

„The International Sports Federations affirm that the practice of sport and the acceptance of its ethics is an essential component in the education of youth by teaching self discipline, respect for opponents and freely accepted rules, team spirit and good fellowship, at all levels.“

„The sports-spectacle, when not having any educational counterpart, ends by producing a saleable product designed by satisfying spectator's expectations and the interests of third parties. The competitor becomes a professional entertainer and ethical considerations are pushed aside by marketing strategies.“

(Declaration of GAISF, Articles 41 and 12)

Education through sport

Sport is characterized by constant change, which impacts on its confrontation with reality and, hence, also on the cultural values and educational significance of sport.

Today experts readily acknowledge the ever growing importance of sport for military training schedules and the role that armed forces play in national and international sports activities. In this context it is therefore justifiable to reflect upon the contribution sport can make to education as well as upon the capabilities of the armed forces to meet this challenge.

Definition and historical review

One out of many definitions describes *education* in general as

all planned activities that contribute to the physical, spiritual, and moral formation of (young) people, so that, with all their skills and capabilities, they may become well balanced, round and responsible personalities, strong in character and in tune with prevailing norms

or, from the point of view of the educandus,

one's ability to adapt oneself to the moral and technical standard of the group to which one belongs and to contribute to the enhancements of its cultural potential and civilization during one's life-time.

Sports education is the

application of these measures and abilities to a restricted field of activities: sport with its huge variety of possibilities. To have an educational effect however, sport needs to go beyond pure exercise, serving a purpose and yielding a result that transcends the limits of the merely physiological, and the sportsman must also be prepared to accept the respective educational goals, thus making it his own.

These demands lead to a clear distinction between *sports education* on the one hand and *physical training* on the other.

Since the dawn of civilization, sports education in its widest sense has been vital to every culture. Due to ideology gaining influence over this education, models with varying political backgrounds have come and gone in the course of the centuries.

In ancient times sports were regarded as acts of worship and, at the same time, as preparation for war through tough physical exercise.

Greece made elements of physical education and sport a part of politics. Not only was sport a means of education but also served as a guideline for politics, aesthetics, and morality. Thus, considering physical exercises a means of strengthening both, will and character, the Spartans placed physical education at the centre of their state politics. Sporting competition was looked upon as a test for war. In Athens education through the conduct of sport was regarded as an important element for the formation of young people; nationwide interest was roused by athletic exercises and games. The importance of the Olympic Games, of which records date back as far as 776 b.c. best exemplifies this interest.

Derived of its spiritual backbone, sports education suffered a setback in Rome. The circus saw its vilest form in brutal games. In 393 a.c. THEODOSIUS put an ignominious end to the Olympic Games of the Antiquity.

As for the Middle Ages, we know of games and tournaments, which were almost the nobility's exclusive entertainment.

In the following centuries of the Baroque and the Age of Reason, physical exercise almost entirely ceased to be a means of education although the pamphlets published in its support by authors such as MONTAIGNE, ROUSSEAU, and PESTALOZZI largely contributed to the

development of a theory of physical education. This theory abounded with conflicting ideas since the theoreticians of pedagogics realized the different approaches made, yet this conflict hardly had any bearing on reality due to the uprise of sport.

With its roots in England, sport spread more and more. Toward the end of the 19th century, its organization also gained momentum on an international scale: the International Olympic Committee was founded in Paris in 1894, and the first modern Olympic Games were conducted in 1896.

At the beginning of the 20th century, a new interest in sport was kindled and new cultural horizons became visible, thus accelerating the development albeit not uniformly. On the one hand demands from the military side again led to a tendency to make sport an element of military training, while on the other, primarily in the Anglo-Saxon world, a concept of sport developed which was immun from the use of sport for military purposes. There sport was looked upon as an important element that met human and social demands, thereby serving as an excellent instrument for social integration.

It is characteristic of sport today that it is used by the various powers in their constant quest for hegemony, be it of an ideological, political, economic, or of any other nature. National governments, the big financial and economic entities, and not forgetting, the managers of powerful means of communication, are well aware of the enormous socio-political role of sport. It is clear that the different political systems, geographical factors, and economic and technical means result in wide differences in the capability of nations to develop, promote, and control the conduct of sport.

Brief, incomplete, and sketchy though it is, this historical review shows that physical exercise has always been a means of education, serving different purposes of worship, games, ceremonies, humanism, education, and sport in itself, depending on the respective era.

Educational goals

The concrete goals of today's sports education are most concisely described in the formula that it is primarily necessary

- to know oneself,

- to become aware of one's individual sport and sport in general,
- to maintain this awareness and out of it
- to constantly strive for the best.

To perceive one's skills and qualities as well as the possibilities of one's body and mind is to make the first, indispensable step. Knowledge is required about one's body, the functioning of its systems and how to influence them favourably, as well as one's health and the prophylactic, natural methods of building up, improving and preserving it. It is important to experience one's body through its movement and one's control over it and to become aware of the pleasure, entertainment, diversion, and calmness to be derived from the playfulness of sport as well as the natural demand in our mechanical world for movement as an expression of life, as the use and, at the same time, liberation of the body, and as a means of communication. Obviously, a certain degree of aggressiveness is inherent in every human being and sport can be an outlet for it, thus preventing violence by avoiding the adversary's destruction or subdual and replacing it by accepted victory on the basis of the application of rules.

It is true that most values are the same for all sports yet each kind also has its specific ones. The sportsman must become aware of these values. Sports education cannot do without such awareness since it does not yield its effects through physical movement itself but, rather through the steadfast pursuit of these values.

With reference to KURZ sport has a sixfold *meaning*.

- By doing sport, people search for special bodily experiences, for bodily balance, for a workout as comprehensive as possible, and for the resulting good feeling. They expect sport to exert a positive influence on their fitness, their health, and their shape.
- Through sport people search for fascination, sensations, and pleasure that can be associated with bodily movements as such. Through the movements performed in sport, they gain access to experiences of a special kind, particularly in nature and about nature.
- People seek to use sportive movements as a vehicle to formulate messages about themselves; they want to express something in this way; they want their movements to appear skilled, artistic, impressive, beautiful, and of aesthetic value.

- People are attracted to sports as a field of activity in which one can set one's goals, strain oneself, measure up to challenges, compare oneself with others, find out one's limits and capabilities, experience the appreciation of others, and recognize one's own value.
- In the field of sport people seek open-ended situations that cause tensions, but are not necessarily threatening. They search for experiences full of risk and adventure, the thrill of an uncertain situation, and the relief to follow.
- In the field of sport people seek togetherness, a special, and often easier communication, the experience of a close human relationship, and social life.

Each of the answers presented above characterizes an special aspect of sport that can be important for the individual. The importance of each aspect may be different for different sportsmen. Each of these six meanings however, is not only a justification of sport, but characterizes also in itself under the living conditions prevailing today a real need or human necessity.

Sports education must make people ready to do their best and give them a longing to compete. It should of course be joyful, but cannot always be done without effort, fatigue or sacrifice. It trains human behaviour by teaching rules, their observance, and the acceptance of sanctions in the case of infringement. By teaching respect for one's teammates and competitors, the right attitude towards defeat and victory, the observance of *fair play*, i.e. *rules written and unwritten*, and the refusal of *victory whatever the cost*, it instills self-control in the sportsman in every situation and promotes respect for mankind. Solidarity and team-spirit are fostered by integration into a team.

The role of the military

Undoubtedly, family and school are most actively involved in (sports)education. Among the institutions contributing to it, the military has hitherto been attributed only a modest role; pedagogics has had problems considering it another useful means of tackling tasks of (sports) education. Of course, the military did little in the past to improve its image in this respect. Basically, it regarded itself as a training institution having to lead groups, motley as a rule and

different in traits, attitudes, and interests, to a clearly defined target as quickly as possible by means of techniques that had stood the test over prolonged periods of time and often even set methodological examples for the civilian sector. It is true that physical fitness was always important yet the very term of *physical training*, used in many armed forces for training meant to improve it, implying the non-existence of any element of (sports)education. Direct effects of (sports)education were only created in the few fields in which some aspects of (sports)education formed a purposeful part of an educational process, such as in the formation of key personnel. For the bulk of trainees such effects were only indirect, mainly through the example set by individual instructors or commanders and, of course, in a minor form as a by-product of *physical training*.

The understanding of *military training* itself has not changed in principle yet time calls for some new aspects. *Fitness* and *health* are prime concerns of modern society and are reflected in education policies. The pursuit of these goals takes family and school to the limits of their abilities. Therefore armed forces also are more and more tasked with the forming of citizens. Armed forces have thus become a link in a chain, often even the *school of the nation*, and as some think, the last real chance to reach the respective goal of education.

In this context, a very special psychological aspect deserves particular attention. Each period of individual development has its own characteristics and its specific effects on the educative task. Generations also usually pass through a developmental process that is somewhat similar to the individual's one. The most remarkable event, comparable to the discovery that the individual makes of himself during adolescence, is the new awareness of the *we*, the perception of the strength of the group as such, the discovery of the intelligence, the physical and moral force of his generation, which are in no way inferior to those of his elders. The group behaviour of a generation is of special significance for the psycho-social behaviour patterns of youth around the age of 20, when National Service is generally effected. But it is not only the generation group that conditions the behaviour of youth; the norms and clichés of any other (normal) group in which the individual is included have an enormous motivation influence over his choice of personal behaviour patterns. From the psycho-social point of view National Service in general and especially in the very field of sport may be considered a

period for recovering attitudes of assimilation and may not only become a great opportunity for reinforcing and broadening major learning patterns but may also lead to a linkage with circles that will enrich social behaviour into which individual values may be fully integrated.

It is a fact that values of sport have always been applied to training in modern armed forces. More and more however, at least in theory, they are being associated with educational tasks. It is true that training programmes are increasingly more diversified and concentrated despite the fact that training periods remain the same or even become shorter. There is the apparent paradox that, nonetheless, making citizens realize their physical capabilities and live accordingly, even as soldier in the reserve, should have priority over superficial and ephemeral (intermediate) training results. In other words and as a maxim at the same time: *education through sport must lead to education for sport!*

The military has largely contributed to the rapid development of *competitive sports* and continues to make so big a contribution to it that without its support many countries would not be able to keep their sporting standards with regard to quantity and quality. Both, the individual promotion of top athletes and the numerous international military sports events, conducted on all continents, are important factors, enriching competitive activities, year after year, according to the motto of CISM that sport should create friendship and thus contributes to the maintenance of peace.

All the above mentioned goals of *sports education* in general apply, without change, to *military sports education* as well. Many armed forces have already taken them into account with regard to their respective regulations and manuals as well as to the training of necessary key personnel, which is often conducted at civilian universities and institutions or, at least, in close cooperation with them. To spread these ideas and to execute them more and more in daily routine training will be chance and challenge for the military in the years to come.