



Transversal competences in primary education through tennis

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this article is to raise awareness of the potential of tennis at school, more specifically in Primary Education, for the treatment of important aspects such as academic performance or physical-motor affective, emotional, and social development. In this sense, we present, as an example, games to develop cross-cutting themes at school from the area of Physical Education, such as gender equality, education for peace, education for responsible consumption and sustainable development, as well as education for health.

Key words: mini-tennis, school, values, sustainability.

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INTRODUCTION

In relation to the practice of tennis at an early age and its introduction at school, Wang (2016) stressed the important role of mini-tennis in the educational system, not only increasing the interest of students in this sport, but also boosting the development of its teaching at a higher level. However, although tennis presents some difficulties to be adequately developed in Physical Education sessions at school, due to its technical and organizational complexity, facilities, and material..., there are different proposals that have provided effective solutions to positively overcome them (Fuentes et al., 2020; Fuentes, 2013, Sanz et al., 2004).

Currently, authors such as Tsuda, Ward and Goodway (2018) presented a set of knowledge to be acquired consisting of 13 tasks framed in the four stages of game development of Rink (2012), defining the main contents to be addressed in Physical Education classes of Upper Primary Education, relying, among other proposals and initiatives, on those carried out by the United States Tennis Association (USTA), in the case of the Net Generation Quickstart, which have suggested the use of an important variety of modifications aimed at facilitating the learning of tennis by children: use of short rackets, use of smaller sized courts and nets, slow bouncing balls... Thus the USTA (2021) noted that 48% of children participating in their school tennis programs obtain an average "A" school grade, 73% have not misbehaved in school, or 82% volunteer in their communities:

In relation to all the above, sport in the school context and, therefore, tennis as well, are an excellent means to intervene on various problems of our educational-social environment towards an adequate physical-motor affective, emotional, and social development of schoolchildren (Fraile & De Diego, 2006). In this context, a study conducted by Araújo, Soares and Fuentes (2014), based on a tennis program at school aimed at children aged 9-11 years old, students of a public school, who presented a low academic level, being at social



risk by residing in a neighborhood with a high rate of violence, showed significant benefits at the affective and learning level. Thus, the results of this study, in which the students received tennis lessons of 45 minutes twice a week for three months, reflected a greater mastery and taste for tennis, greater self-esteem and self-image, as well as an improvement in the affective and behavioral relationships of the children who participated in the program.

Linked to the above, several initiatives have been developed to promote cross-cutting themes, such as values, from the area of Physical Education. Thus, Fuentes and Martínez-Patiño (2021) suggested the importance of this area as an ideal context for the development of the values of Olympism, describing an educational action called "Racket Day". In this activity, more than five hundred Primary School pupils from different schools participated simultaneously in an activity in which the aim was to promote different racket sports through games in five rotations. These games combined sports learning and development of values, the students must

achieve five tokens (the five Olympic rings), each representing a sport and a value through their active participation in each game.

For example, in Spain, the Organic Law 3/2020 of 29 December (LOMLOE) establishes that students in Primary Education (6-12 years old) will work on gender equality, peace education, education for responsible consumption and sustainable development, as well as health education, including affective-sexual education. Likewise, special attention will be paid to emotional education and education in values, as well as to the promotion of meaningful learning for the development of transversal competences that promote autonomy and reflection.

Therefore, the main objective of this article is to offer a vision of the great possibilities of tennis in the school context, in general, and in Primary Education, in particular, to contribute effectively to a better academic performance or the physical-motor, affective, emotional and social development of students.

PRACTICAL PROPOSAL

In this section, we offer several examples of original games or games adapted from Fuentes, Müller and Furlaneto (2020), to develop cross-cutting themes through tennis taking into account the great importance of attitudinal work and the acquisition of values from an early age, as well as the opportunities offered by tennis to develop work focused on them. These games are originally framed in the area of Physical Education in schools, although they are considered equally interesting to be carried out in other contexts.

Gender equality

- In mixed teams, players try to hit 12 balls in a row without missing, being mandatory that, of the four, each time a different boy or girl hits the ball, so each one must hit 2 balls. Games can be introduced in the ball game, for example, each time the ball is hit, a phrase representing gender equality must be said out loud, for example "Girls and boys are equal in their studies" or "Boys and girls are equally brave", and the phrases cannot be repeated in each attempt. When 12 points have been scored, any of the boys or girls can say aloud a sentence that includes sexist stereotypes, for example "Girls have to wear earrings and bracelets" or "Boys have to defend girls". From one of the latter phrases, everyone can try to win the point, although they also have the option of continuing to cooperate and saying gender-equal phrases and therefore scoring points. The game can be played in reverse, starting by trying to win the point by saying phrases that contain sexist stereotypes and if a boy or girl says a gender-equal phrase, points are added, and the game is played collaboratively.

Peace education

- Doubles competition. The boys and girls try to create their own rules of play for their matches; if the four of them do not agree on what the rules should be, they will vote on each proposal; in the event of a tie, a draw is made, for example, rotating the racquet if there is a tie between two, and depending on which side comes out, the one that has been favoured by the draw will



prevail. Finally, after the corresponding matches with the approved rules, all the students, with the presence of the teacher as moderator, must propose rules and vote them, until reaching a common competition regulation for all the students.

- In a cooperative stroke exchange situation, before hitting the ball to the opponent's court, qualify the partner with a positive adjective about his/her personality, trying not to repeat any of them during each rally: brave, fair, kind, polite, friendly, patient, nice. A variation can be to introduce individual or pair competition and the moment someone misses a shot or repeats an adjective during the same point, he/she loses the point. You can also set up rallies or matches in which after a player says a positive adjective, for example, "hard-working", the partner must say the opposite, "lazy".

Education for responsible consumption and sustainable development

- As a warm-up, run at a slow pace; each student with a sheet of newspaper makes a "ball", players pass the ball one to each other in pairs each time with a different hand and in the most varied ways possible; individually or in pairs, they play coordination games, such as passing it behind the back, between the legs, throwing it up in the air, turning on oneself and catching it before it hits the floor.... Next, they use the newspaper itself to place the sheets folded in half on rubber bands placed, for example, from one basketball basket to another, to be used as a net for the development of the class. Afterwards, at the end of the session, students should take the papers to the recycling bin.
- Carry out games, using cones as lines and the mentioned net/rubber, which allow us to quickly vary the width and length of the fields if we want to work on tactical concepts such as depth, opening angles... through hitting. Likewise, we can raise the net (more time for the ball to fly) in games in which we consider it appropriate for the children to have more reaction time to return the ball... Through these types of games, we want the children to appreciate and value that it is not only possible to work with little material, but also that sometimes the use of certain pedagogical resources can offer organizational advantages and, in certain cases, it can even be more useful to use them to work on certain aspects of the game than other more conventional material.



Health education

- Delimit with cones or draw, for example, with chalk, a pyramid in each part of the court, coinciding its base with the net, representing the "nutritional pyramid" of the ideal healthy consumption frequency depending on the type of food. The pyramid will be divided into four zones: the first zone, the closest to the net and, therefore, the widest, representing flours, cereals and water (4 balls: 4 points), the second zone related to vegetables and fruits (3 balls: 3 points), the third zone related to dairy products, fish, meat, eggs and legumes (2 balls: 2 points) and the fourth zone, corresponding to the vertex of the pyramid, related to fats and sugars (1 ball: 1 point). The students will be distributed in each lane individually or in pairs and will exchange shots in a collaborative way. Each child must score 10 points. To be considered valid, each student must say out loud the name of a food within the area of the pyramid to which he/she sent the ball, without repeating names; for example, if he/she sends the ball to the second area, say "strawberries". Thus, to achieve the goal each child must send four balls to zone 1, three to zone 2, two to zone 3 and one to zone 4 (total: 10 points). Depending on the level of mastery of the students, for example, they will have 10 attempts to achieve the goal without having to follow a specific order of sending the balls to the different zones, or even, to increase the difficulty, it may be mandatory to send first the four balls to zone 1, then three to zone 2, and so on.

CONCLUSIONS

Tennis practiced at an early age has proven to be an effective tool to improve school performance and physical-motor affective, emotional, and social development of schoolchildren who practice it. Considering all the above, it is advisable to implement the game at school since it is very useful to be developed in Primary Education (6-12 years), by using the sport as a cross-cutting theme to work on aspects such as gender equality, education for peace, education for responsible consumption and sustainable development, as well as health education.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest and that they did not receive any funding to conduct the research.

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