

Research on the function of the motor autobiography as a self-assessment methodology for future teachers of the Italian kindergarten and primary school

Nadia Carlomagno^{1*}, Gilda Cecoro², Antinea Ambretti², Raffaele Proserpi³,
Mustafa Uslu⁴, Paloma Filippo Gomez², Maurizio Sibilio²

¹ *University Suor Orsola Benincasa of Naples, Faculty of Science of Formation, Italy*

² *University of Salerno, Department of Human, Philosophical and Educational Sciences, Italy*

³ *University of Enna Kore, Faculty of Motor and Wellness Sciences, Italy*

⁴ *Selcuk University, Faculty of Education, Turkey*

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Abstract

With the Decree No 249 of 10 September 2010, on the “Definition of the requirements and procedures of the initial training of kindergarten and primary school teachers”, the Italian Ministry of University and Research has effectively revised aims and purposes of a degree course which aims at qualifying and enhancing the teaching function through the acquisition of educational, psycho-pedagogical, methodological - didactic, organizational and social skills necessary to make the students reach the learning outcomes provided by the current regulations. Among the areas indicated by the Italian Ministry of Education, there is a renewed interest in the motor-sports area with particular attention to the role played by the teaching of the movement. It is stressed the importance that future kindergarten and primary school teachers have a strong knowledge and skills in the motor-teaching field, to be able to structure suitable curricular and extracurricular paths and to educate through the body and movement since the early years of school. The results of the data analysis is coherent with the theoretical framework outlined above, which gives the teaching of the movement an important role in the university training of nursery and primary school future teachers opening further and necessary research perspectives.

Key Words: Motor autobiography; self assessment; teaching.

Introduction

In 1990 the Italian Ministry of University and Research, in order to trace a new profile of the figure of the teacher of the kindergarten and the primary school, issued the Law no. 341 of November 19 which introduced the need for "a specific degree, consisting of two courses, aiming at the cultural and professional training of teachers of the kindergarten and elementary school ..." (Law no. 341 of 19 November 1990 Reform of the university teaching regulations, art. 3). This measure derives from the need to revalue the figure of the teacher, in an attempt to redefine the responsibilities of teachers of all

*Corresponding author. Tel.: +39-081 252 22 52

E-mail address: nadia.carlomagno@unisob.na.it (N. Carlomagno)

grades and to organize educational routes which may meet the various training needs related to the specificity of each school.

In the academic year 1997/98, with the advent of the first degree courses in Primary Education in the Italian universities, it was emphasized the need for a rigorous theoretical and teaching preparation of the future teachers, giving the priority to the urgent need to provide them with knowledge and multiple skills. The academic class of the students attending the University of Primary Education, organized by the Italian Ministry of Education, raised the importance of a curriculum based on the study of subjects related to the scientific-educational sectors, the pedagogical area, the methodological- educational, the psychological area, the social - anthropological area and the hygienic-medical area.

In fact the initial training of kindergarten and primary school teachers organized and offered by the Italian universities aims at acquiring and developing attitudes and skills able of supporting the teaching of the foundations of the subjects in the fields of literature-language, mathematics-computer, physical sciences, natural and environmental, music and sound communication, movement science, modern languages, history-geography – culture and design.

Among the areas indicated by the Italian Ministry of Education, there is a renewed interest in the motor-sports area with particular attention to the role played by the teaching of the movement. It is stressed the importance that future kindergarten and primary school teachers have a strong knowledge and skills in the motor-teaching field, to be able to structure suitable curricular and extracurricular paths and to educate through the body and movement since the early years of school.

In the recent decades, the development of the curricula for kindergarten and primary school has provided with the phasing of the motor games and sports activities in the Italian school, constantly outlining new training paths for teachers. The Ministerial Programs of 1985 of the Italian Ministry of Education had already expressed an interest in the educational role of the motor activities, inserting the physical education into the curriculum of primary school students. In fact, it had the task to help “the development of the morphological, biological and functional skills of the body and the development of the motion in a global and analytical way” (Primary School Programs, D.P.R. 12 February 1985, no. 104)

In the Italian school culture of the ‘80s it came out the need that each teacher had a wealth of knowledge and experience in the motor-sport field to create curricular paths that were different from the previous ones, thanks to the presence of sports activities since the first year of the Italian primary school. As a result of this great expectations placed by the Italian primary school programs of 1985, since the mid-nineties, in Italy, the educational role of motor sports activities has been also asserted in the ministerial documents entitled Guidelines of 1991, addressed to the kindergarten.

The presence in the Document of 1991 of a section titled “The body and Movement”, entirely dedicated to the play motor sport field, explains the importance given to the educational value of the body and movement by the Italian Ministry of Education. “The field of experience of the body and the motion contributes to the overall growth and maturity of the child by promoting the awareness of the value of his/her body as an expression of the personality and a functional, relational, cognitive, communicative and practical condition to develop at all levels of training” (Ministerial Decree 3 June 1991. Guidelines of the education activities in the state kindergarten titled field of experience. The body and the movement) . At the same time the Ministry invites the teachers to plan all the curriculum activities through a "continuous and responsible flexibility and an effective teaching creativity" (Ministerial Decree 3 June 1991 Guidelines of the education activities in the state kindergarten III - CURRICOLAR INDICATIONS Art. 2.- Field of educational experience) related to "the individual variability of the rhythm, timing, and learning styles as well as the motivations and interests of the children” (Ministerial Decree 3 June 1991 Guidelines of the education activities in the state kindergarten III - CURRICOLAR INDICATIONS Art. 2.- Field of educational experience).

Then, the need to rely on more and more qualified teaching staff led the Italian Ministry of Education to revisit the structure of the teaching degree courses for future teachers of kindergarten and primary school through a four-year university course. Training and refresher courses were also introduced to retrain the teaching staff already working in kindergartens and primary schools.

The latest National Guidelines for the curriculum of the kindergarten and primary school in 2007 invited the kindergarten and primary school teachers to reflect on their educational responsibility that results in structuring educational-training courses based on the basic cultural literacy. The latter aims at the acquisition and the progressive mastery of a multiple and transverse learning regarding various forms

of expression and communication which "is realized with the cooperation of several subjects: Italian, Community languages, music, art-image, body-movement -sports "(National Guidelines for the curriculum of the kindergarten and primary school, 31 July 2007, section: SUBJECTS AND EDUCATIONAL AREAS).

The National Guidelines of 2007 have contributed in fact to urge the necessity to revisit the curriculum and teaching organization of the degree course in Science of the Primary Education aimed at future teachers of kindergarten and primary schools. With the Decree no. 249 of 10 September 2010, on the "Definition of the requirements and procedures of the initial training of kindergarten and primary school teachers", the Italian Ministry of University and Research has effectively revised aims and purposes of a degree course which aims at "qualifying and enhancing the teaching function through the acquisition of educational, psycho-pedagogical, methodological - didactic, organizational and social skills necessary to make the students reach the learning outcomes provided by the current regulations" (DECREE n. 249 of 10 September 2010 Art. 2 Objectives of the initial teachers.)

The Teaching In Primary Schools degree course, in force since the academic year 2011-12, compared to the previous four-year course set up in 1996, is characterized by a five-year training course aimed at training kindergarten and primary school teachers. They are expected to acquire "a strong knowledge of the different subjects and the ability to propose them in the most suitable way according to the school level, the age and the background of the pupils" (Article 6 Primary Education Degree Course Educational qualifying objectives).

Within this new academic framework, the subject and the teaching methods of the motor and sports activities get a leading position in the organization of the compulsory curriculum provided from the first year of the degree course in science of education, relying on theoretical courses and laboratory activities to achieve an adequate level of knowledge and skills in the motor-sport field.

The increasingly strong interest of the MIUR for the educational role played by the motor sports activities since kindergarten has required the future teachers of kindergarten and primary school a renewed awareness of the functions that the body and movement can play in teaching-learning processes; they indeed act as a key access that can foster the acquisition of knowledge and transfer "... learning and knowledge through the body in an original way" (Gardner, 2005).

The Ministerial Guidelines of 2007 have placed at the center of the Italian educational debate the importance that the play-motor-sports activities can play in organizing a curriculum to allow the child, since his very early education in the school, to use "... a living body, a body that speaks, able to communicate and express feelings and moods" (Merleau-Ponty, 2003).

The Italian Ministry of Education so entrusts teachers of kindergarten and primary school with the task of creating play-motor-sports activities that can help the natural instinct to "do and to act" (Dewey, 1969) of the kindergarten and primary school children, inside teaching courses able of leading them to more and more elaborate and conscious forms of knowledge.

Therefore the university training of Italian teachers should strengthen a portfolio of basic and specific skills tailored to this arduous task, involving knowledge, skills and personal resources.

In fact, the teaching-motor field requires the teacher specific knowledge, not traditionally linked to other fields of education. For instance, the awareness of the possible effects of movements or sanitation are essential to practice school motor activities and cannot be regarded only as a theoretical enrichment but must necessarily result in paths that the only direct experience can offer (Hughes, Lipoma and Sibilio, 2010).

The research carried out in this work deals with the topic of the teachers' motor credentialing. It also analyzes the basic functionality of the teaching and the educational value of the motor autobiography of students attending the first year of the Bachelor of Science in Primary Education of the University Suor Orsola Benincasa of Naples, who will be the future teachers of kindergarten and primary school.

Within the motor field, the autobiography allows you to connect the assessment of their skills with the history of the types of the curricular and extracurricular experiences, that led to the acquisition of it (Gomez Paloma, et al. 2008); in the motor field the autobiographical approach to the evaluation is an effective tool for reaching the targets set by the national guidelines and programs of the Italian Ministry of Education (MIUR), which require you to check the degree of the motor skills achieved in every type of school .

The research aims to verify the positive effect of the subsequent measures of the Italian Ministry of Education, aimed at restructuring the rules and adapting the guidelines according to the various levels of education (Kindergarten and Primary School, University of Education), in relation to motor and sport activities by Italians aged between 3 and 24 years, the educational and the functional role of teacher training for motor activities.

Furthermore, the study aims to verify the consistency of motor activities in the school with the programs suggested by the ministry guidelines.

Method

The research was conducted by Researchers of the University “Suor Orsola Benincasa” of Naples and University of Salerno. The sample consisted of 139 students (134 females and 5 males) attending the course of "Methods and teachings of sports and motor activities" in the academic year 2011-2012.

In order to assess their "motor autobiography" it was administered to each student a questionnaire with 7 closed questions, designed to verify knowledge about:

- personal history of curricular and extra-curricular skills at school (“lived” in the motor field);
- formative role of motor-sport activities in school skills;
- frequency of motor and sports activities on extracurricular time;
- role of Teacher, Class Council, Principal of Institute, Structure and Organization of motor and sports activities, curricular and extra-curricular;
- formative role of motor activity in kindergarten and primary school.

This questionnaire is similar to that already proposed to the students the first year of the Faculty of Primary Education, University of Salerno, in 2002. Thus it was possible both to collect the information necessary to detect the motor autobiography path (curricular and extra-curricular) of the students in 2012 and to compare it with that found in similar group in 2002.

The questions 1-3 investigate the ability of each student to make a preliminary survey on the educational role of motor-sports activities from their own experience as regards. Questions 4 and 5 require passing judgment on the frequency of the motor and sports activities in curricular and extracurricular time, and invite the student to reflect on the organization of roles and skills required from different organs of the school, as well as to the teacher. Question 6 asks the student to indicate the weekly frequency with which previously he played motor-sports activities in extra-time, in order to gather the number of days or hours per week. Some questions were given the opportunity to provide simple answers or compound.

The motor autobiography, a specific element of authentic assessment in motor education, is part of some procedural steps described extensively in the international literature that are applicable in the specific context to the training field of the movement activities. In Italian context, it represents a good opportunity to estimate in input the motor skills acquired by teachers of kindergarten and primary schools, especially those defined as "general" because they can be applied in different contexts and, consequently, can also be used in problems of a different type. The motor autobiography allows to assess the level of acquisition of skills in the use of body and movement to resolve problems in the cognitive and relational field.

Questionnaire for motor autobiography, curricular and extra-curricular

<i>1. I have lived my experiences of motor activities and sports</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>						
	At school	In the gym	In sports field	In natural environment	More						
	<i>Simple answers</i>				<i>Compound answers</i>						
	A	B	C	D	E	AB	AD	BC	ABD	ACD	ABCD
		A	B	C	D	E					

2. The physical activities and sports were also important	In kindergarten	At primary school	At first grade secondary school	At second grade secondary school	In no order of school
	<i>Simple answers</i>			<i>Compound answers</i>	
	A	B	C	D	E
			BC	CD	ABC
					BCD
3. The motor activities and sports have played a formative role in my school experience	A	B	C	D	E
	In kindergarten	At primary school	At first grade secondary school	At second grade secondary school	In no order of school
	<i>Simple answers</i>			<i>Compound answers</i>	
	A	B	C	D	E
				AB	AD
4. The role of motor and sports activities depended on	A	B	C	D	E
	The teacher	The Class Council	The Principal of the Institute	The structure	More
	<i>Simple answers</i>				<i>Compound answers</i>
	A	B	C	D	E
					AB
					AD
5. The learning activities as a student I worked in the motor and sports field in elementary school were	A	B	C	D	E
	Systematic and consistent with existing programs	Episodic, but conforming to current programs	Systematic but different from existing programs	Episodic and different from existing programs	I never did physical activity primary school
	<i>Risposte</i>				
	A	B	C	D	E
6. I did motor and sports activities outside the school with frequency	A	B	C	D	E
	Regular (bi-weekly, tri-weekly)	Irregular (less than 8 months a year with no rate constant)	Occasional	Irregular - Occasional	More
	<i>Simple answers</i>				<i>Compound answers</i>
	A	B	C	D	E
					BC

We have collected, by ISTAT website, the data relating over the years to motor activity of the Italians from 3 to 24 years; in particular have been detected the percentages physical and sports activity, national and of the region Campania.

Results

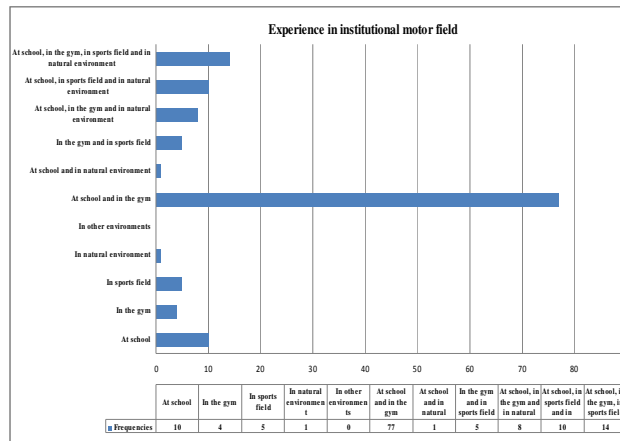
Results of the motor autobiography assessment in the 2011-12

The results of the survey conducted in the academic year 2011/2012 are as follows:

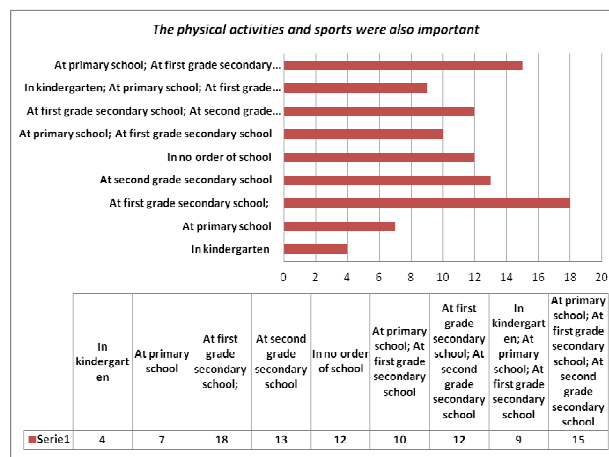
1. I have lived my experiences of motor activities and sports	A	B	C	D	E					
	At school	In the gym	In sports field	In natural environment	More					
	<i>Simple answers</i>					<i>Compound answers</i>				
A	B	C	D	E	AB	AD	BC	ABD	ACD	ABCD
7%	3%	4%	1%	0	57%	1%	4%	6%	7%	10%
2. The physical activities and sports were also important	A	B	C	D	E					
	In kindergarten	At primary school	At first grade secondary school	At second grade secondary school	In no order of school					
	<i>Simple answers</i>					<i>Compound answers</i>				
A	B	C	D	E	BC	CD	ABC	BCD		
4%	7%	18%	13%	12%	10%	12%	9%	15%		
3. The motor activities and sports have played a formative role in my school experience	A	B	C	D	E					
	In kindergarten	At primary school	At first grade secondary school	At second grade secondary school	In no order of school					
	<i>Simple answers</i>					<i>Compound answers</i>				
A	B	C	D	E	BC	AD	ABC			
1%	10%	22%	15%	18%	11%	16%	7%			
4. The role of motor and sports activities depended on	A	B	C	D	E					
	The teacher	The Class Council	The Principal of the Institute	The structure	More					
	<i>Simple answers</i>					<i>Compound answers</i>				
A	B	C	D	E	AB	AD				
46%	4%	3%	4%	0	1%	42%				
5. The learning activities as a student I worked in the motor and sports field in elementary school were	A	B	C	D	E					
	Systematic and consistent with existing programs	Episodic, but conforming to current programs	Systematic but different from existing programs	Episodic and different from existing programs	I never did physical activity primary school					
	<i>Risposte</i>									
A	B	C	D	E						

	13%	32%	11%	27%	17%
6. I did motor and sports activities outside the school with frequency	A	B	C	D	E
	Regular (bi-weekly, tri-weekly)	Irregular (less than 8 months a year with no rate constant)	Occasional	Irregular - Occasional	More
	<i>Simple answers</i>			<i>Compound answers</i>	
	A	B	C	D	E
	42%	15%	34%	5%	0
					BC
					4%

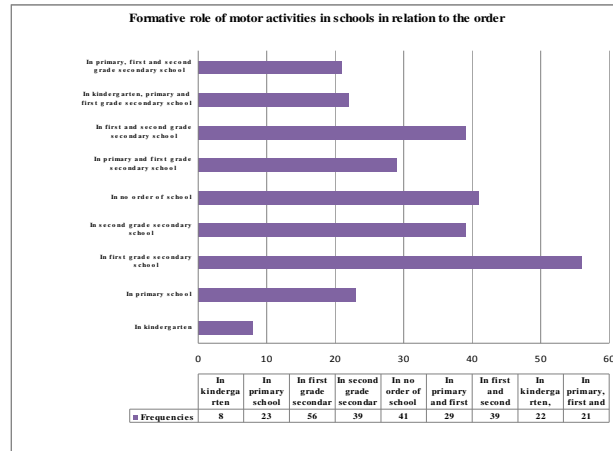
Summary graphics.



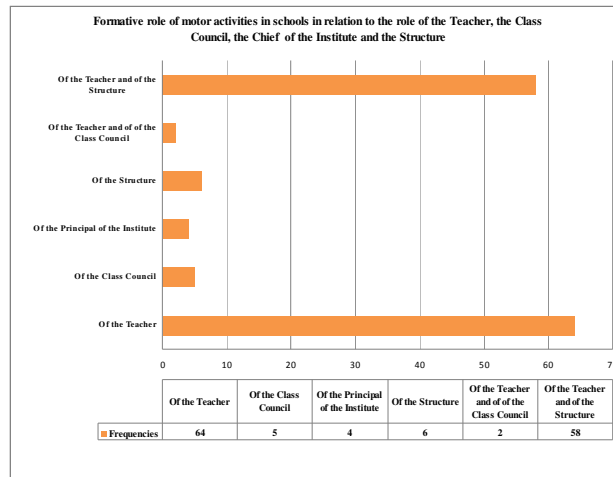
Graphic 1



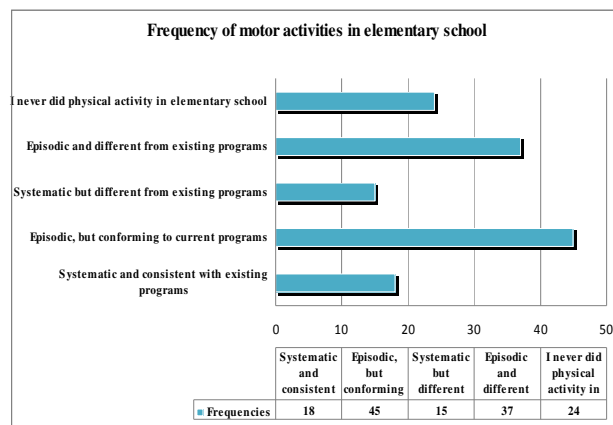
Graphic 2



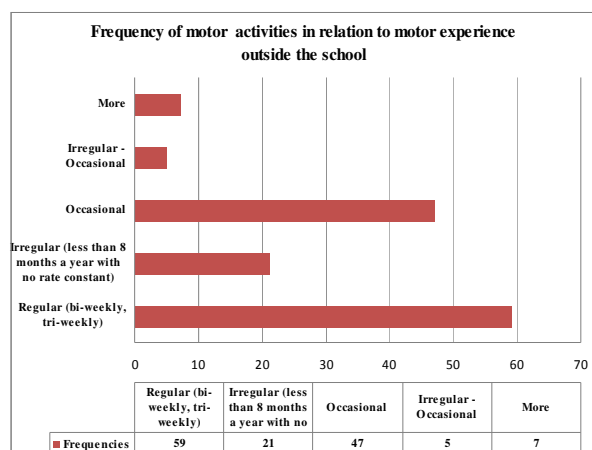
Graphic 3



Graphic 4



Graphic 5



Graphic 6

Comparison with the results of 2001-02.

To compare the data collected in 2011/2012 with those of 2001/2002 relating to each question, we calculated the total frequency on the individual item. We compared the values of the total 2011/2012 with those obtained in a similar survey in the academic year 2001/2002. The values of 2011 that representing an improvement over those for 2002 are highlighted with green background.

The summary tables are presented below:

1. I have lived my experiences of motor activities and sports	A	B	C	D	E	
	At school	In the gym	In sports field	In natural environment	More	
	86%	73%	25%	25%	0%	2001-02
	88%	80%	25%	25%	0%	2011-12
2. The physical activities and sports were also important	A	B	C	D	E	
	In kindergarten	At primary school	At first grade secondary school	At second grade secondary school	In no order of school	
	7%	23%	61%	27%	18%	2001-02
	13%	41%	64%	40%	12%	2011-12
3. The motor activities and sports have played a formative role in my	A	B	C	D	E	
	In kindergarten	At primary school	At first grade secondary school	At second grade secondary school	In no order of school	

<i>school experience</i>	9%	18%	43%	25%	27%	2001-02
	8%	28%	56%	31%	18%	2011-12
4. The role of motor and sports activities depended on	A	B	C	D	E	
	The teacher	The Class Council	The Principal of the Institute	The structure	More	
	82%	5%	0%	30%	5%	2001-02
	89%	5%	3%	46%	0%	2011-12
5. The learning activities as a student I worked in the motor and sports field in elementary school were	A	B	C	D	E	
	Systematic and consistent with existing programs	Episodic, but conforming to current programs	Systematic but different from existing programs	Episodic and different from existing programs	I never did physical activity primary school	
	2%	7%	18%	32%	41%	2001-02
	13%	32%	11%	27%	17%	2011-12
6. I did motor and sports activities outside the school with frequency	A	B	C	D		
	Regular (bi-weekly, tri-weekly)	Irregular (less than 8 months a year with no rate constant)	Occasional	Irregular - Occasional		
	23%	27%	43%	9%		2001-02
	42%	19%	38%	5%		2011-12

The most significant results relate to:

- skills in the motor field on the institutional and chronological level (question no.1):
 - it is noted in 2011, compared to 2002, a slight increase in motor activity at school (from 86% to 88%) and in the gym (from 73% to 80%); the percentage of the motor experiences in the sport field and in natural environment are unchanged.
- assessment on the educational role that physical activities in schools have played in relation to:
 - importance given to physical activities in the various school levels (question no. 2): the importance attached to the motor activity in all types of schools has increased from 2002 to 2011, and this especially in the primary school (from 23% to 41%) and in the secondary school of second grade (from 27% to 40%); even smaller increases in childhood school (from 7% to 13%) and in the secondary school of first grade (from 61% 64%) .
 - the role of the Teacher, the Class Council, the Principal of the Institute, the Structure (question no. 4): the influence of Teacher, Principal of the Institute and the Structure in the formative role in the development of motor and Sport activities was held in 2011 higher than that observed in 2002, respectively 89% against 82% for teachers, 3% vs 0% in 2002 to the Head of Institute, 46% in 2011 versus 30% in 2002 for the structure;
 - the formative role played by educational activities in primary school (question no. 5): at a significant reduction in the performance of motor activity in primary school (from 41% in 2002 to 17% in 2011) correspond a systematic increase, both in performing these activities, whether they are consistent with existing programs (from 2% in 2002 to 13% in 2011). In addition, we also

found an increase only in line with programs (from 7% to 32%), although corresponding to episodic performances and a decrease of inconsistency in the case of activities carried out in a systematic way (from 18% to 11%);

- motor extra-curricular experience (question no. 6): 42% (22.72% in 2002) has played regularly with time (bi-weekly, tri-weekly, more frequently for at least another year 8 months) physical activities outside school; 15% (25% in 2002) in an irregular manner (less than 8 months a year with constant frequency, or with constant frequency and constant interruptions), and 34% (40.90%) in an occasional manner.

Results from the ISTAT data (tables and graphs) related to motor activity of the Italians.

According to ISTAT data, in 2011, Italians over the age of 3 years who continuously or intermittently practiced sports were 18,800,000, corresponding to 32.1% of this age group, up from 2002 data, people who do not practice sports, engage in physical activity are 16,200,000, or 39.8% of the age group considered (in this case an increase compared to 2002).

In particular, in the Campania region has gone from 18.9% (compared to 29.6% nationally and 22.6% in the South) of people who practiced sports in 2002 to 19.4% in 2011 (compared to 32.1 % nationally and 22.7% in the South).

Given that, always in Campania, in 2011 it worked as physical (not sports) 23.5% of the population, brings the total to 42.4% (compared with 59.8% nationally and 46.3% South-Italy). In particular, in the age group surveyed students (18-24 years) in 2011 about 60% of males and about 40% of females has practiced sports.

Discussion and Conclusion

Comparing the data collected during the academic years 2001-02 and 2011-12, we remark:

- a slight increase in motor experiences at school (from 86% to 88%), in sports (from 25% to 21%) and in the gym (from 73% to 79%);
- increased importance given to physical activities and sports in all school levels, from 1% to 7% in kindergarten, from 23% to 41% in primary school, 61% to 64% in secondary schools grade I, from 27% to 40% in the secondary school level;
- increasing of the formative role of physical activities and sports in primary schools (from 18% to 28%), in the lower secondary grades (from 43% to 56%), in secondary school grades (from 25% to 31 %);
- an increase in the allocation of liability for failure to supply the formative role of the teacher activities and sports (82% to 89%), the headmaster (from 0% to 3%) and structures (30 % to 46%);
- increased consistency of teaching activities over existing programs;
- increased regularity in the performance of extracurricular activities and sports (from 23% to 42%) and a decrease of occasional activities (from 27% to 19%) and / or irregular (from 43% to 38%).

The subsequent measures of the Italian Ministry of Education, aimed at restructuring the rules and adapting the guidelines according to the various levels of education (Kindergarten and Primary School, University of Education), have produced a positive effect on motor and sport activities by people aged between 3 and 24 years since 1985, producing an increase in such activity, both in school and outside of it, as demonstrated by the ISTAT data.

These measures have also produced an improvement of the educational and training role of the school in general and of the teacher in particular, as regards the motor activities.

In fact, in the first year students at the University of Primary Education, the motor autobiography has allowed to verify the current knowledge and representation of:

- ◇ function of the motor activity inside and outside school;
- ◇ function of the teacher in attributing an educational and training role to the motor activities;

- ◇ consistency of the movement activities performed in the school in relation to the ministry programs and guidelines.

Basically, it is interesting the qualitative and quantitative growth of the motor activity in the school, referring to people interviewed, who, for the most part, in the year in which it was made the first survey, were attending the primary school. In conclusion, the educational use of the motor autobiography has allowed an awareness by the students of the overall growth of the educational dimension of the movement, suggesting to consider the role played by the new primary school teachers who, since 1985, have relied on specific teaching - methodological and psycho - pedagogical skills in the motor field to be used in teaching.

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SUBJECTS AND EDUCATIONAL AREAS

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