

ARTICLE BY R.A. ROSA & I. SANNICANDRO - FOUR LANGUAGES ABSTRACTS (E)(F)(S)(P)

ADAPTED PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN ITALIAN SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES - STUDIES AND RESEARCHES

The course on *Adapted Physical Education* taught at Italian Universities is aimed at offering students competences to improve the quality of life of the people involved in the practice of motor activities.

Personalizing educational intervention means to apply the paradigms of adapted physical education to schools considering the concepts of *Ability* and *Performance*. These competences, if not adapted or personalized to everyone's needs, potentials and rhythms, represent a risk of limitations and restrictions, creating an additional gap in disabled students. The personalization of didactic processes also implies organizational and didactic choices regarding spaces/places, tools/gears, length and quantity of a motor assignment, its intensity and difficulty, breaks, time of engagement, variety, groups, rules, ways of control and evaluation.

Adapted Physical Activity is a didactic action aimed at allowing people to express their individual motor skills, regardless of their age or their physical state of health. It involves the social, emotional, motor, and cognitive dimensions of the personality.

Key words: adapted physical education; school; university; life quality; motor activity; didactics.

ÉDUCATION PHYSIQUE ADAPTÉE AUX ÉCOLES ET UNIVERSITÉS ITALIENNES - ÉTUDE ET RECHERCHE

Le cours sur Education Physique Adaptée fait dans des Universités italiennes a le but d'offrir a leurs élèves les compétences pour améliorer la qualité de vie des gens engagés aux pratiques des activités motrices.

Personnaliser l'intervention éducative signifie appliquer les paradigmes de l'éducation adaptée aux écoles qui donnent importance aux concepts d'*Habilité* et *Accomplissement*. Si ces compétences ne soient pas adaptées ou personnalisées au besoin, au potentiel et au rythme de chacun, elles représentent un risque de limitations et restrictions, qui vont produire sur l'élève handicapé un déphasage postérieur. La personnalisation du procédé didactique englobe aussi des décisions d'organisations et didactiques à propos de lieu, des accessoires, durée et quantité du travail moteur, intensité et difficulté de réalisation, intervalles, durée, variété, groupes, règles et méthodes de contrôle et évaluation.

L'Activité Physique Adaptée est une pratique didactique dont le propos est de permettre que n'importe quelle personne de n'importe quel âge dont les conditions physiques de santé exige des adaptations, puisse exprimer ses habiletés motrices individuelles. Il s'agit là d'un procédé qui englobe les dimensions sociale, émotive, motrice et cognitive de la personnalité.

Mots-clés: éducation physique adaptée; école; université; qualité de vie; activité motrice; didactique.

EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA ADAPTADA EN LAS ESCUELAS Y UNIVERSIDADES ITALIANAS - ESTUDIOS E INVESTIGACIONES

Las clases de *Educación Física Adaptada* de las Universidades italianas tiene el objetivo de ofrecer a sus alumnos las competencias para mejorar la calidad de vida de personas comprometidas con la práctica de actividades motoras

Personificar la intervención educacional significa aplicar los paradigmas de la educación adaptada en las escuelas que tienen en cuenta los conceptos de *Habilidad* y *Desempeño*. Si esas competencias no son adaptadas o personalizadas de acuerdo con la necesidad, el potencial y el ritmo de cada uno, pueden representar un riesgo de limitaciones y restricciones, produciendo en el alumno minusválido un desfase posterior. La personalización del proceso didáctico también implica decisiones de organización y didácticas respecto a localidad, accesorios, duración y cantidad del trabajo motor, intensidad y dificultad de su realización, intervalos, duración, variedad, grupos, reglas y métodos de control y evaluación.

La Actividad Física Adaptada es una práctica didáctica que tiene el objetivo de permitir que alguien de cualquiera edad cuyas condiciones físicas de salud requiera adaptaciones pueda expresar sus habilidades motoras individuales. Se trata de un proceso que engloba las dimensiones social, emocional, motora y cognitiva de la personalidad.

Palabras-clave: educación física adaptada; escuela; universidad; calidad de vida; actividad motora; didáctica.

EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA ADAPTADA EM ESCOLAS E UNIVERSIDADES ITALIANAS - ESTUDO E PESQUISA

O curso sobre *Educação Física Adaptada* ministrado em universidades italianas tem por objetivo oferecer a seus alunos as competências para melhorar a qualidade de vida de pessoas engajadas na prática de atividades motoras.

Personalizar a intervenção educacional significa aplicar os paradigmas da educação adaptada a escolas que levam em conta os conceitos de *Habilidade* e *Desempenho*. Essas competências, se não forem adaptadas ou personalizadas à necessidade, ao potencial e ao ritmo de cada um, representam risco de limitações e restrições, gerando no aluno deficiente uma defasagem posterior. A personalização do processo didático também implica decisões organizacionais e didáticas quanto a local, acessórios, duração e quantidade da tarefa motora, intensidade e dificuldade de sua realização, intervalos, duração, variedade, grupos, regras, e métodos de controle e avaliação.

A Atividade Física Adaptada é uma prática didática cujo objetivo é permitir que qualquer pessoa de qualquer idade cujo estado físico de saúde requiera adaptações possa expressar suas habilidades motoras individuais. Trata-se de um processo que envolve as dimensões social, emocional, motora, e cognitiva da personalidade.

Palavras-chave: educação física adaptada; educação; escola; universidade; qualidade de vida; atividade motora; didática.

ADAPTED PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN ITALIAN SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES - STUDIES AND RESEARCHES (E)

ROSA ANNA¹⁻³⁻⁴⁻⁵ & SANNICANDRO ITALO²⁻³⁻⁴⁻⁵

¹ *Teacher Adjunct Adapted Physical Activity (e-mail: ra.rosa@unifg.it)*

² *Researcher in Methods and Didactic of the Motor and Sport Activities (e-mail: i.sannicandro@unifg.it)*

³ *University of Foggia, Italy*

⁴ *Faculty of Medicine and Surgery*

⁵ *Degree Course in Motor and Sports Science*

PREAMBLE

Adapted Physical Education constitutes a new area of research in the curriculum planning of Italian Universities that offer a Degree in Motor Abilities.

The term "adapted physical activities", from the analysis of specific literature and in every day use, is very difficult to define, both referring to the curricular and extra curricular environment.

The current School Reform, through the perspective of the National Indications, sets in the personalized educative curriculum planning the fundamental axis of the formative path of every student.

In the area of "*Motor and Sport Sciences*" to personalize the educational intervention means to apply the paradigms of adapted physical education, in primary and secondary school.

Our purpose in this work is to set the pedagogical background, the area of activities, the places where to practice, the people whom these activities are addressed to and to put, in a dialectic relationship, the need to personalize the educational intervention and the formative goals.

1. ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES: THE REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

The orderly practice of motor and sport activities from a wider and wider public has set new psycho-pedagogical problems and methods aimed to let people practice physical and sport activities accordingly to their attitudes, capabilities and needs in a *life long learning* perspective (UNESCO, 1999). The access to the capability of practicing a motor or sport activity has become today a legal "obligation" that has slowly involved international (UNESCO e OMS) and European (COE, CEE) organizations and institutions. In Italy, the Ministry of Education (MIUR) initially with the Perseus project and subsequently with the PON projects (Programma Operativo Nazionale per le regioni obiettivo), financed by European Social Funds, has acknowledged that motor and sport activities have a high educational worthiness, so much that in measure 3, action 3.1 and 3.2 of the PON projects - aimed to recover, in the programmable modules the school dispersion in the primary and secondary school - it is also included the motor and sport education. Through the *intelligent doing* the motor and sport education points at the strengthening of the resiliency that presumes the existence, in every student, of a learning potential that overcomes the traumas provoked by adverse starting conditions, due to natural or cultural factors or to the use of different learning styles or to the development or to the prevalence of only one type of intelligence rather than another one.

The *corpus doctrinae* of the Adapted Physical Activity is currently constituted by theories and results of researches belonging to different backgrounds and different areas of studies (biomedical, psycho-sociological-pedagogical, motor and sport, legal) and to their relationships. The APA includes "that area of studies that includes motor, sport, physical activities, leisure activities, rehabilitation activities, fitness, dancing activities addressed to people of every age and in different contexts (home, school, community)" (ICSSPE, 2000)

The Adapted Physical Activity, deriving its knowledge from different fields, uses this ability in an integrated and complementary way; by appealing to individual methods, to make people reach or re-establish a harmonic state of well-being and health, and also through a more active lifestyle (OMS, 1998). There is enough scientific evidence to prove that among the most common and a relevant problem connected with modern lifestyles among the industrialized countries, hypokinetics is certainly included, with negative consequences for the motor development of kids and preadolescents. Numerous and contemporary studies have highlighted that disabled people with mental retardation are more exposed to this syndrome; hypokinetics leads to extreme negative and

harmful consequences from a physiological, psychological and socio-relational point of view. WHO has published a new International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health – ICF, 2001; this document represents the cultural turning point as far as the evaluation of the state of health is concerned because it considers as inseparable the complex relationships among body, mind, environment, contexts and culture, in so defining disability as a multifactor and interdisciplinary process.

The reading of ICF with its components (Functions and body structures, activity and participation, environmental factors) and the intervention areas of the APA (therapeutic re-educational, sport - recreational and agonistic -, leisure time and the beginning of a sport practice, educative) give us the opportunity to notice that they are complementary. The re-educative area, takes, thanks to ICF, a different value: it is now considered as the first useful step for a person to enter into a global model of social health, not only connected to his/her state of illness. Under this particular provision, the practice of motor and sport activities aims to aid in the recovery of a person that has suffered from a disability, in a global model of "social health", reorganizing his or her motor abilities in relation to the changed state of health. The purpose is that of having the person rediscover the potentials of the body and to test new and different motor situations to regain the autonomy of a normal daily life.

In the dominion "participation and interest" we consider the concepts of *Ability* (indicates the highest probable level of functioning that a person can achieve in the activities and participation) and of *Performance* (describes what the individual does in everyday situations).

These concepts are undoubtedly transferable in the educational area because pupils are constantly and daily challenged to express their abilities and their performances in terms of competences that, if not adapted or personalized to the needs, potentials and rhythms of everyone, risk to create more limitations in the activities and restrictions of the participation, creating in the disabled pupil an ulterior gap, preventing him/her from participating and being involved in the situations that he/she must face during his/her lifetime.

The dominion "environment factors" refers to the amateur and competitive level of the sport activities, to leisure time and to the beginning of a sport that, through the use of facilitators (prosthesis, wheelchairs, acoustic or visual devices etc.) allows, nowadays, people with disabilities to be integrated in the micro and macro systems; to overcome not only the architectural barriers but also the cultural ones; to promote an active lifestyle, to choose freely how to organize their free time; to guarantee the right to equal opportunities in order to prevent them from being *stigmatized*. The Adapted Physical Activity is therefore apt to be used to face all the problems that can emerge in a person and that are trying to keep him/her away from an adequate state of health.

2. ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN ITALIAN UNIVERSITIES

Today, APA is the focus of particular attention by the European Union and the World Health Organization, so much to request a deeper educational level and specific professional competences able to organize, lead and evaluate motor or sport paths adapted to the different needs of the public, carried out in formal structures (schools, hospitals, jails) in non-formal structures (voluntary associations, parishes), in informal structures (sport, cultural and recreational associations). The heterogeneity of the groups and individual differences, specific of every person, that emerge in these areas, demand for adapted paths, able to take into consideration various data but, most of all, different levels of health. In Italy, even if with a certain delay compared to other European and non-European countries, Universities have activated, within the Department of Motor and Sport Sciences, both Specific Degrees in class 76/S (Sciences and Techniques of adapt and pre-emptive physical activity) and Master Degrees in this specific area of study. The deep and multidisciplinary course that Italian Universities are offering is aimed to have students acquire, in the pre-emptive and adapted area, competences that can be used in different contexts and useful to improve the quality of life of the different people involved, through the practice of pre-emptive, recreational and sport, motor and sport activities. This course, well-supported by university studies and researches, addressed mainly to the pre-emptive function primarily, and secondarily, that motor activities carry out through a lifetime. Many well respected Italian authors have offered researches whose goal was to study the relationship between the health conditions of the users and the frequency, the length, the intensity, the gaps, the typology of activity, the age, the sex, the geographic origin of the same users.

3. DIDACTICS IN ADAPTED MOTOR ACTIVITY IN ITALIAN SCHOOLS

The reference frame, suggested by many well famous authors that in the course of time have generated different streams of ideas, is useful to set the necessary background to understand the concept of Adapted Physical Activity that finds its fundamental theories in fields such as psycho-motor doctrine, socio-motor doctrine, psycho-kinetics education and motor education and adopts the didactic efficiency of Physical and Sport Education.

Adapted Physical Activity is not another discipline, nor is it a sub-discipline of Motor Sciences or of Sport and Motor Education but it is a didactic process that encourages participation and expression of the people in sport and motor practices taking into consideration the capabilities, the difficulties, the different learning and developing styles and the different ability of thinking that belongs to everyone. It is, in every area in which it can be applied, a personalized didactic that utilizes *organizational choices* and *didactic strategies* aimed at assuring everyone success depending on one's own capabilities.

In Italian schools, using the expression Adapted Physical Activity, should not generate any confusion or request didactic solutions both broader than those indicated in the reference frames, and of those indications set specifically in the National Indications for writing a Personalized Educational curriculum, accordingly to the level of the school that we are referring to. To adapt an intervention in Motor/Physical Education does not mean to reduce or nullify the specific goals of learning and the formative goals that the discipline includes or that are implied, but it requires that some adaptations are put in place depending on students' special needs. The request, included in the National Indications, to personalize the educational process, impose that Teachers' choices be thought and carried out basing the decision on their students' characteristics. The effects of the personalization of suitable and *adapted* didactic paths to the abilities and capabilities of disabled students, consent to diminish the *gap* between the goals and the abilities of the students, promote *resiliency*, increase the interest and the motivation, and strengthen the self-confidence through *the doing*. Motor experiences, to be considered significant, should be varied in a range of difficulties and therefore be accessible; on the contrary, motor experiences with a high level of difficulty will produce a state of demoralization and a feeling of incompetence (repeated failures, it is well known, alter the individual process of self-confidence). In this way it will be possible to control the so-called *potential development area* or *zone of proximal development* described for the first time by L. Vigotskij. There is, in fact, a close connection between the qualities of the activities to be carried out and the pupil's characteristics. If the assignment is too complex and the pupil cannot be, by definition, successful, it is likely that a learning block will emerge. In order to avoid the rise of these problems, we must not commit the opposite mistake, as to say, to offer activities that have no difficulty at all, because the learner, not learning anything new, will end up demoralized as well (Cottini, L, 2003). On a methodological approach it will therefore be necessary:

- To promote the transformation of the movements keeping in consideration the bodily experience and the motor past of the student (new knowledge is based on previous knowledge);
- To support, through recreational and cooperative activities, the confluence of the social, physical and personal environment;
- To encourage one to think in a divergent way through the method of problem solving or to give answers and motor solutions that range from the simplest to the most complex according to abilities and capabilities of everyone;
- To evaluate the progresses that have been effectively noticed but also to consider as useful the unsuccessful outcome in order to make the student harmonically improve in the learning process.

The personalization of didactic processes also implies organizational and didactic choices in relation to spaces/places, tools/gears, length and quantity of a motor assignment, intensity and difficulty of doing a motor assignment, breaks, time of engagement, variety, groups, rules, ways of control and evaluation, different but complementary. The evaluation contributes to give a relative consideration to the feared unsuccessful outcome and to promote a dynamic personalized project in so far as to also allow for the finding of points of support in order to progress.

CONCLUSIONS

Adapted Physical Activity is a didactic action whose aim is to allow every person of every age, whose physical state of health requires some adaptation, to express his/her individual motor skills.

Nowadays it assumes the characteristics of a true didactic-educational process in so far as it responds to the needs of the users of different ages, not only from a motor point of view but, mainly, in referring to the functional interactions of the person, because it involves all the dimensions of a personality (the social one, by developing healthy and positive interpersonal relationships referring to competition and win-loss; the emotional one by helping the person to increase his/her self-esteem and trust in other people; the motor one by adopting more active and healthier lifestyles during one's entire life; the cognitive one by acknowledging the benefits on the quality of life of the practice of a motor and sport activity). APA represents, as far as teaching Motor and Sport Sciences is concerned, the most effective didactic strategy because it allows participation in an active way and it is focused to one's own personal process of motor, psychological, intellectual and social growth. Adapted Physical Activity constitute *"the art and science of controlling data, in order to reach the desired goals"* (Sherrill,C,1997).

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