

THE INCLUSIVE VALUE OF MOTOR EDUCATION AT SCHOOL

IL VALORE INCLUSIVO DELL'EDUCAZIONE MOTORIA A SCUOLA

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Double Blind Peer Review

Citazione

Ascione A., Tafuri M.G., (2024) The inclusive value of motor education at school; *Giornale Italiano di Educazione alla Salute, Sport e Didattica Inclusiva - Italian Journal of Health Education, Sports and Inclusive Didactics*. Anno 8, V 1. Edizioni Universitarie Romane

Doi:

<https://doi.org/10.32043/gsd.v8i1.1039>

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gsdjournal.it

ISSN: 2532-3296

ISBN: 978-88-6022-486-6

ABSTRACT

The history and value of physical education from an inclusive point of view differs based on the ideology of the Nation. In Italy, starting from the seventies, pupils suffering from disabilities, regardless of their health conditions, participate in physical activities together with all children. The aim of this work is to demonstrate, through a study carried out in a primary school in the province of Bari, the inclusive potential of physical education in schools. Specifically, 7 motor education teachers from 4 primary schools were selected, and the effort they had to make to include pupils with difficulties in a general motor education context was observed and evaluated.

La storia ed il valore dell'educazione fisica dal punto di vista inclusivo differisce in base all'ideologia della Nazione. In Italia, gli alunni affetti da disabilità, a cominciare dagli anni settanta, a prescindere dalle condizioni di salute, partecipano alle attività motorie insieme a tutti gli altri. Lo scopo di questo lavoro è di dimostrare, attraverso uno studio effettuato in una scuola primaria della provincia di Bari, il potenziale inclusivo dell'educazione motoria nella scuola. Nello specifico sono stati selezionati 7 insegnanti di educazione motoria di 4 scuole primarie, ed è stato osservato e valutato lo sforzo che essi hanno dovuto compiere per includere gli alunni con difficoltà in un contesto di educazione motoria generale.

KEYWORDS

Motor education, inclusive action, school, educational intervention

Educazione motoria, agire inclusivo, scuola, intervento educativo

Received 20/11/2023

Accepted 12/03/2024

Published 15/03/2024

1. Introduction¹

Motor education in primary schools has been recognised as a real discipline, since it has an educational effect on the body, psyche, intelligence, inter- and intra-personal behaviour (Pierobon, 2023).

Motor education is based on scientific principles and technical standards, calibrated on pedagogical, biological, ethical and social aims, starting from the assumption that movement is the basis for the development of the human being's intelligence. Any form of educational intervention stems from the teacher's skills and the need to focus on functional abilities, in order to design educational proposals calibrated to the abilities of each pupil (Cottini, 2022). It is for this reason that it is possible to state that motor education is based on the valorisation of diversity, since it is able to bring out the intrinsic value present in each pupil.

2. The right to exercise in school

The Committee of European Ministers in May of the year 2021 decided to amend Article 1 of the European Sports Charter, reaffirming the importance of guaranteeing all young people the practice of education and physical education. This rapid evolution of regulations concerning both physical activity (Pittalis, 2019) and inclusion (Saturn, 2021) has revealed an increasing focus on diversity on the right of those affected to have free access and participation on an equal basis with everyone else.

The UN Charter emphasises in Article 1 that every human being has the fundamental right to physical education, physical activity and sport, without discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic or any other basis (Cappuccio, Maniscalco, 2020). This highlights how movement is an opportunity for inclusion, and it is therefore necessary to ensure that children start practising motor education from pre-school age (De Luca, 2013).

The practice of motor education in primary school certainly generates positive effects on the process of literacy, well-being, health, individual and social (Bailey, 2017). It is for this reason that the Ministry of Education has decided through Law No. 234 of 2021 to introduce the teaching of motor education in primary schools

¹ Author of paragraphs n. 2-4-5

² Author of paragraphs n. 1-3

from the school year 2022/23. It is introduced, initially, in the fifth classes only, and from the school year 2023/2024 it will also be active in the fourth classes. This recognition consequently makes it compulsory to ensure that motor education teaching proposals have a strong inclusive character, so that they play a fundamental role in learners' daily routines (Bianchi, 2020).

The action of the Ministry of Education and Merit (M.I.M.) has, in fact, definitively acknowledged the educational and inclusive value of motor education, recognising it as an integral part of the pupil's educational system, and at the same time, movement and the body are also unquestionably given due value (Palumbo, 2018), as being capable of fostering the global and unitary growth of the learner involved in the educational process (Mazzantini, 2020).

The 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities asserts the right of everyone to live in inclusive contexts and to enjoy and actively participate in social practices, thus drawing attention to the need for the right to education, instruction and the practice of motor activity in an inclusive sense. It is with this in mind that it is necessary to intervene in order to make learning environments 'normal' in order to foster the full and active participation of each and every pupil (Orsomarso, 2021).

The concept of inclusion emphasises both the individual and the environment that surrounds him or her, therefore it also has repercussions on the school paths that must be personalised for each pupil and not exclusionary (Caldin, 2019). In this way, the school will be able to propose educational and didactic strategies aimed at the development of each individual's potential (Perla, Vinci, 2021), respecting the right to self-determination and reasonable accommodation, with a view to the best quality of life and a life project (Gaspari, 2022).

The above shows how motor education becomes a cornerstone of inclusive education, as it is capable of producing positive effects both on pupils with Special Educational Needs (BES) and on all other members of the class (Di Palma, Ascione, 2017). They highlight how motor education is capable of producing an educational intervention that is not limited only to operational and practical aspects, but goes beyond this to become an opportunity for each pupil, including those with psycho-physical disabilities. Therefore, through movement it is possible to calibrate the didactic proposal to the point of making it personalised, thus taking into account both the needs of each pupil and the pedagogical and interdisciplinary aspects.

The educational experience deriving from motor practice must embrace all pupils without excluding anyone (Perla, Martini, 2019), furthermore it must be a promoter of positive experiences, capable of highlighting the pupil's ability to do, and at the same time make them aware of the motor skills acquired while respecting diversity.

In this sense, the group experience capable of enhancing diversity and avoiding inequalities certainly plays a fundamental role (Moliterni, 2013).

3. Study of the role of the motor education teacher for inclusion purposes

In view of the legislation and recent choices regarding the presence of motor education in primary schools, this work aims to highlight how motor education in primary schools generates inclusive effects.

The playful factor present in motor practice certainly allows all pupils to participate in the proposed activities, avoiding the emergence of episodes of, and thus becoming a resource for inclusion understood as a process capable of increasing socio-relational and emotional participation in all contexts (Giaconi, D'Angelo, Marfoggia, Gentilozzi, 2023). Obviously, in order to generate these effects it requires the creation of adequate environments and educational systems that respond to everyone's diversity, and that are consequently able to enhance each diversity following the principle of special normality (De Vita, Rosa, 2017).

The above is the premise on which this work is based, the aim of which is to enhance the inclusive potential of motor education in primary schools. To this end, the project focused on the role of motor education teachers, since they can be creators of educational and inclusive proposals for learners, capable of reducing social marginalisation, thanks to the creation of an accessible, facilitating and inclusive learning environment (Cottini, 2018).

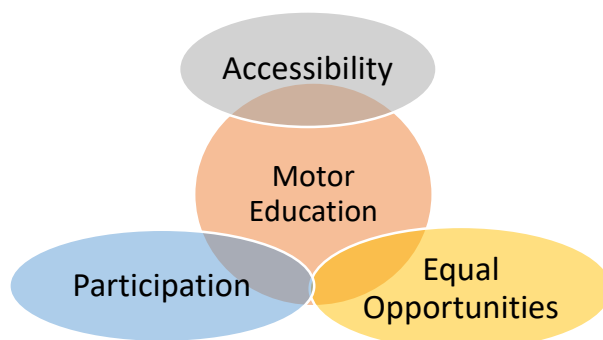


Diagram 1: Characteristics of motor education

The didactic proposal that the PE teacher puts into practice must take into consideration the student's potential, and for this to be realised it must be accessible, able to involve everyone and offer equal opportunities. These three values can be considered the cornerstones of inclusive education, without which inclusion cannot be implemented.

Analysing the relationship between motor education and inclusion and its role, it is clear that the role of the motor education teacher becomes decisive so that educational action is also inclusive (Sgambelluri, Vinci, 2020). Through motor education, the importance of the body and the strategies that, through it, are implemented to include students with disabilities is emphasised. It is therefore possible to enhance inclusion through movement, and in the case of primary schools, motor education, by enhancing joint planning both horizontally (relations between school and territory and within the institution between teachers) and vertically (relations between the various school levels), in order to create identity, a sense of belonging and constructive interactions.

4. Description of the research work

In order to assess the degree of inclusion in relation to motor education, a process of observation and evaluation of the teachers of the discipline in question was implemented. In particular, the actions that teachers put in place to ensure that pupils with disabilities were able to take part in motor education activities were measured. Therefore, the focus was not on the quantity and quality of the social and empathic relationships generated through motor practice in the pupils, but rather on how these educational actions were put into practice and the strategies used by the teachers to ensure that it produced the desired effects. In this regard, the following parameters were observed and evaluated:

Parameters to be observed and evaluated by teachers		
<i>Start of lesson</i>		
Introduction	Activation	
<i>Presentation of the teaching proposal</i>		
Diversified instructions	Autonomy-supportive instructions	Demonstrations
<i>Type of teaching proposal</i>		
Individual play	Team play	
<i>Duration of the teaching proposal</i>		
7 min	10 min	14 min

<i>Conclusion of the activity</i>
<i>Evaluation and positive feedback generated</i>

Table 1: Parameters observed during the lesson

Please note that a score for each descriptor ranges from a minimum of 1 (non-inclusive teacher) to a maximum of 5 (fully inclusive teacher). More specifically:

<i>Teacher assessment</i>	
1	Non-inclusive
2	Not very inclusive
3	Fairly inclusive
4	Very inclusive
5	totally inclusive

Table 2: Teacher assessment

In order to demonstrate, the degree of inclusiveness of motor education, 7 motor education teachers from 4 primary schools in the province of Bari were selected, whose average age is 40 years with an average of 7 years of professional experience taking into consideration years of physical education in first and second grade schools and motor projects in primary schools promoted by MIUR and CONI.

This work was carried out in the school year 2022-2023 (October), and included an observation-assessment phase characterised by video recordings of the lessons carried out by the teachers in order to be able to observe more carefully what was being proposed and how it was being done, and to allow each teacher to review and complete the questionnaire at a later point in time. In addition, this mode has the advantage for teachers to be able to change any behaviour that is deemed inappropriate during the teaching proposals.

The average score resulting from the observations and evaluations is 4.2, so it is possible to assert that the teachers' educational actions put in place to ensure the participation and equal opportunity conditions of the students are inclusive.

Analysing the various macro-areas in detail, it is possible to note that the moments of the beginning of the lesson and the first instructions of the activities to be carried out present actions and behaviour on the part of the teachers that are more aimed at inclusion and participation of pupils with disabilities in class activities. An average score of 3.89 was achieved at these moments.

Delving further into the phases, it was observed that the moments of activation and diversified instruction achieved an average score of 3.38 and 3.58 respectively.

The autonomy-supportive instruction phase achieved a very good average with regard to inclusion, in fact the score was 4.09, just as the demonstration moment

was even more inclusive with an average score of 4.58. In these moments, the teachers demonstrated that they have the skills to use inclusive strategies capable of involving all the pupils in the class.

With regard to the area of evaluation, an average score of 3.86 was achieved, revealing a particular attention to and knowledge of the theories and methodologies of inclusive motor education studies. Finally, with regard to feedback, a particular attention and inclusive attitude on the part of the teachers was recorded, scoring an average of 3.95.

The lowest score was recorded in the area of individual/team play, with an average score of 3.09, highlighting critical issues in the management of group activities, of a collaborative and cooperative type, since the complexity of designing this type of activity requires specific and in-depth preparation.

5. Conclusions

This work has highlighted the tendency of motor education teachers to use educational strategies of inclusion, paying attention to the construction of their teaching proposal in terms of participation, access and equal opportunities (Galanti, Giaconi, Zappaterra, 2021).

Given the importance of motor education in inclusion processes and the primary role it can take on in the life planning of each pupil (Murdaca, Oliva, 2015), it becomes fundamental that every teacher is trained in this regard, and this research shows that it is still necessary to work according to this ideology.

By doing so, it will be possible to emphasise the role of the teacher understood as the mediator of inclusive policies in the classroom, and the role of the pupil understood as the true protagonist of his or her own learning (Fiore, Baldassarre, 2022).

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