


Chapter 7

Creation of Playful Learning Indicators in Relation to Motor Games in Early Childhood Education: Application in the Classroom

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ABSTRACT

The school context, and specifically the area of Physical Education, is emerging as a determinant of playful learning and children's well-being, considering that it has suffered a severe setback with a negative influence on the students due to the COVID-19 pandemic (impossibility of attending class in person). In view of this situation, the aim is to know the levels of playful learning of motor games in Early Childhood Education based on indicators placed in different categories, taking as a reference the work of the pedagogy of play of the Project Zero research group of Harvard University, in order to

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provide quality to the proposals proposed. A group of 41 expert teachers were then asked to evaluate the selected indicators, and differences were observed between the choice of playful learning indicators in the different age groups. Finally, they were used as an evaluation instrument for a Physical Education session in a 4-year-old class with 19 boys and girls, showing improvements in different areas worked on.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is based on a need arising from the pandemic associated with COVID-19. For more than three months, Spanish children were confined to their homes, unable to play as before. Although classes continued online, play, due to its special characteristics, was negatively and intensely affected and, when the students were finally able to return to the classrooms, they did so in a very special situation accompanied by an enormous amount of restrictions that, once again, deeply affected play (interpersonal distance, impossibility of sharing materials, use of masks, need to clean the resources used before new use by another person, etc.). This is something that has resulted in different health risks, especially in relation to reduced physical activity and increased sedentary lifestyle (López-Bueno et al., 2021). Restrictions also had a negative effect according to mental and health aspects in children and young people, such as increased levels of obesity (Beck, et al., 2021), depression, anxiety and feelings of loneliness (Panda, et al. 2021), sleep disorders (Bucak et al., 2021) or decreased levels of cardiorespiratory capacity (López-Bueno et al., 2021).

Based on a situation such as the one described above, the school context, and specifically the area of Physical Education, is currently emerging as one of the determinants of playful learning and children's well-being. This playful learning to which we allude, involves much more than games and fun activities, more than achieving objectives related to the state of mind, the living of vital experiences, the promotion of curiosity and creativity as part of child development.

According to Garaigordobil (2005), play is directly and totally related to human development and, at an early stage, influences a variety of aspects of growth. Through it, children develop their personality and social skills and stimulate and develop their intellectual and psychomotor capacities and can achieve experiences that teach them to live in society, to understand their own possibilities and limitations, to grow and mature.

The motor development of children plays a decisive role in their overall evolution (Extremera & Ruiz-Montero, 2016). Psychomotor activities provide children with pleasurable physical sensations, in addition to contributing to the maturation, separation and independence of movement. Through the activity, they will understand their body scheme, develop and integrate neuromuscular aspects such as coordination and balance, also developing their sensory capabilities and acquiring dexterity and agility.

Given this emergency situation, relevance and necessity, the main objective of this work is to know the levels of playful learning of motor games in Early Childhood Education. Therefore, it is a question of initially creating a list of ludic indicators that serve as a tool for educators to plan, evaluate and reflect on teaching and ludic learning, and in the specific case of this study, this will be done through motor games in the Early Childhood Education stage.

The indicators are placed in different categories: authority, curiosity and enjoyment, taking as a reference the work of the pedagogy of play of the Project Zero research group at Harvard University. These

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