

Chapter 19

Resilience and Psychomotricity in Preschool Education: A Study with Children that are Socially, Culturally, and Economically Disadvantaged

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to analyse the importance of resilience and psychomotricity and their impact in the learning of disadvantaged children at a preschool age that are exposed to adverse social and personal factors and to assess the efficiency of an intervention program based in psychomotricity and resilience together. A project developed in a region of Brazil (Botucatu), where a Psychological Development Activation Model was used, is presented, and also standardised and easily reproduced psychomotricity exercises and the Programme Strong Start Pre K in the area of resilience are presented. The assessment instruments used were the WebeST test for resilience, discussed in this chapter, and the operational Portage Inventory test for Psychomotricity. These results indicate that there was an evolution in resilience among children in the group that participated in this program. They improved the resilience capacity, dealing with problems, and controlling emotions. Some implications of this study are analysed, suggesting changes in the teaching/learning process as well as in testing and interventions in order to achieve success in school.

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INTRODUCTION

Personal, Social, and Emotional Skills

Anxiety, fear, insecurity, aggressiveness, emotional barriers, bullying, rage, joy, surprise and sadness are a part of our daily life from childhood to adulthood. From the tenderest age we can learn how to deal with our own emotions and those of others, see the world from different points of view, which may help improve our quality of life, health, personal and professional success, which is one of the challenges of the 21st Century. It is a fact that the development of social-emotional skills combined with cognitive development is the key to success in school and throughout life, as shown in Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 2010; Damásio, 2011).

Motta and Aguiar (2007) indicate that being competent is having the capacity to apply skills, knowledge and behaviour. The ability to use knowledge to achieve a purpose, the capacity of using knowledge and skills acquired in one's profession and the capacity to mobilise knowledge such as know-how, know how to be and know how to act, and lastly, the capacity to solve problems.

A personal skill is an integrated and structured knowledge that an individual will have to resort to and uses in order to effectively undertake various tasks encountered throughout life, while being aware of their potential and resources as well as psychological constraints in order to be able to pursue projects in various dimensions of their existence.

It is common knowledge that emotions affect how and what we learn, that affectionate relationships are the basis for lasting education and that important skills can be taught simultaneously with the academic content. Research shows that the positive effects achieved through the development of these social skills in academic performance benefit the health of the body, improve self-image,

self-concept, and self-esteem, and provide physical and mental well-being and responsible citizenship. In order to achieve success throughout life, it is essential to reduce the risk of poor adjustment, failed relationships, interpersonal violence, substance abuse and unhappiness (Elias et al., 1977; Zins, Weissberg et al., 2004).

For the World Health Organisation (WHO), health is not merely the absence of illness but a resource of our daily lives and the state of physical, psychological and social well-being of the human being. Barbosa (2002) reports that psychomotricity is directly related to education, health and well-being, which help to achieve a complete balance of the human being, and has the objective of promoting integral development.

Resilience: Different Approaches

The term resilience is not a fixed attitude that changes according to the stage of life and circumstances, type of trauma and how a person experiences it as well as the historical-cultural factors (Hensius, 2010). It is a dynamic process, a symbiosis between the individual's inside and outside, in a social context, resulting from the interaction of various micro-systems (family, school, friends) and macro-systems (community, beliefs, ideologies, values and customs, means of communication, economic situation and educational system), from the perspective of the bio ecological Human Development Model by Bronfenbrenner (1998). Resilience leads to a metamorphosis of the individual who learns through experiences lived and draws life lessons for life.

Manciaux (2003) sees resilience as a person or group's capacity to develop and to project themselves into the future, despite destabilising events resulting from difficult life conditions and traumas that sometimes are severe.

Tavares (2001) states that resilience is the capacity that people have, individually or in group, to withstand adverse situations without losing their

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