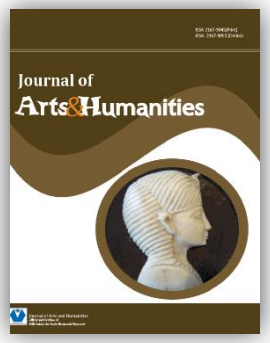

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Site Development and Teaching of Motor Skills in Early Childhood Education

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ABSTRACT

In the stage of Early Childhood Education children continue a progressive discovery of their body itself as a source of feelings and sensations, exploring the different possibilities of action and body functions, will constitute the necessary experiences upon which children's thought is being built. Besides, affective relationships established in situations of psychomotor education, and particularly through game, will be essential for children's emotional development. In this sense, this article is focused on justifying the necessary presence of Psychomotor education in Early Childhood Education as well as on showing a pedagogical proposal based on an attractive and entertaining motor intervention for children at this stage. This article contains concepts and assumptions about the psychomotor development, movement contents, motor game and the methodological approach where psychomotor storytelling, learning corners, workshops and projects based on action and adventure spaces shine in their own right. Moreover, a didactic design based on programming motor skills at this stage of Early Childhood Education in a funny and lively way also plays a relevant role in this article. We argue that professionals working in the field of Early Childhood psychomotor skills may know and recognize the value of the proposals shown here so that they can teach us to be more critical regarding our professional practice, increasing our concern about the development of motor skills – physical education in Early Childhood Education in its systematic form – which without any doubt will result in children's higher levels of welfare and health with regards to their own construction of the reality which surrounds them.

Key words: Early Childhood Education, Learning Methodology, Psychomotor Education and Storytelling.
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1.0 Introduction

Nowadays, no one argues that early childhood care is essential. However, both investigators and teachers and the Education Administration have to delve further into the role that Early Childhood Education is expected to play in our current society.

Along the years, Early Childhood Education has been considered just as a "nursery". Its aim was to cover the most basic needs of children. Thus, no professionals with the right pedagogical training were required. Later on, society started to demand a real education for children at this stage, as Early Childhood Education was considered to play a key role in order to prepare children to access Compulsory Education.

Considering all stages of education in general, Early Childhood Education is the one which has had a higher increase and development within the last 20 years. All the countries are developing a wider view of this educative stage, which goes from birth to the beginning of Primary Education. On one hand, this is due to the fact that many prestigious economists in the field of education show the positive individual and social impact that is obtained in the long term as a result of investing on Early Childhood Education. Thereby, those countries which have invested more resources on this educational stage are the ones that currently show higher levels of development.

On the other hand, as long as physical, cognitive, affective and social development is concerned, solid and healthy basis are established at this educational stage. Moreover, families, professionals in the fields of education and psychology and even the media are becoming more and more aware of the importance of educative intervention at this stage of human development; hence the clear recognition and value of the quality of educative practice during these early years in the life of a person. The main purpose is to promote an adequate progress in children's development and maturation by means of education, where education of motor skills plays a key role.

Psychomotor behaviour, especially in this stage of human development, is integrated by cognitive, affective and motor aspects which show us the *authentic* children as they are. By revealing their great potential of perfection which will be gradually actualized through the teaching-learning process, where psychomotor game acts both as an instrument and an objective.

However, this was not always this way, as childhood has been seen from different perspectives in different centuries along history. As a result of these diverse points of view and conceptualizations of childhood, several advances concerning childhood development have been done, leading over time to the different educative proposals that we know nowadays.

2.0 The need of an early education of psychomotor skills in childhood

The aim of motor development is to achieve the self-control of the own body so that we are able to exploit all its possibilities of action. This development is shown through motor function, which basically consists on the rehearsal of movements aimed at the different relationships children establish with the world surrounding them. Thus, the development of motor skills plays a key role in the whole process of improvement which goes from basic movements to the proper coordination of large muscle groups which involved in the mechanisms of postural control, balance and movement (Gesell 1958; Denis, 1980; Guilman and Guilman, 1981; Da Fonseca, 1984 and 1986; Gallahue y McClenaghan, 1985; Cratty, 1990; Wickstrom, 1990; Justo, 2000).

In 1983, Howard Gardner published his work, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, to highlight the unknown amount of human capabilities. This author identifies eight different intelligences, one of which is the body-kinesthetic, which has two key features: the control of body movements and the ability to handle objects skilfull. In humans, these capabilities have both a genetic and a practical basis, more related to training.

There are more and more authors who plead for an appropriate educational intervention at these first stages in the human development (Baltes & Danish, 1980; Alcantud, 1998; Boulch, 1983; Domínguez, 2000; Monge-Alvarado, 2010; Parra-Ortiz, 2010; Gil-Madrona, 2013). That effective educational should also engage one of the basic areas of human development, which is motor development in its systematic form of psychomotor education or physical education, from a global perspective (emotional, cognitive, motor and social-relational).

Although theories about educational development tend to focus their attention on cognitive aspects of children's development, the ability to think, reason, understand and learn also involves perceptual and sensory skills. During the first years of a child's life, the motor dimension and intellectual development are closely linked.

This text aims to show the relevance of the role of Motor Education at early childhood stage, suitable for the cultivation and development of positive attitudes as well as individual and social values of great scope. Before that, it is appropriate to clarify that it was in the early twentieth century when the French physician Ernest Dupré introduced the term "psycho-motricity" for the first time when he was studying the motor weakness in patients who suffered from mental illnesses. Dupré's ideas around psychomotor disorders are widely accepted in diverse fields of science such as genetic psychology (Wallon), child psychiatry (Ajuriaguerra) and pedagogy (Picq and Vayer, Le Boulch and Lapierre and Aucouturier) among other disciplines. Behind this term, as Pastor-Pradillo (2007) states, it is frequent to find a large number of concepts and doctrine under varied definitions that use the terms of psychomotor education, education of motor skills, Motricity, education based on experience, dynamic expression, corporal expression, body language, movement education or psychokinetic education by motor movement, etc., as synonyms.

Probably this is due to the fact that there are many professionals from a wide range of fields of knowledge (education, social work, psychology, paediatrics, medicine, physical education, neurology or psychiatry) who deal with it. However, all of them agree on the importance of working psychomotor development along the childhood education stage. During the last few years, maybe as a consequence of the *network of networks*, including the media (press, television, radio, etc) and politicians, a favourable public opinion has been generated regarding this. This means that objectives and resources are being reviewed as well as motor intervention procedures, as all of them agree on the importance of such intervention from early childhood.

However, it appears that the new approaches arising in the 21st century are more interested in a holistic, global, comprehensive and behavioural perspective, leaving analytical perspectives behind. As it happens in other countries, different Spanish authors linked to the field of education agree with this inclusive idea. One of the main promoters of the unification process was professor Berruezo (2000) and, later on, different proposals for intervention including Arnaiz (2000), Muniáin (2001), Herrero (2000), Quirós (2001), Justo Martínez (2000), Sánchez y Llorca (2001), Lázaro (2002) y Mediara-Rivas y Gil-Madrona (2003). In this way, professor Gil-Madrona (2013) and his team have found a solution to recover motor skills in their systematic physical education form, regarding the level of quality at schools throughout a well planned and organized design which establishes objectives followed by viable solutions.

The early years of a person's vital cycle are crucial. Nowadays, studies show that many of the challenges faced by adult population (overweight, developmental delay, illness, etc.) have their origin in early childhood. Regular motor activity is related to a healthier and longer life. It all appears that a healthy early development regarding physical, socio-emotional and cognitive-linguistic skills is essential in order to reach success and happiness not only during childhood but throughout life (Irwin, Sidiq and Hertzman, 2007). However, most children living in developed countries do not practise enough motor activity to achieve these health benefits.

Certainly, different Childhood Education professionals are aware that different children show different motor skills, and it allows them to observe and share information about children's situation regarding not only motor but also cognitive, affective or social skills such as self-confidence, self-esteem or social relationships, among others. These professionals are aware that body movements are a sign of children's global behaviour in which aspects of their personality are involved as well. Le Bouch (1983) stated three decades ago that children who are immersed in a group follow social rules through their movements; and this way, they are integrated within the world which surrounds them through physical motor activity. Thus, motor development is related to the rest of components of behaviour (adaptable, verbal and social) and it constitutes the basis of global human development, highlighting two periods, childhood and adolescence.

It is for this reason that nowadays it seems to be already recognized from all areas that Motor Education must play a key role in the construction of a quality Early Childhood Education, as its aim is the balanced development of the body as a means or an instrument to achieve human maturity as well as harmony, a positive self-concept and a high self-esteem. It is also suitable for the development of positive attitudes and individual and social values, so it makes an important contribution to children's global education as it provides experiences which bring both positive – the earlier the better - and negative or failure attitudes. That is why the general approaches about Motor Education in Early Childhood Education must be suitable for the people they are directed to (Gil-Madrona, Contreras and Gómez, 2008). We are sure that there is no other stage in the life of a person in which Motor Education is so important than in early childhood. The key to this development is the creation of new scenarios and the promotion of "an appropriate variety and quantity" of motor proposals. In this context, a set of strong values, a proper pedagogical training and a vocational practise will facilitate teachers their role of motivators and guides for students regarding their motor learning process.

3.0 Global proposal of motor intervention in Early Childhood Education

Piaget (1936) states that through physical activity children think, learn, create and face their problems; and this leads Arnaiz (1994, p.43-62) to say that this stage is a period of unique global development which should be properly used by educational approaches about psychomotor activity, regarding this: it should be a pedagogical and psychological action that uses the body activity in order to improve and normalize the child's global behaviour improving the development of all aspects of the personality. Da Fonseca (2006) shows a similar point of view as he considers that infant motor development is an essential element in order to access higher and more complex thought processes. And all of this can be reached by stimulating infant motor activity freely, avoiding stereotypes and automatisms more related to sport techniques (Ríos-Hernández, 2005).

In this context, the global proposal of Motor Education in Early Childhood Education is directed to the child's global development and it is organized as follows:

Perceptual-motor factors: body awareness; space awareness such as location, direction or orientation; time perception, such as duration or rhythm; knowledge of the physical environment and development within the social environment. The body requested by perceptual factors is the *conscious body*, which is linked to voluntary motor activity and mental representation. It is a body committed to think, decide, act and know. Perception is a cognitive process which has always been highly valued within educative centres as one of the essential aspects regarding perception is significance. Thus, perception involves interpreting and constructing objects with significance. It all has to do with taking our knowledge as a basis, being able to build new learning and express it properly.

Physical-motor factors: instrumental, physical and motor body, acquiring basic motor skills as motor development improves. These are factors that have to do with the progressive control of the body and they promote balance and the practice of natural movements which enhance the development of physical fitness, enriching motor behaviour and reaching body efficiency. The body requested by motor factors is the *instrumental, motor and physical body*. It is a body that is able to move different muscles

and joints with varied motor answers, acquiring motor patterns as motor skills improve. It is a body that shows its physical reality through different movements, positions, gestures and attitudes, etc., a global being focused on *knowing how to do*.

Affective-relational factors: creativity, confidence, tensions, affections, happiness, social abilities. Throughout his global expressio, the child can show his feelings, internal conflicts or tensions. The environment of the class of physical education is a proper context to observe the most original behaviours as well as children's relationships with adults and peers. Regarding the psycho-educative context, educators can deal with the different conflicts which may arise among children, being able to solve them. As long as the treatment of socio-affective factors is concerned, non-verbal language (sight, gestures, sounds, etc.) is considered to be essential, as well as all the abilities related to verbal behaviour (ask for something, thank somebody something, apologize, express affection, propose things, express feelings, etc.). This means that, in any moment during the session or at the end of the session children can be asked to express their feelings, being able not to judge different points of view, which can be necessary sometimes (Mendiara-Rivas and Gil-Madrona, 2003).

Thereby, our activity is focused on the development of balance; laterality; coordination of movements; relaxation and breathing; rhythm and organization of time and space; postural and gestural communication; child's relationships with objects, peers and adults; affective and relational development; socialization through body movement; the acquisition of individual and social values; corporal expression. Which means that the child is able to control and express motor skills within a relational context where he can show his wishes, fears and emotions; and therefore focusing on children's motor development and working with diverse educative learning by using the expressive, creative and life-based possibilities of the body as a whole. It all leads to a global and integrated approach where body is seen from all its motor dimensions which mush help children acquire a higher self-consciousness from the early years, as well as the awareness of the others and the environment which surrounds them.

Materials should meet the objectives in terms of evolutionary development in order to work the progressive self-knowledge. In this sense, the child's body will become the resource used as a means and a frame of reference throughout the whole stage of Early Childhood Education. Therefore, the body allows children to develop their own experiences at the same time that it can be used as a resource in the knowledge of their own body perception as well as a source of sensations and feelings such as pain or pleasure, or the development of their own personal identity or self-esteem. We should not forget the child's own clothes to work his personal identity. In this sense, we will use them to develop children's autonomy regarding how to get dressed and undressed, how to button up or manage to use buckles and clasps, zips; or work the different colours and textures.

As long as the gym permits us to do so, it is advisable to provide materials to be hung all over the ceiling (ropes, ladders, bars, wall trellis). Which will make it possible to work rotations, reflections of falls from certain heights, the postural control, balance, general dynamic coordination and motor-visual coordination. Other kind of materials may also be required to work with them at the gym, such as puzzles, balls, hoops or cloths which, due to their varied colours, shapes and textures. Are good resources to work body movement as they will promote skills such as boost walking, crawling, climbing, as well as the developments of guidance and space structuring skills, coordination of movement, balance, tone, posture, relaxation, breathing, etc.

4.0 The motor game in Motor Education at the first stages of development

The role of game in the different developmental levels of a child has not gone unnoticed to the different authors. Its treatment plays a key role of the general structure of Motor Education in early childhood and thus it is an essential instrument in the educative process to the extent that it has a transversal aspect in the curriculum of Early Childhood Education.

Indeed, motor game considered as a tool for the motor development in a playful way; but, even more important, as a context in which it is possible to observe significant motor behaviour. Motor game deserves special consideration within the methodological approach, as this educational stage is closely linked to didactic. Thereby, our practise in the field of Psychomotor Education in Early Childhood Education will lead us to the establishment of a educative methodology based on experiences, playful activities and games, and this is the way the mentioned educative contents will be addressed.

Play is a natural and innate activity in all cultures around the world as it is a recreational activity; but, at the same time, it plays a key role in education, especially in the early stages of development. As long as Early Childhood Education is concerned, psychomotor intervention is implemented through games and playful activities within a playful approach, and this will allow us to globalize all motion-based contents related to our educational practice.

Motor game is a positive practice which improves the acquisition of motor skills and the development of social relationships, as well as the promotion of emotional skills, creativity and imagination, enhancing children's self-esteem. Acting as a tool which can be used for the observation and assessment of children, regarding both motor-physical development and maturity (crawl, walk, run, catch, drop, go up and down). Besides, it promotes motor-perceptive development (laterality, balance, space and time awareness, self-concept) and it leads to the evaluation of the children's capacity of socialization and interaction with peers and adults regarding the way they express their emotions and feelings (happiness, fear, anger, tenderness). Finally, motor game also promotes moral development, as it includes social rules, and cognitive development which lets children be able to perceive and understand form and dimension of objects, mental construction and imagination.

Therefore, the role of game as a tool which leads to motor development in a playful way is essential, even more if we consider it as a main context for the observation of significant motor behaviour where analysis and manipulation constitute the real essence of physical education which merges with general education at this level (Gil-Madrona and Navarro-Adelantado, 2005).

5.0 Global proposal of Motor Education in Early Childhood Education

When entering the field of motor development at school regarding early childhood, the diverse dimensions previously described should be taken into account in a global, organized and systematic way. This means that, when stimuli for the purpose of search motor development are provided, it should be taken into account that a given activity will be carried out with a child who has his own general characteristics (biological, social and psychomotor).Therefore any intervention should consider aspects such as the environment, growth, maturation and development.

All these considerations lead to suggest that teachers must focus on children's physical and motor development from a *dynamic point of view*, considering the great importance of motor development in the different processes of human development. Every early childhood educator must be given a training which allows them to properly stimulate children within the teaching-learning processes, especially regarding motor development (Uribe, 2011).

Along the whole twentieth century, different didactic models have arisen in the field of Early Childhood Education, such as the works carried out by Owen and Federico Froebel, Carpenter, Montessori, Decroly, Rosa and Carolina Agazzi's model, Freinet, Rosa Sensat… known as Pedagogical Renovation Approaches. Other educational approaches at Early Childhood Education which have led to an important advance in the methodological renovation at this educational stage are schools of Modena and Regio Emilia in Italy as well as the model "Spectrum" which is inspired in the theory of multiple intelligences provided by Howard Garner. Thus, Psychomotor Education in the field of Early Childhood Education, far from being considered separately, should be worked in a global and integrated way so that body can be shown from all its motor dimensions.

Motor proposals to be put into practice in early childhood schools and kinder gardens are aimed to children's general development as well as the improvement of perceptive, motor, physical and affective-relational factors which constitute the whole child in an integrated way. Thereby, our intervention from psychomotor education must be directed to reach a global, harmonic and balanced development of all the aspects that build children's personality. So the commitment is focused on the multiple meanings and views over the same activity.

Among the objectives, the design of each didactic unit and session will take into account the global uniqueness of the child, so the design and adaptation of spaces should promote:

1. The educational intention, the construction of identity, the affirmation of the own self, the development of self-esteem, positive attitudes and behaviours, good relationships with the physical and social environment, the balanced combination of individualism and socialization.
2. The acquisition of the control of their own body, the development of natural games and movements, the improvement of coordination and balance, the development of physical fitness and the enrichment of motor behaviour and body efficiency.
3. The perception of the body and the environment, the organization and structuring of feelings and sensations, the acquisition of skills and knowledge construction, expression, communication and representation, as well as the correct development within their physical and social environment.

For these purposes, the activities proposed in the classroom of Motor Education will be a continuity of those carried out in the rest of the school day, with this educative intervention immerse within the didactic model given by each teacher or early childhood centre included in globalized lesson plans. Which means that the development of motor skills in this educational stage is integrated with the rest of school learning.

Thus, psychomotor childhood education proposals are presented as "learning environments" and "spaces of action and adventure", based on motor tasks with motor games, motor storytelling, music and topics such as animals (the zoo, the jungle, the forest, Tarzan and Jane in the jungle, farm animals or sea animals), seasons of the year (sun, rain, snow, wind, trees, flowers, etc.), Christmas (family, carols, presents, Santa Claus, the Three Wise Men, etc.), medieval knights, Carnival (Indians and cowboys), a walk through my city (means of transport, jobs, land and sea, fire, etc.), the circus (the clowns, the trapeze artist, the trainer), the characters of different stories and tales (the world of gnomes, Harry Potter, Peter Pan, Cinderella, Don Quixote of La Mancha), we know our bodies, food (taste), senses (the world of colour, touch, hearing, taste, smell, sight), jobs (policeman, fireman, chef, farmer, doctor), and so on.

The walls of the gym will be filled with drawing, murals, designs, prints and silhouettes, outlines of those areas of interest that the students themselves have made during the school day, which means that we work and adapt motor tasks regarding the given topic children are working in other subjects in the learning context of physical education. Therefore, it will be frequent to see there, in the gym, the silhouettes of two children (male and female) made by the children themselves as a task for other subjects, as if they were some of the pieces designed for a final purpose. In other cases, children will have to dress – and undress – with clothes and costumes previously prepared to participate in the carnival; or they will have to make a snowman with different pieces taken after running and overcome the obstacles put within a circuit that simulates the woods in spring, a mountain, a valley, an afternoon at the circus or a walk round the city (Gil-Madrona, 2013). These programmes are not closed models but a proposal based on the development of different activities which are gradually carried out depending on their level of difficulty so that children can acquire and develop psychomotor skills.

In these spaces, which Mendiara-Rivas (1999) calls "spaces of action and adventure", games and playful situations will be a motivating element in order to focus the attention on the activities proposed, due to the fact that children at this stage show a preference for motor activity, game and play-based activities. These are the environments where contents worked will be those that promote the development of manipulation, movement patterns and those related to dynamic coordination in general terms (rolling,

crawling, walking, jumping, throwing, pushing, pulling). The body scheme (global and segmental body structure). Physical health (hygiene habits). Space awareness and perception (orientation and notion of different situations). Time perception (rhythm, concepts of before and after). Corporal expression (tonic control, relaxation, expressive possibilities). Creativity and imagination (the design of different exercises or activities, proposal of games, imagine situations, etc.); cognitive development (volume, shape, colour). Social relationships (integrate within the group, establish visual contact, lend and ask for objects, agree, share). In short, encourage the development of activities carried out within children's natural environment, in recreational spaces which promote relationships with peers and adults. The expression of feelings and emotions (joy, affection, care, love, anger, etc.). The improvement of self-esteem and social skills (enjoy relating with others, realize and accept their own abilities in different games, observe and be aware of others). The acceptance and compliance with rules and standards (show respect, accept their own limits, follow the instructions, control impulses of shouts, laughter, fear, noise).

The methodological approach will depend on the objective we want to reach, the timing, materials, resources and space available, taking into account the group's different needs and characteristics as well. With regards to the timing, we should make a distinction between sensorimotor time, in which general dynamic movements of general or segmental coordination are developed; symbolic time, when performances are carried out; and finally, time representation and verbalization, in which children remember and organize their ideas in order to verbalize what they have experienced during the session so that they are able to remember it later.

As long as space is concerned, it refers to the learning environment, defining it as a concept which comprises diverse concepts, from the space itself and its forms to the materials or elements that can be found in the gym, all of them with an educational significance. Everything should have an educative purpose, including not only the activities designed but also the time and the space they are going to be developed.

6.0 Resources and materials

When choosing these materials, we must take into account the physical structures and space available to develop our classes as they are going to condition the characteristics of the materials we use. The next list includes the different kinds of materials and resources that can be used:

1. *Conventional materials:* dishes or Frisbees, balls of various sizes, Swedish banks, plasticine, clay templates, molding toy tools, mats, rings, pins, gomets, foam balls, balloons of various colours and sizes, ropes, scarves, ping pong balls, pikes, costumes, colourful clothes, etc.
2. *Unconventional materials:* cards, crafts, plastic dishes, sweeping brushes, tree leaves, garbage bags of various sizes, balls of newspaper, cardboard boxes of various sizes (some lined with coloured cardboards), duct tape, waste or recyclable materials (plastic bottles, tetrabriks, soda cans, cardboard and newspapers), large and small cubes, velcro, sheets of paper, quill pens, empty egg cartons, murals, cotton wool balls, plastic and vegetable seed cards, pouches, cushions, baskets, boxes, toy fishing rods, worms, silver shiny paper, pieces of the puzzle treasure, nets, sand boxes, and other materials to decorate de gym.

7.0 Teaching-learning strategies

After considering the issues mentioned above, the most commonly used *methodological strategies*, either by the kind of activities proposed, the distribution of time and space or the use of varied materials, are the ones outlined below:

Circuit, which main characteristic is that there are different learning areas distributed throughout the whole gym, where we can find one or more tasks (individual or collective) which allow us to respond to differences, interests and learning paces of students. The circuit is composed by various exercises and activities to be developed simultaneously by different groups of students. Each activity is carried out in

one of the sections that form the circuit, so that each group of students performs the activity which is indicated in that section during a given period of time. After this period of time, each group changes to another section in a predetermined direction, usually in the clockwise direction. Times of physical activity and rest will be set according to the difficulty of the task or the intensity of physical effort. The exercises of the circuit are repeated until each student performs all the exercises and tasks so that all students make at least one round around the whole circuit.

Corners. This methodology is based on setting different tasks to be developed in small groups, even when the activity could be carried out individually as well. We can't forget that children at these stages start developing individual activities and gradually they are moving on to work with others. As Travernier (1987) states, a corner is a place where diverse activities, either free or directed, individually or in small groups, take place.

Corners have these main characteristics: they are organized spaces which can be a static space in the classroom or the gym, or different spaces moving from one place to another depending on the activity. The tasks which are carried out children work simultaneously different activities. Besides, these activities are adapted to the different interests and abilities of the group and may not only include school materials but also others more related to the child's near context. Through these strategies autonomy, creativity and the need to learn are developed. This way, we will be able to organize the classroom in corners with specific contents by establishing a given period of time within the timetable in which students can work them; or work these contents linking them to the general activity of the course. In this case, children are free to choose to go to the places where these corners are located in their free time; for example, after they have finished a task or an exercise proposed by the teacher. Regarding the Motor Education classroom, working with corners as a specific content is very common. The action in these areas is based on freedom of choice, which otherwise promotes imagination and deduction, as well as personal autonomy.

The motor storytelling is also a very useful and interesting didactic resource in Early Childhood Education as it focuses its action on a narrated, experienced, lived and played story or tale, where imagination, creativity and fantasy arise and mix with the real world during the time the storytelling takes, letting children exercise all kinds of movements (Conde, 2010). The narrator could be a character of the tale of someone who is not in the story but is integrated within the group during the course of the story (Ceular, 2009). According to Rivas and Terroba (2010), it is a tale that, being narrated with the help of music, enhances a wide range of movements, dramatization, simulations, turning children into the main characters of the story. The main objectives to reach with the motor storytelling are the following: develop basic motor skills, promote children's imagination, as well as their fantasy, creativity and affectivity. It also promotes the development of expressiveness and cognitive development, creating habits of life in society, autonomy and self-esteem, which are essential aspects during childhood.

Finally, we should discuss the evaluation, which aim is focused on establishing the child's level of maturity regarding their motor development. This assessment can be used as a preventive measure in order to know the evolution of the student as exhaustively as possible and, thus, adapt the teaching-learning process to the child. Another advantage of this evaluation is the improvement of learning through different activities such as motor games, motor storytelling, learning environments, etc. To finish, perhaps the most important issue regarding this assessment is the evaluation of the teaching-learning process focusing it on the teacher. With this assessment we can check if both the curriculum and the teaching practice are consistent with what is stated in the official curriculum. In general terms, specific assessment of the motor skills is aimed to propose different activities or programmes based on the results obtained with that evaluation.

In this framework, the global proposal about the pedagogical action of Motor Education in Early Childhood Education is directed to the global development of the child and so all aspects of this global perspective are properly organized around perceptual-motor skills (perception of their own body,

space perception such as location, direction or orientation, time perception as duration of timing, knowledge of the physical environment and development in the social context). Motor-physical skills (instrumental, physical and motor body, with the acquisition of motor patterns and motor skills), and affective-relational skills (creativity, self-confidence, control of feelings and emotions, such as anger or joy, socialization) (Mendiara-Rivas and Gil-Madrona, 2003).

With this purpose, the "didactic model" which is a set of principles, ideas and preconceptions on which the teacher bases his daily educational practice, serves to define educational objectives and aims to guide the processes and teaching-learning strategies. Regarding the Motor Education in Early Childhood Education, the teacher is attached, from the perspective of discipline to certain theoretical positions, more or less consciously, during his work at the gym. In this sense, the curriculum framework, the legislation and the epistemological issues around Motor Education meet in the gym and set different didactic approaches. We must not forget that this pedagogical intervention covers some critical years in the development of children and their main function is developed on a *human being in construction*, whose nervous system, physical condition and personality are still being built. Therefore, the educator's role is to provide the best environment and physical learning experiences for children in order to help them explore and learn with a purpose.

Thereby, the creation of a safe and affective environment for the child is required, as it will promote the achievement of a positive self-esteem and the development of a balanced personality. Physical Education or, as we have mentioned before, Psychomotor Education, must be implemented in Early Childhood Education through working methods based on experimentation, activity and play. Moreover, play is the ideal methodology to be applied in Early Childhood Education as it promotes meaningful learning from a global perspective, enhancing active teaching as well. Games are presented as a learning content linked to motor, affective and social objectives. On the other hand, game is considered as a methodological strategy as it is a means to achieve the correct development of didactic units. Both issues share a common purpose, which is a globalized and integrated approach, essential in this educational stage. Thus, knowledge about these issues should be useful to know how to foster learning processes in education.

Regarding the structure of the sessions of Motor Education at this stage of Early Childhood Education, an optimum approach is the one proposed by Vaca (1996), in which the class will begin with an *initial routine* consisting of going from the classroom to the gym where Motor Education classes are developed. In this initial time or time of meeting at this stage, information will be provided about the guidelines and rules related to the play space at the gym, and the different songs, stories and tales, materials and resources to be used will be presented, promoting motivation among children by catching their attention through these positive environmental factors. All these aspects will provide a moment of active play and motor activity. This initial routine will constitute the main part of the session in which children, either individually or collaborating with their classmates, will develop at their own learning pace, satisfying their need for movement and their curiosity to tackle small risks and save minimum obstacle or difficulties by making decisions and testing their own level of responsibility. Games and experiences will be structured within an atmosphere of freedom, trust and security where the adult (the teacher) acts as a guide and has the responsibility to make rules being followed and respected. There is another important moment in the session, the moment of relaxation, internalization, verbalization, also called the *goodbye routine*. In this moment of the session children are asked to identify their own experiences so that they can express them and be able to understand their classmates' experiences. Finally, the sessions finishes with a *going out routine* when the whole group returns to the classroom.

8.0 Conclusion

Nowadays, there are many research from the fields of medicine, psychology, sociology and education which state that environment, stimuli, care and early education of children have a transcendental impact regarding the way their brain develops. Thus, the more stimulating the environment, more

positive connections are formed in the brain and the better the child's progress is in all aspects of his life in terms of physical, emotional and social development, as well as their ability to express and acquire knowledge. With this purpose, the government must recognize that proper investments on early childhood represent the cornerstone of human development and they are essential for the progress of society. In fact, our planet does not offer examples of prosperity or welfare among those societies that have ignored the development and education of the early childhood and thereby. A further development of different areas in our planet has also taken place as Early Childhood Education has been taking seriously into account in those regions. So we still need even more good practice in the field of Motor Education at this stage of Early Childhood Education.

The approaches and activities suggested here are strongly related to the enrichment of children's relationships at school: the relationships with themselves, with others and with the environment through motor activities and the development of sensorial skills. Therefore, our proposal to work the child's personality from an integrated perspective, which means that we may address all kinds of behaviours specially focusing on the way they are shown. Thus, even from the planning sessions, we will carry them out in such a way that all children are able to develop all aspects of their personality. This implies that exercises and activities should be design so that no items are standing out above others but all of them are given the same value, as the practice of motor education involves a balanced combination of the three previously mentioned aspects which make up children's personality.

These proposals are expected to help teachers in Early Childhood Education to configure and articulate their own didactic approach of Motor Education at this educational stage so that it can contribute to promote children's developmental processes based on a higher motor, cognitive, emotional and relational development as well as the promotion of social abilities and healthy habits among children. What is already intended with this work is to provide children all these issues so that they can benefit from them.

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