EDUCATIONAL DANCE AND INTEGRAL FORMATION: BODILY EXPRESSIVENESS AS A PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT
Educational dance is a pedagogical approach focusing on bodily expressiveness and individual creativity rather than traditional technical execution. Its main goal is to develop awareness of the body and movement as an expressive language. Requiring no prerequisites, it allows every child to freely explore their movement potential, shifting the focus from performance to personal discovery. In schools, educational dance supports harmonious growth by stimulating emotional, social, and cognitive skills. Rather than just teaching an artistic discipline, it provides an educational process that fosters self-awareness, empathy, cooperation, and expressive autonomy. Viewing students as active participants who invent and reflect on movement, this method develops motor, creative, aesthetic, and relational competencies. Ultimately, educational dance is an inclusive experience where the body becomes a powerful vehicle for knowledge, expression, and global personal growth.

KEYWORDS
Educational dance; bodily creativity; holistic development; experiential learning; inclusion.

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1. The Educating Body: Dance as a Tool for Holistic Development

The integration of dance into the school curriculum represents, to date, a significant challenge and a subject of pedagogical debate. Although widely recognized and practiced outside formal settings, its presence within institutional educational contexts remains marginal, often confined to episodic, time-limited integrative activities accessible to only a small number of learners. This disciplinary displacement starkly contrasts with a modern conception of disciplines understood as genuine epistemological tools—essential not only for understanding reality but, above all, for the formation of soft skills and the development of critical and proactive personal attitudes.

It is imperative to acquire two fundamental realizations that should guide the revision of current educational paradigms. First, authentic learning transcends mere instruction understood as the simple acquisition of knowledge. Rather, it takes the form of a holistic educational process that harmoniously integrates different dimensions: knowing (knowledge), knowing how to do (practical and operational skills), and knowing how to be (attitudes, values, socio-emotional competencies). The prevailing focus of schools on the acquisition of knowledge alone, unfortunately still widespread, represents a methodological gap that limits the integral development of the individual.

Second, it is urgent to move beyond the persistent Enlightenment-era and fragmented vision of knowledge, which conceives subjects as disjointed, cumulative units. It is essential to adopt a teaching approach that promotes the unity of learning processes. This is achieved through the construction of integrated learning units capable of enhancing interdisciplinary correlations and building bridges between seemingly distant fields of knowledge. Such a hologrammatic approach to didactics requires synergistic cooperation among the teaching staff, whose collective commitment and sharing of common

goals are aimed at ensuring the coherence and integrity of each student's educational path. Only in this way can the fragmentation of knowledge be avoided in favor of a complex and interconnected vision of learning.

This reflection leads us to question which disciplines should actually compose a curriculum authentically aimed at the integral formation of the learner's personality. The answer appears intuitive: all those that contribute to this goal. If the school's mission is an education that embraces all dimensions of the individual—cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and aesthetic—why does dance, along with other fundamental artistic expressions such as music, painting, or theater, continue to lack adequate and systematic space, despite the presence of specialists such as physical education teachers?

It is therefore fundamental to recognize the intrinsic and multidimensional formative value of artistic activities. In recent decades, educational dance has gained increasing importance in the international pedagogical landscape, establishing itself as a global expressive mode. Its peculiarity lies in its ability to convey complex and subtle content through the use of postures and technical-expressive gestures. Dance acts as a true analog language, facilitating access to and processing of the individual's primary processes, which are often inaccessible to verbalization. From this perspective, any bodily manifestation, even the smallest or seemingly insignificant, can potentially be traced back to a form of danced art, as a carrier of meaning and intentionality.

In the English-speaking world, the concept of "Dance Education" has long been recognized as a specific discipline, the purpose of which is to develop the learner's body awareness and the ability to manage movement in a harmonious, precise, and conscious manner. Educational dance is thus configured as an integrated discipline aimed at promoting the harmonization

of the subject's diverse dimensions: physical, emotional, cognitive, and relational. It significantly fosters processes of affective and psycho-social maturation, creating the prerequisites for an overall improvement in the individual's quality of life. It is a global activity that synergistically combines motor development with emotional evolution, allowing the individual to express their deepest identity and transform it into an authentic artistic message.

Through the practice of educational dance, the individual can access a profound awareness of their internal dimensions (emotional, affective, cognitive) and their unexpressed creative potential. This awareness is then consciously projected into space and into interaction with others, outlining a dynamic and integrated configuration of body-mind-spirit. Such an approach favors a personal path of growth, enrichment, and rediscovery of bodily language—an indispensable element for the emergence of sensory-perceptive experiences in their multidimensionality and for the refinement of psychomotor functions.

The constant practice of educational dance can significantly improve relational skills, help overcome emotional blocks and postural rigidities, expanding proprioceptive awareness of movement and stimulating cerebral proactivity. In this process, movement, steps, and postures evolve from simple action to a complex mental representation and, finally, to a true "representation with the body," where the gesture becomes language. The body of the dancing learner transforms into an autonomous expressive vehicle, communicating needs and requests through the conscious use of breathing, exploring the surrounding space, and interacting with sound and rhythm in a context of regulated spontaneity.

Education through dance in the school setting thus acquires the profound meaning of actualizing and sharing meaningful formative experiences, promoting bodily autonomy in its diverse and manifold dynamic functions, and providing the learner with essential tools for effective and conscious interaction with the world. To achieve the balanced and global growth of the student, dance activities in school must adopt a specific movement-centered pedagogy, capable of integrating organically and coherently into the overall educational-didactic programming.

2. Educational Dance: The Body as Language and Learning

Numerous empirical studies and pedagogical researches converge in highlighting the multiple benefits derived from integrating movement into educational processes. A significant example is provided by Werner's research (2001), which demonstrated how implementing dance within the teaching of mathematics led to a statistically significant increase in students' positive attitudes toward the subject. This suggests that bodily engagement can reduce anxiety and increase motivation, making the learning of abstract concepts more accessible and rewarding.

In parallel, the study conducted by Grant (1985) on the adoption of kinesthetic approaches in teaching at-risk children revealed numerous advantages of incorporating movement for educational purposes. Specifically, Grant employed kinesthetic strategies with first-grade students to teach literacy—a skill that inherently depends not only on motor abilities but also on the synergistic use of gestural, auditory, and visual language. Her findings showed not only the greater effectiveness of the kinesthetic approach but also a notable increase in student engagement and motivation. The

experimental group matched or surpassed the control group in all five areas tested, an improvement Grant clearly attributed to the kinesthetic approach. Aligning students' creative energy with instructional goals thus proves to be a disruptive factor, capable of supporting learning effectively, especially for learners exhibiting oppositional, hyperactive, or restless behaviors who struggle with the stasis required by traditional teaching models.

To deepen the understanding of movement in education, it is useful to reference the four approaches to psychomotor concepts outlined by Seewald (1993), which postulate a constant connection between the psychological dimension and motor activity. In this framework, movement can be interpreted in several ways:

1. A functional procedure: Choreographic activity aims to improve parameters such as balance, muscle tension management, dynamic effort, and other fundamental motor skills, enhancing the fluidity and precision of bodily action.
2. A process of self-activation: Emphasis is placed on exploring internal expression, seeking identity through gesture, and improving body awareness, promoting a deep dialogue between the self and the moving body.
3. An achievement/attainment of structures: The synergistic combination of perception and movement allows for variations and adaptations of acquired motor patterns, leading to greater variety and flexibility in the learner's sensorimotor behavior.

4. A medium for the relationship between the individual and the environment: Dance offers a privileged channel for the individual expression of internal events—even traumatic or complex ones—allowing the subject to communicate and process experiences through non-verbal language.

Creativity, from a perspective that also embraces the therapeutic, is effectively defined by Bean (1994) as: "the process across which an individual may express his/her original nature through his body or another media providing a deep sensation of fulfillment." Furthermore, one might argue that a human being becomes creative when faced with a problem that cannot be solved through habitual methods and, crucially, when driven by a strong interest in solving it (Kast, 1994).

Regarding the central nervous system, we can understand different cognitive processing modes through the specificity of the cerebral hemispheres:

- Left-hemisphere dominant students ("Thinkers"): They process information sequentially, analytically, and in detail. They are tuned into language, logic, and linear sequences (Hannaford, 1997; Sousa, 2006).
- Right-hemisphere dominant students: They process information holistically and globally, prioritizing images, rhythm, patterns, emotions, and colors. They lean toward visualization, spontaneity, intuition, and kinesthetic/tactile learning modes.

Since both hemispheres process stimuli, their joint stimulation through dance promotes trans-hemispheric information transfer and the formation of crucial neural connections, encouraging critical thinking.

Finally, in a prospective analysis of the socio-economic landscape, Daniel Pink (2006) argues in "A Whole New Mind" that our globalized economy is moving from the "Information Age" to a new "Conceptual Age." In this era, the ability to nurture creativity and the roles of "creator" and "emphasizer" become imperative, suggesting a necessary reorientation of educational strategies toward these holistic transversal competencies.

3. The Transformative Potential of Educational Dance: From Theory to Didactic Practice

Dance, as an artistic and performative manifestation of unparalleled universality, permeates the history and culture of every people, accompanying their evolution and assuming, from time to time, multiple meanings and connotations. It is configured as a language intrinsically rooted in human instinct, capable of transcending geographical and cultural boundaries. Through its practice, a profound contact is established with emotions and the rich fabric that weaves together cultural and aesthetic identity, allowing the body to express itself artistically in perfect harmony with music. This original form of expression possesses a notable formative value thanks to its intrinsic link with life, the close interrelation it postulates between the psychic and physical dimensions, and its inherent potential for personal expression and self-control. Furthermore, its innate communicative capacity to promote awareness of the "other" and the collective makes it a formative experience of extraordinary efficacy.

Within the school institution, dance can rise to become a complex and articulated formative structure of expressive corporeity, capable of giving shape to, renewing, and changing what has been perceived and experienced

through even an instrumental use of movement. It restores dignity to a dimension of the bodily long relegated and diminished by Western thought—a dualistic conception that for a long period pervaded the school environment as well, often translating into a sharp opposition between mind and body. In such a restrictive vision, motor activity was equated exclusively with gymnastics, marginalizing its intrinsic educational dimension within the formative path. This created a cultural and reductive dichotomy between the "body to be trained in the gym" and the "mind to be educated in the classroom."

Only in recent decades, thanks to a growing scientific and pedagogical awareness, has the unity and holistic complexity of the learning subject been vigorously proclaimed, emphasizing the inextricable link between motor experience and cognitive thought. In this renewed context, dance is configured as one of the most promising educational activities, capable of retying the knot between didactics, movement, and creativity, enriching a vision of corporeity—previously oriented mainly toward the mere physical-motor aspect—through the development of a powerful artistic and expressive dimension of the body.

Educational Dance therefore offers an original and stimulating alternative, capable of diversifying and enriching the activities provided by ministerial programs. For children, the knowledge of dance represents an important opportunity for bodily and emotional growth, as through it, the learner learns to perceive their own body and to use movement as a privileged means of communication with others. They discover how the typology and quality of movement are deeply linked to the emotions and sensations experienced, and how they are strictly correlated to the space used, the music, the rhythm, and the group dynamics. Dance thus allows for the development of

movement in a creative form, permitting the externalization of a conscious expression of what is represented and animated within each individual, awakening a multiplicity of new sensory, imaginative, and thought experiences, thereby enriching one's personal heritage.

In this methodological perspective, dance is defined as the art of using and organizing movement to express, communicate, and invent. The learning of dance should not, therefore, be considered exclusively as a matter of executing steps or developing physical skills, but must be understood as a precious tool for the integral formation of the person and the individual. Educational Dance proves particularly applicable to the school context due to its intrinsic experiential and non-executive perspective of the subject: it does not aim to teach predefined technical procedures, but rather to guide students to identify and recognize the common principles underlying movement and expression. The dancing student is simultaneously performer and creator, and learns to recognize the elements they have experienced also through the observation and analysis of dance in its multiple manifestations, whether individual, collective, or artistic.

Dance has been described as the highest and most harmonious configuration of human movement, capable of creating complex images starting from the dominant image of man in his individuality and wholeness, confirming the decisive function of the bodily-kinesthetic potential in the origins of communication (Giugni, 1991, 111). Creative movement in dance can, in fact, give voice to those internal dimensions and needs that do not find expression through the word, opening the way to new paths of communication, and therefore to new ways of perceiving and being in the world. The intrinsic challenge of every education toward creativity through dance lies, therefore, in increasing the mastery of our body, in recognizing the affective and

emotional dimension of our gestures, and in fully valuing the needs for creativity that, in every individual, do justice to subjectivity (Garcia, Plevin & Macagno, 2006, 33).

The understanding of the body and mind in learning processes has been deeply influenced by seminal studies in the fields of psychology and pedagogy. Already Sigmund Freud argued for the profound identity between the ego and the body-ego, emphasizing the importance of somatic experiences in the structuring of personality. Fundamental was also the contribution of Jean Piaget who, through his studies on the developmental age and his theories on the psychomotor development of the child, unequivocally clarified the preparatory role of the motor dimension as an essential substrate for the development of more complex cognitive actions and as a basis for the construction of the symbolic system. Piaget's research laid the foundations for modern psychomotricity, understood as a systemic approach to the mechanisms of habilitation, learning, communication, and the global development of the person.

This discipline saw the birth in France of some of its greatest researchers, including Pierre Vayer and Jean Le Boulch, who forcefully relaunched the educational and formative dimension of psychomotricity. While Le Boulch highlighted the strong link between bodily behaviors and emotionality, analyzing the evolution of corporeity in different chronological phases (emotionality, hyperactivity, representation), Vayer focused on the gradual nature of motor learning and its preparatory role for other cognitive learning. Howard Gardner's theories, with their introduction of multiple intelligences, opened new "biological and intercultural" perspectives, placing emphasis on the relationships between the body and intelligent activities and positioning

bodily-kinesthetic intelligence at the same level as other forms of intelligence, thus re-evaluating the perspective of learning experiences founded on a motor substrate.

Psychomotricity studies have been further enriched by contributions arising from the psychoanalysis of authors such as Winnicott, Dolto, and Klein, and by in-depth research on non-verbal communication. Such contributions led to the progressive affirmation of the concept of the "emotional body"—that is, a body capable of expressing complex meanings, producing signs, and acting intentionally. The full valorization of the concept of corporeity as a natural and continuously evolving dimension of the subject has made its way, as a privileged place where language in all its different forms germinates.

In this renewed context, dance, as a formative and educational discipline intrinsically centered on the body, can be considered an articulated structure of expressive corporeity, capable of giving shape to, renewing, and changing what has been perceived and experienced through even an instrumental use of movement (Dollari, 1995, 18). Distancing itself from an educational vision of corporeity with an exclusively physical-motor orientation—and therefore executive and training-based—dance contributes decisively to the reconciliation between body and thought, opening itself to an artistic and expressive dimension that had long been neglected (Zagatti, 2009, pp. 23-26). Specifically, compared to other arts, dance possesses the unique ability to unite and reconcile motor development with expressive and emotional development; the body is not only the conductor of the artistic message but becomes at the same time the instrument and object of its own action. It is precisely this artistic-expressive experience that acquires a formative purpose

in education, not as a mere externally formalized representation, but by virtue of the perceptual emphasis given to the subjective, emotional, and aesthetic experience of what is being represented.

4. Educational Dance for Inclusive Didactics

"*There is a special place in the life of a child with a disability where, above all others, they must find the best and most complete application: it is the educational context, understood as inclusive […] It is, in fact, in school that the disabled child naturally encounters their peers, and it is together with them that they learn, apply new knowledge, verify their skills and their own ideas about them, and validate hypotheses […] It is in school that they have the best and most natural opportunity to play with others, and through play, grow and develop within the interaction between the limits and possibilities posed by each protagonist and the opportunities offered by the environment*" (Besio, 2009).

The school is configured as a privileged and optimal context for promoting the social integration of students with disabilities, facilitating the implementation of ludic-motor and creative-expressive activities. In this institutional environment, more than anywhere else, and through the multiple opportunities offered by motor and sporting practice, individuals with disabilities can experience the full realization of their potential, transcending any categorization linked to deficit dimensions. Consequently, the school stands as the educational place par excellence, overseeing growth processes from childhood to adolescence at all levels—from motor education to physical

education, according to ministerial directives. It can act as a driver for sporting practices, integrating motor routines into the lifestyle of every student, with or without disabilities.

In this light, a motor-sporting activity adequately structured on the principles of educational dance can represent an exceptional tool for the disabled person, through which a competent educator can globally influence the pupil's physical, mental, and socio-affective development, fostering an overall growth of their personality. Like all arts, dance is an expression of our being, of our creativity, a means of communication that allows us to relate to others and tell our story through movement. The language of dance is universal and can be read by anyone, without restrictions of age, experience, or physical and mental condition. Everyone has the right to fulfill their expressive potential; everyone has the right to let go through dancing (Alicia, 2022).

It is important to emphasize that it is neither a therapy nor, even less so, dance therapy; its purpose is not rehabilitative or curative, but rather to integrate all diverse people into a single space, a single place of expression and movement in order to achieve awareness and knowledge (Kissinger, 2017). What is important to highlight is that educational dance laboratory activities do not aim to eliminate the cause of distress, but aim to encourage the use of the body toward a recovery of the motor dimension within the teaching-learning processes, because the body represents the primary device through which experiences are realized, learning is developed, and knowledge is produced (Palumbo, 2018, pp. 83-84).

Furthermore, dance favors socialization, facilitates integration, promotes dynamic relationships, and stimulates self-esteem. Dance is a collective activity carried out in a context of play and fun; for this reason, it fosters a sense of belonging and cohesion, contributes to the development of coherent

relational behaviors, accentuates collective feelings and self-control, and fuels cooperation toward achieving a common goal. Dance, therefore, is configured as a valid inclusive tool capable of supporting and contributing to the personal growth of individuals in order to promote well-being by transforming weaknesses into strengths, welcoming diversity as a resource in an inclusive context of "special normality" (Ianes, 2006, p. 107).

References to Educational Dance in School Regulations

The current reform of the Italian school system has been deeply influenced by the growing re-evaluation of motor and sports sciences, especially from a didactic-educational perspective. However, in this process, the educational role of dance has not yet been clearly highlighted. In the *National Guidelines for the Curriculum of Preschool and the First Cycle of Education* of September 4, 2012, children symbolically "bring" their bodies to school; they play with them and represent them, communicate, express themselves through mimicry, dress up, and test themselves. In these ways, they perceive the completeness of their own self, consolidating autonomy and emotional security. Thus, a vision of the body emerges as a "tool for knowing oneself in the world," recognizing movement as the primary factor of learning at school. The body, as stated in the specific field of experience *The Body and Movement*, has expressive and communicative potential realized in a language characterized by its own structure and rules that the child learns through specific learning paths: motor experiences allow for the integration of different languages, the alternation of words and gestures, the accompaniment of musical enjoyment and narrations, and the fostering of self-image construction and the elaboration of the body schema.

It is within the *Goals for the Development of Competence* in the field of experience *The Body and Movement* that a visible reference to dance appears

as a privileged means to foster interaction with others and as a tool with strong communicative and expressive potential. In the 2012 National Guidelines, the first recognition of dance is found within the *Learning Objectives* at the end of the third year of lower secondary school for Music, where the latter is considered among the artistic forms that must be integrated critically with the design and realization of sound events. Subsequently, in Physical Education, the formative potential of motor education is highlighted as an opportunity to promote cognitive, social, cultural, and affective experiences. Indeed, it states that it is through movement—encompassing a vast range of gestures from facial mimicry to dance and various sporting performances—that the student can know their body, explore space, and communicate and relate to others in an adequate and effective manner.

Furthermore, it is in the *Goals for the Development of Competencies* at the end of primary school for Physical Education that the term "choreutic experiences" appears for the first time, understood in its legitimate derivation from the Greek-Hellenistic semantic field. This refers to experiences which, together with dramatization and rhythmic-musical activities, allow the child to communicate and express their states of mind using bodily and motor language. In the *Learning Objectives* at the end of the fifth grade of primary school, besides the clear reference to dance as a body language and communicative-expressive mode, the reference to the emotional aspect of dance is unique. Here, the objectives presented include using expressive and bodily modes in an original and creative form, also through forms of dramatization and dance, while being able to transmit emotional content and to elaborate and perform simple movement sequences or individual and collective choreographies. Moreover, in the *Learning Objectives* at the end of

the third year of lower secondary school, an indicated objective is to "Know and apply simple techniques of expression, states of mind, and stories through gestures and postures performed individually, in pairs, or in groups."

In the *New National Guidelines 2025*, the centrality of the body as a primary tool for knowledge is reaffirmed for preschool. Dance, understood as choreutic language, is explicitly mentioned within the plurality of languages, both in expected competencies and specific learning objectives. Regarding primary and lower secondary school, the guidelines do not present targeted references to dance. It is included only in more general considerations related to bodily expressiveness and choreutic movements, without specific recognition of its autonomous disciplinary potential.

The presence of dance in the Italian school system is detectable at various levels and with different nuances, from preschool to high school. However, in the absence of clear and unambiguous reference regulations, educational dance—understood in its intrinsic formative and educational value—tends to remain confined to an activity of a predominantly creative and expressive nature. This positioning often prevents its full establishment as a true curricular discipline aimed at the integral formation of the person. In the Italian school landscape, in the most favorable cases, dance translates into a laboratory path integrated into the didactic programming, initiated by the autonomous choice of the individual school institution within the *Piano dell'Offerta Formativa* (P.O.F. - Three-year Plan of the Educational Offer). Such initiatives are typically entrusted to an external expert, whose role is that of a dance-educator.

It is fundamental to emphasize that the role of the dance-educator is not intended to, nor can it, replace that of the curricular teacher. On the contrary, they act as an artistic mediator whose mission is to spread dance as a

privileged form of body expression through adequate tools and effective methodologies. This conception of dance aims to give shape to, renew, and convert what has been assimilated and internalized through an instrumental use of the body. The primary objective of educational dance is, therefore, to favor the unfolding of forms of movement which, in their free organization and structuring, find the favorable space for the birth and development of a true artistic form of movement. This is a process that goes beyond the mere execution of predefined steps or choreographies, promoting instead the discovery of an authentic and subjective bodily language capable of reflecting and shaping internal experience and the relationship with the external world.

5. Dancing at School: Principles, Value, and Didactic Implementation

Educational dance, founded on the principles of personal and bodily creativity, focuses on the expressive awareness of movement rather than the learning of imposed choreographies. Through this approach, learners develop a deep knowledge of their own bodies and use movement as a means of interpersonal communication. They learn that the quality of movement is intrinsically linked to the emotions and sensations experienced, as well as to the surrounding space, music, rhythm, and the relational dynamics of the group. The methodology does not transmit mere technique but stimulates the child to organize movement to express, communicate, and invent, prioritizing a process of doing, creating, and observing. The student is simultaneously the performer and creator of their own dance, exploring their motor possibilities under the guidance of the leader. This approach requires no prerequisites or specific motor skills and can also be configured as a single formative experience without necessarily requiring continuation. Integrating dance into schools means promoting emotional, creative, and relational experiences that

foster the balanced and global growth of the individual. Dance, therefore, should not be understood as a mere exercise of steps or physical abilities, but as a precious tool for individual formation. Its applicability in the school context is high, as it is based on an experiential rather than executive perspective: it does not teach a predefined way of "doing," but invites one to recognize and understand movement according to common parameters. The dancing student, as performer and creator, also learns through the observation and analysis of various choreutic manifestations (individual, collective, artistic).

Despite its potential, the presence of dance in Italian basic schooling is limited to vague mentions in ministerial programs for Preschool and Primary levels. This absence of specific programming and of a teaching staff with adequate skills hinders its full integration, even as a support to disciplines such as Physical Education or Music Education. It is widely recognized that the rhythmic-musical element holds fundamental importance in the formation of the individual. As argued by Rudolf Laban, dance achieves an organized cooperation of mental, emotional, and bodily faculties, translating into essential actions for the development of coordination, harmony, and personality. The current lifestyle, characterized by the prevalence of intellectual work and the sedentary nature imposed by the pervasive use of digital technologies, relegates dance to a small space, generating a need for physical release. Recent studies show that motor activities and dance mitigate aggression, promote well-being and security, and foster relaxation and harmony between mind, body, and spirit, in full alignment with Juvenal's principle of "Mens sana in corpore sano." Dance at school must aim for the achievement of functional, relational, and cognitive objectives within a playful and socializing environment, enhancing its interdisciplinary function. Being

movement, dance is motor activity; being rhythm, it is intrinsically linked to music. Dance is also lived and dynamic geometry, building figures in real space, surpassing the static nature of textbooks. Like other arts, it is a universal language of time and space, devoid of boundaries, favoring the knowledge of different cultures and promoting interculturality. Educating through dance in the school environment means actualizing formative experiences, making the body autonomous in its multiple dynamic functions, and providing it with tools for interaction with the world. At school, dance activities, embracing the principle of promoting balanced and global growth, require a specific movement-centered pedagogy capable of integrating with the overall educational-didactic programming. The purpose of an educational dance intervention is to offer children the opportunity to engage with new teaching-learning methods, develop non-verbal language for greater body awareness, and learn interdisciplinary concepts through motor activity.

Educational dance interventions can be structured into four fundamental phases:

- Warm-up: Activities aimed at joint mobilization, stretching, and muscle strengthening, preparing the body for choreutic activity with background music. It can take place in different spatial configurations (on the spot, across the floor, in a circle, mirroring).
- Presentation of the Stimulus: The teacher introduces the stimulus to be explored, initiating a guided discussion with the students through relevant questions.
- Exploration: Based on the stimulus, students experiment and explore their own movement freely or rhythmically, under the careful guidance of the teacher.

- Composition: In this final phase, the children create a choreographic composition following the instructions provided by the teacher, integrating the previous experiences.

6. Concluding Reflections

Educational dance is configured not only as a means to optimize motor skills but as a catalyst for the integral development of the personality, fostering learning processes through active and alternative modes. Its practice constitutes a crucial facilitating element for integration and the acquisition of personal autonomy, particularly for individuals with learning difficulties. This occurs through the enrichment of motor, intellectual, and sensory-perceptual experiences. Dance assumes an integrative function whenever it offers the opportunity for the recognition of one's own identity and individual potential. In this perspective, educational dance activities prove to be cognitive tools of significant validity, capable of exploring and conquering unprecedented dimensions of relationship and socialization.

Movement, in its intrinsic motor-expressive dimensions, constitutes a sophisticated and alternative learning environment in which movements assume a peculiar and very rich syntax, potentially more complex than the linguistic-verbal one. It succeeds in giving body to the most subtle feelings of the human soul and, contextually, in promoting values such as equality, active participation, respect for diversity, mutual trust, joy, and empathy. Its applicability to the school context is high, as it is based on an experiential rather than a merely executive perspective of the subject. This means that educational dance does not aim to teach predefined technical procedures, but rather to guide students to identify and recognize the common principles underlying movement and expression. Adequate work on the body, with a

marked emphasis on creativity and expressiveness, can make students more aware of their own movements, while simultaneously allowing for free expression and communication.

Educational dance represents, therefore, an original and stimulating alternative to diversify and enrich the activities provided by existing ministerial programs. The central function of an educational path based on corporeity and dance requires not only the elaboration of a specific learning environment but also the adoption of an interdisciplinary culture and a complex, innovative didactic method. This approach is capable of bringing out the various unexpressed abilities of the child, which often remain latent in more traditional educational contexts. Didactic paths centered on dance can be applied in a plurality of educational contexts, adapting activities to the specificities of the environment and the themes to be proposed. Dance, in fact, can be employed as a transdisciplinary educational tool in relation to all disciplines that contribute to the integral formation of the personality of individual students. Its intrinsically connective nature—which links movement to spatiality, rhythm, emotion, cognition, and social interaction—makes it a privileged vehicle for exploring and consolidating concepts that would otherwise remain confined to isolated disciplinary fields. In this sense, educational dance stands as a model of integrated pedagogy, capable of overcoming the mind-body and knowledge-experience dualisms, promoting a holistic understanding of knowing and being.

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