

THE PEDAGOGICAL ROLE OF MOTOR ACTIVITY IN CONTRASTING EDUCATIONAL POVERTY

IL RUOLO PEDAGOGICO DELL'ATTIVITÀ MOTORIA NEL CONTRASTO ALLA POVERTÀ EDUCATIVA

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Abstract

Educational and economic poverty are two phenomena closely connected to each and are spreading exponentially, also due to the health emergency due to the Coronavirus. The first educational areas that must be valued in order to face and reduce this constant growth are certainly the school institution, the family and physical education. In particular, the school, intended as the first educational agency and glue among others, has the task of using all the educational sources that exist, therefore it must exploit all the potential of Motor Activity to be able to counter the family economic difficulties that inevitably compromise the correct cultural and social growth of the child and therefore of the future citizen. This article aims to highlight how the combination of "School and Physical Education" is one of the necessary pillars to tackle Educational Poverty, especially in the developmental age.

La povertà educativa ed economica sono due fenomeni strettamente connessi fra di loro e si stanno diffondendo in modo esponenziale, anche a causa dell'emergenza sanitaria dovuta al Coronavirus. I primi ambiti educativi che devono essere valorizzati per fronteggiare e ridurre questa costante crescita sicuramente sono l'istituzione scolastica, la famiglia e l'educazione motoria. In particolare la scuola, intesa come prima agenzia educativa e collante fra le altre, ha il compito utilizzare tutte le fonti educative che esistono, pertanto essa deve sfruttare tutte le potenzialità dell'Attività Motoria per riuscire a contrastare le difficoltà economiche familiari che inevitabilmente compromettono la corretta crescita culturale e sociale del bambino e quindi del futuro cittadino. Il presente articolo vuole evidenziare come il connubio "Scuola e Educazione Motoria" sia uno dei pilastri necessari per fronteggiare la Povertà Educativa, in particolare nell'età evolutiva.

Keywords

Educazione Motoria; Povertà Educativa; Agenzia Educativa.
Motor Education; Educational Poverty; Educational Agency.

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1. Educational Poverty and the health emergency due to Covid-19

The term “Educational Poverty” defines the impossibility for all people under the age of 18 to learn and develop any skills or competences independently or in a guided way. Unfortunately in Italy this phenomenon is very widespread, in fact almost two million children live in absolute poverty and are deprived not only of the right to grow up and to study, but also of the goods considered indispensable to lead an acceptable life (Nuzzaci A., Minello R., Di Genova N., Sideboard S., 2020). Educational Poverty is direct consequence of the economic one, even if both go hand in hand, and increase in a directly proportional way. Deficient economic conditions inevitably deprive or condition the opportunities that all children could or should have. There is only one difference between educational and economic poverty and consists in the fact that if the second manifests and makes evident the conditions of difficulty of the people who suffer from it, in the first case it is subtle and acts negatively on the learning ability of each child (Milani L., 2020). Several scientific and statistical studies have shown that in Italy 1 out of 7 minors drop out of school early, consequently increasing the phenomenon of early school leaving, and 1 out of 5 minors have never practiced or abandoned sports. Just as in the first case the negative trend is evident and it is mandatory to try to remedy and put an end to this phenomenon, also in the second example it is necessary to try to run for cover, as the children as well as the educational institution are deprived of any other opportunities for educational growth, placing limits or compromising the possibility of participating in any cultural and motor activity (Matutini E., 2020).

The phenomenon of Educational Poverty is frequently associated with disadvantaged social contexts, in which there is a strong family discomfort in correlation with further factors such as the absence or occasional work occupation by the parents which inevitably compromises any educational opportunity for the child. This situation has worsened even more due to the manifestation of the pandemic due to the Coronavirus, as families who were already living in a situation of job insecurity have lost their job permanently, or there has been a drastic drop in salary, compromising and reducing accordingly the standard of living of each member of the family itself (Rizzo M., 2020). All this has caused an exponential increase in the lack of educational opportunities both in school and out of school, in learning difficulties due to distance learning, which in some cases have led the child or adolescent to isolate himself even more until the total abandonment of the same. This situation generated by Covid-19 has done nothing but increase and consolidate the educational impoverishment especially for children and adolescents precluding them from having a better future (Di Genova N., 2021). Furthermore, the percentages of early school leaving at the national level are increasing sharply as well as the phenomenon of youth unemployment. In this scenario of educational shortage, the educational institution, with its curricular and extracurricular proposals, should be a fundamental point of reference to counter this phenomenon, but in reality the difficulties in being able to offer these opportunities due to Covid-19 it has done nothing but lead children and adolescents to this delicate phase of their life towards a condition of greater social isolation. Therefore this growing educational emergency must be considered a real national issue, and

assuch, it must be faced by the collective and not exclusively by the institutions, in order to be able to contrast it as a real educating community, attentive to fundamental aspects such as sociability, emotions, ties with the peer group and not, in order to be able to put children at the center of the whole process of educational growth (Arduini G., Chiusaroli D., 2020).

2. Motor Activity as an Educational Tool

The term Educational Poverty leads us to think of innumerable difficulties that must be countered by many cultural forms, but Motor Activity does not always appear in the idea of people (Sibilio M., 2005). Unfortunately, even to day when we talk about any sporting activity we only think of the physical benefits that it generates and not of those that, even if they do not manifest themselves in an obvious way (socialization, manifestation of emotions, etc.), are more useful. Motor Activity must be understood as an educational tool capable of encompassing multiple training areas, and consequently of proposing all the values of the citizen's life up to being able to shape society (Moliterni P., Magnanini A., 2018). It must be considered in all its forms, for its ability to produce physical improvements, but also, as also stated in the 1992 European Charter, to bring about cognitive improvements, socio-relational, emotional: values that are proposed in association with the playful component present in any form of motor activity and that will contribute to forming the character and personality of the future adult. What has been said shows that Motor Activity is able to provide improvements both as regards the educational aspect and from the point of view of physical health, thus contributing to counteracting the phenomenon of Educational Poverty. It must be understood as a real educational agency, and as such necessary for the psychophysical development of the person (Cereda F., 2017). Sports practice manages to fight sedentary lifestyle, which is increasingly present in a technological society like the current one, and exploits all the inherent values of Motor Activity that will surely be useful for academic success. Furthermore, it is highly inclusive, it does not make any distinctions from the point of view of the origin, language or color of the children, on the contrary they are an added value for both personal and collective educational growth. Carrying out a motor activity, both individual and group, at any level, involves both physical and mental commitment: this necessarily generates a positive influence on the person's character and an improvement in the child's self-esteem and personality (Bertoli F., Modonutti G.B., 2007). It is inevitable to recognize the educating value of Motor Activity, bearer of an enormous educational potential for the child and adolescent, such as to have to collaborate with all the other educational environments, formal and otherwise, to be able to forge the citizen of the future. It must be considered on a par with the school and the family, and for this reason it must be accessible for everyone, also and above all for those who live in situations of economic-educational poverty. Motor practice involves the acquisition of values that are not always present in those who do not carry out any type of motor activity. Specifically, aspects such as respect for the rules, for oneself, of others and the surrounding environment, solidarity, loyalty, attention and continuous comparison with oneself and with others, the acquisition of a critical spirit, motivation and pursuing a set goal, and many other values which, even if acquired in the motor field, can also be used efficiently and effectively

in other contexts, in order to achieve personal and social autonomy, and a growth in self-esteem. The advantage of exploiting motor activity as an educational tool lies in being able to exploit the playful factor of the same, understood as the possibility of playing, proposing activities that will prove to be useful for cognitive purposes education and training of the identity of the person (Lipoma M., Napoli O., Paloma F. G., 2008). For this to happen it is necessary that the motor proposal represents a moment of fun, so as not to be excessively demanding, but at the same time stimulating both as regards the motor, socio-relational and emotional aspects. It could be safely stated that the educational potential inherent in Motor Activity is capable of changing world society, eliminating negative aspects such as isolation, lack of emotions and the absence of sociality, which spread exponentially following the health emergency for Covid-19. From this point of view, the role of the coach-educator is fundamental, as he is a point of reference for the child and his growth, therefore his way of presenting himself and doing must be controlled as well as the motor proposals must be scheduled; he must be considered as a real means of inclusion capable of exploiting the potential of motor activity to favor a balanced growth of the child's entire cultural potential. Specifically, starting to educate to respect the rules of the society in which one lives, starting to work on their potential from an early age by exploiting the game as a means to lay the foundations of an honest citizen, aware of himself and with great social potential. Any sporting activity practiced by the child produces undeniable advantages from the point of view of the formation of character, whether it is individual or team sport. Carrying out a physical activity means committing yourself. Keep your attention and concentration on what you are doing at the particular moment, respect the rules and others, develop critical thinking and problem solving skills to be able to overcome the difficulties that may be encountered during the game. All this inevitably leads to an improvement in one's self-esteem and self-confidence, and we must also not forget the inclusive potential that motor activity possesses, as values such as friendship and respect arise during the game but also remain outside the playing field. Finally, the collaboration and communication that one must have with teammates to achieve the pre-established goal creates bonds in which there is esteem and respect for the other. All these feelings and emotions that are provoked make the child or adolescent grow according to certain parameters that will surely contribute to the correct growth of the citizen.

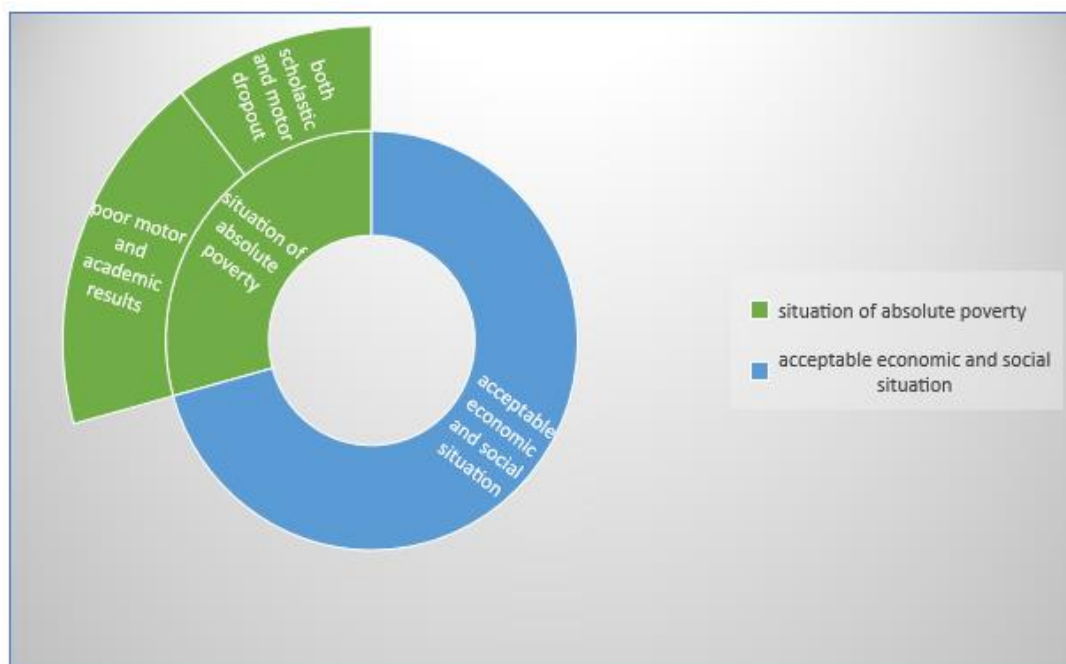
3. School and Motor Education as a means of contrasting Educational Poverty

In modern society, three major educational agencies can be considered that have the delicate task of shaping the identity of the child: the family, school and physical education (Maggi D. 2020). In reality, of the three, the glue is certainly the school, whose delicate task is to be a point of reference both for families and for physical activity. Therefore if the educational institution is to be placed at the center of the whole educational process, it must be able to exploit the potential of all activities, formal and otherwise, in order to be able to propose mainly issues of a social and ethical nature (D'Antone A., 2020). Here the role of physical education becomes primary as it is present both in the school and extra-school context, and it succeeds by

exploiting, the playful component, to form the child from an educational point of view already in the first years of his life (Bellantonio S., 2014). The above is of fundamental importance as in a society where the percentage of Educational Poverty is growing strongly due to the emergency due to the Coronavirus, having awareness and being able to exploit all the educational potential of motor activity allows to fight this emergency.

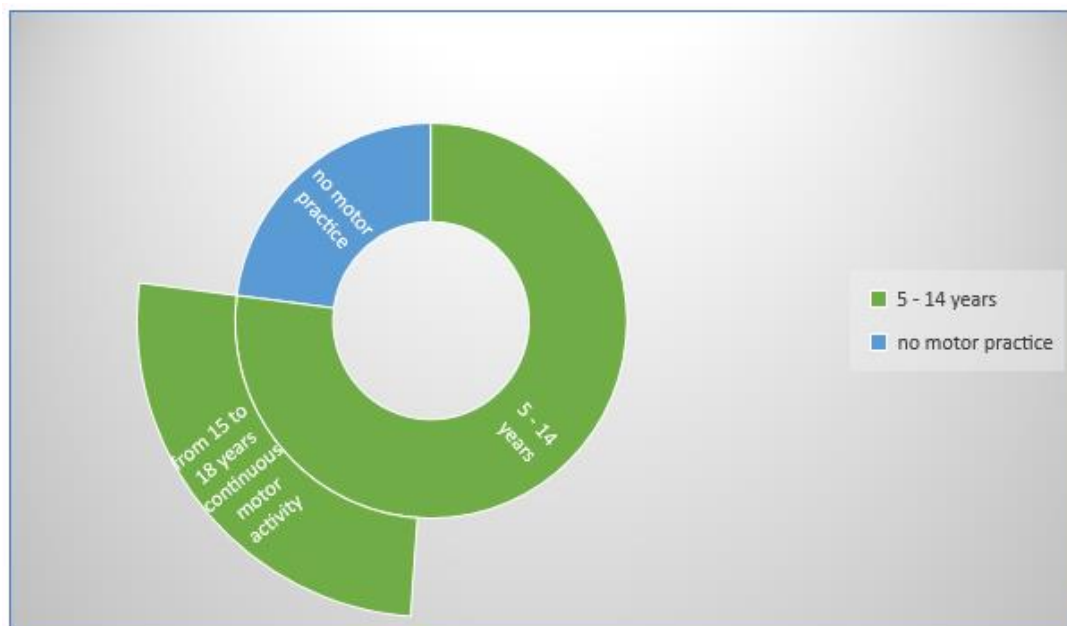
Numerous are the activities implemented in the school environment in favor of physical education, and affect the various levels of education. As regards primary school, projects are activated annually in collaboration with the C.O.N.I. and from the 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 school years the figure of the teacher of physical education will be provided for the fourth and fifth grades. As regards the secondary school of first and second degree, in addition to the curricular hours, student sports games are offered annually to be played in extra-school hours. All this in particular in the second cycle of education has the delicate role of extending the presence of pupils in school environments to carry out activities other than normal lesson hours and with different behavioral dynamics between teachers and learners in order to reduce early school leaving and therefore the increase in Educational Poverty. By now there is full awareness of the importance of physical education as a factor fighting Educational Poverty and in favor of the social growth of children and young people, even more so in a delicate moment of health emergency such as the current one (Brugnera G., 2017). Unfortunately, the condition of Educational Poverty is strongly influenced by many factors, first of all the family economic dispute, which is inevitably linked to health and education. The intervention of the school must be timely, this means that it must already be implemented on children in order to act on the growth process of the latter. One of the tools that must be used in these cases is certainly motor education that manages to exploit the strength of emotional processes to ensure that learning, both cognitive and social, takes place in a joyful and playful way. School, physical education and the family must assume the burden of keeping all the synergistic processes that can favor the reduction of Educational Poverty and offer the possibility of experience and growth to the pupils but also to all the other children who find themselves in situations of greater fragility, in order to be able to increase and strengthen cognitive and social awareness (Ronci C. M., 2010). Despite the now full-blown awareness of the importance of physical education for the formation of the child and the reduction of Educational Poverty, the study that has been done shows that, if from the age of 5 the percentages of children who practice a motor activity exceed 50%, with increasing age, motor education is abandoned and consequently also possible cognitive and social improvements are lacking.

The sample study was carried out on 100 boys from the Campania region, aged between 5 and 18 years, it emerged that about 13% are in a situation of absolute educational and economic poverty, therefore, based on what has been said previously, their results in both the scholastic and motor fields lead to a total abandonment in 85% of cases while the remaining 15% leads to rather poor results that do not meet the minimum set objectives.



This lack does nothing but produce cultural and economic inequalities with the remaining part of the sample group, and an even more alarming and serious fact, obtained during the surveys, is that this condition of discomfort will most likely be handed down from parents to children. Unfortunately, the data collected show how economic and Educational Poverty feed each other, because the lack of cultural means and social networks also reduce employment opportunities, and this condition in the short term undermines the child's right to personal fulfillment and gratification, while in the long term it reduces the likelihood that as an adult he will be able to escape from a condition of economic hardship.

This situation has worsened even more due to the manifestation of the pandemic due to the Coronavirus, as families who were already living in a situation of job insecurity have lost their jobs permanently, while others have had a drastic drop in salary, compromising and reducing as a result, the standard of living of each member of the family (Martinelli C., Oliviero S., 2021). All this has caused an exponential increase in the lack of educational opportunities both in school and out of school, of difficulties from the point of view of distance learning, which in some cases have led the child or adolescent to isolate himself even more until the total abandonment of the same. A further fact that has been analyzed is the participation in any form of physical education. It has been observed that 69% of children between the ages of 5 and 14 practice a motor activity continuously while from 15 to 18 this percentage drops drastically as only 50% continues to carry out the exercise, motor activity.



The data that emerged in this second analysis are alarming because if in the age ranging from 5 to 14 years more than half of the sample group practice physical activity even after school hours, from 15 to 18 years this same percentage of children is halved. Therefore, in the first case it is an age that includes children who attend primary and lower secondary school, and therefore need a greater educational intervention, while in the second case it is about secondary school students.

As for the percentage of children who do not practice physical activity from the age of 5 to 14, the reasons are various, but the one that prevails the most is age, in particular from 5 to 10 years, parents still consider too young children to introduce them to motor practice. While in the case of children aged 15 to 18 the motivation that prevails is the total lack of interest at the expense of other hobbies such as video games and internet. It is undeniable that there is a high percentage of total absence of motor activity in both cases, which means that the educational institution must do without one of the three main educational agencies to combat Educational Poverty. The most significant data, even if it did not emerge predominantly, is that about 20% of those who do not practice specific physical activity are motivated by the economic difficulties in which their family finds themselves, highlighting how economic poverty can considerably influence the educational one. Ultimately, this study has highlighted how physical education is recognized for its educational peculiarities, particularly in the developmental age, but at the same time it has shown that for a percentage of the sample group economic poverty manages to compromise the regular attendance of children in any training environment, consequently producing an educational impoverishment.

4. Conclusions

Motor Education, with all its potential, is closely linked to academic performance, health promotion and the future of the citizen in society. It contributes to the formation of the identity of the child/pupil, collaborating with other educational agencies such as the school and the family, fighting a growing phenomenon such as Educational Poverty. Psychological aspects such as stress and anxiety, increasingly widespread due to the health emergency from Covid-19, seem to diminish until they disappear in those who practice any form of motor activity; the other way around, values such as self-esteem and relationships with others are positively influenced by the latter (Tamburlini G., Marchetti F., 2020). Motor education therefore becomes a tool with great training potential both in school and out of school contexts. The positive aspects related to the practice of physical activity are listed by the World Health Organization, and it is stated that in order to be considered healthy, a person must have a complete state of physical, mental and mental well-being. It is towards this direction that the school, the family and physical education must work to fight this pandemic emergency situation in order to increasingly reduce the percentage of people living in Educational Poverty.

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