



ROLE OF LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN SPORTS

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ABSTRACT :

Life skills learned during high school sport are being transferred for use at various stages across the lifespan (Kelsey Kendellen, 2014). Danish and Donohue (1995), defined life skills as the skills and attitudes learned during sport participation and their application to daily life. Life skills enhance the development of the psychological skills that are required to deal with the challenges of everyday life (Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish, & Theodorakis, 2005). These skills can be physical, behavioral, or cognitive (Danish & Donohue, 1995). Life skills are similar to physical skills in that they can be learned through demonstration and practice. Many skills learned in sports can be transferred to daily life such as the ability to perform under pressure, solve problems, meet deadlines, set goals, communicate, handle success and failure, work with a team, and receive feedback. Being equipped with life skills will not only improve the athletes' current athletic experience, satisfaction and performance, but these skills will inevitably have a positive effect on their school-, private- and working lives. It further needs to be emphasized that being an athlete is not an occupation that will last a life time, and thus it is essential to equip athletes with skills that will enable them to eventually move on to another career.



KEYWORDS : Life Skills, Psychological Skills.

INTRODUCTION

The healthy development of youth is a fundamental building block of our society. Efforts to promote positive personal growth and optimal functioning in young people permeate almost every salient social sphere including the family, education, religion, media, economics, and sport. Young people struggle to gain the skills that will help them become active, productive citizens in their nation's economy and workforce. Life skills program uses games and sports to teach young people conflict resolution, time management, decision-making, teamwork and communication skills that can be readily applied to their daily lives. The skills that they learn will last a lifetime and prepare them for the future.

The World Health Organisation (1999) proposed a definition of life skills, referring to the psychosocial skills and abilities that can be practiced to promote desirable qualities, such as self-esteem, and sociability. As a predominant driver in the field, Danish et al (1995) defined life skills as those skills that enable us succeed within the environments in which we live.

Within their definition, life skills may be behavioural (e.g., communicating effectively with peers and adults) or cognitive (making effective decisions, interpersonal (e.g., being assertive) or intrapersonal (e.g., setting goals) life skills that are required to deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life (Hodge & Danish, 1999).

Sport can provide an educational context for acquiring life skills but highlight that interactions with key

social agents (peers, parents and coaches) are crucial components of how people learn life skills through their involvement in sport. In particular, peer interactions appeared to be the most meaningful aspects of youth sport participation (Nicholas L. Holt et al, 2009).

The development of life skills has been most effectively researched and practiced within organized youth activities (e.g., Larson et al., 2006). One context of organized youth activity that has been considered particularly effective in transferring life skills to young people is sport. Historical records demonstrate the value that sport has always been considered to play in personal development. "The moral value of exercises and sports far outweigh the physical value" (Plato, 1920). Even today the assumption that sport builds character is a foundation of the Olympic movement (Olympic Charter, 2004). This value placed on sport has allowed sport to permeate almost every salient social sphere (e.g., family, media, education, economy, religion) and be connected to the larger ideologies of our culture (Coakley & Pike, 2009). These ideologies allow individuals to make sense and give meaning to the world around them as well as identifying what is considered important and right within a particular cultural milieu. Danish (2002) noted that sport is a particularly salient context for youth development. He argued that sport has always been more than a game and can contribute to the personal growth of young people. Gould et al (2007) found that successful coaches integrated the development of life skills into their coaching.

In fact, these coaches recognised the teaching of life skills as an integral part of sport and aimed to provide specific strategies that targeted their development and transference. Danish and colleagues (Danish, Taylor, Hodge, & Heke, 2004) have also noted the need for young people to be continually exposed to the positive and deliberate strategies that specifically target the transference of life skills.

The recognition that life skills development through sport needs to be deliberate, systematic, continual, with explicit strategies to encourage transference has led to the development of a number of programs aimed to develop life skills. Sports can provide a valuable vehicle for teaching life skills when these lessons are learned and transferred. Youth should believe that the sport skills learnt in the sports arena can and do become used in other settings, and similarly life skills learned also can be used in sports. For transferability to take place, one should believe that they have skills and qualities that are valued in other settings. To excel in sports, the use of the body from the neck down alone is not required, but there is a lot more as they must plan, set goals, make decisions, seek out instruction, and manage their arousal levels as a routine part of their athletic participation.

Life skills are taught not caught (Hodge, 1988), they must intentionally be acquired, practiced and perfected throughout the athletic experience and outside the sport arena. Psychologists, Physical educators through their education and training can make sure skilled athletes develop the necessary work ethic and life skills to be successful by stressing the importance of constant improvement, rather than just winning.

Sport skill to be considered a life skill, it must be successfully transferred and applied beyond sport. Life skills transfer as an ongoing process whereby he/she continually interacts and interprets his/her environments to produce positive or negative life skills transfer outcomes.

By emphasizing these life skills and by talking about how these characteristics lead to success in and out of the sports arena, parents and coaches can teach athletes that success is not all about physical ability, it's about how well they combine this ability with their attitude. Like anything else, life skills take work to develop. While there are many life skills that can be taught through sport, it is up to the adults involved to use "teachable moments" to ensure that athletes learn these skills and develop them for success outside of sport.

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