

Chapter 8

When Playing Is Not About the Physical Sporting Experience: Emotional Well-Being When Participating in Traditional Sporting Games

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this chapter was to examine the positive and negative emotional intensity in schoolchildren with and without sport experience, when participating in motor games. One hundred fifty-two students of Elementary Education (age range = 8–12 years, Mage = 9.72, SD = 1.18) belonging to two Spanish schools participated. After finishing each of the games, the students completed the Games and Emotions Scale for Children to assess the emotional intensity experienced. The intensity of positive emotions was higher ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.89$) than negative emotions ($M = 1.18$, $SD = 0.25$, $p < 0.001$). Sporting experience is not a determinant of the type of emotion experienced. However, it was found to relativise the average emotional intensity, both positive and negative. The results could benefit physical education teachers and practitioners by providing them with practical evidence-based information to organise teaching content, generating the desired motor behaviours through positive experiences.

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INTRODUCTION

What do we mean by holistic education and by physical education? Subjective well-being should be one of the key issues in the integral development of pupils' personalities. However, in order to achieve this integral formation, it is essential to integrate emotional development together with cognitive, social and physical development in a unitary and personal way in each child (Lagardera & Lavega, 2003; Lavega, 2002a, 2018). In fact, when we see schoolchildren playing, immersed in motor experiences, they make decisions, establish social relationships with the rest of the players and experience an effervescence of emotions. In other words, they develop as full human beings in all areas (Lavega, 2002b, 2010). Therefore, teaching should be seen as a pedagogy of motor behaviour, i.e. a global and dynamic learning process that educates people on an organic, cognitive, social and emotional level, seeking to develop and perfect the human potential of each person in their totality (Parlebas, 2012, 2018).

Addressing the education of emotional competences from childhood would act as a solid predictive variable of life satisfaction in later stages (Chen et al., 2019; López-Cassá et al., 2018; Pérez-Escoda & Alegre, 2016). In fact, people in whom positive affectivity predominates tend to generate environments of personal and social well-being with others, strengthening interpersonal relationships in all areas (Fernández-Berrocal & Extremera, 2009; Gallagher & Vella-Brodrick, 2008; Kong & Zhao, 2013; Palomera & Brackett, 2006; Schutte & Malouff, 2011). Thus, emotional competences are shown to be basic competences for life because of their personal, social and professional value, and because they promote emotional well-being. Because their acquisition and mastery enable better adaptation to the social context in an active, effective and responsible manner, as well as better personal coping with the challenges that life poses. The question is to educate for life, to forge happy people from the earliest educational stages who are capable of feeling satisfaction in the different areas of their daily lives, both personally, socially and professionally.

However, given that emotion leads to action, and that the teacher must promote the personal and social well-being of students, it is a priority that our students learn in an affective and motivational climate with positive experiences that lead them to perform and strengthen appropriate motor behaviours. According to Piaget (1969), action is the motor of knowledge, and the child knows by acting, so that our most elaborate internal constructions are internalised actions. Therefore, it is evident that there is no learning that does not start from personal experiences. Moreover, as Smith (2019) states, emotion and learning go hand in hand, as people are more emotional than logical. Thus, the learning process involves the intervention of cognitive, emotional and social processes. During learning, the emotions we feel can influence the assimilation of the information received, as well as the subsequent ability to retrieve the stored information, by enhancing or hindering the assimilation of the information received (Dolcos et al., 2011; Pekrun et al., 2006; Tyng et al., 2017). Added to this is the influence of social relationships, which can either promote or suppress the ability to participate in any learning situation. This is even more relevant in the early stages of learning where children begin to develop social skills, compare themselves with their peers and attach great importance to being part of a group (Blakemore, 2010; Renom, 2012). Emotion is shown to be a highly significant means of promoting learning, and it is the motor situations that take place in the classroom that influence emotional experience (Hanin, 2007). Emotions, and especially affectivity at the level of human development, are indispensable for learning. Several studies consulted (Elizondo et al., 2018; Pekrun, 1992; Rodríguez, 2016; Villarroel & Leiva, 2005; Woolfolk, 2010) point to the need to educate children in emotionally positive contexts and affective relationships of acceptance, socialisation, cooperation, empathy, etc., from an early age,

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