THE ROLE OF SKI SCHOOL IN THE SOCIALIZATION PROCESS FOR THE PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Physical Culture, Belgrade, 63 (2009), 2, p. 276 – 284, ref. 18

Abstract

The object of this paper is ski school and it’s role in socialization process of preschool children. Socialization is the process of social learning through which an individual obtains the socially relevant behavioral patterns and is formed as a personality with all of the specific features. Socialization and development of personality being provided through social agents (factors) in the society that has the characteristics of a group. The following could be the socialization agents: family, school, peers, mass communication media and other institutions and persons with which and whom the individual has the contact with, for instance the coach, instructor and other. Ski school, in which the children actually meet with those values, requests and norms which exist and rule the society, might be one of the socialization factors. An important role in that process could be taken by: playing, peer group and the ski instructor. Playing is the most appropriate method for adopting the techniques and also for socialization, where there is an interaction between developing the certain functions and social relations. It contributes to development of some dispositions that could be transformed into abilities just by themselves-balance, coordination, agility, quickness and other. Playing stimulates and develops emotions. Motives inspired by the emotions can be the prompters and directors of children’s activities. A peer group can represent an important agent in the socialization process of an individual; it helps developing sociality, adopting the new social attitudes, regular mental and physical development, avoiding the eccentric behavior and encourages personal independence. Ski instructors, their personalities and their actions toward children could be of extreme relevance for the formation of personality as those people represent the role models for children, to look up to and identify with. Ski school with its own characteristics important for socialization (play as work method, group learning method, ski instructor as educator) is an important factor in socialization process of preschool children. School programs, durations of lessons and working with pre-school children should be adapted to specific requirements, needs and abilities, in accordance with their development.

Key words: SKI SCHOOL / SOCIALIZATION / INSTRUCTOR / GROUP

INTRODUCTION

Many of the preschool children needs are actualized through activities and interaction with others. Personality formation and development is done in the environment with real group features and is fulfilled through the influence of social agents (factors) referred to as socialization. There is also a great number of socialization agents: family, school, sports school, peers, mass communication media and other institutions and persons with whom the individual is in contact with - for instance coach, instructor, etc.
Only with socialization, that is with social learning (studying under the effects of social factors) gradually, living in the human society and learning in it, the human individual acquires habits, knowledge, skills, capacities, characteristics and behavior manners that enable him or her to line and interact in the society and become a person and personality. There are two groups of socialization effects: 1) teaching the individual social life (forming the important features and manners for functioning and living in a society) and 2) development of a biological individual into a personality with all the special features (formation of personality through the socialization process).

In that regard, socialization can be defined as the process of social learning through which an individual acquires the socially relevant behavior manners and is formed as a person with all the specific characteristics (Rot, 2003).

Upon birth, a child is neither a social nor a non-social being but just potentially capable of social development.

In the early childhood, family is of the greatest influence. Through parents, with whom the children identify with, who represent the role models for the children, transferred are the generally accepted views, desirable features, favorable behavior and that presents one of the most important factors in the personality development (Allport, 1969).

In pre school institutions, children have the opportunity to establish contacts with a larger number of peers, which shows a large significance on the social development of children, providing them a chance for new type of experience in social contacts.

Starting school represents an important moment in the socialization process for children. Their playing becomes socialized only after starting school. The process of intellectual, social and emotional development that began within in the family is systematically prolonged and advanced. School presents a new environment for children with new, stricter requests and different relations than those in the family (Piaget, 1988).

Playing also influences the socialization of children. Playing and its impacts in the socialization process are closely connected to the development of the overall child’s latent potentials. With children of pre school age, in the play there is interaction/ twinning of development of capacities of certain functions and social relations that mutually affect each other. Social contacts stimulate the child to perfect/improve the capabilities and those improved capacities lead to a better participation in social relations (Smiljanić, Topić, 1990).

Socialization through sports, as one of the aspects of overall socialization is also accomplished by taking parts in the contents of physical culture, in sports clubs and sports organizations within which the sports groups are formed and developed. At Ski school, during the course, a sports group is formed, the course takers, that is preschool children have the same or similar goals and achieve them in mutual interaction. Just like other types of small groups, the group in ski school is also characterized by all the features and interaction which significantly influence the socialization process and achieving the primary goals for the group- adopting the basic ski techniques.

In a three-year research conducted in Russia, Lisovskiy (2007) on experimental and control group, both consisting of 30 children, aged 4-6 (where the study included testing the physical abilities of the children, medical parameters of health, questionnaire for parents, psychological methods, pedagogical observation, pedagogical experiment and statistical processing) it was confirmed that the mood, frame of mind of the children is improving during the skiing, compared to the initial level (before they start skiing). The analysis of responses by the parents also points to the fact that skiing is the crucial positive factor in increasing the mutual understanding between parents and children and improving the psychological atmosphere in their family. The authors of the study conclude that the organized alpine skiing for pre school children is an active way of promoting their health, improving their physical development and strengthening the family ties.

Parents can teach their children to walk on skies 2-3 months after they acquire the walking technique. The organized group manner of working can involve the children aged 3-4. Although the children aged 3 may start with the ski school, before the age of 7-8 they will not be able to acquire, learn any of the advanced ski techniques (better). Thus, the experts find that not much will be missed if the ski training starts a couple of years later. It is best to enroll the children in skiing when they are ready for that activity, motivated to try something new and enjoy it (Baćanac, 2008).

The paper discusses how ski school, with its basic characteristics important for socialization (playing as the method of work, teaching a group, in-
Skiing and developing abilities for learning certain self-control, etc. and an educational tool, through amoral and will features, attitudes, values, directions, an instrument of upbringing through the formation of categories: social, physical, academic and experimental bene-

tion (skiing).

A well organized and systematic training, with the adequate pedagogical approach while teaching skiing to preschool children represents an important agent in the process of socialization for the youth and a significant factor that takes part in the formation and development of a versatile personality. During training, through the process of acquiring the ski techniques, children also become familiar with the values, requests and norms existing in the society and thus ski school provides its own special contribution to favorable conditions for the personality development.

Basic types of learning and principles applied to learning in general are used also in explaining the social learning. Social learning can be divided as follows: learning by conditioning (traditional, instrument and observation conditioning), learning as per model (learning by identification, imitation, learning the roles) but also the learning based on higher cognitive processes - learning by getting an insight (Rot, 1990). Ski school enables using the largest number of those types of learning and basic principles on which the socialization is based.

Ski school represents an organized, planned and systematic process of sports perfection (education) oriented toward adopting the rational and expedient technique of moving on the snow with skies (skiing).

According to Fraser (2004), the educational benefits from skiing can be divided into four categories: social, physical, academic and experimental education. Social education (learning more about self and peers, reaching higher or lower than expected, reacting to new situations, encouraging of mutual influence among the peers, challenge for personal barriers...) and physical education (a chance to try out some new activity, an opportunity to stand out in the sport which does not include team work, a calling to be active no matter of their actual built, weight or physical abilities, development of motor skills...) are of special significance. Large numbers of pupils who do not distinguish themselves in team sports advance in skiing; learn about their own capacities and the abilities of their peers and are often surprised with their own personal reaction in different environments.

The fact that sports and sport-recreation skiing can only be practiced in the mountains, on the sea level above 1000m, on pure and thin air, far away from the impact of urban lifestyle points to the positive effects of skiing on the health of those who exercise it, in other words a positive impact on the general physical development of bodies in young children (Ilić, 1988).

An extreme value of acquiring the ski skills is that skiing has a practical significance and a positive transfer on situations in everyday life. Through the ski training program a child is faced with various difficulties (conflicts that child experiences in having a contact with its environment and different emotions, such as fear, anger and emotional tensions, anxiety, uncertainty, thrill and other) and overcomes them in his or her own manner, finding a way in new situations and searching for some new paths to solve them.

A peer group with which a child establishes social contacts at ski school can display an important role and shows a significant influence on the formation and development of numerous personality features in children in the socialization process. The ski school program and the duration of one ski lesson for preschool children are conditioned with the specific characteristics of that age. Through the learning content, the development of certain personality features in children can be influenced, and also the development of motives, important for the socialization development, primarily biological ones (a motif to be active) and social ones (development of positive- pro-social motives and the control over negative motives): pugnacity, self confidence, self confirmation, power, independence, freedom, self actualization, gregarious theme-conformity, affinity, affective binding, motiv for accomplishments, aggression, altruism, development of moral awareness.
In that regard, the curricula should be tailored toward the needs of children and their capabilities, in accordance with their development (Rot, 2003).

The methods used during learning largely contribute to the efficient motor learning. Their accurate usage enables children to learn more successfully, more easily and with less effort. The time available for learning a certain motor task, that is, the element in skiing technique can be fulfilled with various assignments.

The question arises what the optimal methods for acquiring the basic skiing technique for preschool children are. Playing has always been and remained a part of children’s activities and it represents the most adequate method for taking up the basic skiing technique, but also an important instrument in socialization, in development of many of personal features.

Playing and its role in the socialization process in ski school

Playing presents a human activity motivated by the joy of participating and self confirmation. Importance of playing has been studied from the point of psychological, pedagogical, social, historic and anthropological view and what is common for all the studies is that in playing they find one of the basic behavior patterns serving the individual development (Lazarević, 1987).

Basic features of playing found at the ski training are as follows:

- playing is an activity children have a positive response to (biological aspect),
- playing is a source and an instrument of positive emotional and general mood (psychologically it fulfills certain children’s needs and influences the psychological development of a child),
- to share (interaction) emotions and moods (social aspect) through the game.

Playing and its impacts in the process of upbringing and educating children’s spirit are based on a close link between playing, as the phenomenon of human expression with the development of the overall children’s latent potentials. Although the play differentiates from work not being productional and that it is not the result of force, almost all life situations can be told through it and various types of human behavior and relations may be reproduced through it.

Thus, one of the most significant functions of playing is preparing people for life at the early stages of their ontogenetic development (Lazarević, 1987).

Until the age of two, playing in solitude is dominant with children. Between the age of two and three, dominating is the simultaneous play, with which each child plays on its own, but is comfortable with the closeness of other children. After the age of three, the interest in playing with other children increases. Children like to play in groups of two or three, but those groups are constantly changing. It is necessary to direct them and control them every 20 to 30 minutes, as conflicts arise.

From the age of four, children prefer very much to play in small groups. Playing is on a low level, as although the children possess a large number of good ideas, they still don’t know how to implement those. Five year old children are capable of playing in a larger group, even up to five children. At that age, friendships grow stronger. Children choose their peers for playing, some choose playmates of the opposite sex and some of the same sex, and sometimes the children feel comfortable in playing with older children. At that stage, children are still more prone to playing in which they play simultaneously with other children.

Only after the age of eight, the child’s play becomes socialized, in other words children are inclined toward games in which they cooperate with other and are trying to provide their contribution in accomplishing a group goal (Smiljanić & Toličić, 1990).

Through the game activities in ski school with pre school children there is a mutual interaction between the development of certain function and social relations by mutual influence. Social contacts encourage the children to improve their abilities, and the advanced abilities enable them better participation in social relations.

Functional joy, which is predominant at the beginning of children’s activities at ski school in playing is gradually replaced by a child’s strive toward increasing its own capacities. Hence the motivation is changed and that influences the content and the directions of children’s activities while training and perfecting the basic ski technique.

Using playing and skiing, a child sets free/ expresses and develops feelings, experiences the value of the contents of activities on the snow and the members of its ski group. Actually, those motives, inspired
by emotions, possess a special power and thus are given a special role in the motivation of other children and become initiators and directors of children’s activities in the process of ski training.

All that stated the basic approach to children has to be through games and that in the widest sense of the word. Children should be taught about the general rules of the game, provided with instruments, given freedom and that is the path toward a goal. With such an attitude, through playing and competing with themselves, children are motivated and ready to face various ski tasks. The skiing equipment itself presents a new situation for children. Adapting to ‘extended feet’, equipment, sledging, snowballing, basic playing on the snow in the surroundings enables children to be less pressured prior to the first, ‘real’ going on the snow and facilitate the meeting with the ‘real’ ski instructor and the training in that sport (Goršnik, 2002).

The issue is whether certain elements in ski training are different from playing and whether and when those actually turn into playing. Playing during ski training becomes less free, and the behavior is controlled, subjected to certain goals, rules, time and spatial limitations. Structure in the playing provides the participants with the opportunity to repeat the situations which fill them with pleasure, and in that manner, they advance in learning the elements of ski techniques.

In addition to playing, significant influence in the formation and development of many features in the personality of an individual in the socialization process of preschool children can also be achieved by a peer group, with whom the individual establishes social contacts at ski school.

The role of the group and advantages of group learning compared to individual one in the socialization process for pre school children at ski school

By observing children while playing freely, it was determined that the time spent in isolated playing decreases with age whereas the time used for group playing increases (Toličić, 1990). It was also found that the aspiration toward playing together is present with children much earlier than the child is intellectually and emotionally capable to cooperate in group playing, but at that age children are still unable to coordinate their own activities with the activities of others.

In order to enable children to be in position to modulate their activities with the activities of other children, they have to adapt their notions on the goal, typical for solitude playing with the concepts and activities of other children and depending on the activities of other children again manage to function under new circumstances.

All the given facts state that in group playing, where children cooperate there is different thought process from the one occurring in solitude playing. In addition to the thought process, for the children to adapt themselves from playing alone to the group, they need to harmonize both emotional and social requests, overcome their emotional bursts, limit their own demands and respect the demands of others. The aforesaid requires also a certain degree of emotional and social maturity (Smiljanić & Toličić, 1990).

The aspiration toward social contacts becomes noticeable in group games. Children’s need for activity differentiates pursuant to the physical and mental development. Children are not satisfied with any activity while playing, just with the ones entailing higher capacities of their functions, and that in communication with others. Different types of group games and sports activities are above all adequate for that ambition.

Ski school, through group teaching and activities in playing represents a favorable place for a child to meet his/her need for social contacts, develop his/her activities and various personal features and offers a special contribution in the socialization process for preschool children.

Group learning type of education at ski school is appropriate for preschool age in regard to its type and content for children to satisfy their needs for social contacts and stimulate their activities. The training program for that age should be set up in the manner that is interesting and fun for children and represents a pleasure for them.

A peer group at ski school can present an important tool in the socialization of an individual. The group contributes to developing sociability with children, acquiring new social attitudes, regular development, avoiding eccentric behavior and encouraging personal independence.

During group training at ski school social emotions are also developed: affinity, inclination toward
people, devotion, solidarity, discretion and other. Various children’s difficulties and conflicts they experience in contact with the environment are present in the group: emotions such as fear, anger, emotional tensions, anxiety, uncertainty, excitement and similar (Đorđević, 1988).

The expected effects of benefits from applying a group teaching compared to the individual one at ski school in working with children are as follows:

- more favorable conditions for developing a competitive spirit, through various contests and internal competition (to do something quicker, better, more nicely etc),
- better conditions for training to be organized through playing and contests,
- children themselves can be demonstrators, providing them possibility to learn by watching each other (the younger the demonstrator, the better the effects),
- an opportunity for each child to listen to the explanation a couple of times (while things are being explained to others),
- children are given enough time for rest and concentrating on the new task, between the two task (that is of special importance for the ‘walking’ classes, at the beginning of training, before they start using ski lifts and cable cars),
- a chance for children which advanced less in techniques to learn by watching those better at skiing in front of them, as those are put alternately one behind the other.

Despite the fact that ski school is a group teaching, specific features of each course participant individually should be considered and followed up, as well as their individuality, which is expressed in certain situations.

The personality of ski instructor also has a significant influence on developing certain personality characteristics in the socialization process, in addition to peer group, playing, and the training program.

The role of ski instructor in the socialization process and specific features in working with preschool children at ski school

At ski school children are encountered by an image and authority other than parental, and that represents an important step for them in the socialization process. For children, ski instructors (just like parents) represent the role models they look up to and identify with. In addition to education, the instructors have also an impact on upbringing and thus their personalities and treatment of children can be a significant factor in formation of personality in the socialization process.

Ski instructors have the task to initiate and encourage activities through playing at ski school and at the same time allow for the own creativity of children to be expressed. Support and compliments, praise from the instructor or parent represents an important developmental factor which is provided by the environment and that assists children and stimulates them to develop their potential to the maximum.

In that manner, children’s self confidence is raised and the motives for further participation in the ski training strengthened. Motives inspired by emotions have special power at ski school and thus play a special role in the motivation of children and become the initiators and directors of children’s activities in the ski training process. Defining the relation between children’s characters and skiing is reduced to identification of the motives, that strongly stimulate them to become involved in the training and continue with expressing their potential in the ski training process.

Each person (child) has its own development path and the influence of social environment is different for everyone, depending on the personality structure and the characteristics they have (Tomić, 1991). In that interaction each individual searches for and finds his or her own way to satisfy their psychological and social motives. Ski instructors have to be aware of the fact that there is no certainty in the exact level of children’s maturity appearing at a certain age.

In that regard, it is the instructor’s role to: create the external environment conditions, that is to look after forming a favorable atmosphere at ski school, to identify the motives that stimulate the child (successfully accomplished task, competitions, promises, praises, awards and other), to adapt the content of the games to children’s needs and abilities, in accordance with their development, to initiate, direct and encourage the activity in playing and enable for the own creativity of children to be expressed at ski school.

For the aforegiven reasons, a ski instructor ought to possess the following features: knowledge about psychological and social features of children
still developing, advanced level of methodic skills, feeling, experience, know how and the ability to recognize each step in children’s maturity, and also a high personal level of adapting the training style to the real capacities of a child and the specific features at certain stages of a child’s development.

Positive characteristics that are desirable and are especially appreciated in regard to the work of a ski instructor are the following: treating all the course goers in the same manner, being fair, explaining well, being well familiar with skiing, but also able to talk interestingly about other things, in addition to skiing, patient and kind, having a sense of humor, in other words to animate the children and at the same time being able to maintain order and discipline (Ropret, 1998).

The fact that ski instructor is the only mediator between the curricula and students speaks for itself of how significant factor a ski instructor is in the implementation of goals and tasks at ski school. Hence, in addition to having responsibility for the realization of ski school program, the ski instructor needs to have the appropriate didactic, pedagogic, methodical and expert education. Bearing in mind the role in upbringing children at that age, the ski instructor has to be of wide culture and education, creative, mentally stable, human, with high moral qualities and strong will (Kragujević, 1987).

The attributes of a good ski instructor are: being familiar with skiing, motivation, empathy, communication skills, leadership abilities, cordiality, honesty, objectivity, moral integrity and self control.

Thus, working with children requires only highly educated and specialized staff.

Specific features in working with preschool children at ski school that distinguished themselves through a long time experience in working with that age are reflected as follows (Ropret, 1998; Goršnik, 2002):

- the training ought to be organized through playing and animation, thus the ski school becomes interesting for course goers, fund and represents pleasure (facing with various competing task, for instance, wriggling through the ‘tunnels’ made of sticks, jumping to get a balloon, who is going to be quicker, to do things more nicely and other),
- the difficulty of the task needs to be adapted to the specific features, needs and capacities of all the course goers, in accordance with their development (thus all of them can successfully complete the task),
- while explaining things verbally, only familiar phrases should be used (the new concepts need to be explained, make sure those are understood and only then start using them)
- explanations have to be brief, clear and precise (due to short time concentration and attention)
- with terms ’left’ and ‘right’ in accordance with need, visual orienteers should be used, large enough to be easily visible (for instance forest-hotel, Christmas tree, ski lift and other)
- it is preferable that the markers, they need to pass by on the obstacle course, are ‘heroes’ from their world of cartoons, fairy tales, comics or films, currently popular and which they can easily recognized.

Further factors which strengthen the self confidence in children and establish the motives for further participation in ski training are: success in accomplishing tasks, contests and rewards for successfully accomplished task or hard work, praises and other.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Ski school can also have an important role and be of great influence in the socialization process of pre school children, and the reasons can be found in the facts that ski school:

- has a positive influence on the development of the overall children’s latent potentials,
- represents a significant instrument in education and upbringing,
- assists and stimulates the emotional and social maturity in children; children need to adapt their emotional and social requests, overcome their emotional outbursts, limit their demands and respects the demands of others,
- is favorable for satisfying the children’s needs for social contacts in the group and encourag- ing children’s activities,
- is of practical importance for facing various difficulties, that children overcome each in his or her own way during ski training help in managing everyday life,
- is good for developing a competing spirit and enable each child to find a place in the group,
• is a place adequate for exchanging the social feeling: sympathies, inclination toward people, devotion, solidarity, discretion and other,
• is good to increase self confidence and reinforce the motives for further participation in ski training with children with influences from outside (praises by instructor or parents themselves for a successfully accomplished task or effort, contests, awards, diplomas and other).

Motives inspired by feelings at ski school obtain special power and thus are provided with a special role in the motivation of children and become the initiators and directors of children’s activities in the ski training process. In that regard, through adopting the basic ski techniques with its basic characteristics, important for socialization (playing as a working method, group learning and trainings, instructor-pedagogist) represents a significant factor in the socialization process of preschool children.

REFERENCES


