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CREATIVE CORPOREALITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF DIVERGENT THINKING IN CHILDREN

CORPOREITÀ CREATIVA E SVILUPPO DEL PENSIERO DIVERGENTE NEI BAMBINI

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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.

Abstract
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.

Key-words Creative corporeality; Children; Divergent thinking; Biodanza SRT.

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parole-chiave Corporeità Creativa; Bambini; Pensiero divergente; Biodanza SRT.

Introduction

Studies carried out in the last twenty years in the field of neuroscience have highlighted the presence of strong connections between brain, mental and motor activity, and their peculiarity of being more significant as the younger the people. Body, mind and emotions are the three dimensions of being that, within the embodied cognition, typical of the *Embodied* approach, acquire an essential role in the process of the overall development of the individual. Psycho pedagogical studies, neuroscience and the latest evidence from the pluri-prospective contributions of the *Embodied* approach, allow us to affirm that cognitive processes are significantly influenced by both real and imaginary bodily states (Barsalou, 2008). The body-kinesthetic intelligence becomes a real tool of knowledge because "*the body becomes the main actor in cognitive functions*" (Gardner, 2005). Within the complex teaching-learning process, the body is also recognized as having "*alternative, complementary or vicarious meanings*" (Sibilio, 2012) based on the link between the actions, movement, motor creativity and cognitive relapses. The theory of *Embodied Cognition* (Barsalou, 2008; 1999; Wilson, 2002; Glenberg, Kaschak, 2002; Caruana, Borghi, 2013), roots cognitive functions in the sense-system for this reason it considers them strongly linked to the perception/ interaction with the experiences concretely experienced through bodily actions and, therefore, closely related to motor representations. Further experimental elements in favor of the perspective of *Embodied Cognition* have been 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). Assuming that all aspects of cognition are shaped by the body's perceptual system, which moves and interacts with the environment (Wilson, 2002) it becomes important to activate in education an incarnate approach capable of stimulating the bodily dimensions deriving from one's own cognitive, experiential and emotional baggage and from the latter's relationship with the bodily experience of others; In turn, it will give rise to new spaces of meaning and interpretation of reality (D'Anna, Minghelli, Forte, Gomez Paloma, 2020). The scientific panorama, together with the normative programmatic context of the Italian reality (MIUR 2012, 2018), hopes to overcome 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 perceptive connotation-motor that using all sensory channels and actively involving the whole body facilitates "learning by doing, observing, creating, acting and interacting with others and the environment" Re-evaluating the educational aspects and intrinsically embodied essence of motor activities, games and sport (Ceciliani, 2018).

1. Educating for Creativity

Scientific evidence identifies creativity as the 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 or cannot awaken its potential. 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 only in the intimate of man exists and is manifested (*dimension of thinking*)" (Vygotsky, 2010). Creativity exists in fact not only where outstanding, historic creations are made, but everywhere there is a man who imagines, combines, modifies and realizes something new (Vygotsky, 2010). It should also be borne in mind 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 individual and his mental activity, but also social factors such as collaboration, networks of support and comparison, educational and cultural background (Sawyer, 2006). In addition to being a specificity proper to the human being, intimately connected to his creative and generative power, creativity is also a specificity of our social being, influenced by experiences, contexts, cultures, collectivity. Creativity is the "answer that opens" 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's the fullest expression of that tendency to realize yourself and develop your potential in truly effective ways (Rogers, 1954). Creativity, as the specificity of human thought and behavior, is inserted by the World Health Organization (WHO, 1994) in the life skills that each individual needs to live a healthy life based on the development of their potential (Zorzi, Antoniello, 2020). In "life skills" creativity is defined as the ability to find original solutions and ideas and contributes to both decision making and problem solving, allowing you to explore the possible alternatives and the consequences of different options (Marmocchi, Dall'Aglio, Zannini, 2004). Guilford's theory (1950) identifies divergent thinking as a peculiarity of the way creative individuals think, attributing to it four characteristics: fluidity (the ability to quickly propose many ideas or solutions), flexibility (the ability to deal with a problem in different ways), originality (the ability to propose new and unexpected ideas), and elaboration (the ability to organize, detail, bring an idea to completion). The school is invited to educate children and young people to this adaptation, to the understanding of 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 develop for well-being and human development in the contemporary world (EU, 2008). Recovering and enhancing the intellectual dimension of creativity or even better, the creative dimension of thinking, of intelligences, allows the development of a divergent thought, analog, artistic, not necessarily useful, or effective, or performative, but definitely generative, beautiful, oxygenating, human. This dimension of thinking finds its harmonious 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 is always manifested 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 providing answers to questions, almost according to a stimulus mechanism-It is an individual who freely re-processes the stimuli received to process personal responses. The creative process, understood as the ability to find divergent solutions aimed at the conscious reworking of a subject, can take place only if there are the necessary premises. To educate to creativity means to form the whole person (to educate him or her for the common good, for an active and responsible world citizenship, for interdisciplinary and intercultural dialogue and relations, to educate him or her at the service of others, to do good) but it also means preparing it to shape its future in a significantly subjective way. (Rossi, 2009; Cinque, 2010) making students aware that, in order to find solutions to problems, they need to «learn to learn» (La Marca, 2009) analyzing the multiple alternative solutions.

2. Creativity Motor and teaching embodied centred

Through a process of becoming aware of one's own body (understood as a great factory of information that the Ego coordinates and modulates) and of its expressive potentialities, the awareness of oneself and the perception of one's individuality and identity are fostered. 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 a characteristic of the human person as such; the thesis is also supported by the affirmation of neuroscience for which each person has a creative potential to develop. Creativity that becomes action and that is linked in the first place to corporeity gives rise to the concept of creative Movement that leads inextricably back to the relationship between the human being and movement. Man in his existence moves. Movement is a specific element of life and has a central role in the relationship with himself and with others. Movement is not only born of a material need or an act of will, nor is it exhausted in the locomotor apparatus of the human being: it is also emotion. The creative movement is born both from the relationship of the subject with the world and from its existence in the world that weaves connections between man and corporeity in its totality including the moods and inner attitudes that affect and determine in relation to the action bodily. Through creativity, the subject responds in a personal and constructive way to the stresses coming from the environment by facing reality by adapting to it or changing it according to its needs. The creative act is outlined as an action that involves the globality of the human being as they are stimulated and used all the elements of the "trinity of the person": the intellect in its dimension of mind (imagination and imagination); the soul in its dimension of emotion and feeling; 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 a protagonist of his life and its realization. The motor creativity with its potentialities of action, expression, communication and performance of the body has multiple relapses in the cognitive field. A body that speaks freely, finds solutions, evolves and self-renewes in a facilitating environmental and interpersonal context. The creative potential of

children coincides with the need and primary motivation of the game that pushes them to create new and original solutions of movement previously thought, reflected, imagined. Play 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 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 the clash takes place direct, With other people, actually. In this way, they practice empathy and reciprocity" (Nussbaum, 2011). Motor creativity is "*the intrinsic human ability to use corporeity to express individual potential, in the innovative search for an effective original idea*" (Maestu, Trigo, 1995). While the concept is difficult to address and define, the research agrees 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 research have shown that the ability to "create" a divergent thought (Guilford, 1959) seems to be linked to the dimensions not only bodily, but also cognitive. In fact, a study of a group of children in kindergarten confirmed the hypothesis that «*motor activity positively influences the development of divergent thinking and self-esteem*» (Valentini, Troiano, Balzano, 2011) while from a study that compared two teaching styles of motor activity in the developmental age found a greater sense of self-efficacy within the group where more space was given to exploratory activities in support of creativity than the group in Operated in a traditional style (Theodorakou, Zervas, 2003). Kinesthetic mode is the most appropriate mode to arouse creativity in preschool age. Corporeity is a privileged channel to stimulate in children new forms of sensory-motor exploration and implement creative development and motor development and their reciprocity in the back-feeding each other in order to develop motor creativity: the ability to produce motor solutions in response to motor problems (Torrance, 1981). Solving such 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 the development of motor creative potential positively affect the subject's divergent ideational abilities, even in learning situations. In order to promote the overall development of the child creativity and movement become fundamental binomial in the learning process on which to graft an *embodied teaching* focused also in terms of autonomy, self-efficacy, self-realization, Expression of their potential and enhancement of their talent. Creativity, in addition to being a useful resource to encourage learning and to restructure problematic situations, is also an important factor for the subjective well-being perceived by the child (Antonietti, Giorgetti, Pizzingrilli, 2011). For the implementation of an *embodied centred teaching* that emphasizes the role of corporeality to promote transversal skills, a teaching strategy is needed active and constructive action-based learning that encourages exploration and 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 corporeality and the recognition of creative thinking in action and movement, they can be a factor that contributes significantly not only to the improvement of motor mastery, but also to encouraging, through it, the development of other cognitive abilities that are connected to the creative potential of the child. (D'Anna C., Minghelli V., Forte P.,

Gomez Paloma F. 2020). In defining the development goals, the National Policy Papers (MIUR, 2012), in line with the scientific literature, also attribute to creativity a role of absolute importance considering it an instrument of exploration, creation, a useful preliminary expression for the grafting of the subsequent formal learning. Both in Legislative Decree No. 60/2017 "*Norms on the promotion of humanistic culture, on the enhancement of cultural heritage and productions and on the support of creativity*" and in Law 107/2015 (pursuant to Article 1, paragraphs 180 and 181) "*Reform of the national education and training system and delegation for the reorganization of the current legislative provisions*" (OJ 162/2015) stresses the need to design activities within the Three-Year Plan of the Training Offer aimed at promoting creativity through vertical curricular paths from childhood. It is therefore strongly recommended a didactic approach that does not emphasize mechanical or standardized *performances* but that privileges a global and spontaneous execution through activities that offer a multisensory stimulation and that stimulate the perceptive self-organization motor (Goodway, Ozmum, Gallahue, 2020) leaving room for free initiative, divergent thinking, expressive and creative, through the first cognitive channel that is its own: the body.

3. Biodanza SRT: Embodied Centred pedagogical workshop

Movement and creativity play a fundamental role in education while remaining, within the school educational programs, still placed in the background compared to the others. From scientific evidence emerges clearly 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 their talents. Montessori (1950) elaborated the concept of "experience", in which doing and action represent the external manifestation of thought. During the last decades that have been conducted numerous studies on the link between the practice of artistic activities and the development of the brain skills of the individual during 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 the cognitive, socio-emotional and multisensory skills. Creative movement influences cognitive, metacognitive, and self-esteem development by developing *problem-solving* skills (understanding that problems may have more than one solution and that each question may have more than one answer) and *decision making* (mental process leading to the identification of the best strategy of action leads to the choice of the most effective possible solution among the different alternatives) Promoting interaction with the outside world through a series of acquired skills that facilitate self-expression and communication. Through the creative movement the child learns to agree with himself and to control his own efforts. Teaching, from the point of view of social development, to develop opinions on "qualitative" relationships and not only "quantitative" favoring socio-emotional skills (transversal skills) They utilize and enhance knowledge and skills through meaningful, long-lasting and versatile learning experiences. The most recent studies of neuroscience, in line with psycho-pedagogical

theories, describe learning as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that takes into account cognitive, metacognitive, emotional-relational relations that play a fundamental role in ensuring the effectiveness of the educational relationship and is intended as a constructive, self-regulating and social process within which the child actively participates through exploration, direct action and playful dimension. Planning an effective teaching/learning process creates the conditions for children to develop knowledge, to experiment skills and acquire skills that are in line with their attitudes and that extend to others and always new spaces of knowledge means to propose a pedagogical intervention that can actively involve them in a structured spatial and temporal context ad hoc that also facilitates and especially the acquisition and the spontaneous and creative combination of skills. The Pedagogical Laboratory is the place of space and action par excellence where "new itineraries of exploration can be tackled, [which allow] to put in place modes of interaction based on the quality of accompaniment, proximity, support and reciprocity and where the productivity of each is valued" (Salati, Zappa, 2011). Through learning by doing, in acting, in movement, in perceiving emotions and sensory stimuli, the person experiences and experiences concretely 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 certain personality traits (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. Its complexity, richness and globality make the creative act a fundamental point of any educational and training path. The expressive-creative movement laboratory becomes a method of work that is based not only on the intention of transmitting a knowledge, but, above all, on bringing the subject to form through practical experience and the discovery that follows. Body language, like verbal language, contributes to the formation of the individual's personality, constituting itself as a tool for an effective communication composed of grammar and syntax. The movement contributes to 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 puts the ego in well-defined relationships with external reality" (Montessori, 1950). In this perspective, movement and movement are not exclusively related to the laws of biomechanics, but represent original and natural possibilities of constructions of meaning. Motor activity must necessarily take the form of the presupposition of any educational project that makes the body, with its formative potential, the protagonist of the development process in particular with regard to the period of childhood and preadolescence. *Biodanza SRT* plays a particular role as a possibility, open to all, to affirm their own identity, to overcome differences and as a true element of integration. The person through the experience of himself mediated by emotional movement and creative corporeality is told by becoming the protagonist of his life by getting in touch with himself and at the same time in relationship with others and space in a temporal dimension. Vehicle of growth, individual development, self-affirmation and acquisition of new personal potential, the Biodanza SRT System is a social pedagogy body mediation that aims both to educate people through and through the expressive movement-creative, and both to educate them in the communication arts and ecological communication by

developing the creativity and personal expressiveness of each. The *Biodanza SRT* system is based on a methodology that refers to a very precise 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)Movement (natural expression, spontaneous and felt, moved, as a rediscovery of their most authentic gestures, full of meaning and meaning), *Vivencia* as "*Experience lived with great intensity by an individual in the present moment, involving the cenestesia, the visceral and emotional functions*" (Toro Araneda, 2007). Regarding the evidence of neuro-scientific studies and from the most recent perspective of Embodied Cognition, "every form of human cognition is embodied and that is "rooted in the bodily experience" (Welsh, 2016). In this interpretation the proposal *Biodanza SRT* represents a physical place, emotional, social and mental 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 in 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 their creative action. The laboratory of Biodanza SRT is a protected environment in which the central element is the process from which the elaboration of the experimentation of putting into play that each participant performs and lives on himself in the first person. The results obtained from a study focused on interventions of Biodanza SRT proposed to minors subjected to a restriction regime at the IPM "Fornelli" in Bari to promote new personal skills (emotional, cognitive and relational) and sensitize the Perception of Own Well-being, evaluated through the Questionnaire of Optimal Experience (Goldwurm, 2015), have highlighted a qualitative significance of the experience experienced by prisoners in all aspects estimated: cognitive-behavioral, emotional, motivational and relational and have facilitated the adoption of socially accepted behaviors that are the basis of reintegration into civil society (Rosa, Madonna, 2019). Biodanza SRT and education are two realities that have common goals: on the one hand, pedagogy places at the center of the educational action the person with all its potential to develop; on the other Biodanza SRT pursues the same objective 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 physicality with his feelings and his thought but also with his deep humanity, with his consciousness of values, with his most immediate and spontaneous sociality. It is an individual path in a group work, in fact, it is not only an opportunity for the conquest of self, but also a space for the construction of meaningful relationships aimed at reinforcing group identity, stimulating mutual knowledge, sharing, cooperation, enhancement of heterogeneity; Biodanza SRT is not an activity for its own sake but an activity that has an educational purpose of human formation and guidance in supporting the person in becoming aware of himself, of their own identity and individuality, recognizing their own needs and the importance of being able to express them without conditioning through ecological forms of communication and allowing their potential to emerge from the perspective of unity and inseparable unity between the body, mind, emotions and soul.

Conclusions

On the educational level, dance is perhaps the most dynamic mode of research as it uses the body in motion for all activities not only motor but also and above all cognitive and evolutionary discovery. (Sibilio, Aiello, 2015). Knowledge, built through experience, is the fundamental premise for the creative act to take place and, at educational level, it seems to be a priority to develop in the new generations the knowledge of expressive languages in order to strengthen both the development of thought and creative talent resulting from learning not limited to school years, but that potentially accompany the whole life span. The laboratory didactics is characterized by the use of active techniques that involve the heartfelt 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 the situation, group training. The Biodanza SRT System lends itself to be as an innovative educational methodology Embodied Centred able to facilitate the child to experience and experience through the body, his emotions and perceptions connotating itself as a playful approach Motor-expressive-creative that promotes a conscious orientation to experiences according to their possibilities. It would therefore be desirable for the school to provide more and more duly designed spaces that promote the involvement of the body, of corporeality, spontaneous and creative motor expressiveness aimed at cognitive learning, Metacognitive and the development of human potential and enhancement of talents.

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