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MOTOR CREATIVITY AND LEARNING. BIODANZA SRT: AN *EMBODIED CENTERED* DIDACTIC

CREATIVITÀ MOTORIA E APPRENDIMENTO. BIODANZA SRT: UNA DIDATTICA *EMBODIED CENTRED*

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Abstract

In the educational field, more and more studies emphasize the importance of the body in teaching / learning processes. The recent theory of Embodied Cognition has highlighted how most of the cognitive processes occur through the control systems of the body and how the incorporated knowledge predicts the dependence of cognitive processes on the sensorimotor system as assumed. This article aims to identify a conceptual framework which, by investigating the development of creative potential and its repercussions on the divergent thinking of children in learning situations, puts the educational perspective of laboratory teaching into dialogue, as a valid alternative to the traditional frontal lesson in able to involve the body in the teaching-learning process, and the Biodanza SRT System as an Embodied Centered teaching tool. The goal is to allow the development of training courses that constitute a meaningful educational experience for children that favors the development of creativity and creative movement as a source of cognitive, metacognitive learning, problem solving and decision making skills, interpersonal skills, communicative, emotional and social skills.

In ambito educativo sempre più studi sottolineano l'importanza del corpo nei processi di insegnamento/apprendimento. La recente teoria *dell'Embodied Cognition* ha messo in luce come la maggior parte dei processi cognitivi avvenga attraverso i sistemi di controllo del corpo e come la conoscenza incorporata preveda come assunto la dipendenza dei processi cognitivi dal sistema sensorimotorio. In questo articolo si propone di identificare un quadro concettuale che, indagando lo sviluppo del potenziale creativo e le sue ripercussioni sul pensiero divergente dei bambini in situazioni di apprendimento, pone in dialogo la prospettiva educativa della didattica laboratoriale, come valida alternativa alla tradizionale lezione frontale in grado di coinvolgere il corpo nel processo di insegnamento-apprendimento, e il Sistema Biodanza SRT come strumento didattico *Embodied Centred*. L'obiettivo è consentire lo sviluppo di percorsi formativi che costituiscano per i bambini una esperienza educativa significativa che favorisca lo sviluppo della creatività e del movimento creativo come fonte di apprendimento cognitivo, metacognitivo, delle capacità di *problem solving* e *decision making*, delle competenze relazionali, comunicative, emotive e sociali.

Keywords

Embodied Cognition; Motor Creativity; Didactic; Childhood, Biodanza SRT.

Cognizione Incarnata; creatività motoria; Didattica; Infanzia, Biodanza SRT.

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Introduction

Studies carried out in the last twenty years in the neuro-scientific field have highlighted the presence of strong connections between brain, mental and motor activity, and their peculiarity of being more significant the younger the subjects. Body, mind and emotions are the three dimensions of being that in the context of embodied cognition, typical of the Embodied approach, acquire an essential role in the global development process of the individual.

Psycho-pedagogical studies, neuroscience and the most recent evidence from the multi-perspective contributions of the Embodied approach, allow us to affirm that cognitive processes are significantly influenced by both real and imaginary body states (Barsalou, 2008). Body-kinesthetic intelligence becomes a real tool of knowledge as "The body becomes the main actor in cognitive functions" (Gardner, 2005). Within the complex teaching-learning process, the body also recognizes the capacity of "alternative, complementary or vicariant signification" (Sibilio, 2012) on the basis of the link between actions, movement, motor creativity and cognitive effects . The theory of Embodied Cognition (Barsalou, 2008; 1999; Wilson, 2002; Glenberg, Kaschak, 2002; Caruana, Borghi, 2013), roots cognitive functions in the sensory-motor system and for this reason considers them strongly linked to perception / interaction with experiences concretely lived through bodily actions and, therefore, strictly connected to motor representations. Further experimental elements in favor of the Embodied Cognition perspective was provided by the identification of mirror neurons: that network of neurons that are activated during the observation and / or execution of actions (Rizzolatti, Fadiga, Fogassi, Gallese, 2002). Starting from the assumption that all aspects of cognition are modeled by the perceptual system of the body, which moves and interacts with the environment (Wilson, 2002), it becomes important to activate an embodied approach in the educational field capable of stimulating the body dimensions deriving from one's own cognitive, experiential and emotional baggage and from the relationship of the latter with the bodily experience of others which, in turn, will give rise to new spaces of signification and interpretation of reality (D'Anna, Minghelli, Forte, Gomez Paloma, 2020) . The scientific panorama, together with the programmatic regulatory context of the Italian reality (MIUR 2012, 2018), calls for the overcoming of a transmissive teaching in favor of multimodal interventions that favor divergent thinking (Guilford, 1959) and stimulate creative reasoning.
The directives coming from the pedagogical context underline the need to implement in school contexts approaches increasingly in line with the embodied perspective according to which knowledge and learning acquire a strong perceptual-motor connotation which, using all the sensory channels and actively involving the whole body, facilitates "Learning by doing, observing, creating, acting and interacting with others and the environment" by re-evaluating the educational aspects and the intrinsically embodied essence of motor activities, games and sports (Ceciliani, 2018).

1. Educating to Creativity

Scientific evidence identifies creativity as an innate quality of the human being, but even if the individual is always potentially endowed with it, it is also the socio-cultural environment that can awaken its potential or not. We can mean creative activity "any human activity that produces something new, be it an object product of the external world (dimension of doing) or a certain construction of intelligence or feeling that exists and manifests itself only in the depths of man (dimension of thinking) "(Vygotskij, 2010). Creativity actually exists not only where famous, historical creations are made, but wherever there is a man who imagines, combines, modifies and creates something new (Vygotsky, 2010). It should also be taken into account that social relations and the cultural context are factors affecting the development of creative thinking and therefore to explain creativity it is necessary to understand not only the dynamics of functioning, inspiration and talent of the single individual and his mental activity, but also social factors such as collaboration, support and discussion networks, educational and cultural background (Sawyer, 2006). In addition to being therefore a specificity of the human being, intimately connected to his creative and generating force, creativity is also a specificity of our social being, influenced by experiences, contexts, cultures, the community.

Creativity is the "opening answer" in art as in life (Carotenuto, 1991) is in each of us and is configured as an endowment of every human being as such. It is the fullest expression of that tendency to realize oneself and to develop one's potential in truly effective ways (Rogers, 1954). Creativity, as a specificity of human thought and behavior, is included by the World Health Organization (WHO, 1994) in the life skills that each individual needs in order to live a healthy life based on the development of their potential (Zorzi , Antoniello, 2020). In the "life skills", creativity is defined as the ability to find original solutions and ideas and in fact contributes to both decision making and problem solving, allowing to explore the possible alternatives and the consequences of the different options (Marmocchi, Dall'Aglio, Zannini , 2004). Guilford's theory (1950) identifies divergent thinking as a peculiarity of the way of thinking of creative individuals, attributing to it four characteristics: fluidity (the ability to quickly propose many ideas or solutions), flexibility (the ability to tackle a problem in different ways) , originality (the ability to propose new and unexpected ideas), and elaboration (the ability to organize, detail, carry out an idea). The school is invited to educate children and young people to this adaptation, to understand the complexity and diversity of situations, developing creative skills, innovation, constant learning, which make them aware and critical citizens (MIUR, 2018). Adapting to changes with flexibility, creativity, entrepreneurship is also the declination of one of the key competences - learning to learn - to be developed for well-being and human development in the contemporary world (EU, 2008).
Retrieving and enhancing the intellectual dimension of creativity or better still, the creative dimension of thinking, of intelligences, allows the development of a divergent, analogical, artistic thought, not necessarily useful, or effective, or performative, but certainly generative, beautiful, oxygenating , human. This dimension of thinking finds its harmonic conjugation in the dimension of doing, which constitutes the creator and producer side of human creativity: one dimension does not exist without the other and creativity always manifests itself in both dimensions (Zorzi, Antoniello, 2020). Creativity, therefore, is not a specific function of our

brain, but is a consequence of its way of functioning, in turn a consequence of a long and complicated process of evolution. An action aimed at educating to creative thinking implies a precise conception of the individual: the student is not seen as an individual who provides answers to questions, almost according to a stimulus-response mechanism, but as an individual who freely re-elaborates the stimuli received for elaborate personal responses. The creative process, understood as the ability to find divergent solutions aimed at the conscious re-elaboration of a subject, can only take place if there are the necessary premises. Educating in creativity means forming the person in his entirety (educating him for the common good, an active and responsible world citizenship, dialogue and interdisciplinary and intercultural relationships, educating him in the service of others, to do good well) but it also means prepare her to shape her future in a significantly subjective way. (Rossi, 2009; Cinque, 2010) making students aware that, in order to find solutions to problems, it is necessary to «learn to learn» (La Marca, 2009) by analyzing the many alternative solutions.

2. *Motor Creativity and Didactic Embodied Centred*

Through a process of becoming aware of one's body (understood as a large factory of information that the ego coordinates and modulates) and its expressive potential, self-awareness and the perception of one's individuality and identity are encouraged. The expressive-creative movement induces the person to perceive himself as the undisputed protagonist of his gestures and actions, as a true proponent of choices and changes, as a creator and a modifier of reality and, above all, as an artist of his own life. Creativity, therefore, ceases to be the prerogative of artists or genius alone and becomes characteristic of the human person as such; the thesis is also supported by the affirmation of neuroscience for which every person has a creative potential to develop.

Creativity that becomes action and which is linked primarily to corporeality gives rise to the concept of creative movement which indissolubly leads back to the relationship between the human being and movement. Man moves in his existence. Movement is a specific element of life and plays a central role in the relationship with oneself and with others. Movement does not arise only from a material need or an act of will, nor does it end in the human musculoskeletal system: it is also emotion. The creative movement arises both from the subject's relationship with the world and from his existence in the world that intertwines connections between man and corporeality in its entirety including moods and inner attitudes that influence and determine each other in relation to bodily action. Through creativity, the subject copes in a personal and constructive way with the stresses coming from the environment, placing himself in front of reality by adapting to it or modifying it according to his needs. The creative act is outlined as an action that involves the entirety of the human being as all the elements of the "trinity of the person" are stimulated and used: the intellect in its dimension of mind (fantasy and imagination); the soul in its dimension of emotion and sentiment; the body in its dimension of gesture and movement, body identity and form (Oliva, 2005). There is no creativity that is not connected to an emotional relationship.

The deepest experience of a creative act is to offer the human being the perception of living his time and the social changes to which he is exposed and to be the protagonist of his life and its realization. Motor creativity with its potential for action, expression, communication and body performance has multiple implications in the cognitive field. A body that speaks freely, finds solutions, evolves and renews itself in a facilitating environmental and interpersonal context. The creative potential of children coincides with the need and primary motivation of play that pushes them to create new and original movement solutions previously thought, reflected and imagined. Game as a practice of empathy and reciprocity and as what develops the sense of wonder, playful imagination. "Play is a type of activity that takes place in the space between people - what Winnicott calls" potential space ": that space where people (first children, then adults) experience otherness in less threatening ways than how often direct, effective confrontation with other people takes place. In doing so, they practice empathy and reciprocity "(Nussbaum, 2011). Motor creativity is "the intrinsic human ability to use the body to express individual potential, in the innovative search for an effective original idea" (Maestu, Trigo, 1995). Although a concept difficult to address and define, research agrees on the consideration that creativity incorporates the concept of generating new ideas (Sweller, 2003). In the psychological field it is not only described as an "alternative to the standard, that is to the normal way of behaving, thinking and acting, but it is equally important because it implies the ability to adapt to variable situations" (Melchiori, Peluso Cassese, 2014). The results of some researches have shown that the ability to "create" divergent thinking (Guilford, 1959) seems to be linked to dimensions that are no longer only bodily, but also cognitive. In fact, a study on a group of children in kindergarten confirms the hypothesis that "motor activity positively influences the development of divergent thinking and self-esteem" (Valentini, Troiano, Balzano, 2011) while from one a study that compared two teaching styles of motor activity in developmental age revealed a greater sense of self-efficacy within the group in which more space was given to exploratory activities to support creativity compared to the group in which one was operated with a traditional style (Theodorakou, Zervas, 2003). The kinesthetic modality is the most appropriate modality to arouse creativity in preschool age. Corporeity is a privileged channel for stimulating in children new forms of sensory-motor exploration and for implementing creative development and motor development and their reciprocity in feeding each other back in order to develop motor creativity: the ability to produce motor solutions in response to motor problems (Torrance, 1981)

Solving these motor tasks requires problem solving and decision making skills (Richard, Lebeau, Becker, Inglis, Terenbaum, 2018) demonstrating how the body is closely linked to the cognitive and how training paths aimed at developing creative motor potentials positively affect the divergent ideational abilities of the subject, even in learning situations.

With a view to promoting the global development of the child, creativity and movement become a fundamental combination in the learning process on which to graft an embodied didactics also focused in terms of autonomy, self-efficacy, self-realization, expression of one's potential and enhancement of one's talent. Creativity, in addition to being a useful resource for promoting learning and for restructuring problematic situations, is also an important factor for the subjective well-being perceived by the child (Antonietti, Giorgetti, Pizzingrilli, 2011).

For the implementation of embodied centered teaching that emphasizes the role of corporeality to promote transversal skills, a teaching strategy is required learning based on active and constructive action that encourages exploration and the search for solutions (D'Anna C., Minghelli V., Forte P., Gomez Paloma F. 2020). The creation of embodied based learning environments, aimed at the awareness of one's own corporeity and the recognition of creative thinking in action and movement, can be a factor that significantly contributes not only to the improvement of motor mastery, but also to favor, through it, the development of other cognitive skills that are related to the child's creative potential. (D'Anna C., Minghelli V., Forte P., Gomez Paloma F. 2020). In defining the development goals, also the national programmatic documents (MIUR, 2012), in line with the scientific literature, attribute a role of absolute importance to creativity, considering it a tool for exploration, creation, a preparatory expression useful for the grafting of subsequent formal learning. Both in the Legislative Decree n. 60/2017 "Regulations on the promotion of humanistic culture, on the enhancement of cultural heritage and productions and on the support of creativity" and both in Law 107/2015 (pursuant to Article 1, paragraphs 180 and 181) "Reform of the national system of education and training and delegation for the reorganization of the legislative provisions in force "(GU 162/2015), the need to plan activities aimed at promoting creativity through vertical curricular paths starting from childhood.

3. Biodance SRT: pedagogical laboratory *Embodied Centred*

Movement and creativity play a fundamental role in education while remaining, within school educational programs, still placed in the background compared to the others. From scientific evidence, the line that connects the practice of expressive-creative motor activities to communication skills, physical-cognitive-emotional development, the improvement of skills to strengthen self-awareness, to free human potentials and enhance one's talents, clearly emerges. Montessori (1950) developed the concept of "experience", in which doing and action represent the external manifestation of thought. Over the last few decades, numerous studies have been conducted on the link between the practice of artistic activities and the development of the brain capacity of the individual during the school age, emphasizing the role of art, in its most varied forms (visual arts, music , theater, dance, etc.), in fact, involves all the senses of the child and strengthens their cognitive, socio-emotional and multisensory skills. The creative movement influences cognitive, metacognitive and self-esteem development by developing problem solving skills (understanding that problems can have more than one solution and that each question can have more than one answer) and decision making (mental process that leads to identifying the best action strategy leads to choosing the most effective solution possible among the different alternatives) favoring interaction with the outside world thanks to a series of acquired skills that facilitate self-expression and communication. Through the creative movement the child learns to find an agreement with himself and to control his own efforts. Teaching, from the point of view of social development, to elaborate opinions on "qualitative" and not just "quantitative" relationships, favoring socio-emotional skills (transversal skills) that

use and increase knowledge and skills through meaningful and therefore lasting learning experiences and versatile. The most recent neuroscience studies, in line with psycho-pedagogical theories, describe learning as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that takes into consideration cognitive, metacognitive, emotional-relational aspects that play a fundamental role in guaranteeing the effectiveness of the relationship. educational and is intended as a constructive, self-regulated and social process in which the child actively participates through exploration, direct action and the playful dimension. Planning an effective teaching / learning process creates the conditions for developing knowledge in children, experimenting with skills and acquiring skills that are in line with their attitudes and that extend to other and ever new spaces of knowledge means proposing a pedagogical intervention that can actively involve them within an ad hoc structured spatial and temporal context that also and above all facilitates the acquisition and the spontaneous and creative combination of skills. The pedagogical laboratory is that place of space and action par excellence where "new itineraries of exploration can be tackled, [which allow] the implementation of methods of interaction based on the quality of accompaniment, closeness, support and reciprocity. and where everyone's productivity is enhanced "(Salati, Zappa, 2011). Through learning by doing, in acting, in movement, in perceiving emotions and sensory stimuli, the person experiences and experiences concretely by learning and enhancing both those cognitive factors that are determined in the ability to develop different and multiple responses to the same situation. stimulus demand (divergent thinking) and therefore in the ability to consider a problem from different points of view (mental flexibility), and both those conative factors that modulate the expression of creativity that are determined in the development of some personality traits (l openness to new experiences), in the willingness to expose oneself, to run the risk of making mistakes, in the pleasure of dedicating oneself to creative activity. The complexity, the richness and the globality make the creative act a fundamental point of any pedagogical and training path. The expressive-creative movement laboratory becomes a working method that is based not only on the intention of transmitting knowledge, but, above all, on that of bringing the subject to form through practical experience and the resulting discovery.

Body language, like verbal language, contributes to the formation of the individual's personality, constituting a tool for effective communication made up of its own grammar and syntax. Movement contributes to determining the integral development of the person as "it is not only the expression of the Ego, but it is an indispensable factor for the construction of consciousness, being the only tangible means that places the Ego in well-defined relationships with external reality "(Montessori, 1950). In this perspective, movement and moving are not aspects exclusively attributable to the laws of biomechanics, but represent original and natural possibilities of meaning constructions. Motor activity must necessarily be the prerequisite for any educational project that makes the body, with its training potential, the protagonist of the development process, especially in reference to the period of childhood and pre-adolescence. A particular role is exercised by Biodanza SRT understood as a possibility, open to all, of affirming one's identity, overcoming differences and as a true element of integration. The person through the experience of himself mediated by the excited movement and the creative corporeality tells himself by becoming the protagonist of his life by getting in touch with himself and at the same time in relationship with others and with space in a temporal dimension.

A vehicle of growth, individual development, self-affirmation and the acquisition of new personal potential, the Biodanza SRT System is a social pedagogy based on body mediation that aims both to educate people through and through the expressive-creative movement, and to educate them in the communicative arts and ecological communication by developing the creativity and personal expressiveness of each one. The Biodanza SRT system is based on a methodology that refers to a very specific Gestalt that acts on the healthy part of the person using Music (universal language that facilitates self-expression and deeply stimulates emotions and existential sensitivity), the Movement (natural expression, spontaneous and felt, excited, as a rediscovery of one's most authentic gestures, full of meaning and meaning), the Vivencia as an "Experience lived with great intensity by an individual in the present moment, which involves cenesthesia, visceral functions and emotional "(Toro Araneda, 2007). With regard to the evidence of neuro-scientific studies and from the more recent perspective of Embodied Cognition, "every form of human cognition is embodied, that is," rooted in bodily experience "(Gallese, 2016). In this interpretation, the Biodanza SRT proposal represents a physical, emotional, social and mental place where the student develops a work on himself through learning by doing, constituting an opportunity to grow with the awareness that the most important aspect consists in the process and not at the point of arrival. As a vehicle for the formation of the person, the expressive action of Biodanza SRT becomes a project and a process of self-pedagogy and development of one's own creative action. The Biodanza SRT laboratory is a protected environment in which the central element is the process from which the development of the experimentation of getting involved that each participant carries out and experiences on himself or herself arises. The results obtained from a study focused on Biodanza SRT interventions proposed to minors subjected to a restriction regime at the IPM "Fornelli" in Bari to promote new personal skills (emotional, cognitive and relational) and raise awareness of the perception of their own well-being, evaluated through the Optimal Experience Questionnaire (Goldwurm, 2015), they highlighted a qualitative significance of the experience lived by inmates in all the estimated aspects: cognitive-behavioral, emotional, motivational and relational and facilitated the adoption of socially accepted behaviors that are at the basis of reintegration into civil society (Rosa, Madonna, 2019). Biodanza SRT and education are two realities that have common purposes: on the one hand, pedagogy places the person with all his potential to be developed at the center of the educational action; on the other hand, Biodanza SRT pursues the same goal through activities that stimulate the development of creativity, communication and identity. Biodanza SRT is an effective means of education that involves the individual in his corporeality and in his physicality with his feelings and his thoughts but also with his profound humanity, with his awareness of values, with his most immediate and spontaneous sociability. It is an individual path in a group work, in fact it represents not only an opportunity for self-conquest, but also a space for building meaningful relationships aimed at reinforcing the group identity, at stimulating mutual knowledge, sharing, cooperation, the enhancement of heterogeneity;

Biodanza SRT is not an end in itself but an activity that has an educational purpose of human formation and orientation in supporting the person in becoming aware of himself, of his identity and individuality by recognizing his needs and the importance of to be able to express them without conditioning through ecological forms of communication and letting their potential

emerge from the point of view of a unity and inseparability between body, mind, emotions and soul.

Conclusions

On the educational level, dance is perhaps the most dynamic research method as it uses the body in motion for all activities, not only motor but also and above all cognitive and developmental discovery. (Sibilio, Aiello, 2015). Knowledge, built through experience, is the fundamental premise for the creative act to take place and, at an educational level, it appears a priority to develop the knowledge of expressive languages in the new generations in order to reinforce both the development of thought and creative talent. the result of a learning that is not limited to the years of school, but which potentially accompanies the whole span of life. The laboratory teaching is characterized by the use of active techniques that involve the felt and conscious participation of those who participate (not a passive role) with an emotional involvement of the whole personality, constant monitoring of feedback on learning and self-assessment, training in situation, group training. The Biodanza SRT System lends itself to being an Embodied Centered innovative educational methodology capable of facilitating the child's experimentation and experimentation through the body, its emotions and perceptions, connoting itself as a playful-motor-expressive-creative approach that promotes a conscious orientation to experiences in according to your possibilities. It would therefore be desirable for the school to provide more and more duly designed spaces that favor the involvement of the body, corporeality, spontaneous and creative motor expression aimed at cognitive, metacognitive learning and the development of human potential and enhancement of talents.

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