

MOVIMPARO (I MOVE AND I LEARN). BODY, MOVEMENT AND OUTDOOR EDUCATION

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MovImparo is an acronym that lends itself to different interpretations, depending on the point of view.

If we identify with the child, we confirm the awareness that movement is the basis of all learning in the first years of life: *I move and I learn*. Sensory-motor or bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence characterises the first life skill as early as in childhood: *know how to reason in situations*, namely to have the skill to solve small-large daily problems which the child usually tackles.

If we identify with the adult (parent, educator, teacher), the acronym underlines the need to respect the needs of children and therefore to observe them to understand how to accompany them and support them along their educational path. It is as if the child were saying to us, somewhat in Neapolitan style *Mo' V'imparo* (Now I'll show you), look at me, follow me, I will show you what I need, what interests me, what stirs my emotion and the desire to act in the environment. It is an appeal to help children as they develop, without replacing them, but leaving them to be the true protagonists of their own development.

If we identify with educators/teachers, the acronym leads to emerging phenomenological theories on Embodied Education¹, namely education that fully considers the oneness of mind and body, in the situation, as fundamental element of embodied cognition. Consequently, *I Move and I Learn* means being able to predispose sensory-motor experiences, rooted in concrete activities, in which executive functions, emotions and perceptions can involve the entire child.

So, let us listen to the children and their heartfelt appeal to the adults they love, asking them for help and affection rather than take their place.

Help me, a child, to grow

Dear parents, educators and adults...

... helping me to grow and mature requires your ability to relate with me as a person who is ready for an inter-subjective relationship, who needs to interact with you like the air I breathe and the food I eat.

The fact that I am young and that I depend on you adults, mustn't make you think that I am incapable of tackling day-to-day life; instead, you should recognise my incredible potential which only asks for the space and time to be expressed.

¹ Francesconi D. e Tarozzi M. (2012) Embodied Education: A Convergence of Phenomenological Pedagogy and Embodiment, *Studia Phaenomenologica* XII, 263-288

My immense love of life, my exuberance, my untiring search for self, must be reflected in the family and the school environment, it must reflect itself in looks that show trust in me, who believe in the immense possibilities that are pushing up inside me like magma in a volcano.

Development is a journey that I want to make with you, perhaps staying one step to the right or to the left, where I am driven by the pleasure of action, without interest, without seeking advantage, just so I can feel the emotion of being a part of the world.

After all, when I was born, I heard you say that I had *come to the world* not into the world, so help me to be the protagonist of my life.

My priority language is sensory-motor action; it is the expression of my intelligence, the greatest asset in the intentional impulse towards the appropriation of the unknown that surrounds me. I know nothing, I have to learn everything.

Curiosity, wonder, amazement, thirst for knowledge, fed by a disproportionate energy, drive me towards the exploration and the discovery of everything that fascinates me and interests me within the environment in which I am allowed to act.

Instead, what astonishment to find your anxieties, your fear of my initiatives, the continuous replacement or limitation that interrupts action and solves all the problems, taking away the enjoyment and enthusiasm of the experience.

What confusion when you tell me to stay still, not to touch, do get down from there, not to climb, or not to slide head down. It dampens my enthusiasm and the pleasure, which I thought I could achieve in what I had chosen to do with joy, is erased by what I have to do to make you happy.

Life is beautiful if pleasant experiences exceed the unpleasant ones, but if the effort exceeds the enjoyment then do not tell me I am playing because, in fact, I am already working. Then, do not get angry if, as soon as I can, I try all the situations you ban, sources of beautiful emotions that you adults no longer understand.

There are many things to learn around me and I do not understand why instead of leaving me free to learn, perhaps alone, you create countless limits and bans which I find difficult to understand, except in your anxiety.

What are you anxious about? That I will hurt myself? Did you never fall when you were children, did you never scrape a knee while playing happily and having fun? You are still here, alive and kicking.

When I play at the limits of my possibilities, I only do it to put myself to the test, to understand how far I can push myself, to try the pleasure of controlling my body in specific situations: I climb, jump down, run fast, etc. These experiences, among others, build my *self-esteem*, make me able to do and act, as long as I don't see your serious and annoyed or, worse, anxious faces.

You also have to think that it is precisely these activities that give me my *sense of responsibility*, develop my caution, the attention to play with risk, because it's fun, and keep me away from danger.

Or, does the anxiety come from the fact that I waste lots of time doing things that you think are not important, instead of learning what you think is crucial and

necessary? Many years ago, Maria², but Peter³ says the same thing today, argue that we children are able to *learn by ourselves* if left free to act. So, where is the problem?

Does my learning have to satisfy your performance expectations, the results that you have set yourselves without my knowledge? Now I understand why you forced me to keep an upright position inside that walker, where I perceived the great expectation for the moment in which I would stand to take my first step. What a pity, I would have liked so much to crawl around the house, instead of living inside that contraption that took away my freedom and possibility to act.

I often perceive your anxiety towards error and failure. To tell the truth, I do not know what they are because for me everything is experience and important for my development. When I am free to play or explore, I can allow myself the luxury to fail and make a mistake because by doing so I learn to act better and with greater precision in subsequent experiences. Don't grandparents say: "practice makes perfect!" So, what is the problem?

Is this anxiety going to spread to all the learning that awaits me during my development? If so, I think I will be exhausted within the first ten years of my life.

If, instead, we all agreed with each other, parents, educators and myself, wouldn't it be an intelligent and productive thing? Perhaps we could give ourselves some shared *rules, habits, and educational guidelines* to respect at school and at home. Experts call it *educational alliance* and it guarantees me equal treatment at home and at the crèche. I accept it because I have no fear of the rules as long as they are useful to everyone: to you, to calm the excessive anxiety towards what can happen to me; to me, to allow me to experience engaging and emotional educational situations.

Of course, if you adults do not talk to each other it works one way at the crèche, another way at home, and I don't understand anything. I get confused and disorientated. If, instead, we cooperate and each one plays its own part in harmony with the others, I think it is called *positive interdependence*, quality will be given to all the educational activity that concerns me and everyone will benefit from it.

If you truly want to care for me, you will have to find some way to create that atmosphere which allows me to express myself authentically and naturally, far from your expectations and close to my *real needs*.

What are my real needs? This is a good question, which I can try to answer by giving you some advice on what you can do about it:

- Observe me to get to know and understand me.
- Accompany me in my activities without replacing me but appreciating my commitment and my action.
- Guarantee me opportunities to freely explore and play. I can learn many things and develop my personality in these activities.
- Respect my timing, which is longer than yours and only apparently dispersive.

² Montessori M. (2014), *La scoperta del bambino*, Milano: Garzanti Editore.

³ Gray P. (2015) *Lasciateli giocare*, Torino: Einaudi

- Help me to play independently with the rules that I know are important and necessary.
- Respect what I am learning, don't force me to learn things I am still not ready for or still not interested in; be patient, I will learn everything.
- Know that I need to move, to manipulate, to experience my body and the environment because my *intelligence* at this age is of the sensory-motor kind or, as Howard⁴ put it, the *bodily-kinaesthetic* kind. Once I have developed this well, all other forms of intelligence will be a piece of cake.

Over time, your patience in respecting my needs will be rewarded with complete and integrated development in all areas of my personality (cognitive, motor, emotional-affective, socio-relational), with characteristics of independence, autonomy and responsibility.

What I ask of you is to stay by my side, to appreciate what I am trying to do, to support me in my activities, to liven up my day, to console me a little when I feel anxious, perhaps because I'm missing my mother.

Don't worry too much about the rest; I am keen to do, to learn, to participate, to grow up with you by my side, sharing your affection, your understanding, at times even your strictness which has never done anyone any harm. The important thing is to make me understand that you love me and are acting for me, that you want to see me grow up and mature for what I am and not for what others would like me to be.

In recent years, Andrea⁵ has tried to gather theoretical guidelines and concrete experiences that can assist a personal reflection on education for zero to six years olds.

Whether you are adults, parents or educators/teachers, share the educational orientations to refer to, develop attitudes and good care practices for the development of us children, the future men and women of tomorrow.

We love you and have complete confidence in the adult world. Do you?

⁴ Gardner H. (1987), *Formae mentis*. Milano: Feltrinelli.

⁵ Ceciliani A. (2015), *Corpo e movimento nella scuola dell'infanzia*. Parma: Edizioni Junior Spaggiari.
Ceciliani A. (2016), *Gioco e movimento al nido*. Roma: Carocci Editore