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MOVEMENT IN TRAINING & THE TRAINING ≡ MOVEMENT

At the beginning of the European Year of Education through Sport 2004, we knew that many people were happy that some attention was being given to sport and its educational value. We also had the impression that many people in training circles were shaking their heads: “What does sport have to do with quality training and education?” Or: “This is just another platform for the millionaire soccer players to get media coverage”.

In fact, there are some interesting twists to the story. In this article, we will outline these, emphasize our understanding of the concept of education through sport, give concrete examples, and point to some future possibilities in the field. For now, we dare to claim that “All serious youth trainers should consider using sport and physical activities as part of their work!”

► A political twist

Why wasn't the “European Year of Education through Sport” not just called “European Year of Sport”? Why add “Education”? Well, the answer is – at least partly – political. The European Commission can only engage actively and support policy areas that are described as community priorities in the treaties of the EU. And sport is not one of these priorities (it is in the new treaty, as we shall see, but this is not in effect yet). That means that the European Commission cannot simply deal with sport as sport in itself. However, if you add that little word “Education”, the picture changes. Education IS in the treaties, and using sport as a tool for education is more appropriate from a constitutional perspective. Problem solved!

So was it in fact just a cover-up, using the educational perspective for political purposes? Probably not only that. To the best of our knowledge, sport can in fact be an excellent tool for learning, socialisation, integration, value-discussions, etc. But this requires a certain view of sport; one on which there is far-reaching consensus.



Millions of Europeans watch, breathe and live for their favourite top-level soccer team. Players are idolised, games are televised and sport is a business of enormous economic proportions. The Olympic Games too, are a world event with no expense spared. The last television deal between the International Olympic Committee and the US-based TV-station NBC for example, brought in 2.300.000.000 US\$ for the coverage of three consecutive Olympic Games.

If you read the newspaper sports sections in an ordinary EU country, the focus is on a few, male dominated, elite/professional sports – and the results of the last game or race. And let's admit it – a lot of people read these sections!

We do not mean that elite/professional sport should be dispensed with. Not at all. There are certainly serious issues to be dealt with in elite/professional sport – poor finances in the clubs, doping, an increasing number of injuries and health problems, corruption etc. But these are issues that should be dealt with by those concerned. Our point here is that there

is a different world of sport altogether. One in which the emphasis is on broad participation, voluntary commitment, education and citizenship, to mention but a few. And this is where Education Through Sport comes into the picture.

Sport, when practised at local level – in clubs, in the streets and in schools – has great potential for educational purposes. We call it “Sport for All”. And it is important to note that we consider this a much broader view of sport. Sport can indeed be soccer games or swimming or running. But it may also be traditional games or dances or simply a new game invented for the occasion. The common factor is therefore the physical movement rather than the existence of different “regulated” sports.



Why then is “Sport for All” interesting in educational terms? Education through sport is for us a question of non-formal training – that is, training outside formally approved schools, high schools, universities etc. And we are not speaking just in terms of training to become better at a particular sport. Take, for instance, the distinction made in a recent study on the differences **between education for, by and through sports**.

Education **for** sport develops technical competences. This is normally linked to well-defined disciplines of competitive sport. In our concept of training, this is of limited interest.

Education **by** sport uses physical activity instrumentally to attain certain social goals such as ethnic reconciliation, public health, citizenship or social integration. “Sport for All” is therefore closely related to public welfare. And in training terms this is certainly relevant, having regard to the thematic objectives of the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

Education **through** sport is physical exercise which creates existential learning between human beings. Popular sport is personal development through physical encounter, it is a “school for life” and for creating trust. Here, education is a way of enabling the human being, of encouraging exercise, of empowering people. Obviously we are talking here about learning in a very broad sense – but a concept of learning that seems to be gaining ground in political and training debates recently.

Using these two distinctions (elite/professional sport vs. Sport for All and Education for, by, and through sport), we can start a meaningful discussion on the educational value of sport as a tool. And in our experience, sport should not just be used as a tool in formalised clubs. It is just as good (maybe even better) when used in training with a broader outlook, for instance for discussing European values, democracy and citizenship.

Example

Using a soccer game as an experiential approach to conflict management, leading to a discussion based on the sporting conflict.

Talking the talk and walking the walk

From our perspective, the European Year of Education through Sport 2004 was not only a great opportunity to promote this view of sport but also to increase the amount of actual training taking place in this field. That is why our organisation the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA, see more in the box) applied to the European Commission for funds to establish an International Academy of Sport for All (IASFA, see box and www.iasfa.org). It offers a range of international training opportunities for top leaders, youth leaders, employees and instructors in sport, culture and youth NGOs.

► **Young people and education through sport**

Young people are a special target group of IASFA and, a particular sub-programme called the International Youth Leader Education programme, IYLE, has therefore been set up. It aims to offer specific training opportunities and experiences to young people working in the field of youth, culture and sports. IYLE combines different forms and structures of non-formal education, always using sport and physical activity as a tool to promote discussion and exchange on social issues: issues such as intercultural learning, health issues, environmental protection, democracy, project management & international cooperation.

► **Sport and physical activity as a tool for social change**

Sport and physical activity have a huge potential to attract people from all kinds of social and ethnic backgrounds. Indeed, a large proportion of the NGO world is made up of sports organisations, local clubs, leisure time groups, etc.

These organisations have a major impact on the living conditions of individuals as well as an enormous potential to influence the social cohesion of society. Here, we are not talking about training to achieve excellence in a particular sport, but the benefits of participation in the social and organisational life of these associations.

The IYLE programme aims to use that great potential in enabling young people to become active members of their club, local community and wider environment. To achieve this goal, IYLE offers young people the opportunity to take part in different non-formal educational activities; like a 4-month training in open Danish adult education centres, 1-week international training courses, international forums and youth camps.

► **Moving and improving**

The IYLE programme will train about 600 young people in the next 2 years and will create strong links for networking and setting up new projects. The creation of a training manual containing lots of training activities combining physical activity and social issues will certainly be one of the highlights of the next two years' IYLE campaign and will serve as a vital resource for NGOs interested in Education through Sport. Last but certainly not least, IYLE will successfully contribute to the understanding and help build bridges between individuals, groups, local communities and Europe.





► Moving on

To sum up, we feel that a broader understanding of Education through Sport is needed. We suggest focusing on physical exercise and Sport for All as a tool for learning and training. Not just in sports clubs, but in all training situations. The tools are continuously being developed, and we encourage you all to establish partnerships to use them more widely – feel free to contact us by email.

As we already pointed out, sport is mentioned in the treaty that is to be ratified by member states in 2005 and 2006. That gives the European Commission some leverage to establish further programmes for sport. It provides opportunities – but it also poses threats: the main protagonists, such as the UEFA, IOC, elite/professional clubs, TV-stations etc., may take the opportunity to have EU policy turned to their advantage. We would prefer to place emphasis on making use of the potential in sport for training and education – “Sport for All.” While we wait for that movement, we intend to use the present year (2005), which has been declared the UN Year of Sport and Physical Education, see www.un.org/themes/sport, to highlight the possibilities and strengthen our network to enhance Education through Sport!

ISCA

International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA) is an international umbrella organisation for sport, culture and youth organisations. It was founded in 1995, and now has 140 member organisations from five continents.

ISCA

- promotes worthwhile events and experiences for member organisations
- seeks to encourage debate, clarify definitions and influence sports and cultural policies
- organises international festivals, exchanges, conferences, seminars, training courses and tournaments

For more information, please see

www.isca-web.org



IASFA

International Academy of Sport for All (IASFA) is a project initiated by ISCA with support from the European Year of Education through Sport 2004.

For the course calendar and more information, please see



www.iasfa.org

For more information on the distinction between education for, by and through sports, see



<http://www.iasfa.org/literature.htm>

IYLE

ISCA's “International Youth Leader Education” programme is specifically designed to integrate different ‘education through sport’ activities to promote social integration and non-formal education among youth. The activities include camps, non-formal training courses, seminars and forums. The integration of these activities creates a diverse yet cohesive programme that provides training, cooperation and exchange of information among young people.



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