject name "education" implies, where, together with the cultivation of physical fitness and acquiring different physical/sports skills, the emphasis is on the educational component. The mutual connection between physical education and sport is obvious. Nevertheless, physical education falls under the school system, that is under the "direct" care provided by the state (even though private schools exist as well), but sport is primarily the concern of civil society and voluntary sports organizations and associations. In the last several decades, however, we have witnessed the trend when sport is no longer exclusively the concern of voluntary sports organizations, but people devote to it individually or use the services of the private sector whose position has tremendously increased in importance. This trend is evident in the Czech environment, too. It is understandable for the adult population, which currently practises recreational sport up to the senior age, i.e. mostly outside organized sport. But the question is whether the departure from the organized participation in sport is also happening in the children's and youth sport. Club-based sports life has always offered space for exerting a deliberate educational effect on this social group.

2. EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL OF SPORT

The educational benefits of sport are proclaimed in many political documents at the European level, but naturally also in domestic documents. The professional explanation of the relationship of sport to education is addressed in a special field of science – sport pedagogy. It builds on the general knowledge of pedagogy, which is constantly developing and modernised to reflect the development of society. It moves away from the definition of normative rules and principles of upbringing and education and opens up to individualization and postmodern values (e.g. Průcha, 1997). It is, however a question whether the excessive freedom in upbringing and education and the plurality of standards and values can bring only positive effects for both the development of the young individuals themselves and society. As a matter of fact, sport has always strived to respect the existing rules and principles, mainly fair play, in all situations and by all participants who are equal in sport. The same also applies to the "lower" form of sport, a game, where all its participants must respect the rules if they are to understand each other and have fun playing it. In a game and in sport in particular, learning the rules (both written and unwritten ones), learning how to do what is supposed to be done, what is allowed and what is not allowed, is the basis without which the game/sport could not be played at all. Therefore, we assume that it is more expedient to perceive the issues of education in sport from the position of more traditionally based education (and pedagogy) than modern educational approaches.

According to Svoboda, education can be considered "planned and purposive social action aiming at the optimum socialization of an individual with relative autonomy" (Svoboda, 2003, 23). It is of intermediary and largely indirect nature. Socialization means that an individual acquires skills, attitudes, values and behaviour. In education in sport, socialization means the acceptance of the

demands for a sporting activity with all that belongs to it (Slepička, Hošek & Hátlová, 2009; Rosenberger, 2013). Education has its educational aspects, individuals learn the skills and knowledge necessary for practising sport, and its aspects of affecting the athlete's personality. To practise sport, however, only motor knowledge and skills do not suffice, but the individuals should also have a positive attitude to sport, they should understand e.g. the rules of the sport, the principles of performing the respective movements and, above all, they should be able to be part of a specific living environment of a sports group, both in the narrow (team) and the broad sense (e.g. a sports club). Socialization is not only a complex, but also a long-term process.

In some cases, negative socialization impacts of sport can also be present. Therefore, apart from the development of young athletes' performance, it is also necessary to aim at their positive socialization and, to the extent possible, participate in the complex positive cultivation of the sports environment (Jansa et al. 2012). The following objectives of social education are listed by Jůva (2006):

- development of corresponding forms of social behaviour
- ability of adequate expression and communication in different social groups
- development of the awareness of solidarity
- behaviour supporting common interests
- art of resolving conflicts
- understanding of social structures and relationships, etc.

Sport takes many forms. In relation to the education of children and youth, we can distinguish competition, school, recreational, performance or elite/top performance sport. Except for recreational sport, which can also be practised in a non-organized way, the other forms of sport are practised in organizations. These are schools and, above all, sports clubs, which both create material conditions for the sporting activity and provide young athletes with specialists who coach them during their training and competitions. The very participation of these specialists creates the precondition for the above "planned and purposive social action" of an intermediary and largely indirect type of effect on young individuals. Thus, regarding the educational potential of sport, it seems desirable to involve children and youth in organized forms of sport. Together with the fulfilment of specific sport tasks, such as the acquisition of the necessary knowledge about sports, sports skills and the development of physical abilities, specific abilities are also developed (such as decision making, observation and assessment capacity, etc.), regulation of attitudes to all issues of sports life, influencing of interpersonal relationships and all-round effects on personality qualities and formation of needed habits (Svoboda, 2003). Under proper guidance, the personality manifestations are reinforced and potentially transferred to other areas of life.

As stated by the authors of publications of sport pedagogy, the possibilities of team and individual sports in terms of socialization somewhat vary (Svoboda, 2003; Jansa et al., 2012). In team sports, a considerable degree of mutual dependence among their members is required for the successful functioning of the group. Team sports have a somewhat different structure of individual activities and are connected with other social psychological phenomena. The collective concept of sport is based on the existence of a social group whose members share a common goal. They create common standards and regulate and influence their behaviour and actions accordingly. In individual sports, different social groups are also created, but compared to collective sports, some, frequently considerable degree of independence exists among the members during the sporting activity, and in a competition they directly compete with each other.

The actions of teachers/coaches/managers in sport should be based on a realistic strategy of sports education. Here, it applies that the effects of sport are not automatic and do not always have to be positive (Dovalil et al., 2004). The positives and negatives of intentional or non-intentional, direct or indirect action on individuals in sport, however, are not the subject of this article. These processual matters will be left to pedagogy and sport didactics. We are going to concentrate on one area of the conditions for the implementation of this process, on children's and youth organised sport. It is evident

that the organised process of sports preparation and participation in competitions creates space for the above mentioned influence on young individuals.

3. CHANGES IN THE PARTICIPATION OF CZECH ADOLESCENTS IN ORGANIZED SPORT

As was mentioned above, the interconnection of sport end education stood at the beginnings of modern sport. At present, as well, it is the subject of European or national political documents, often, unfortunately, only at a level of proclamations without any tangible results in the form of efficient programmes. In the Czech Republic, for example, the document called the Conception of Sport Development in the Czech Republic of 1999 (MŠMT, 1999) claimed that it was necessary to increase the number of compulsory Physical Education lessons in schools and support association-based children's and youth sport. However, these days, Physical Education at primary and secondary schools is still limited to only two lessons. As for association sport, it is going through a crisis and the optimum model of providing sport for the Czech environment is still being sought (Kraus, 2016; Slepičková, Slepička, & Mudrák, 2016). One of the consequences is insufficient financial support for children's and youth sport. The association sphere is also facing a shortage of voluntary staff who are needed mainly in the initial phases of the entry of young individuals into sport. Sports preparation at a higher to top-performance level, in turn, is usually supervised by professional and/or semi-professional staff.

With regard to the development of sport as a social phenomenon in general, and given the condition of sport and its support in contemporary Czech society, we were interested in the membership rates of children and youth in the association sports sector. They are best reflected by the sports clubs' statistics. The data collection methodology is relatively simple and, above all, stable over the long-term horizon. The data are not very rich indeed, as the monitoring of membership in particular sports and sports clubs is split into the basic age categories. The data can then serve for creating basic statistical surveys according to sports associations and territories (districts, regions and republic). The three main categories – adults, children and juniors are used to distinguish the members by age, where the latter two are included in the common category of youth. The youth category was in the centre of our interest when we were analysing the trends in organized participation in sport.

Due to the fact that there is no legislation in the Czech Republic that would oblige umbrella sports organizations to annually publish information on their membership, we used the data accessible from official sources, available in certain years, for the analysis. Doing so, we only surveyed the sports in which regular competitions are organized, particularly within the activity of the largest umbrella sports organization, the Czech Union of Sport (CUS has existed with some modifications and under different names since 1957), which associates the majority of sports associations in the Czech Republic. If some sports were not included in the analysis, it was because they either associate negligible numbers of young people, or they are covered by other umbrella organizations and the necessary data could not be obtained.

Table 1. Development of children and youth membership in selected sports

Sport/Year	**1988[1]**	**1997[1]**	**2014[2]**
Aerobics	0	-	1876
Athletics	23135	15756	27519
Badminton	2772	1852	4159
Baseball*	1385	2340	2513
Basketball	18066	14415	5304
Boxing	807	636	1147
Cycling	4219	1846	1256
ČUBU (Czech Union of Martial Arts)*	-	19697	15439
Floorball	0	1752	29719
Football	156293	134124	101110
Golf	398	546	6542
Handball	18146	9442	6651
Hockeyball	0	3194	2437
Horse riding	5007	4117	3001
Judo	12885	7578	4924
Canoeing	4253	3146	2363
Karate*	6361	-	-
Inline skating	0	0	1201
Bodybuilding	2542	1604	303
Ice hockey	30403	24642	15050
Skiing	25697	12917	5912
Rhythmic gymnastics	8342	4801	2749
National handball	4812	2661	2117
Orienteering sports*	4691	3298	3372
Swimming sports	12517	11629	16034
Field hockey	1364	1532	1144
Rugby	1664	964	1210
(Sports) gymnastics*	8815	4723	4783
Squash	0	249	630
Table tennis	17911	8918	4449
Chess	6785	3425	5361
Takewon-do ITF	0	2606	3873
Tennis	22721	17967	13877
Triathlon	0	605	2994
Rowing	2104	1543	1133
Volleyball	26524	17200	13073
Weightlifting	886	609	220
Wrestling	3078	1551	677
Total	**434583**	**343885**	**316122**

Source: [1] Slepičková (2001), [2] ČUS (2015)

Note:

1) value "0" means that the sport had not been institutionalised in the Czech Republic (Czech and Slovak Federal Republic) yet

2) "-" the data are not included in the sources used

3) "*" the organisational structure of the sports association for the sport was changed during the monitored period (division or integration of associations)

Table 1 presents data on the number of members in children and junior categories of selected sports. They include both sports with a long history and tradition, and sports which have either newly emerged recently have become more popular in recent years and attracted more people. The years for which the numbers of members are listed were chosen primarily for the reason of the availability of these data and their relative objectivity. In 1988, the last statistical survey was conducted by the former Czechoslovak Sports Association (ČSTV) as a unified sports organization. The year 1997 was the year of data collection on all separately existing voluntary sports organizations performed on the initiative of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic (with links to personal identification numbers). At present, statistics on the members of the Czech Union of Sport (CUS, former ČSTV) are commonly publicly available. Like in any statistical survey, the data presented here are also burdened with some errors.

Table 1 documents changes in the membership in selected sports over the last 25 years. Overall, the membership rate declined by nearly 30%, which significantly exceeds the decline in the numbers of persons in this population group due to demographic changes and aging of population. It manifests a shift away from collective and organized forms of activities.

Apart from the above correlations with the development and signs of today's sport, the table also reveals specificities of various sports. Numerous sports in which power or speed plays a key role in terms of performance do not have a sufficient base of young people interested in organized membership. These are sports either frequently associated with large-scale doping scandals or strongly professionalized (cycling), or having a long-term image of using prohibited drugs (weightlifting, bodybuilding). Some of these sports have moved into the sphere of providing paid services where competing in the true sense of the word no longer applies, nor do the rules regulating the respective sport in its organized form. Conversely, many sports building on technical skills are experiencing a significant boom. Examples include martial arts, which not only attract those interested in organized activities, but also thrive in the service sector. As shown by numerous surveys, many sporting activities of not only adults but also adolescents have presently moved into the sphere of individual recreational sports. Cycling, for example, belongs to the most popular leisure time sporting activity.

Table 2 presents the overall numbers of organized young athletes in typical individual sports, in team sports and Martial Arts sports, which are also individual sports, but by their nature and evolution over the past three decades they are specific.

Table 2. Comparison of organized youth participation in individual, team and Martial Arts sports

Sport/year	**1988**	**1997**	**2014**
Individual	109391	70565	86619
Team	302061	241252	203443
Martial Arts	23131	32068	26060
Total	**434583**	**343885**	**316122**

Note: Data from table 1 are used for sums in each of sport groups

In individual sports, there has been a drop by ca 20 000 members. The same trend is also evident in collective sports where there is a total drop by ca 25 % of the members. Due to their popularity, often associated with action films and the overall image of these sports, Martial Arts, have, more or less, remained on the same level.

Apart from the total numbers of organized members, there have also been significant changes in the structure of the popularity of particular sports. Besides traditional sports, which have maintained constant popularity worldwide (like soccer), new sports have emerged (floorball, triathlon) and found their place among the others. On the contrary, some of the sports which were popular in the Czech environment in the past like gymnastics or rhythmic gymnastics are in recession. There is a number of potential reasons for this ranging from changes in youth sport promotion to the opinions of the public

about the too high intensity of training in these sports since early childhood with potential negative consequences for health.

The social image of particular sports is changing where their economic aspects often play the key role. On the one hand, there are costs of young athletes' training which can be very high (sports equipment, membership fees, participation fees in competitions, etc.) and set high demands for the family time and budget in the long term. For individuals from less well-off social classes, such sports become unaffordable, which leads to social exclusion of many from sport and, consequently the membership declines (ice hockey, tennis). On the other hand, the child's support for sport can be motivated by a vision of his or her successful sporting career in the future associated with high, sometimes enormous incomes, and despite the low membership rate compared to the other sports, the numbers of members doing these sports are growing (golf). There has been a huge drop in the membership rates in skiing, which is not only demanding on the competition level, but its popularity has been affected by changes in the school curricula (ski courses are no longer compulsory in schools, and, therefore, fewer children gain experience in this sport), and the conditions offered by sports clubs have changed, too (e.g. ski lifts and resorts have been privatized).

There are, however, sports where the financial aspect does not play such a significant role, and still there is a decline in the membership rates. They include many team sports, not only the already mentioned ice hockey, but also, for example, volleyball, a sport with a great tradition in the Czech environment. The situation is similar in football, basketball and handball. Only a new sport, floorball, has developed very dynamically, although it is essentially a local sport, practised in only a few countries in Europe, and it is not an Olympic sport. Its relatively low financial demands, easy accessibility of playgrounds and support facilities in schools have won this sport the second position in terms of the membership rate, straight after football.

In the group of Martial Arts, there has been a slight increase and stabilization in the membership rate, but the popularity of individual sports is changing. There is a noticeable departure from traditional sports like wrestling or even judo, where the number of organized youth has fallen by more than a half despite the fact that it is an Olympic sport. On the other hand, the interest in new sports imported to our environment like aikido, taekwon-doo, karate has grown. Boxing has been experiencing a renaissance recently. These very sports or related sports skills, in particular, are presented in the above mentioned action films.

4. CONCLUSION

The state of organized (and unorganized as well, which is not addressed in this article) participation of children and youth in sport, including its structural changes reflects the transformation of sport in general and its development in the Czech environment in the last three decades. It is, above all, the commercialization, privatization and individualization of sport that has caused significant structural changes in the participation of Czech adolescents in its organized forms. Statistical data reveal that there has been a total significant drop in those who are involved in sports clubs under the supervision of coaches and are, therefore, exposed to long-term systematic educational action. The opinion that organized participation in sport can positively affect the overall development of young individuals, teach them knowledge, skills, values and standards transferable to other areas of their life (naturally under the conditions of a well conducted educational process) is generally accepted. The analysis of the data on the participation of children and youth in sport has also shown that the number of members in team sports has significantly dropped. This is so despite the fact that, compared to individual sports, team sports are generally considered to have a greater potential in terms of learning cooperation, aiming at a common goal, offering more space for socialization.

Individual sports are also affected by the loss of organized members. Sociological surveys manifest that even if children do not practise sport in sports clubs, they devote themselves to sport individually. In such sporting activities, however, neither regular and systematic training nor educational action exerted by coaches is present. The decline in the numbers of organized young athletes has also been found in sports that are usually accompanied by doping scandals (weightlifting, bodybuilding) or in

sports, usually individual ones, requiring very hard specialized training since the early childhood, which have often lost attractiveness for this reason (gymnastics). On the contrary, there has been a boom in many sports that require good technical skills and are presented through electronic media, close to the contemporary young population, in various forms. New sports, sports with a higher socio-economic status or, conversely, more affordable or systematically popularized, mostly individual ones, have gained popularity. This is naturally also linked with a typical current trend in society dominated by individualization, the self-assertion attempt, the effort to be better and reach a better performance than the others in order to achieve a financial reward and social prestige. But the question remains whether sport oriented in this way is not less effective in terms of its educational potential.

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