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Francesco Del Sorbo¹

Teacher M.I.M.

delsorbo.francesco@iisferrariastabia.edu.it



Nicola Tenerelli

University of Bari Aldo Moro

nicola.tenerelli@uniba.it



ABSTRACT

Placing the student at the center of the learning-teaching process means implementing innovative teaching proposals, which observe and evaluate the learner considering multiple aspects and values (socialization, emotions, relationships, motivations, etc.). In this regard, physical education seems to be a "discipline-tool" capable of responding to current educational needs thanks to the inherent ability to bring out the emotions of pupils (Marino, 2024).

This study aims to highlight how in the school environment physical education has such relevance from the point of view of emotions and motivation as to be able to make the student aware and an active part of the teaching-learning process.

Porre l'alunno al centro del processo di apprendimento-insegnamento significa mettere in atto delle proposte didattiche innovative, che osservano e valutano il discente considerando molteplici aspetti e valori (socializzazione, emozioni, relazioni, motivazioni, ecc.). A tal proposito l'educazione motoria sembra essere la "disciplina-strumento" in grado di rispondere alle attuali esigenze educative grazie alla insita capacità di far uscire fuori le emozioni degli alunni (Marino, 2024).

Questo studio vuole mettere in risalto come in ambito scolastico l'educazione motoria abbia una rilevanza dal punto di vista delle emozioni e della motivazione tale da riuscire a rendere l'alunno consapevole e parte attiva del processo di insegnamento-apprendimento.

KEYWORDS

School; Teaching-learning process; Emotions; Motivation; Physical Education.

Scuola; Processo di insegnamento-apprendimento; Emozioni; Motivazione, Educazione Motoria.

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1. Introduction

The WHO believes that movement is a very important channel for learning not only motor, but also cognitive, relational, emotional and therefore constitutes one of the fundamental factors for maintaining people's health (De Vita, Rosa, 2018).

The aim of this work is to evaluate how physical education in primary school can positively influence the management of emotions and, therefore, of pupils' motivation in the teaching-learning process.

The work involved two primary schools of the Puglia Region in the province of Bari, in particular two fifth classes of each school were selected (number of pupils involved = 140), in order to assess the relationship between motor skills, emotional intelligence and motivation of the pupils through the administration of self-assessment questionnaires, with the aim of highlighting how useful movement can be to improve emotional awareness and self-regulation of learners.

The results suggest that physical education, by exploiting emotions, is able to strengthen the self-esteem and motivation of pupils. These data make it clear that with the introduction of conscious movement practices in formal education, significant benefits can be produced on the emotional and motor development of young people, offering innovative perspectives in the teaching-learning process.

2. Body language in motion and emotions

Body language is a form of nonverbal communication that expresses emotions, moods, and intentions through gestures, postures, facial expressions, and other body movements (Amado Alonso, León-del-Barco, Mendo-Lázaro, Iglesias Gallego, 2020). Body language is an essential part of everyday communication and plays a significant role in the transmission of authentic, therefore real and participatory emotions (Quintili, 2024). Body language can be more eloquent and reliable than the words themselves. The congruence between body language and verbal language contributes to effective communication. When the content and meaning of the words correspond to the gesture, postures, facial expressions, and maintaining eye contact, effective communication at high levels is achieved (Fexeus, 2024).

Alongside the development of motor skills, body language as an expressive communicative mode is one of the learning objectives to be achieved at the end of primary and lower secondary school, which is part of the thematic nuclei of the national guidelines for the 2012 curriculum (Cerini, 2012).

Therefore, mastering communication methods is considered a must for formal education: both body language as self-perception and/or expressive communicative mode, and the completion of the functional development of motor and expressive skills, are two of the thematic nuclei of the national indication, for ages ranging from two years (with the spring sections of kindergarten) to fifteen years (with the end of the first cycle of secondary education).

As many as two out of five thematic nuclei on school content to be compulsorily transmitted to all students up to the age of fifteen are related to corporeality and movement.

Body language is taught in school because movement represents one of the main functions for the human being and his evolution; moreover, it supports the dictate of the Constitutional Charter in Article 33, where the right to psycho-physical well-being in all age groups is highlighted (Agosti, Bocchi, Borgogni, 2024).

The benefits of constant physical practice are many, including:

- the reduction of the risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, osteoporosis;
- the reduction of the risk of obesity and obviously also of overweight;
- the reduction of depressive symptoms, loneliness, stress and anxiety since movement acts by releasing endorphins;
- finally, it produces benefits for the muscular and skeletal system.

Generally, when we refer to the concept of "developmental age" we indicate a period between birth and adolescence. This period is divided into three main phases:

- from birth to six years of age;
- from 7 to 13/14 years old;
- from 14 to 18 years old.

As can be seen, these are periods of life that are accompanied by formal education, i.e. school activity.

Attention to young people is a legacy that comes to us from the Greek tradition, which counted sport among the noblest forms of culture to be transmitted to young people.

For the Spartans, physical exercise served to strengthen spirit and body while waiting for war; The Athenians also pursued the ideal of fusion between external beauty and nobility of soul through the practice of sport. The young people of the polis were taught the value of confrontation with others and above all respect for the opponent; The word *agón*, the root of our competitiveness, is synonymous with the need for confrontation. The role of the athlete and the soldier overlap in the reality of ancient Greece, where military and sporting *areté* enjoy the same

celebratory schemes: Milo of Croton was a strategist, winner of seven Olympics and recipient of a heroic cult. Together with the culture of the body, young people in ancient times were taught the culture of values; The commitment to be the best is not an operation that was conceived in opposition to others but offered to one's fellow human beings as a gift from the gods (Bernardini, 2016).

Historical evolution has led to a sedentary lifestyle that has made it necessary to move during developmental age; It should be pointed out that growth is characterized by the quantity and quality of changes, maturation and development of the various domains of the person. One changes structurally, physiologically, and changes one's personality. Especially in childhood, the child receives the stimuli that affect the formation of the personality and its correct anatomical-physiological development (Raimondo, 2024). As the child learns how to react to the stimuli of the environment, he develops an adaptation process that makes him increasingly competent in managing different life contexts, which is why movement needs during developmental age are essential fundamental rights (Kuokkanen, Gutierrez, Snellman, Romar, 2024).

From the point of view of development, the developmental age represents the period most sensitive to learning related to the different spheres (cognitive, motor, emotional, relational, social, moral) of the person. Therefore, this is the phase in which motor patterns of behavior are acquired at the basis of adult life on a personal, social, emotional and work level (Impara, 2019).

Specifically, from eighteen months to three years, the child relates to the environment through sensory-motor play activity, characterized by the use of the body in a dynamic and real sense, aimed at subjecting the body to a series of important sensory stimulations which is also associated with an important emotional value (Cheung, Brown, Yu, Cheung, 2024).

For the following period, from three to five/six years of age, sensory-motor play evolves and is characterized by the presence of cognitive and emotional contents that the child expresses through symbolic associations, so that we cannot speak only of an operational/practical activity, as there is also an elaboration of knowledge, since cognition and the ability to perceive emotions processed and related to events are activated: this is the activity that the Agazzi sisters stimulated in children through the research and use of "junk" (Valentini & Troiano, 2017).

3. Physical education and emotions

Physical education is intended to define the teaching present in primary school with the presence of the teacher specialized in motor activity (Pascali, Monacis, 2024).

Through motor practice, there is an improvement in the sense of well-being in both formal and non-formal learning. This is because movement has been observed to help in the development of personality, emotional, social and cognitive well-being (Risyanto, Subarjah, Ma'mun, Prabowo, 2024).

To draw up physical education programs, a correct application of scientific theories is necessary as a basis for the design of the programs; Next, a systematic approach is needed to the design of exercise programs, which are redefined later, when specific objectives are identified according to the needs of the participants.

Last but not least, it is necessary to make a selection and structuring of physical activities according to the objectives and abilities of the pupils, so as to be able to guarantee effective and efficient movements.

In the relationship with young people, the teacher is always attentive to emotions, which represent the non-verbal aspect of communication. Emotions can be defined as the emotional states that guide our behavior according to two fundamental vital principles: that of self-preservation and that of the protection of the species (Ammendola, 2012). Another definition of emotions states that emotions tell us about the ways and motivations with which we are related to others (Galimberti, 2021). In this sense, emotions represent spontaneity, understood as what guides us in the sense of motivation to do. Emotions, therefore, acquire a meaning in the culture to which they belong, especially in the family or in the mini-context of the person who finds themselves experiencing them (Pellai, 2018).

In some respects it could be said that reason informs while emotion makes us act. The rational aspect makes things observed and systematizes them; Emotions represent motivation with respect to the things you do on a daily basis. In many situations, therefore, especially when automatic behaviors are involved, it is emotions that decide what should be done.

Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to emotionally understand the emotional states of others and to relate to each other (Misuraca, 2024). Emotional intelligence or interpersonal intelligence allows good management of human relationships. It depends on:

- knowledge of one's emotions (self-awareness);
- control of emotions (awareness);
- recognition of other people's emotions (empathy).

Emotions give us the opportunity to "guide" what we do, while emotional responses and their behaviors that, if recognized, can say what the other is feeling, so they can guide us in feeling good.

Obviously, emotions, both negative and positive, must all be present. They can all be reduced with hypo-reactivity or only some blocked, but they must still be

manageable, otherwise they risk resulting in explosive behavior. Emotions must be experienced in a congruous way both in the sensory-motor patterns and in the context and must be surmountable, whether they are positive or negative emotions.

4. Job description

This work was carried out in two primary schools of the Puglia Region in the province of Bari. In particular, two fifth classes of each school were selected. Study participants were chosen using non-probability convenience sampling for a total of 140 students. It should be noted that two classes of one school had the function of experimental group while the other two of the other school had the function of control group. Going into detail, the control group is composed of 70 students, of which 37 females and 33 males, both aged between 9 ± 1 years and 10 ± 1 years, while the experimental group consists of 70 pupils, of which 34 females and 36 males, both aged between 9 ± 1 years and 10 ± 1 years.

The study was carried out in the 2023/2024 school year and lasted 1 school year, therefore it began in September 2023 and ended in June 2024.

Obviously, both groups had the same physical education teacher, who proposed teaching units with the same contents.

The experimental group carried out the hours of physical education provided in the form of games and motor activities related to the teaching unit imparted in the subject. During the study, the aspects that were observed and evaluated were the emotions and motivation that derive from it.

To assess the presence or absence of the birth of emotions during the motor proposals, a questionnaire was proposed to the pupils.

	QUESTIONS	YES	NO	PARTLY
1	I recognize and respect my feelings			
2	I recognize and respect the feelings of others			
3	I share my emotions with others			
4	They are often in a bad mood			
5	I prefer to be alone because others don't understand me			
6	I prefer to be with others			
7	I worry when I'm the center of attention			
8	I like to help others			
9	I often argue with others			
10	I often get distracted because what the teachers say doesn't interest me			
11	When the teacher speaks I get annoyed			

12	This class was fun and interesting			
13	This lesson bored me			

Figure 1: Questionnaire proposed to pupils

A further parameter that has been evaluated is the motivation that physical education is able to generate. All this taking into account that the experimental group was subjected to a type of physical education lessons characterized by interdisciplinarity, while in the other group the lesson was carried out following the traditional model. It should be noted that the evaluations, carried out through questionnaires proposed to the pupils, were initial, in progress and at the end of the school year; they were made by teachers of both physical education and other disciplines.

As regards the questionnaire proposed to the pupils, the pupils were given the necessary time to fill them in correctly. The results that have been extracted from the data and evaluations carried out by teachers (highlighted in the following figures) highlight the difference between the beginning and the end of the school year; The mid-term evaluation was used as a fundamental data to evaluate any improvement or worsening of the observed values but was not reported in the graphs.

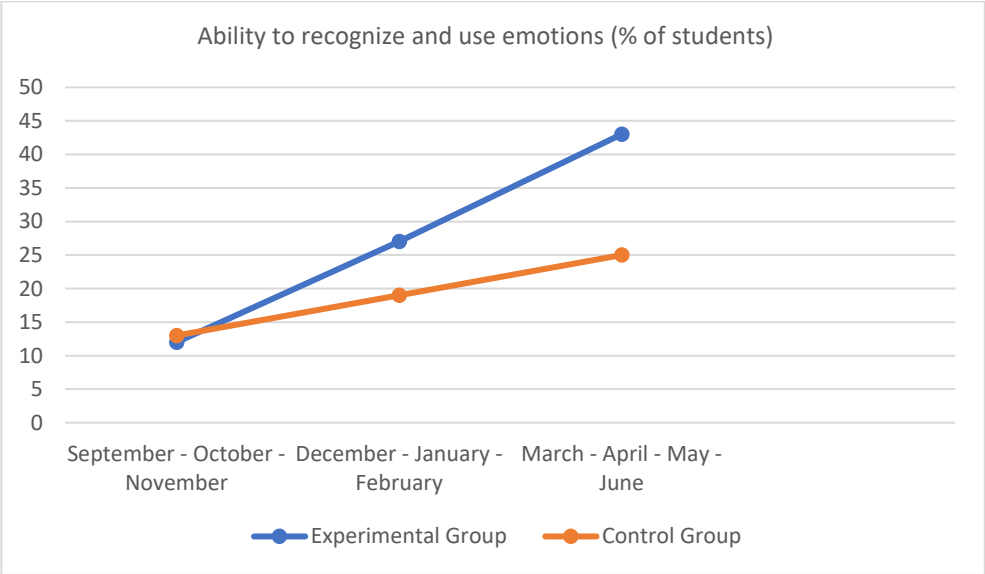


Figure 2: Ability to recognize and use emotions

As regards the presence of any difficulties in identifying emotions, and the consequent ability to recognize and use the emotions felt, the data that emerged

from the questionnaires administered show that the students of the experimental group have improved the ability to recognize emotions and, consequently, the ability to use them in different contexts.

If at the beginning of the school year there was an ability to recognize and use emotions by 12% of pupils, at the end of the school year this percentage stood at 43%. All this thanks to the presence of motor education which, through innovative educational proposals calibrated on play.

Conversely, in the control group, which was able to benefit exclusively from traditional teaching proposals, there was not the same improvement as in the experimental group (few demonstrated the ability to recognize emotions and know how to use them).

At the beginning of the school year, 13% of pupils demonstrated the ability to recognise and use emotions, at the end of the school year this figure stood at 25%. Comparing the data obtained from the two groups, it can be seen that the experimental group recorded an improvement of 31 percentage points, while the control group recorded an improvement of 12 percentage points, a difference of 19 percentage points in favor of the experimental group.

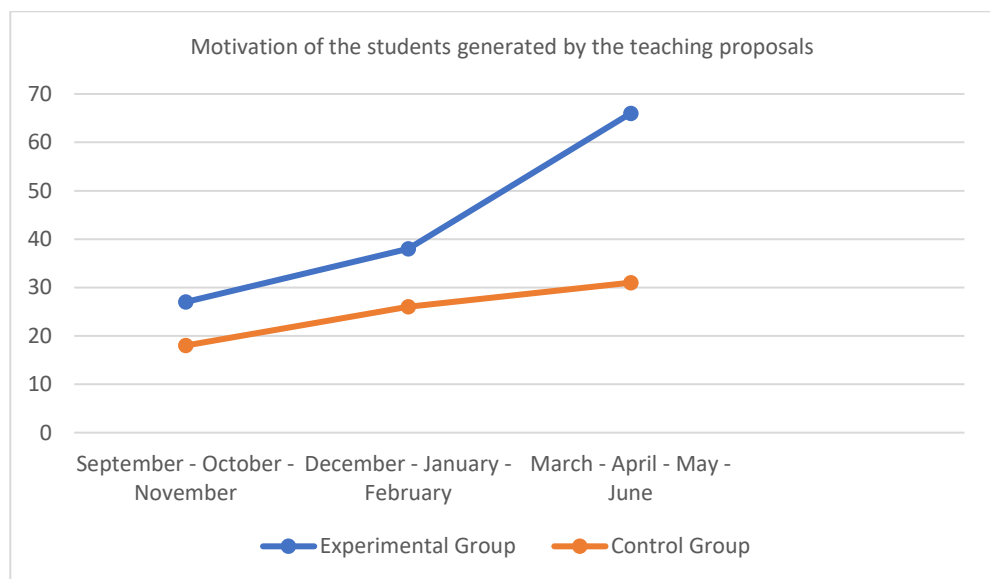


Figure 3: Motivation of the students generated by the teaching proposals

As regards the motivation of the pupils generated by the teaching proposals, it was observed that in the experimental group an improvement compared to the control group.

Initial evaluations showed that in the control group only 18% of the pupils declared that they were motivated and participatory during the educational proposals, a figure that rose by 13% at the end of the school year. The experimental group already had 27% of motivated students at the beginning of the year, which at the end of the year became 68% (a much greater increase than the other group +39%). Field research has confirmed that thanks to motor education, supported by the playful aspect, it is possible to involve and motivate the youngest; Traditional teaching, although able to produce improvements from an emotional and motivational point of view, was not able to generate the same impact.

5. Concluding Thoughts

The aim of this research was to highlight how physical education has a relevance from the point of view of the recognition and ability to use emotions, which affect the motivation and interest of pupils in the teaching-learning process. All this in order to make the learner aware and an active part of the learning process, thus managing to improve academic performance.

In this perspective, through this work it has been observed that the playful movement, generated by motor education in the school environment, creates from the point of view of motivation and attention, as well as socio-relational, a certainly greater improvement in pupils when motor education acts in a trans and interdisciplinary way, managing to create a real personalized path, characterized by the presence of playfulness, able to bring out the emotions that students feel and make them understand how to recognize and manage them.

The results of this work highlight how much the students involved in the experimental group were more motivated and built a better ability to recognize and use emotions; these attitudes have produced positive effects from the point of view of school and intra and interpersonal relationships.

Involving pupils and motivating their participation is a necessary approach to implementing an educational action oriented towards the well-being of students. This is the direction that the school must take; it is necessary to use suitable methodologies to meet the needs and requirements of young people, so as to be able to put them in the best possible conditions so that they can achieve educational and training success.

The school, responsible for the training of young people, must equip itself to exercise its institutional task to train life skills of identity and citizenship formation in an always binding and renewed way.

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