



## Sport, including e-sport, in the light of various interpretations\*

Malgorzata TOMECKA<sup>1†</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Academy of Sport Education in Warsaw, Poland

<sup>2</sup> Śl.TZN Secondary School in Katowice, Poland

### Abstract

Sport is a complex, multidimensional social phenomenon in the dynamically changing communities as well as one of the elements of physical culture seen as a specific field of culture in a selective and global understanding. In the recent years, there has been a growth of the meaning of sport in different areas of social life, and in systems associated with values such as ideological, religious or ethical ones. Interest in sport of million receivers both direct and indirect ones on the market of sport goods makes us pause to reflect upon its phenomenon. Questions like: "What is sport?" are not rare. They were asked long time ago, they are asked today and certainly they will be asked in future. Sport is such a complex phenomenon that it hardly undergoes a holistic interpretation. The purpose of the present work of a quality character is an attempt to define the contemporary understanding of the terms "sport" and "athlete" also with reference to e-sports, as representatives of intellectual sport activities. The purpose is also to indicate common areas of the traditionally understood sport and e-sport on the highest level of professionalism. According to traditionally understood sport, intellectual activities such as for example: chess, card games, automatic games or e-sports are not considered sports because of the lack of the most important designate, which is physical activity.

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† Corresponding Author: Malgorzata TOMECKA

E-mail: tomeckam@poczta.onet.pl

## **INTRODUCTION**

Reaching the papers of the Polish sociologist, Zbigniew Krawczyk, an unquestionable expert on physical culture and here in presented issues, I have read, that “(...) *scientific knowledge about sport is as much a reconstruction of the reality in question but also its creation. In science, thus, we are doomed to an endless chain of further interpretations of particular images of sport, and not its limited explication*” (Krawczyk, 2000: 25). A fragment of this statement was used by me in the title of the paper with reference to colloquial understanding and scientific considerations on the subject of the notion of “sport”.

For the first time I have made an attempt to present the essence of the phenomenon of my interest in the paper, in the fragment regarding the need to place field hockey in the inner structure of sport (Tomecka, 2009: 56-64). However, the present study is attempt of broader and more detailed considerations in the subject of my interest. Sport performs a lot of socially useful functions, for example it is an important socializing factor, it supports social connections, and as traditionally understood it builds up patterns of activities to stay healthy and to keep fit for people at different age groups.

In contrast, e-sports are a relatively new phenomenon of greater and greater social meaning of a local range and also in the global scale. At present, e-sports which are called “sport” intellectual activity are not regarded as sport in Poland, but in June, 2017 Parliament accepted an amendment of the Act about sport, and the definition of sport was enlarged with the notion of intellectual competition. That was a tribute to e-sports surroundings, however, so far only of a technical and symbolic meaning.

Nowadays, even the role of an athlete is not limited to beating records, as the heroes, celebrities and idols of sport undertake activities in other domains of social life beyond sport. Thus it becomes important to determine, who deserves the name of “athlete”. It is all about sport, which is now perceived and often described as a phenomenon, which, as it can be observed, has become a contemporary addictive factor for people.

## **MATERIAL and METHODS**

### **Research Model**

The basic source material for the present work is a quality analysis of the subject literature, mainly of Polish authors, the representatives of different scientific disciplines as well as websites contents analysis. The supplement includes the results of my own studies carried out on the basis of surveys, individual oral free interviews and participant observation.

### **Research Group**

Research of a qualitative character were carried out in April 2017 on a targeted group of students of the secondary technical school and students of the academy of sport. There were 21 students of the first year course and 43 students of the fourth year course of the secondary school and 32 students of the academy, so altogether 86 respondents, who took part in the surveys and the participation was voluntary.

### **Data Collection**

I have made a review of selected definitions of sport and its designates from 1964 to contemporary ones in Poland, taking into account the Act on Sport (2010) and the Act on Classified Sport (2005) adopted by the Polish Parliament. The supplement includes the results of my own studies carried out on the basis of surveys, in which, among others I asked the respondents to answer the question how they understood the word “sport”.

### **Data Analyses**

I have analyzed the collected research material by a qualitative analysis and I present the fragments of the material in the results of surveys paying special attention to the answers to research questions:: What is sport? Who can be called “an athlete”? Are intellectual “sports” including e-sports a sport? What is the link between sport and e-sport?

## **RESULTS**

### *Colloquial understandings of the word “sport”*

Knowledge on the subject of the colloquial understanding of the word “sport” is cognitively interesting, it involves indications of a practical nature and can be socially useful. Yet, in the beginnings of the 80ties of the last century the American sociologist Jay J. Coakley writes: *„We have a good enough grasp of the meaning of sport to talk about it with others. When friends discuss their own involvement in sport, when a coach talks about the values of sport (...), nobody gets hung up on the meaning of sport. However, in order to study sport in a systematic way, it is necessary to develop something more than just a general definition of the term”* (Coakley 1982: 5).

It is necessary to notice that most of people can specify who is an Olympian, but who can be called an “athlete” is for many people a difficult task. I have asked 86 students of the secondary school and sport academy undergraduates, how they understand the word: “sport”. Due to the limited framework of this paper, I am presenting general conclusions of surveys, and they show, that the word “sport” is understood and associated *mainly with physical activity and competition*. One of the female respondents said: “if I swim a few times a week, I practice sport, because swimming is a sport”. To answer the question if she considers herself an athlete she said “yes”. Is that true? Of course not.

### *Selected definitions of sport*

Sport, similarly to many other social phenomena, can be considered from different theoretical perspectives and in its analysis can include opinions of famous representatives of different domains and scientific disciplines. It is not possible to mention all the authors and their rich output in the present work, so the selection is not full.

Zbigniew Jaworski, having completed a review of the definitions of sport since 1964 and according to the formula of real definition, determined a general, synthetic and communicative definition of sport which is: “A

*systematic movement activity in a particular discipline, practiced within the framework suitable for this notion , organizational structures, regulations and selection methods, subjected to evaluation in direct competition”* (Jaworski, 2011:6).

A non-substitutable so far definition of sport as one of the elements of physical culture in Poland is this one: *“Sport is an activity practiced systematically, according to certain rules, characterized by a strong element of competition and a tendency to achieve better and better results, the aim of which is the manifestation of mobility (...). The base for the classification of sport is a type of a sport fight : against an opponent, space, time or to gain points, e.g., in games”* (Demel & Skład, 1970: 19).

In the undertaken discussion I also present the opinion of Jerzy Kosiewicz, according to whom *“In the Polish literature the notion of physical culture (...) is also specified in an additive way, that is through listing its main elements. It comprises in this case the extreme sport, mass sport, common sport, amateur sport, school sport, sport for the disabled, physical education, plays and games, mobility recreation, extreme tourism, pilgrim tourism, or recreational forms of tourism”* (Kosiewicz, 2010: 29).

The phenomenon of sport according to Prof. Józef Lipiec – *“(...) includes three necessary factors (...) to form any sport event. They are:1) subject (a competitor, a team, an opponent), 2) material base (the site and equipment needed for a particular event), 3) rules (regulations, legal bases, ethical and traditional bases)”* (Lipiec, 1999: 27). The fact is, that in every domain of social life, and especially in qualified sport, two important constitutive features appear except physical activity. One of them is competition and the other is perfection. The latter one has not been mentioned so far. Thus, Józef Lipiec rightly points out that the latter one has an improving character and is focused upon efforts to be better for oneself (Lipiec, 1988).

However, one of the first author who came to the conclusion that chess is not a sport, nor the games which are devoid of the possibility of physical improvement is Wojciech Lipoński, and this is the definition of sport of this author: *“A conscious activity of a man, the essence of which is are : 1) individual or team competition of people (sometimes with participation of animals) in overcoming time, space, natural or artificial obstacles and the opponent (...); 2) improving physical valors, (...) simultaneously with*

*improving psychological strengths , including the features of will and character, moral rules (...); 3) voluntary participation; 4) abiding by the rules of the game (...) and what regards ethics by the rule of fair play; 5) lack of direct targets beyond sport such as military ones and production ones” (Lipoński 1987: 312).*

However, Zbigniew Jaworski made a few precious remarks regards the term: “athlete” and he writes, among others, that: *“An athlete – is an active member of the section of a particular sport discipline, systematically participating in its educative-training activities as well as in sport competitions who consequently aims at improvement of his sport achievements. Such understood notion of athlete involves of course a relatively modest number of people. This is however a deserved elevation”* (Jaworski, 2011: 7).

*In the legal acts of the Polish Parliament it can be read:*

Art.2.1 Sport is all forms of physical activity, which, by interim or organized participation, influence the work out or improvement of physical and psychological condition, influence the development of social relations or the achievement of sport results on various levels (the Act on Sport of 25, June, 2010).

Art.3.3. Qualified sport is a form of human activity related to participation in sport competition, organized or led in a particular sport discipline by Polish Sport Association or subjects acting on his behalf (Act on Qualified Sport of 29, July, 2005).

Art. 3 pt 5. A contestant is a person practicing a particular discipline of sport and owning a license which authorizes participation in sport competition (Act on Qualified Sport of 29, July, 2005).

### *E-sport*

For a few recent years I have been responsible for the e-sport competitions (League of Angels and Hearthstone) at the secondary school where I work as a PE teacher. I have observed a growing interest in this field. E-sports are a relatively new social phenomenon... In spite of that, they are accompanied by great emotions, great awards and millions of spectators. Thanks to spectators - sponsors and advertisers have become interested in e-sports.

However, the pools of awards are reserved only for the best players in the world, like in sport which is traditionally understood.

Prof. Tomasz Michaluk and Doctor Krzysztof Pezdek write: “*Negating e-sports as a form of sport competition (...) due to the lack of physical time space, in which contestants and team compete (...) seem to be criticism beside the point*” (Michaluk & Pezdek, 2016: 57).

Previously mentioned authors also indicate that: „*The origin of the modern olympism was accompanied by the idea of amateurship, which practically does not have a translation into e-sports (...)*” (Michaluk & Pezdek, 2016: 57). Does the idea of amateurship have a place in the traditionally understood sport? I believe that: Nowadays, there are no amateurs in competitive sports, and sport which is called: amateur sport, a mass sport or sport for everybody finds its place in activities, which are called today sport recreation or sport tourism. Future e-sport area employees in Poland: Should have skills of which the most important are: coping with stress, team work, passion for video games, familiarity with e-sport realities.

In June 2017, the Polish Parliament (Sejm) adopted an amendment to the Act on Sport – 1a. Competition which is based on intellectual activity and the aim of which is achieving a sport result is also considered a sport. However the Ministry of Sport and Tourism explains: new suggestions do not change the legal status of the so called e-sport, they are, however, technical and symbolic changes and the amendment to the Act on Sport does not equalize traditional sport with the so called digital sport.

However, e-sport is also new workplaces. A list of professions was made on the basis of employment announcements and opinions of people, connected with e-sport environment in Poland. There are: Social Media Manager, League Ops, Trainer, Manager, Web Developer, Commentator, Psychologist and Physiotherapist. It should be noted, that in the coming years, the job market for people who, anyhow want to link their careers with the world of e-sport, will be getting bigger and bigger... (Gameplanet, 2017).

In the year 2017 the profits from e-sport were over 10,3 million dollars in Poland and according to prognoses they are going to rise up to almost 11, 3 million dollars in the next, 2018 year, and only in the last year e-sport gathered over 541 thousands of spectators. In Poland, the e-sport

competitions are the most popular among the receivers ranging from 18 to 24 years old and this group is dominated by men (80% of the audience of digital sport events). According to the statistics of PayPal and Super Data the profits of e-sports in Europe are going to reach over 345 million dollars in the year 2018. It is estimated that in Poland the number of e-sport receivers will be growing at the level of 29 % during each year (Virtual Media, 2017).

## **CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

Sport in my opinion, is an institutionalized physical activity. The aim of sport is to achieve the best sport results in the area of one subject or multi-subjective classified competition. It is aiming at perfection and sport mastery of a character of a fight against time, space, or another competitor.

An athlete in my opinion is a competitor, who, through his hard physical and psychical effort, together with competition of a character of fight against time, space, his opponent and himself aims at perfection in achieving sport mastery and aims at his full personal development in the institutionalized classified sport.

What links sport with e-sport at the professional level? In my opinion there are:

1. Competition.
2. Needs connected with job market.
3. Lack of amateurship.
4. Systematicity and perfectionism.
5. High viewership.
6. Significant financial awards.
7. Doping!

In e-sports this is e.g., taking medicines for ADHD syndrome (increasing concentration) or using an illegal software which gives advantage during the competitions.

As a result of according to traditionally understood sport, intellectual activities such as for example: chess, card games, automatic games or e-sports are not considered sports because of the lack of the most important designate, which is physical activity. It is possible, that in the future these two, today competing, sport worlds, will become one –Virtual Reality Games World.

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