

Editorial

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Psychomotricity for the development of children: A tribute to Emeritus Prof. Dr. Renate Zimmer

Physical activities help children develop their body awareness and form the basis for the construction of the child “world of ideas”. Movement education in preschool and elementary classes is oriented towards a holistic approach. That means that, in addition to guided and targeted skill learning, there are also opportunities that motivate the independent movement action of the child.

"Psychomotor Exercise Treatment" was known in Germany as an approach for the promotion of movement for both disabled and non-disabled children. For several years, this approach had been focusing on its therapeutic aspect; however, in last decades, this focus has been increasingly shifted to behavioral disorders prevention and holistic development of child's personality. The main characteristics of the “psychomotor approach” are the enhancement of children’s development through the interplay among movement, thinking and feeling, as well as lesson orientation to the game or other significant social interactions. The enhancement of child’s personality is achieved, above all, through the provision of motor, sensory and cognitive stimuli, the refinement of motor skills and the opportunities for ample experiences with materials, as well as, sensory and movement experiences. In every psychomotor activity, emphasis is given on how children can materialize their own movement ideas, live positive social interactions and enjoy moving. All those activities are characterized by the fact that they are oriented towards children’s experiences repertoire and make sense to them, leading young participants to actively take part in. Psychomotor education is not dependent on the use of certain equipment and materials. The key-components for an effective psychomotor session are instructor’s teaching competence, his/her active engagement to activities and the methods he/she uses. Both everyday-life materials as well as small and large pieces of sport equipment can be used in the context of psychomotricity. The typical pieces of psychomotor equipment require children’s motor performance adaptation according to their use: rollerboard, pedalo, swing cloth, slow-motion balls and pezziballs. Sensory-motor skills have been established as a decisive prerequisite for cognitive, emotional and social development fields of personality. An up-to-date movement education should help children learn how to develop their own movement sequences and support their choices regarding equipment and material use.

According to Zimmer's concept, there are three areas of action competence: **Body experiences, Social experiences and experiences with materials.**

Body perception and body experiences: Refer to the development of the idea of one's own body (knowledge of the body parts, body position in space, etc.). Activities targeting this area include multiple opportunities for practicing movement skills, as well as, experiencing physical conditions (such as exhaustion or fatigue); physical limits (strength, endurance etc) and the effect of tension and relaxation.

This area also includes *Self-Experience* (confidence in one's own performance, realistic self-assessment, building a positive self-image) and *Sense experiences* (experiencing different forms of sensory perceptions, “understanding” of the world through all senses, expression and communication through movement).

Social experiences: Refer to the idea of communicating with other children through movement (children know and experience the meaning of game rules, adhere to commonly agreed rules, take care of others and meet their needs in the common game).

Experiences with Materials: Include the exploration and knowledge of materials and objects through movement (learning specific characteristics of various materials, adaptation of child movement to the piece of equipment he/she is moving with, etc.)

Nowadays, Zimmer's Psychomotricity is the dominant pedagogical approach, being applied at kindergartens and elementary schools across Europe, Latin America and Asia. It would not be an exaggeration to say that if Kiphard was the one who started the idea of Psychomotricity, Zimmer is the one who has completed it.