

Helping Active Lives through Targeting Healthy Youth



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ENCOURAGING CHILDREN'S MOTOR ACTIVITIES THROUGH SCHOOLS

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THE CONTRIBUTION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN EDUCATION

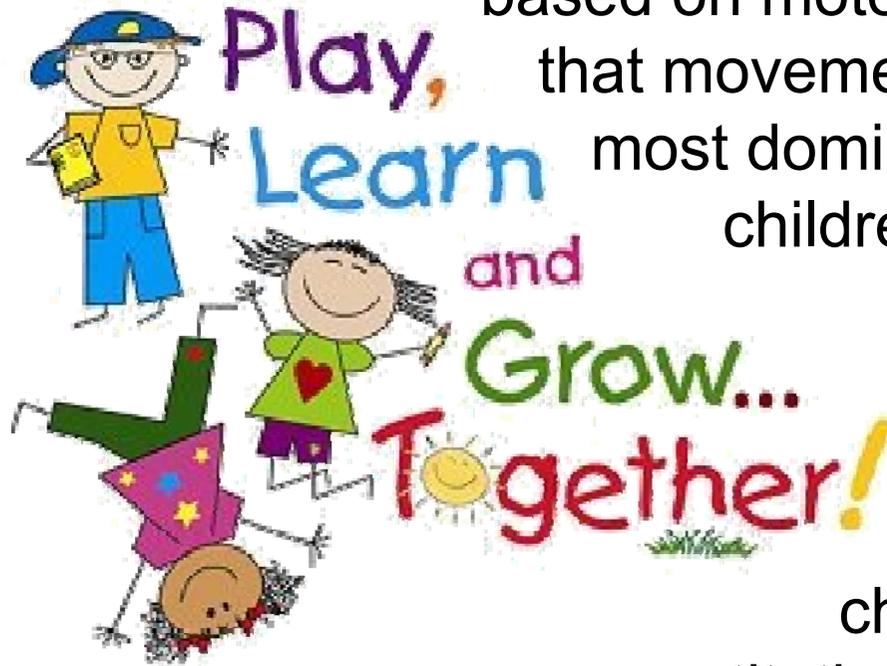
Early aged children display a very strong tendency to movement. A big part of their learning is realized through the use of their body, which renders movement one of the most basic learning factors. Movement and the use of body have a multiple meaning for a child (Gallahue, & Donnelly, 2003).



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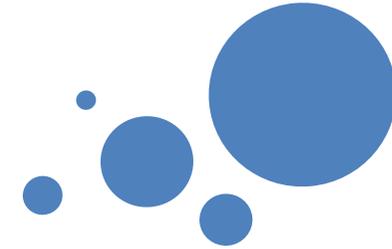


A research relative to the study of brain gives emphasis to the fact that early learning is based on motor development, which means that movement is the most preferable and most dominant way of learning because children comprehend concepts in a better way if they are physically active (Promislow, 2005).



For example, it is easier for children to comprehend certain quantitative concepts such as small-big, high-low, wide-narrow when they use their body.

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In other words, it seems that using kinetic games and motor activities is a particularly important means of learning effectively at preschool and school age children.

Respectively, a daily program which includes an abundance of motor activities can bridge the distance between playing and more official ways of learning which can be met in school athletic activities.

Most motor development experts (e.g. Byrne, & Hills, 2007), agree that playing is an essential part of a highly qualitative learning program.

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Playing is not a mere break from learning, but the way young children learn.

Self-guided / informal game,
offers young children

a chance to participate on a wide range of motor activities

which possibly provide young children with various possibilities to develop a positive attitude towards

sports

kinetic
games

physical
activities

active way of living
on the future

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Organized activities and the free nature of kinetic games create an environment which facilitates the sense of enjoyment and satisfaction, something that may be absent from the children's daily routine in and out of school

This kind of activities and their consequent emotional feedback (the euphoria and joy deriving from physical activities and movement) are described by researchers and teachers as the safest way to enforce children's motivation in order that they participate in motor activities (Liukkonen, 2010).

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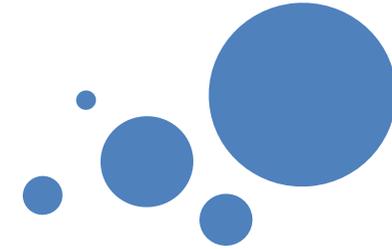
Motor activity programs should be an inextricable part of the natural development of all children

(Byrne, & Hills, 2007; Sutterby, 2009).

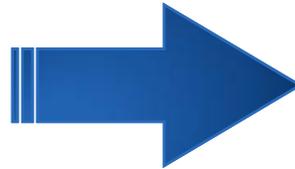
When researchers investigate children's general development, they cannot underestimate the contribution of physical activity programs to their overall progress.



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A daily program
enriched with various
kinds of motor
activities



lead children to a
healthier way of living

According to R. Wickstrom (1970),
“where there are children,
there is an almost incessant movement”

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CHILDREN'S SENSITIZATION TOWARDS A NATURALLY ACTIVE WAY OF LIVING

Good Habits for Kids



The first years of life are considered a landmark for the health and welfare of the rest of life. The adoption of a healthy way of living even at an early age is an important target, especially when it is related to existing genetic and environmental dimensions.

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children's lack of knowledge and familiarization with healthy diet and physical activity



genetic tendency to gain weight



unhealthy weight development



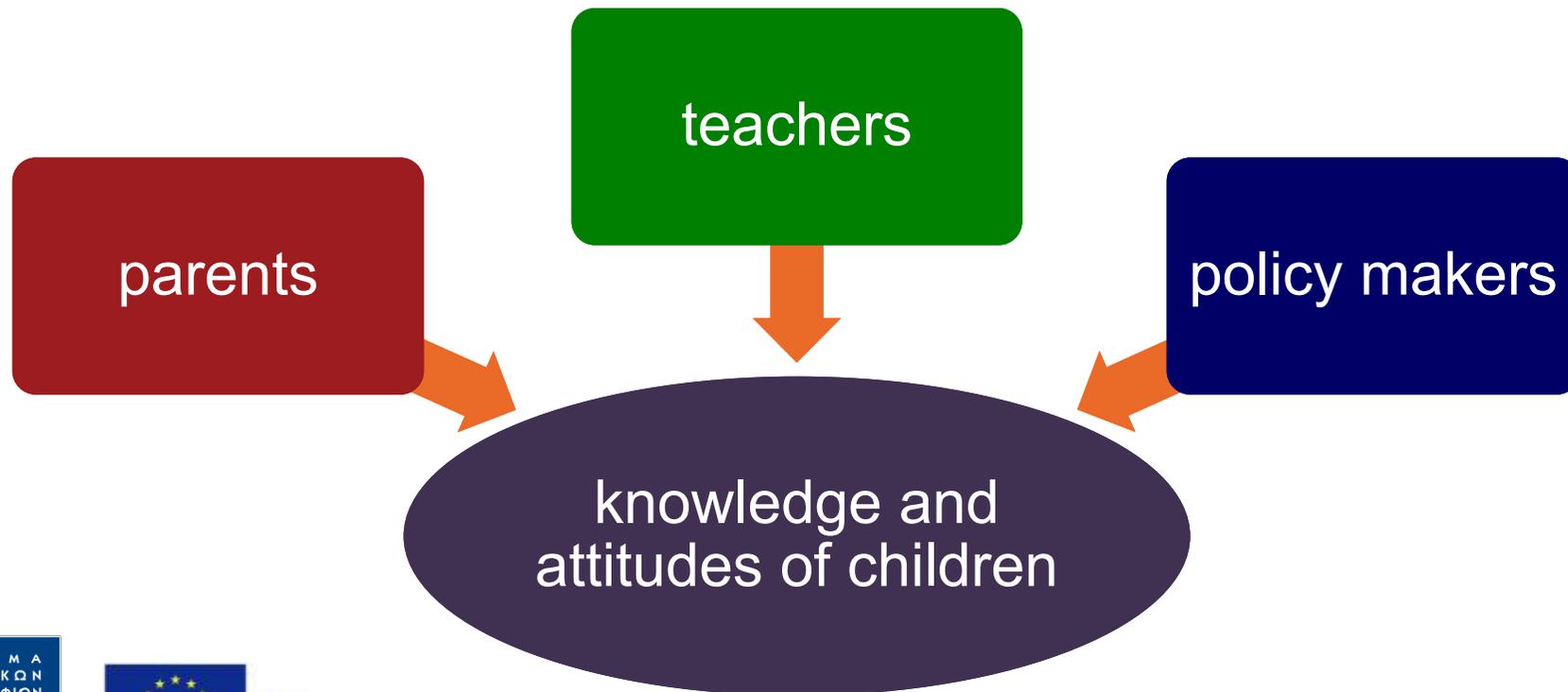
consequent negative health implications in the future

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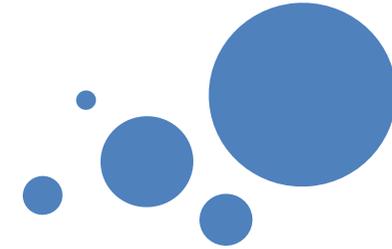


While children are encouraged to increase their levels of physical activity, they should also develop strategies to reduce the behaviours of a non active way of living

(Parizkova, & Hills, 2005).



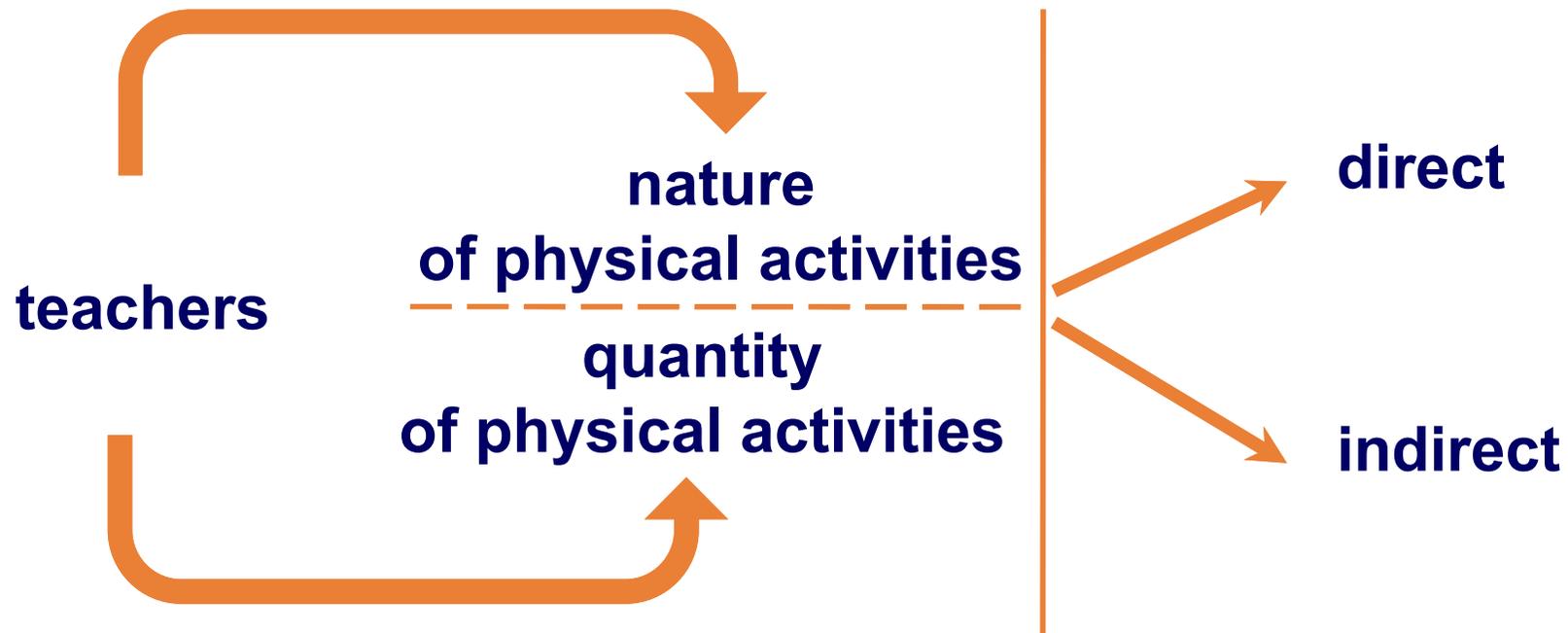
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As concerns planning educational interventions, it is important to focus on the children's crucial behaviours and attitudes leading to excessive weight rather than the environment of the class or the content of the activities.

The environment factors which lead to a healthier or unhealthier way of living must be examined in the light of their ability to contribute to the frequency of the behaviours that increase or reduce the possibility of becoming obese (Hill & Peters, 1998; Hill, Wyatt, Reed & Peters, 2003; Young & Hills, 2007).

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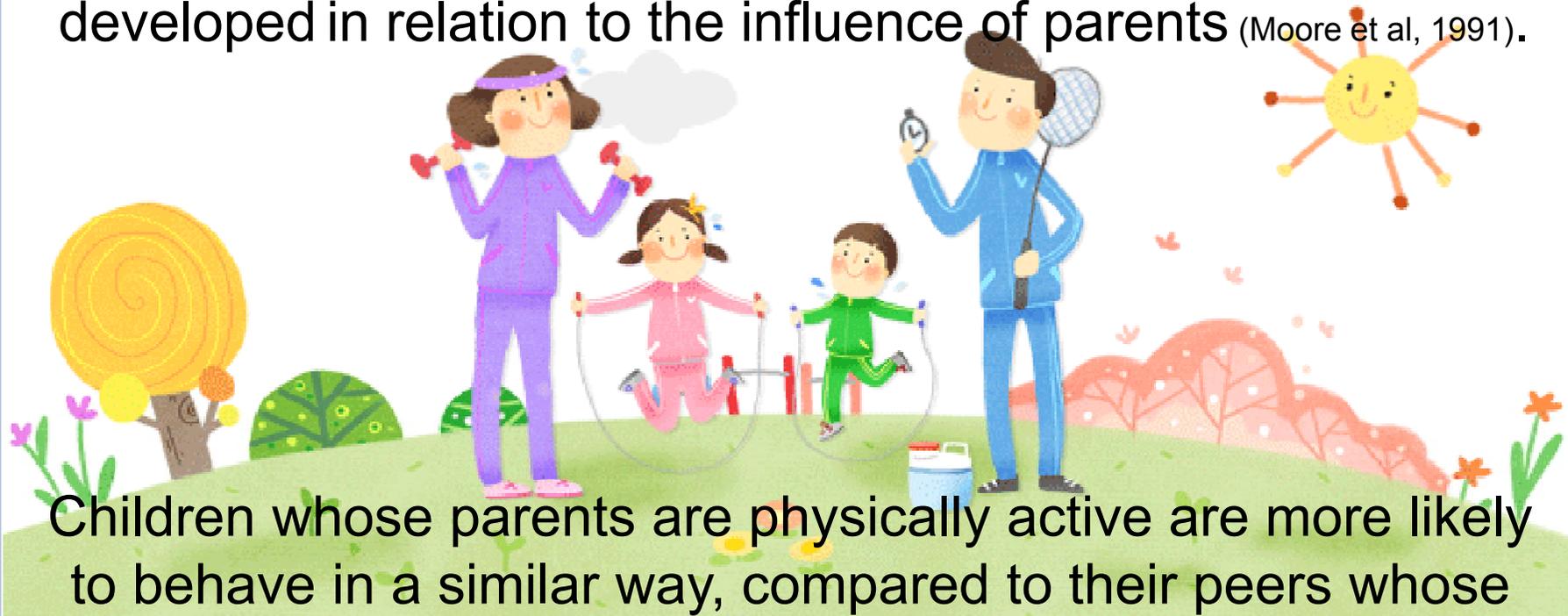


When teachers provide children with a school environment (internal or external) which promotes well explained physical activities, they can be directly influential.

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In addition, teachers can influence the children with their personal attitude, i.e. setting an example by participating in an abundance of physical activities. Similar arguments have been developed in relation to the influence of parents (Moore et al, 1991).

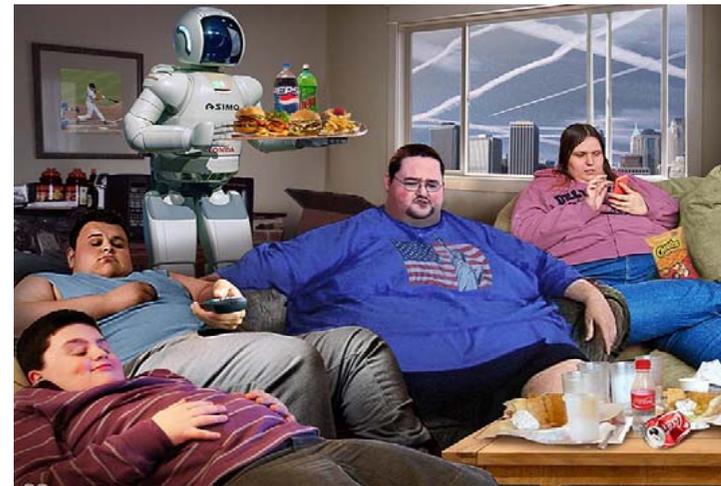


Children whose parents are physically active are more likely to behave in a similar way, compared to their peers whose parents are physically inactive.

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Adults who create environments which promote physical activity and function as models of physical activity themselves, influence young children to adopting a significantly higher frequency of physical activity behaviours, in relation to children who live in environments less motivational (Young & Hills, 2007).

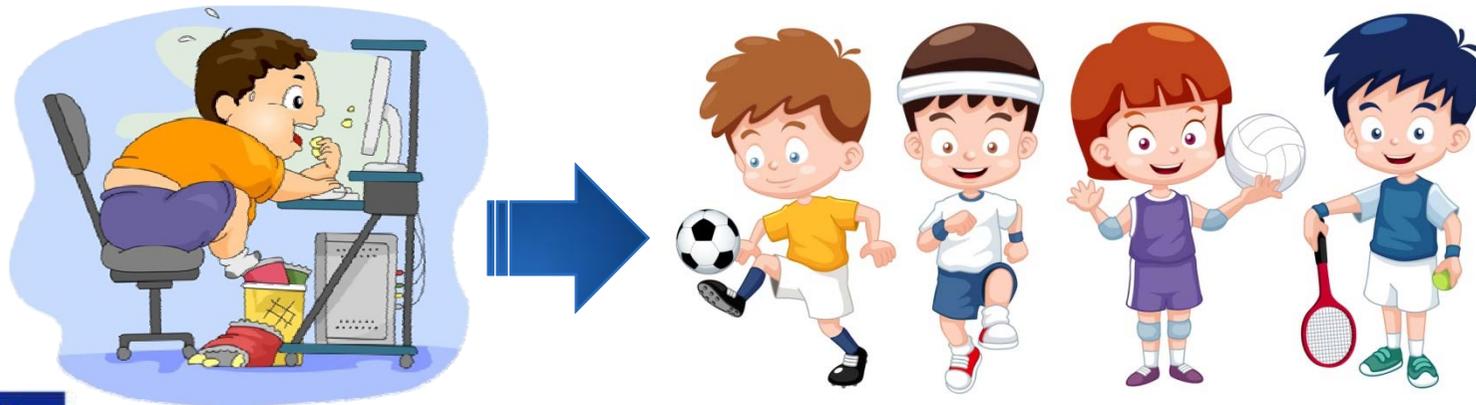


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Considering that obesity does not show signs of recession, it is obvious that the ‘battle’ against the environments which lead to the gradual increase of children’s body weight must begin at a younger age (Hill, Wyatt, Reed & Peters, 2003).

Preventing sedentary life at an early age offers important advantages against child obesity and encourages children to adopt a healthier way of living (Zachopoulou & Kouli, 2017).



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CHILDREN'S ACQUISITION OF POSITIVE EXPERIENCES FROM THEIR PARTICIPATING IN MOTOR ACTIVITIES

activities / games / general environment of class



**fun and
interest**



**cover
children's needs**



**motivate their
participation**



positive experiences

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Motivation refers to human action and its defining factors. Through motivation one can explain and analyze the reasons why people choose to do something, the intensity with which they do it and whether they will continue doing it or not (Alderman, 1974).



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Motivation is
responsible for:

1

choosing and preferring an activity

2

continuing doing this activity

3

the intensity and vitality of its performance

4

the adequacy of its performance,
according to the existing levels

(Singer, 1980)

More specifically, the result of motivation reflects people's reaction to internal motives, since they choose activities which they believe are capable of producing satisfaction

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The ability and success in motor activities is a basic factor of motivation (Roberts, Kleiber & Duda, 1981). Thus, children who feel skillful in motor activities display high motivation, while children with limited skills are not easily motivated to participate.



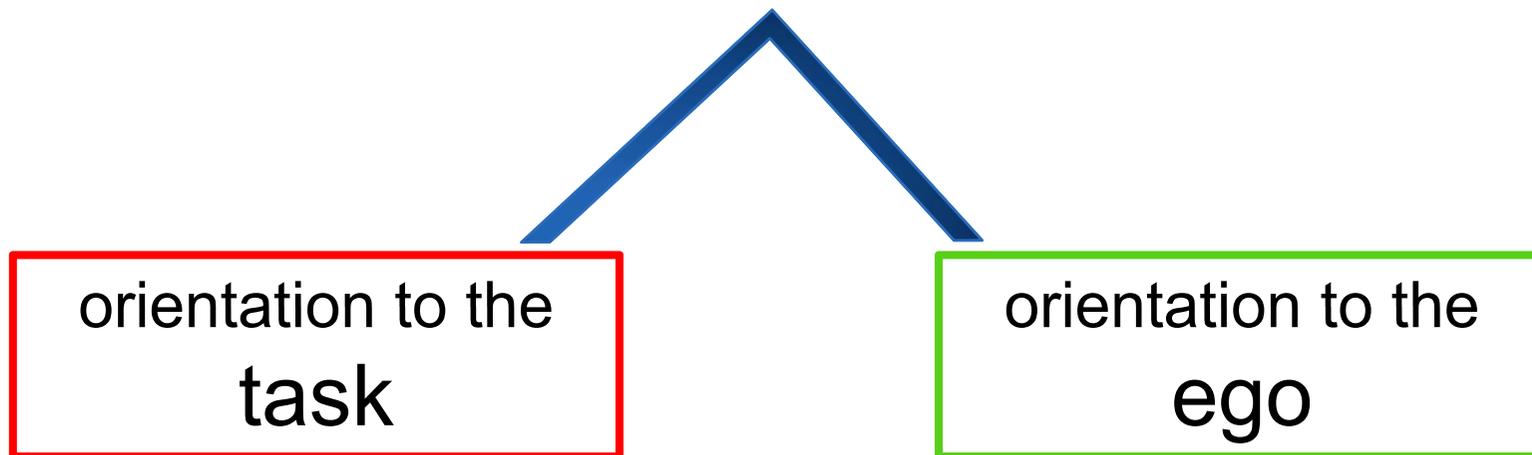
Nonetheless, children should take up motor activities which respond to their individuality i.e. present challenges which meet their personal abilities. At this point it is very important for children to be able to evaluate their skills by themselves

(Papaioannou & Kouli, 1999).

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Furthermore, there are theories in the field of motivation for achievement (Dweck & Leggett 1988; Nicholls 1992) and researches (Duda 1989; Duda, Fox, Biddle & Armstrong 1992) which mention that there are at least two aspects concerning the way someone perceives his/her participation in motor activities or in Physical Education.



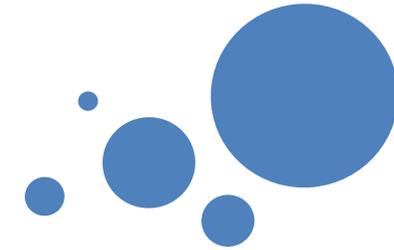
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The first aspect which is called “orientation to the task”, focuses on **learning**, **improving** and **responding** to the demands of the activity.

- ✓ Any perception concerning personal ability comes from the person him/herself.
- ✓ The success criteria are subjective and depend on whether the person believes that he/she has improved or learnt something.
- ✓ Thus, any subjective failure is rather improbable, since mistakes are considered as part of the learning process and a guide for future improvement.

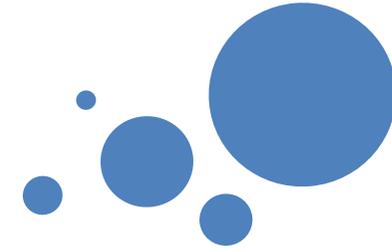
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The state of “orientation to the task” renders a child happy with his/her personal achievement, interested in improving and hard working.



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The second aspect which is called “orientation to the ego” mainly focuses on **“surpassing the others”**

(Duda 1989; Duda, Fox, Biddle & Armstrong 1992).

- ✓ At this state, a person creates his/her perception concerning personal ability according to models and his/her success is based on the comparison with other people's performances.
- ✓ Such persons develop negative feelings when they are found to be on a lower level than the others.

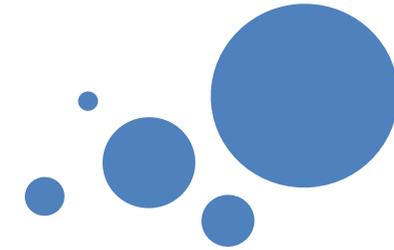
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As a result, they hardly try to succeed, in order to have a plausible excuse for failing and it is very possible that they will stop trying after a number of failures.



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As mentioned in a research by Nicholls (1989), the above two aspects are not inter-dependable.

This means that orientation to the task and orientation to the ego are not necessarily opposite concepts.

A person can be intensely orientated to the task and ego at the same time, a little orientated to both states or highly orientated to the first in relation to the other (Duda, 1988).

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Teachers have two important options as concerns motivation climate. They can choose:

t e a c h e r s

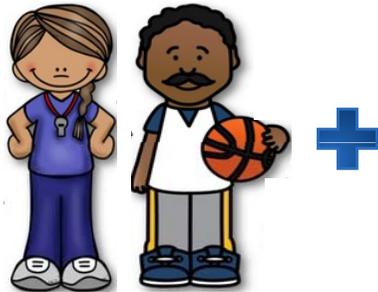


the “competitive” model where the criterion of success is the result of the performance

the “educational” model, where the criterion of success is learning/improvement

motivation climate

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emphasis to
competition and
evaluation using the
performance of the
others as criteria



orientation
to the ego

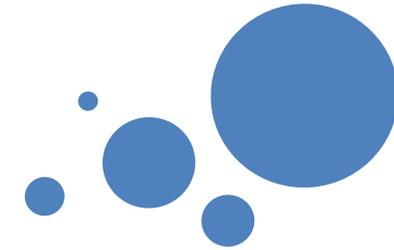


emphasis on learning,
improvement of skills,
hard effort and
participation for
pleasure



orientation
to the task

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Finally, it is widely accepted that organized programs of motor activity can influence children's motivation and commitment to physical activity, because movement has the ability to promote positive experiences for them

(Hagger, Chatzisarantis, Culverhouse, & Biddle, 2003; McKenzie, 2007; Pratt, Macera, & Blanton, 1999).



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PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TOWARDS A NATURALLY ACTIVE WAY OF LIVING

A way to familiarize and encourage children towards an healthy and naturally active kind of living is the daily participation in kinetically active programs with a suitable developmental organization, during which the teacher uses various strategies to induce children's active participation for the biggest part of the activity.

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According to Zachopoulou and Kouli (2017), to apply these strategies a teacher should:



Plan the activities so as to give children enough time to be kinetically active to run, bounce, climb etc.



Give emphasis to cooperation instead of competition, so that every child has the chance to complete the activity.



Give motives to children (e.g. verbal praise and small awards) for their naturally active way of living.



Organize indoor activities, because children need to be active even when the weather deters outdoor activities.

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Encourage children to participate in activities, without pressing them when they are reluctant.



Participate actively in the activities becoming a role model. Young children copy adults and follow their example.



Adjust the intensity levels of the activities to the physical condition of the children.



Change or modify the activities when some children show signs of fatigue and invent games and activities with the children, motivating their interest.



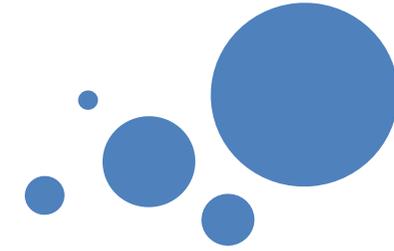
Create a program incorporating activities which activate different muscular units.

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Furthermore, according to various researchers (Jones-Hamilton, 2002; Siedentop & Tannehill, 2002; Good & Brophy, 1987; Siedentop, 1983), teachers should apply certain strategies, in order to create a motivational and therefore positive learning environment, in which children could enjoy the positive results of their participation.

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These strategies are:

1

To separate the children in to small groups
(no more than four children per group)

To take advantage of all the available material.

2

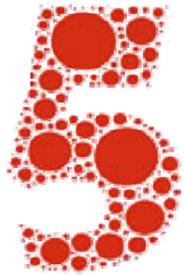
3

To organize the groups in a way that they do
not obstruct one another.

To reduce the instruction time (give plain, clear
and precise instructions).

4

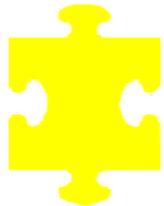
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To individualize training considering the personal differences among children and allow them to participate in the activities continually and successfully. In order to do so, a teacher must:



Modify the degree of difficulty of an activity (use variations of an exercise or change its style)



Create challenging exercises (slightly more difficult than the children's ability to perform)



Create different kinds of challenges (simultaneous performance of different movements, different complexity)

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Manage lesson time effectively, since the time which is devoted to effective practical training is a strong learning index. In order to do so, a teacher must:



Start lesson immediately
(minimize gathering time, absence control, etc)



Minimize the time needed for organizing the lesson,
using routines (applying fast and effective ways to
divide groups, distribute material, etc)



Maximize the time during which children are
occupied with the subject

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Thank you!