

PLAY-MOTOR-SPORTS COMPETENCE IN THE EXPLORATORY QUESTIONNAIRE AREAS OF PARENTING DEVELOPMENT IN THE FAMILY AND AT SCHOOL

LA COMPETENZA LUDICO-MOTORIA-SPORTIVA NEL QUESTIONARIO ESPLORATIVO AREE DI SVILUPPO DELLA GENITORIALITA' IN FAMIGLIA E A SCUOLA



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ABSTRACT

Starting from the assumption that today, more than ever before, we are witnessing a fragilisation of family ties and aware of the shared responsibility of the current educational-parenting crisis, the QEASCG (Questionnaire Exploratory Areas of Development of Parenting Competences) is grafted on, a pedagogical tool of avalutative investigation capable of treasuring the most relevant conceptualisations on the contemporary family. The aim of this contribution is to briefly present this instrument, which takes an initial 'snapshot' of Physical Literacy in the family, as well as a possible definition of play-motor-sports competence in the school context. We then wanted to emphasise the playful and creative dimension of education both at school and in the family, in order to give play back the dignity it rightly deserves within children's developmental journey.

Partendo dall'assunto che oggi più che mai assistiamo ad una fragilizzazione dei legami familiari e consapevoli della responsabilità condivisa dell'attuale crisi educativo-genitoriale, si innesta il Questionario Esplorativo Aree di Sviluppo delle Competenze Genitoriali (QEASCG), uno strumento pedagogico d'indagine avalutativo capace di tesaurizzare le concettualizzazioni più rilevanti sulla famiglia contemporanea. In questo contributo si pone l'obiettivo di presentare sinteticamente tale strumento che scatta una prima "fotografia" della Physical Literacy in famiglia, oltre ad una possibile definizione di competenza ludico-motoria-sportiva in ambito scolastico. Si è voluto poi porre l'accento sulla dimensione ludica e creativa dell'educazione sia a scuola che in famiglia, per ridare al gioco la dignità che giustamente merita all'interno del percorso evolutivo dei bambini.

KEYWORDS

QEASCG, Physical Literacy, School-family co-responsibility, traditional play-motor activities

QEASCG, Physical Literacy, Corresponsabilità scuola-famiglia, Attività ludico-motorie tradizionali

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1. Genesis of the Questionnaire Exploratory Areas of Competence Development (QEASCG)

The QEASCG (Romeo, 2024), an acronym for the Exploratory Questionnaire Areas for the Development of Parenting Competences, is a pedagogical tool for investigation and evaluative action, capable of storing up the most relevant conceptualisations on the modern-contemporary family and the research and reflections on the structures it has assumed (civil unions, de facto cohabitations, extended family models, step family, etc.) in the transition to the new millennium and especially after the pandemic.) in the transition to the new millennium and especially after the pandemic; one of the emergencies that outlined the construct of the multilevel crisis (Gjergji, 2021). In outlining, therefore, the epistemological framework that forms the backdrop to a tool that does not express judgements or evaluations, as is the case in the forensic-peritological sphere, but on the contrary is open to inter-disciplinary and inter- and chrono-systemic-ecological investigation, we started from the assumption of shared responsibility for the current educational-parenting crisis, whereby since the mid-20th century we have been witnessing a fragilisation of family ties determined by several socio-cultural and political-institutional phenomena such as the loss of the sense of community and of those rituals that were its essence (the logic of neighbourhood and of giving without counter-giving typical of archaic societies, a subsidiary bailiwick by means of milk mothers, engagements as couple and community alliances, etc.), the liquefaction of the family as a whole, and the loss of the sense of community as a whole.), the liquefaction of affectivity more generally and the reversal of the dynamics of the construction of the fiduciary relationship (Romeo, Paparella, Tarantino, 2022), so that from the feeling of trust and the trusting that derives from it as an individual and collective posture we are now witnessing mistrust and challenges on a global scale. Therefore, we believe that those increasingly evident Oedipal imitations and inversions in the contemporary family (Romeo, 2021), whereby a child becomes the parent of his parents in spite of himself when he dispenses them advice on how to deal with a marital crisis, for example, or when a parent places himself 'on the same level' as a child who is increasingly seen as a friend and confidant (Aime, Charmet, 204), are the result of broader epochal transformations that the pandemic has caused to detonate from 2020 onwards. The pandemic, specifically, has also highlighted in the young and very young in our country a series of lasting dysfunctional reactions, also of a complex etiopathogenesis, such as emotional-affective flattening, narrative closures, the hypermaturation of the inner monologue and consequently the increase in depressive ruminations (Romeo, 2022), the blocking of agentivity, the feeling of a

closed future, even that increase in suicide attempts which, on careful interpretation and from an autobiographical-narrative perspective, camouflage a generalised need for narrative spaces through which one can try to tell one's life, giving it a projectual direction first. Therefore, evolutionary needs, also unheard of in our time (orientation, of shared play and not just virtual play, of listening to and welcoming a story in search of meaning, of exploring one's own identity, of simplifying the complex scenario, of signifying the events of war, etc.) are the source of a culture incapable of ultimately becoming a 'parent', in other words an adult, for the functions of care that it can express from several points of view and not therefore only of the contemporary family in crisis. If we want, the 'zombification' that seems at the moment to distinguish adolescents and young people in Italy (Romeo, 2024), i.e. the symbolic and non-symbolic mortification of their *pars construens* and the upper hand of instincts and pack logic over those of reason and group, for evidently adult responsibilities we have said, as the unspeakable group abuses in Caivano in the summer of 2023 and most recently the Paderno Dugnano massacre testify, is the putrefying fruit of ineffective family and youth educational policies because they are emergency and never intentional from an educational point of view. With these theoretical premises within the QEASCG an attempt has been made to propose an interdisciplinary survey tool that takes a first 'snapshot' of Physical Literacy in the family, recalling that parents only become parents in daily practice and in particular in dialogue with those who have chosen to work for the care and protection of their children, future citizens of the world. The examination of the motor-sport habits of families could provide interpretative insights into the relationship between well-being and movement, suggesting a new field of socio-cultural investigation by interpreting each motor behaviour as the result of objective and observable manifestations, with the associated subjective meaning. The descriptors identified in the play-motor and sports area operationalise the scholars' conceptualisations, helping families - bearers of social values and orienting their children to self-respect and self-care starting with healthy eating and motor habits - to enhance skills that may have been dormant or never manifested. Since the family context plays a decisive role on the lifestyles and habits of the offspring, it is decisive, through the administration of the questionnaire, to focus attention on the family *Modus Vivendi* as it represents the starting point for the evolution of a culture of wellbeing and movement and thus orient the family and its educational actions in the direction of the potential for motor education. Recognising the parents' motor experience offers educators essential elements for understanding the various aspects of the child's personality: cognitive, socio-relational, biological, expressive, affective. In particular, a praxeological approach could be useful for a longitudinal study on the relationship between motor activities

and well-being, to promote the global development of the person. Supporting parenthood while nurturing a culture of movement through synergies between family, school and community is an effective strategy, capable of improving the population's state of health by reducing the risk of overweight, obesity and metabolic pathologies, and improving clinical, physical and psychological well-being.

2. The importance of the body dimension and motor activity in school for the integral development of the pupil

The most recent theorisations in educational research conducted have recognised, in the process of children's growth and development, the absolute centrality of sport and, in general, of motor activities (Meinel, 2011). Goal No. 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development itself emphasises the importance of encouraging physical activity and promoting motor literacy that considers the bio-psycho-social components of the individual. By Physical literacy (PL), we mean a process of acquiring and developing motor skills, through which the individual expresses his or her motor repertoire, motivations and perceptions of competence, interacts in the socio-cultural context (Colella, 2018). Sport and motor activity, in the plurality of their fields of application, allow the individual, a member of a social community, to live experiences capable of giving shape to unexpressed potential while enhancing his uniqueness and ensuring the affirmation of his personal identity. Through motor behaviour, in fact, people express, consciously or unconsciously, a large part of their personal stories (Lagardera & Lavega, 2003). Recreational and motor activities take on an educational value when, inspired by universal values and principles, they regulate collective and individual behaviour, promote socialisation and, at the same time, provide the tools to build one's autonomy and identity in respect of everyone and each one. Every motor activity represents a complex system in which the elements, ordered in a logical manner, manifest fundamental acts and movements thanks to the interconnection of anatomical-physiological, cognitive and social conditions, finding expression through a praxic-motor repertoire that serves as a means for the transmission of cultural values in a playful-social key. This perspective makes it possible to identify sport and physical activities as opportunities for wellbeing, suggesting a new interpretative key to the use of the body and corporeity in educational, social and rehabilitation contexts (Casolo, 2011). The same UNESCO international document Quality Physical Education emphasises the fundamental role of physical and sporting activity in the overall well-being of the person, highlighting its influence in

the practical-motor, intellectual-cognitive, expressive-communicative and socio-relational dimensions (UNESCO, 2015). Motor education, when supported by the family, becomes a concrete possibility to instil curiosity and motivation in children to participate in physical-motor activities. Various studies show that family environments are one of the main environments for learning and adopting strong motor skills and playful behaviour. Children tend to imitate active behaviours observed in the family context, suggesting a strong correlation between parental involvement in play activities and children's physical activity levels (Sallis, 2000). The family, as the bearer of social values, has the responsibility not only to make children acquire correct practical skills but above all to orientate them towards self-respect and self-care, starting with good eating and motor-sports habits. It has by right the responsibility of directing the dissemination of a culture of well-being underlying movement, acting as an initial catalyst to foster an effective motor literacy that extends beyond family boundaries, involving the school and the entire community, towards a responsible and healthy daily life practice in the interest of collective and individual well-being. But when this family-school-society continuum does not exist, when the family does not fulfil this right-duty, what is to be done, how is it to be intervened? It is a proven fact that in order to support a child's growth, it is necessary to initiate a dynamic of relations between different systems, in which practices and strategies must be put in place to allow parents to take an active role in the life, culture and decisions concerning children (Bove, 2007). It is therefore a matter of constructing a new geography of relationships that allows the whole territory to be inhabited by making it fruitful and identifying effective strategies to promote the co-education of children, through the assignment of distinct roles to each actor involved, based on a solid framework of shared responsibility. This approach implies a clear definition of the boundaries and responsibilities of each participant in the shared educational project for the specific child involved, always being clear about who does what, when and why actions are taken (Barca, 2024 p.86). Of course, building an effective and fruitful alliance also depends on the conviction that such collaboration as between family and school is really unavoidable even if resistance, prejudices and legacies remain on the part of both agencies. The school, often disarmed in the face of the crisis of values, as well as of prospects for the future, the alteration of emotional-affective and socio-relational skills and the dysfunctional behaviour that increasingly involves minors, finds in the family the sole cause of the current educational crisis. The family, on the other hand, sees in the school a judgmental, intrusive agency, which often wants to excel, often trespassing and entering into dynamics that do not belong to it (Barca, 2024). To get out of this impasse, it is necessary to restore the communicative symmetry between the two agencies with a new spirit, always

bearing in mind that at the centre is the child's development which, to be harmonious and complete, needs the synergy and co-responsibility of all the educational agencies. Schools have always been very attentive to the educational value of movement as they are aware that physical or motor education promotes the learning of skills and the development of children's and young people's motor skills (Meyer et al., 2013; Lonsdale et al., 2013) as well as the acquisition of civic and behavioural competences. Recent studies have also shown interesting relationships between motor activity and cognitive functioning, with particular regard to memorisation processes (Pesce et al., 2010) but also between different types of motor and sport activities (dance, sports games, fitness, etc.) and school performance and between increased levels of daily physical activity and school success (Sing et al., 2012; Lubans et al., 2016; Hillman et al., 2017). In the same ministerial documents such as the National Directions for the Curriculum (MIUR, 2012) - without wishing to forget the origins, i.e. the Casati Law with which physical education was introduced as a teaching discipline in all school orders - it is pointed out how the didactic use of the kinaesthetic body dimension in the school environment can represent a multiexperiential and above all, a privileged space for experimenting an alternative way of learning based on a plural approach to knowledge and capable of developing, through playful-motor operations, cognitive skills and competences often compressed by the old traditional didactics anchored to a dichotomous and reductionist vision that considers the physical-body dimension detached from the cognitive one. There are many elements that identify motor activity at school as formative; it is formative both because, through learning motor knowledge and skills, the person can grow in awareness and because, through motor and play experiences, the pupil is urged in a concrete way to exercise personal responsibility and intentionality. From these elements follows the need not to reduce the teaching of motor science to a simple sequence of movements to be repeated, but instead to adopt a reflexive and reasoned action (Belgianni, 2017, p.21). Through physical activity, the pupil is guided from nursery school onwards in the process of exploring the world, also through confrontation with peers and adults, where he or she can experiment and acquire forms of behaviour and related social rules, in a context different from that of the family. In compulsory schooling for the strengthening and enhancement of motor education, giant strides have been made: in 2009, the project 'Motor Literacy in Primary School' was launched, which was intended to be a concrete response to the need to disseminate motor education in children aged 6 to 10 years; this project, developed by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (M. I.U.R.), was implemented by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (M. I.U.R.). This project, developed by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (M.

I.U.R.), the Italian National Olympic Committee (C.O.N.I.), and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, began with experimentation in the 2010/2011 school year, with the inclusion of a sports tutor within the teaching team to work alongside the curricular teacher. L.234/2021 regulates the inclusion of a specialised teacher with a degree in Physical Education who becomes a class teacher for all intents and purposes. Since the body is what puts us in relation with ourselves, with others and with the world, it becomes fundamental for the school to focus its didactic intervention with the pedagogical and educational intention of enhancing corporeity in order to valorise the principles that are also manifested with the body and, at the same time, through not only physical activity but also awareness-raising activities, to improve the health status of future citizens of the world by reducing the risk of overweight and obesity, thus improving physical and psychological wellbeing.

3. Traditional play-motor activities as a prerequisite for the harmonious physical, cognitive, emotional-affective, social-relational and moral development of every child

Reflecting on a phenomenon as multifaceted and multidimensional as playfulness is, requires a vision that takes into account a plurality of approaches: pedagogical, didactic, psychological, anthropological, ethnographic, kinesiological, psychiatric, etc.; its very definition, to be univocal, may face the criticism of reductionism. We can certainly say that play unites us all, and not only in an ontogenetic sense, i.e. passing from the child to the adult and now fully investing even the third age, but also in a phylogenetic sense, so much so that looking back we find ourselves in this respect very similar to our ancestors. The fact that the activity of play for the human being represents a work of extraordinary commitment is evident even if we only mention its history. Its origins, in fact, as evidenced by archaeological findings, are lost in the dark ages to coincide with the very appearance of man on earth. The instinct of play, regardless of age, is common to all human beings, wherever they live on the globe and whatever degree of culture they possess. Playful activity is the first way in which we interact with the world. From the very first weeks of life, the child touches, moves, throws, picks up, manipulates in many different ways, everything around him, engaging in what we call playful activity or play, but which in fact constitutes 'serious work' in the words of Maria Montessori. Such activity also allows the first exchange of culture, information and behaviour between old and new generations. Huizinga in his 1938 work 'Homo Ludens' considers playful activity as the universal principle of man's cultural evolution. Playful activity, be it

free or structured, solitary or in a group, as well as having an important role on the psycho-affective level, in that it allows one to experiment symbolic and imaginative thought (Bobbio, Bandioli, 2021), also has a cathartic function, connecting, comforting, humanising the relationship (Bateson, 1996), leading the child to learn knowledge, skills and behaviour in formal, non-formal and informal environments: at home, in the street, in the gym, at school, everywhere. In the pedagogical field, playful activity plays an essential role in structuring personal identity, promoting autonomy and the development of social, affective and relational exchanges as well as correct and responsible behaviour. As Bruner argued, play is an indispensable training ground for creating new behavioural combinations, it is a combinatory activity that allows the child to see a situation and solve a problem in a creative and divergent manner, seeking alternative and never one-sided solutions. 'Play can serve as a vehicle for teaching the nature of a society's conventions, and it can also inform about the nature of convention itself' (Bruner, 2005, p.50). The pedagogical current on the educational and creative function of play has led to a careful design of living contexts, particularly in compulsory schooling, starting from pre-school, which provides specific spaces, appropriately designed and organised to encourage free playful expression. In these, the child has the opportunity to explore, manipulate, transcend the real and concrete datum, to transfigure and transform it, moving in a boundary space - hovering between inside and outside, between reality and fantasy, between desire and dream - in which to productively experiment the ability to create something new: experiences, thoughts, objects, relationships, going beyond the limits of everyday life. At school, as at home or in the neighbourhood, play-motor activity becomes, therefore, the true and undisputed protagonist in the child's balanced growth; a fundamental prerequisite for the harmonious physical, cognitive, metacognitive, emotional-affective, social-relational and moral development of every child. It is the one and only formative dimension capable of standing up to and pushing away those cultural alphabets that are carriers of isolation and loneliness, of fragmented and chaotic knowledge, of standardised, cold and iconic languages, typical of a complex reality that follows the rules of the free market. It becomes a precious opportunity for socialisation and learning, able to give the child of the twenty-first century the necessary tools to ride that mass media sea overflowing with electronic and computerised alphabets (Palumbo & Ambretti, 2021). If we think of the children of the last century, if we listen to the stories of those children who are now grandparents or great-grandparents, they tell us of outdoor games, street games born when the road was not asphalt, but often still gravel or beaten earth; of adventurous games, of climbing trees, based on agility, coordination, quick reflexes and dexterity made with the large group in the neighbourhood, where those who arrived last did not

feel excluded but worked hard to catch up with their companions. Where the better ones did not 'bully' but spurred the 'less good ones' to surpass themselves. This certainly does not mean that it was all 'roses and flowers' - on the contrary! For example, there was still gender segregation where girls could only play with girls and boys with boys, and above all, the choice of play activities was stereotyped and did not follow their inclinations. What should instead be recovered are the underlying values. They were creative games, of freedom and solidarity, figures of a world that no longer exists, but of which the value of spontaneous aggregation, of self-built space, of rituality and rules of play, of healthy competitiveness should be recovered (Novara & Passerini, 2005 p. 21). The playful scenarios in traditional games are intimately linked to the ways of life, trends and beliefs of the context in which they are born and take shape. Through the ludic-motor activities of traditional games, cognitive, physical and social skills are refined both individually and collectively, such as: making choices, making decisions, negotiating, pursuing one's interests, being creative, showing independence in thought and action, learning to resolve conflicts, understanding rules and structures, solving problems and developing new strategies from lived experiences (Staccioli, 2021). Such activities according to Petrovska et al. (2013) offer the advantage that they can be played both at school and at home. Most of these games include physical activity, cooperation and cognitive-emotional, relational and creative involvement. This motivates children to choose them because they offer the opportunity to be active in all seasons of the year in the open air (in the backyard or garden, but also on the lawn, in the park, in the sand, in the woods, in the snow, in the street...) in preference to sedentary games in front of a screen. Through these games, regardless of whether they are played at school or at home, they see in the figure of the educator (parent or teacher that is) an ally in their psycho-physical development, an adult who understands how important it is for them to work seriously at a game without constraining them, while developing a sense of responsibility and accepting and respecting the rules established and agreed upon by the group (Gul, 2023). Since education in modern societies is too adult-centred, oriented towards the control and supervision of children's play, school - at least preschool and primary school - should become the place where the child can learn to play and have the freedom to experience a playful-motor experience that is not invaded by the presence of adults who dictate the rules, control, limit. Educational care must think of alternative ways and propose educational experiences that educate and train the child to juggle in a community, to live experiences that make him or her ready to face the continuous challenges of daily life and teach him or her to become resilient towards the overbearing peer or towards situations that do not go as he or she would like in respect of everyone and each one (Ceciliani, 2017).

Activating, therefore, an educational-didactic approach based on ludic-motor activities, offers teachers the possibility of initiating for all pupils a 'path to accompanying personal and social growth according to a renewed educational principle that goes beyond the affirmation of both the traditional values of tolerance and coexistence, and the new values of the recognition of identities and respect for differences' (Chiappetta Cajola, 2013, p. 56).

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