

## **“WORLDWIDE TRENDS OF SPORT FOR ALL - a book for the year 2000 ”**

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In The Berlin Agenda for Action, published at the end of 1999, at least one area of sport is practically related to the central conception of life-long education which introduces that statement. It is Sport for All, a three-decade movement whose fundamental propositions are very close to the ones developed by international sports institutions, physical education, health and leisure, all put together by ICSSPE in Berlin (1).

In fact, the so-called Sport for All has been concretely promoting active life for people of all age groups but not exaggerating on the aspect of competition as the top sports have always done. Moreover, these non-formal activities depend less on the administration and on the financial resources than on school physical education, frequently considered as deficient in any country (2). However, there is also the bad news in Sport for All: the lack of theoretical conceptions which validate its interventions in the socio-cultural environment.

This vicious circle of good practice and bad theory sometimes explains consequent prejudices against Sport for All the same way it assigns meaning to its incapacity to renew original propositions. In other words, Sport for All, as far as the characteristic pragmatism of its leaders is concerned, has not freed itself from the calls codified by the European Council and published in the early seventies, when the benefits of physical activities were taken to everybody everywhere.

The result of that is the fragile legitimating of the practices of Sport for All, which in theory, has evolved too little to incorporate new experiences and propositions. To sum up, whatever is too much in sports competition and even in school physical education, it is too little in Sport for All today, yet still very far from scientific validation. In more specific terms, Sport for All has been more a result of the "should be" than of the "be", that is to say, it is more a product of aspirations than a systematization of practices. This is overly important in relation to some vulnerable groups within a society whose sports practice is usually doubtful in relation to its benefits.

The very first attempt to review such limitations took place with the publication of the book "Sport for All", edited by Pekka Oja and Risto Telama in 1991, which established both an international perspective and a scientific classification according to themes. Even though more than one hundred authors had contributed for this publication, in the end, according to the introduction of

editors, it was not possible to obtain an interpretation other than the diversity which seemed to characterize Sport for All (3).

In 1997, after comparing the main themes of 440 papers on the same subject presented in international conferences between 1971 and 1995, DaCosta suggested that culture was the central category for analysis. Diversity would not then be a limitation once Sport for All, culturally determined, would have its own and local meanings. The problem in this case would spring up if broader analyses in the social field sciences were adopted (4). This interpretation is confirmed today by the fact that there are several national publications on Sport for All and only very few and rare initiatives of international scope.

At the end of 1998, UNESCO and TAFISA (Trim & Fitness International Sport for All Associations) developed an agreement to produce an international book that would describe national initiatives and, thus, make sense out of international tendencies by means of comparisons. This way not only the cultural aspect but also the need to understand Sport for All would be carefully examined within principles of scientific validity. The chosen editors of this book - also authors of the present article - developed an initial survey based on which a framework was defined both for the presentation of the national reports and for the elaboration of cross-cultural comparisons. Accordingly, the objective of this research was "to build a state-of-the-art book which aims at providing a body of knowledge able to point out adequate ways and means of developing Sport for All in the upcoming 21st Century" (5).

## **RESULTS AND PROSPECTS**

The eighteen-month experience of editorial work in UNESCO-TAFISA book appropriately entitled "Worldwide Experiences and Trends in Sport for All" has demonstrated that the proposed initial framework works effectively for diverse cultures. Therefore, we estimate that very soon there will be a common and specific language for Sport for All, which will make easier the task of better understanding the similarities and differences among the practices of diverse cultures. So far, the main categories of the framework approved by the authors of the book as they report their national realities have been: (a) history; (b) institutions; (c) marketing; (d) culture; (e) sponsorship and finance; (f) target groups and activities; (g) settings and activities; (h) strategy and activities; (i) social changes and (f) conclusions.

Categories (f), (g) and (h) have been adapted from research carried out by Powell et al. (6). Within these empirical surveys, three crucial aspects have been

identified in the promotion of the practice of physical exercise in populations of different countries: (i.) settings, (ii.) strategies of intervention and (iii.) target groups. The UNESCO-TAFISA book has adopted these central aspects making the necessary adjustments according to the situation of each country so as to include the category *activities*, which predominates in the practice of non-formal sports and games. In other words, both theory and practice were made to be together within an analytical model aiming at a future identification of tendencies in an international order.

Most important, however, was the development of possibilities of comparison and of generalization starting from local experiences, until now inexistent but necessary for Sport for All to have its own theoretical body. Accordingly, the choice of the authors of each chapter, equivalent to one country, privileged academic experience as priority. The objective here was to match the practice of traditional leaders of Sport for All with new approaches and theoretical interpretations. Approximately two-thirds of the participating authors pursue academic careers, which results in the rise of a new Sport for All, based more on social and cultural tendencies than on propositions idealized by government or sports institutions.

An example of this change of focus lies on marketing, a traditional tool of Sport for All, which by comparisons between different countries has shown to be crucial only during the very initial phase of a physical exercise campaign. As a campaign progresses, the frequency and the number of initiatives by means of several other approaches seem to be more effective than promotions of events. Consequently, the priority attributed to the media and other means of promotion by certain initiatives of Sport for All cannot be generalized once it has turned out to be a non-confirmed emphasis in most of the reported experiences.

Physical practices have traditionally been considered very important, which can be seen in the titles assigned to campaigns and programs. By comparing reports, it has been suggested that both physical practices and their target groups have become means of mediation. As a consequence, it is necessary to value the category of history (framework item #1) in terms of characterization of Sport for All. The observation of lifestyles of populations along the years has revealed their own preferences and adaptations of the physical activities introduced in the local culture but not the opposite as it had been previously thought of. That has been the situation of individual countries such as Australia, Colombia, Poland, Brazil and South Africa.

Another probable myth of Sport for All has been pictured by key success stories, out of the preferences of the surviving tradition of the seventies. These supposed models of establishment and maintenance of Sport for All have not found theoretical support because they are very successful only during certain stages, which shows that there is a natural oscillation of the initiatives in the face of institutional and social changes. One consequence of this fact is the greater importance given to governmental institutions confronting other ways of managing Sport for All. This tendency, also identified by comparisons, can be explained by the fact that the government can still maintain its stability in spite of unfavorable results.

Sport for All, rediscovered at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the light of its international tendencies, seems to have as its main challenge the maintenance of its responsibility of promoting physical activity for everybody, everywhere and during their entire life. These propositions tuned up today with globalization can have their experiences presented as models of the *Berlin Agenda for Action*.

This can only be accomplished if the intensive diversification of Sport for All is accepted as a common manifestation of any culture and not exclusively as an obstacle to the construction of knowledge of its activities based on scientific principles. These are the hopes of the authors and editors of the book UNESCO-TAFISA to be published in the second semester of 2000.

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#### "Worldwide Trends of Sport for All" - The Countries, the Authors

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##### EUROPE

**England** – M. Collins; **Russia** – S. Bordin ; **Bulgaria** – V. Girginov & P. Bancov; **France** – J. Raynaud; **Portugal** – J. Bento & G. Pires; **Finland** – J. Savola  
**Romenia** – A . Suciu & O. Oana; **Slovakia** – J. Holko; **Germany** – J. Palm & W. Baumann; **Poland** – T. Wolanska, Z. Mikolajczak, B. Jung, M. Pastwa, J. Salita & J. Zysko; **Spain** – E. Blanco Pereira & M. Mosquera; **Cyprus** – N. Kartakoulis;  
**Greece** – Y. Harahousou & K. Paparoupa; **Belgium (Flanders)**– A . Van Lierd ;  
**Hungary** – G. Foldesi , J. Jakabhazy & N. Nagy ; **Denmark** – P. Gregersen et al.;  
**Sweden** – A. Olsson; **Austria** – .F. Holzeweber.

##### AFRICA

**South Africa** – A. Goslin & A. Bush; **Nigeria** – B. Onanuga; **Cameroon** – M. Jean  
**Algeria** – B. Lalaoui; **Uganda** – M. Kadoodooba; **Tunisia** – K. Benzerti.

##### ASIA AND MIDDLE EAST

**Japan** – M. Ikeda & Y. Yamaguchi ; **Lebanon** – W. Moussa ; **Korea** – J. Ho Chang et al.; **Australia** – R. Stewart & M. Nicholson (consultants: Brian Dixon & Jane Shelton); **Israel** – H. Ruskin ; **China** – Wangmei, Y. Zhongyi & Z. Jinqiang;  
**Malaysia** – S. Sing & S. Khoo ; **Singapore** – S. Min Yan.

##### SOUTH AMERICA

**Colombia** – O. Ruiz, A. Olmos, L. Puyo, R. Ruiz & J. Mejia; **Argentina** – O. Incarbone; **Chile** – C. Zalazar; **Paraguay** – J. Acosta; **Venezuela** – E. Cabrera & C. Vera Guardia; **Uruguay** – C. Gomensoro & C. Mira; **Brazil** – A. Bramante, E. Valente, V. Matsudo & J. Santos.

NORTH AMERICA

**USA** – D. Jones-Palm et al. ; **Canada** – R. Kisby; **Mexico** – E. Subiratis.

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