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MOTOR ACTIVITIES AND SPORT IN THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE CAMPANIA REGION

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Abstract

This article aims to monitor the situation of the school and extracurricular practice related to the motor-sport activities in Italy and, in particular, in the Campania Region. According to this aim, data have been collected on a national and local level, to identify the presence of critical factors that may influence the socio-cultural development of the students. To carry out this survey, it has been adopted a descriptive methodology which gives an exploratory feature to the study. The data collected about the practice of sports and motor activities in Italy have been provided by the Italian Institute of Statistics; those related to the cultural level of the students have been provided by the Italian Institute for the Evaluation of the Education and Training System. They highlight a relationship which may be interpreted according to the theories outlined in this introductory phase, which shows the critical state of the Campania Region with regard to the students' practice of sports and motor activities as well as their cultural level.

Keywords: Motor activities, Elementary school, Sport.

Introduction

In the past decades, in Italy, there has been a progressive enhancement of motor activities in educational contexts¹, also witnessed by a change of terminology that highlights its educational purpose. In 1985 the Italian National Program for the elementary school had already adopted the term "motor education" to replace the traditional term "physical education", so showing the new meaning given to any motor activity having performatory, playful and / or communicative purposes in the overall development of the person. The importance given to each subject aged between 6 -10 years is not surprising when considered in the light of the highly educational function of motor games, particularly used in primary schools as a teaching methodology supported by the theoretical breakthroughs of the modern educational research. In fact, many studies of psychology, sociology, anthropology and philosophy, confluent in this area of investigation, seem to confirm the hypothesis that the motor feature of the game has an important role in the social, psychological and cultural life of the child (Blos, 1993). With regard to this, many scholars assert its value, recognizing the game as the process through which the child reaches his relationship with the body and the movement, encouraging the development of the personal as well of the others identity and, consequently, that of the whole of society (Sibilio, 2003). It is expressed in two specific modes: free game, *pure and simple*, and *organized* game, which, unlike the first one, has more or less rigid rules.

The organized game is a sort of evolution of the *pure and simple* game, it has the same many forms of the sport and it primarily has a social function. The organized game forms players' communities and makes the subject acquire social and cultural patterns of behavior (Mead, 2010). This perspective is part of a wider scientific scene, which recognizes the playful activity an educational function, founding of the human civilization "... that arises and develops itself in the game and as a game" (Huizinga, 2002). It must be analyzed and studied as an activity which finds its own motivation and objective in itself to make possible the understanding of its true essence and the appreciation of its creative talents, generating culture. Therefore it is not unlawful to believe that the crisis that the society and the

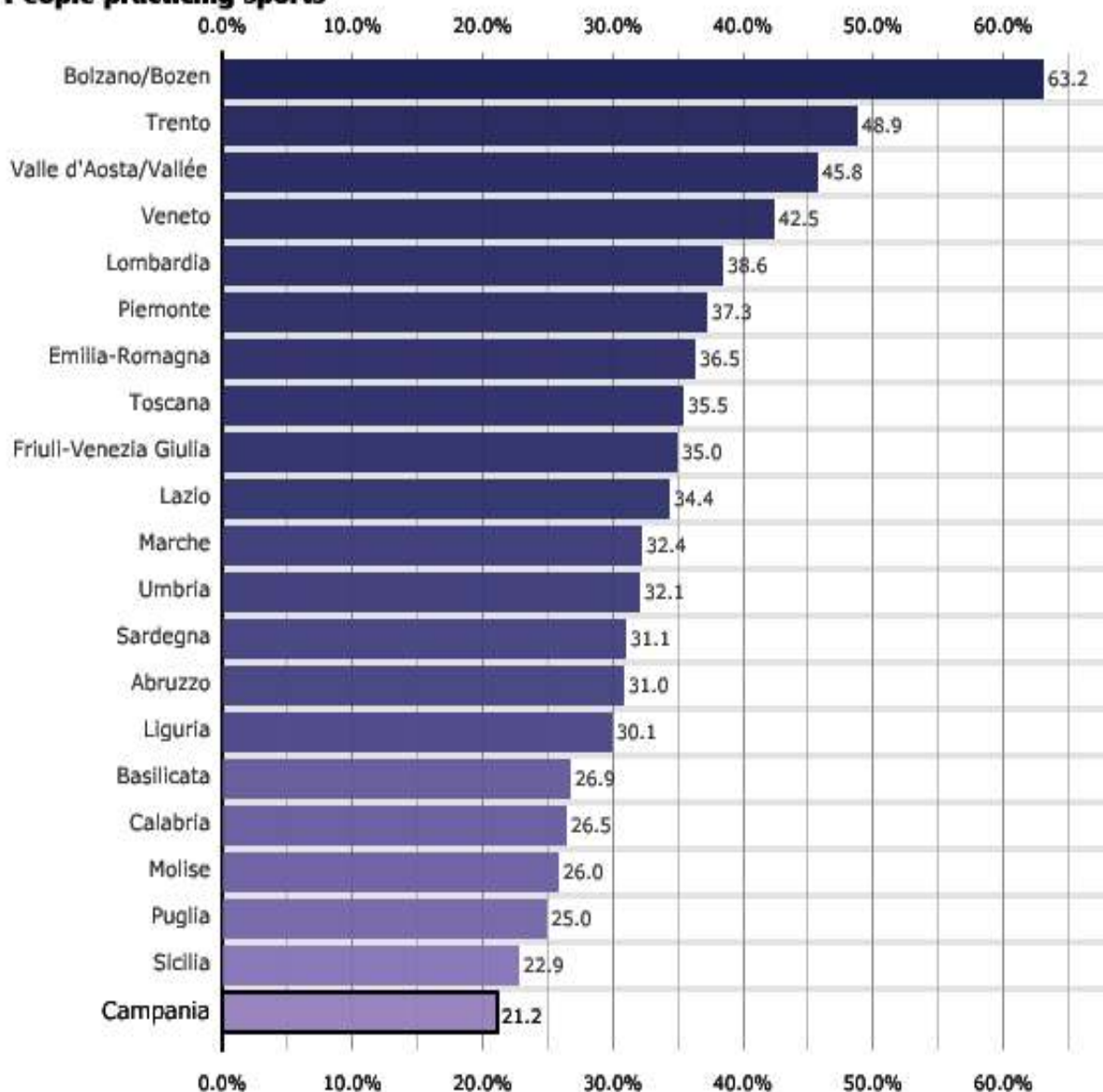
Western culture are undergoing is influenced by a gradual social and cultural detachment from the game, although supported by an education of the civil values, translated in specific educational information into Italian school curricula. The absence of the game-culture relation does not seem to correspond with an appropriate spread of the sport which, permanently deprived of its recreational character, takes on new forms in today's society. In its aggressive displays, it seems to respond to cathartic demands and it seems to take the form of an "imaginary scenario designed to cause an excitement of some kind, mimicking that caused by real-life situations, but without its risks (Elias, 1989)". Therefore, its social as well as educational values find expression in the self-control exercise that facilitates interpersonal relationships. In this perspective, it seemed useful to investigate the practices of motor and sports activities in Italy, with the aim of monitoring the Italian phenomenon, with particular reference to the Campania Region, using a descriptive methodology that takes the form of an exploratory phase, preliminary to a further investigation that allows to substantiate the correlations identified in a wider theoretical framework. In particular, we looked for a possible relationship between the participation to the motor and sport practice and the school performance as an expression of the cultural level of a social community.

¹ National Guidelines of 2007. *Body, movement and sport*

Data analysis

The data collected on the motor activities and sports in Italy were provided by ISTAT (National Statistics Institute), which is a public research institution that serves the community through the production and communication of statistical information, analysis and forecasts. It has been considered the 2010 survey of the Italians and the sport². The study found that in Italy, people aged over 3 years who play sports are about 19.2 million (32.9% of the population in the same age group). The motor activity is shown by the survey as a practice characterized by a strong youth component: the highest odds of participants in fact are found in individuals aged between 6 and 14 years (more than 60%) - (Graph 1). The territorial analysis shows a different level of adhesion to the motor activities in the different geographical areas of the Country. The North is the region with the highest share of people who practice motor activities, with peaks around 60%. The South is characterized by the lowest level, with less than a quarter of the population aged over 3 years who states to practice this kind of activities. The Campania Region, located in the south of Italy, is the region with the lowest share of sports practitioners; only two out of ten people claim to practice motor activities.

People practicing sports



The scenario of the region campania

The position at the bottom of the tail of Campania in the ISTAT ranking of Italian regions is certainly an effect of numerous socio-economic factors. First of all, the causes are to be found in a lower presence in the Campania region of organized structures used for sporting activities, as well as the different economic situation in

² ISTAT, People aged over 3 years old who practice sport, 2010.

Campania respect to the northern regions. In particular this economic situation seems to also affect the efficiency of the school system in Campania, as it comes out from the results of the *INVALSI* tests.

INVALSI TEST.

The INVALSI tests (National Institute for the Evaluation of Educational and Training System) is a research organization that deals with the assessment of the educational system and the monitoring of the students' learning level. The *INVALSI* tests are performed to assess the learning levels of the Italian school students. The results of the *INVALSI* tests of the 2009-2010 school year, given to students attending the second year of the Italian primary school, have been summarized in Table 1³. The research was carried out in 1,385 primary schools spread all over Italy, with a sample made of 39,299 students. As it can be noted, Campania is at the penultimate position, since its score amounts to 2.33 percentage points below the Italian average. The gap becomes even more evident when compared with the regions of northern Italy. In this case Campania is 3.87 points below the average.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

It seems interesting to note that the regions with a higher degree of efficiency of the school system also show a greater adhesion to the sport phenomenon. In fact, the two elements have a mutual coefficient of about 60% (excluding the province of Bolzano). Particularly significant in this context is the position of the Campania region that stands at the lowest levels in both cases. The analyzed data seem to suggest that, given that more than 60% of individuals who practice sport in Italy are aged between 6 and 14 years, the policies of the public

primary education implemented in the Campania region are not suitable for young people who start sports. It is also interesting the datum of the economic wealth of the people from Campania, which, even in this case came in last place in the analysis of the national wealth, with an average P.I.L per person amounting to 12,776.4, about 35% below the Italian average⁴. It seems likely that the economic conditions have significantly affected the two phenomena taken into consideration and that they may be a possible cause of it, but the data in our possession cannot describe this phenomenon without permitting, in the absence of future, more detailed analysis and the identification of its causes and dynamics. It is clear that this analysis can only be considered as a pilot study, with highly descriptive and exploratory purposes. It outlines a critical scenario of the Campania Region which needs further investigations and actions aimed at a social-economic-cultural reconsidering of the sport and the motor activities and a reassessment of the latter in the educational practices in schools and after-school contexts.

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| T. 3.1 scores of primary classes for each region | | |
|--|-----------------------|----------------|
| Geographical area | Region | Average scores |
| | Valle D'Aosta | 62.22 |
| | Piemonte | 61.79 |
| | Liguria | 58.62 |
| | Lombardia | 60.98 |
| | Bolzano italiano | 57.48 |
| | Trento | 61.06 |
| | Veneto | 58.92 |
| | Friuli Venezia Giulia | 60.21 |
| | Emilia Romagna | 59.81 |
| | Toscana | 59.05 |
| | Umbria | 60.63 |
| | Marche | 60.44 |
| | Lazio | 59.78 |
| | Abruzzo | 59.97 |
| | Molise | 61.33 |
| | Campania | 56.51 |
| | Puglia | 57.68 |
| | Basilicata | 60.84 |
| | Calabria | 59.16 |
| | Sicilia | 53.10 |
| | Sardegna | 58.71 |
| Italy | | 58.84 |

Tabella 1

³ INVALSI tests, school year 2009-2010.

⁴ ISTAT(2010). *We, Italy. 100 statistics to understand the Country where we live*.

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