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## Knowledge of the body and psychological development of the child.

*Bodily Knowledge and the Psychological Development of the Child*

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### Summary

Educational psychology provides psychological knowledge regarding human development and the processes involved in learning, offering a foundation to guide decisions, planning, and actions in the pedagogical field. This article is an argumentative and bibliographical exposition that aims to present psychological assumptions that allow us to understand the body's role in the constitution of subjectivity. It addresses psychological conceptions relating body and mind in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, moving through John Locke and Descartes, and then proceeding to the propositions of Piaget, Wallon, Vygotsky, and concluding this theoretical journey with the psychoanalytic perspective of Freud and Lacan. Finally, considerations are made regarding the importance of this theme for guiding proposals for working with children in the educational context, going beyond a neuronormative conception.

**Keywords:** Psychology. Education. Body. Knowledge. Neuronormative

### Abstract

Educational psychology provides psychological knowledge regarding human development and the processes involved in learning, providing a basis to guide decisions, planning and actions in the pedagogical context. This article is an argumentative and bibliographical exposition that aims to present psychological assumptions that allow us to understand the relationship of the body in the constitution of subjectivity and addressed the psychological concepts that relate the body and mind in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, passing through John Locke and Descartes and then moving on to the propositions of Piaget, Wallon, Vygotsky and finishing this theoretical path with the psychoanalytic perspective of Freud and Lacan. In the end, considerations are made about the importance of the theme to guide proposals for action with children in the context of education beyond a neuronormative conception.

**Keywords:** Psychology. Education. Body. Knowledge. Neuronormative

### 1. Introduction

Educational psychology provides psychological knowledge relating to human development and the processes involved in learning, providing a foundation to guide decisions, planning and actions within the pedagogical scope.

The objective sought throughout this argumentative and bibliographical exposition is to present psychological assumptions that allow us to verify the relationship that is established between the The concept of the body and the psychological development of the child: The perspective considered in this article. The idea is that psychological development occurs through the mediation of language and knowledge. arising from the interaction between the child and another representative of the culture in which they are being immersed, Thus, the body takes on its role in the constitution of subjectivity, not without a intersubjectivity.

The theoretical journey will begin with the psychological concepts that relate body and



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focusing on the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, and progressing through the contributions of John Locke and Descartes, then moving on to the propositions of Piaget, Wallon, and Vygotsky, and concluding with the perspective Freud and Lacan's psychoanalytic approach. Therefore, a perspective different from a neurotypical norm is proposed. Finally, there will also be a presentation on considerations regarding the contribution of the theme to... Working with children in the context of education.

## 2. Results and discussion

### 2.1. Philosophical foundations: psychology, education, and the body.

Coll (2008), commenting on Plato's philosophy, states that there would be a division between the body and mind, with the body being the source of sensations and the mind the dwelling place of the soul that it had access to the world of ideas. Therefore, knowledge was attained through noesis, an act of to understand that, in order to do so, it would be necessary to deny bodily sensations in the process of achieving the knowledge. We can find another different conception according to Coll (2008), when commenting on Aristotle, for whom the body and mind, the latter being referred to as psyche, could not... being separate, since access to the world and to truth comes from sensations, undertaken by both.

Given the philosophical perspective presented, it becomes clear that the relationship between body and Knowledge is taken into account, however the learning procedures differ in the way they are used. They understand the bodily interference in psychic development. Coll (2008) refers to this, taking into account... As a reference to Aristotle, John Locke conceived the formation of the initial mental sphere as a A blank slate, that is, lacking content. Therefore, psychic development and consequently Knowledge would be acquired gradually through experience, starting from birth. The child would not have initial, fixed elements in their psychic formation. It would be through the sensations of The body through which knowledge about reality would be acquired.

Coll (2008) points out that, on the other hand, the philosopher Descartes, when proposing the study of anatomy human without infringing the concept that prohibited the use of corpses, as it was considered a violation. and profanation, he relied on Platonic philosophy. Descartes argued that body and soul (or mind) They are separable entities; therefore, studying the body would not constitute a violation, since, after the Death, it would only be the means by which the soul would have acted in the world.

The body, after death, would no longer have these functions and could soon be used as an object of studies using specific methodologies. This concept, presented in the publication called 'Discourse on the Method' conceives of the body as a machine, therefore the functioning of the organism. It would only have primacy over the soul insofar as there is life.

Based on this information, it is possible to consider initiatives aimed at understanding the relationship. between the body and the acquisition of knowledge during the constitution of subjectivity. Such initiatives



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They presuppose a closer and more systematic articulation, broadening the framework of understanding about the processes involved and paving the way for the transition from philosophical foundation to scientific conception.

## **2.2. Human development: a scientific conception.**

It is necessary to define what development is, in order to relate the influences of the body in the processes of knowledge acquisition and management by and for the child while constructs its subjectivity. According to Scharff (2009), development would be the modifications in The psychic and physical system of a human being throughout their life, that is, from biological conception (union of gametes: sperm and egg) until death. For Scharff (2009) they are important for the Development: maturation, which is based on phylogeny, that is, the genetic history of... species; and also the characteristic of learning, which is related to the individual's history in the species world, what is called ontogeny.

According to Scharff (2009), learning promotes more permanent changes in development, containing four complementary aspects that detail the dynamism intrinsic, the first being continuity and cumulateness, which are important to the topic of this This article argues that what occurs in an individual's early years is significant and continuous. It covers... throughout adult life and also overlaps, being able to alternate and accumulate, influencing the subject until his death.

The second complementary aspect is the holistic one, which aims at a connection of the conditions biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors, without prioritizing any one of them. There is also no clear area of expertise here to promote development. The third One aspect is plasticity, as developmental modifications are flexible and adapt over time. of time and the experiences of each individual. Finally, the historical and social aspect, in which the context in which it develops there may be historical events such as wars; social transformations, such as industrialization; or ecological factors, such as climate change, which influence the development.

Later in this article, as already announced, it will be considered that the development This occurs in the intrinsic relationship between the biological and the environment in which the child lives. This concept is It is called interactionist because it considers the existence of initial biological apparatuses, but that the environment that promotes experiences that are essential for intra-individual, or internal, modifications. to each individual, and inter-individual relationships also change as maturation occurs. of individual aspects.

## **2.3. Interactionist conceptions of development: body and knowledge acquisition.**

The following exposition will draw upon the studies of Piaget, Wallon, and Vygotsky, proposing a selection of elements.



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theoretical-conceptual approach to specifically address the relationship between knowledge of the child's body and their psychological development, given that the theories discussed here have very broad applications for the education and anything that would fall outside our scope at the moment.

The theoretical-conceptual framework will take into account that the body and its initial manifestations are... focused on interaction with other human beings. However, it should be noted that children do not carry in itself an intentionality to establish this interaction. Thus, the body is devoid of meaning or representations being merely a motor pathway of involuntary and uncoordinated reflexes, therefore, They serve to relieve physiological and muscular tension.

According to Piaget (1975), with references to his publication "The Birth of Intelligence in "Child," it is thought that the child at birth presents action patterns, which are manifestations of bodily reflexes such as sucking, kicking, and making sounds with the social cords are present, but without yet exhibiting... An intentionality towards the environment. According to the author, the child makes no distinction between her and the environment. The schemas would be cognitive representations that enable actions of interactions with the environment and the objects within it, this interaction with the environment and its objects that cause homeostatic imbalance in the body, promoting in it the need for rebalancing.

Piaget's (1975) concepts of schemas and equilibrium serve as points of reference. This work aims to relate the body and the development of the psyche in children, which begins to... to organize and coordinate action plans for a specific purpose, whether it be paying for an item or Wash his mouth, or throw an object at him and listen to the sound he makes.

According to Piaget (1976a), these schemes, being different from those of action, are thus called differential schemas. Insofar as the schemas allow interaction with objects without causing imbalance, these new objects are assimilated through experience of the environment, therefore They do not necessitate modifications to the scheme. However, if a new experience with the object To cause interference in the equilibrium, the schema is modified through accommodation. The processes of Accommodation and assimilation promote adaptation and maintenance of equilibrium, which is not altered. not only through experience, but also through biological maturation.

According to Piaget (1975), biological maturation allows for special modifications in schemes, but the medium must promote the experience of interactions that are necessary for the development of intelligence, defined by him as the ability to know the world and seek solutions to the problems found within it. The author also proposes finding stages of developments that are systematized, considering the qualitative and quantitative gains in cognitive, affective, moral and social scope.

There are four proposed stages that are sequential and cumulative, in which the lower-ranking members serve... of foundation for the superiors, therefore forming a structure, namely: sensorimotor, which



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found from zero to two years; pre-operative, around two to six or seven years; concrete operative, and six or seven up to eleven or twelve years old, and finally, the logical-abstract stage, from twelve years old onwards (Piaget, 1976a).

In addressing the proposed topic, emphasis will be placed on the first two Piagetian stages.

In the sensorimotor stage, schematic actions are considered in terms of their

Direction: initially focused on the body itself, called primary reactions, and

subsequently directed towards the objects, called secondary reactions. Thus, for the

Understanding child development, knowledge of the world and what surrounds the child.

It evolves from 'body' schemas to 'object' schemas (Piaget, 1975).

The integration of reactions is internalized through the observation of others who are present in middle. For the author, imitating body movements helps to advance in the repertoire of schemas, but at this stage they were not necessarily established on the cognitive level, but rather in the body of the child, which is being differentiated from other objects and other people.

Imitation, when it occurs, is not evidence of the existence of cognition.

Internalization of actions only occurs a posteriori, when imitation takes place outside the presence of the model.

imitated. From this, it can be understood that the child is able to project their body from the

intelligence proper. This imitation is called delayed and allows the child to integrate into

playing pretend (Piaget, 1976b)

Another factor that allows us to understand that there is cognition for the child, according to Piaget (1976b), is the Drawing. When drawing, objects are represented, as well as one's own body and the bodies of others. The language It is what enables symbolization and, therefore, cognitive representation.

Regarding the pre-operational stage, Piaget (1976a) comments that biological maturation allows an improvement in body movement and exploration of the means, in addition to testing the limits of the gains. Physical skills, such as recognizing the weight and height of objects. Through body coordination, which... It becomes more complex, and biological maturation also allows one to track the movement of objects. and thus establish conceptual generalizations about them.

Henry Wallon (1995) presents a developmental stage called impulsive-emotional, in which the child, after birth, needs the solidarity of an adult to survive, since their bodies lack the necessary knowledge. The children's actions according to this author. They are completely devoid of intention and are called impulsive. However, in their relationship with In adults, involuntary and uncoordinated movements take on propositions, becoming... intentional for maintaining the relationship between the child and the adult, through an approach emotional.

Based on this first stage, it is possible to move on to understanding the next stage.

Wallon's next approach. Wallon (1995) considers that each stage is marked by a predominance



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from the affective aspect — which influences the body itself and the environment — or from the cognitive aspect — responsible for the operations and representations of objects and actions. Both manifest themselves through the motor act. Thus, the psychogenesis of the complete person consists of alternations and predominances. These domains shift throughout development: sometimes focused on the self, sometimes on the world. In the stage Impulsive and emotional, affect predominates, and the motor act causes contagion in the social environment, mobilizing The adult turning to the child.

Wallon (1995), when considering the stages of development, comments that it is through the The cognitive domain in which the body interacts with and recognizes objects around it. This stage is called of sensorimotor and projective development. In this development, the ability to walk is related to the conception of space. distance and representation of objects. In the stage following this, called personalism, there is dominance of the child who is interested in resolving their actions without the participation of others and also in the testing of their physical abilities: running, strength, jumping, etc.

Vygotsky (2000), another important author for thinking about human development, considers that the psychological development of higher functions is only possible to the extent that There is an internalization of the symbolic instruments constructed by the culture. For Vygotsky (2000) in As man develops through symbolic mediation, he also influences...

Cultural modification. According to the author, culture initially receives the child who only has the its biological basis, as well as lacking the precision of its motor actions.

To broaden the discussion, consider what Elkonin (1987) called the 'stage of 'Direct emotional communication', a period in which the newborn child goes through a post-crisis. Christmas and its actions are mediated by culture through adult care. Through the Through symbolic mediation, the child's relationship with the world is no longer direct, but mediated. through signs; thus, language is established between the body and the world.

According to Elkonin (1987), object manipulation stems from the interaction caused by initial externalization of the material and procedural history present in the culture, that is, as if The objects and instruments were formed, and how they are used was explored. Therefore, subjectivity is constructed. in the internalization of history and culture involving the mediation of the world through language through of knowledge.

Following the presentation of the interactionist authors, the next topic will aim to address... Freud and Lacan's psychoanalytic perspective on the topic.

#### **2.4. The psychoanalytic perspective: beyond biology**

In the text 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', Freud (1905) points out that the object for the The satisfaction of human needs is variable. Therefore, the human body is not governed by a pre- Biological determination, like an instinct. There is a psychic force that operates and directs satisfactions. Humans, called drives. This concept of drives is best defined in Freud's writings of



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In 1915, "The drives and their vicissitudes," one of the destinies of the drive is to turn back on itself.

Me. Thus, that which is not found in the world can be sought within oneself in representations.

symbolic aspects of the object, which opens up the dimension that the Self is a "bodily Self," this statement

We find this in his publication 'The Ego and the Id' (Freud, 1923).

Narcissism is situated as an intermediate phase, located between autoeroticism and...

Object love. This phase is marked by an initial displacement of the child's ego, in which

previously enjoyed the illusion of perfection and completeness of his mother's childhood love, a result of the relationship

A symbiotic world where she was satisfied on her own. Now, this satisfaction is directed towards an ideal, which is...

It detaches itself from itself and will reverberate in an updated form later, being sought after and

transferred to external objects, thus constituting the objectal phase of libido.

This narcissistic investment is fundamental to understanding psychological development.

of the child who receives affection from caregivers. In the infamous work "Three Essays on the Theory of

In his book "Sexuality" (1905), Freud comments that the child's body is like a "polymorphous pervert".

indicating that there is no coordination between the drive zones, called erogenous zones. This interaction

The coordination of erogenous zones will only be possible when the formation of the Self occurs, which then becomes...

Freud (1914), object of instinctual investment, what is called primary narcissism.

Lacan (1949), who takes Wallon as a reference, coined the concept of the mirror stage.

in which the child, through interaction with the adult and equipped with language, facilitates the recognition of

Body image, symbolizing what influences biological maturation, which up to that point

it was presented as incomplete, that is, it is through the symbolic dimension promoted by the adult that the child is

avored by development and maturation that did not take place.

This experience, which occurs between six and eighteen months of age, takes place when...

that the baby sees himself in the mirror. In front of his reflection, he experiences not only a bodily perception,

but an identification that unifies the image of its still fragmented body. The baby recognizes:

"I am this." This "this" is a fiction, that is: a created image that, at the same time, alienates and

It constitutes him as an individual.

This, therefore, is one of the fundamental differences between human beings and other animals.

For psychoanalysis, a chimpanzee, for example, when looking at itself in a mirror, does not have this identification.

symbolic-imaginary. Looking at oneself, through a reflection, does not have a constitutive character as

In humans, it does not establish the self of the ape, even if it can recognize a correspondence.

between its movements and its image. The Ego, for psychoanalysis, is a psychic constitution that...

It is founded through a support that is not merely physical.

## Final Considerations

The theoretical framework presented allowed us to consider the connection between body and



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psychological development, which is of interest to different traditions of thought, spanning

From the philosophical conceptions of Plato and Aristotle, to modern psychology and psychoanalysis. During

In this trajectory, the body gains a status beyond that of a biological support and is also recognized.

as a symbolic and mediating instance between the subject and the world.

From Plato to Lacan, it is observed that the body is understood as a mediator of development.

It moves from the biological and symbolic plane. This trajectory shows that education, in recognizing

The body, as a place of language and subjectivation, becomes a privileged space for formation.

The child's whole being. Therefore, thinking about education from these perspectives implies recognizing the body.

as a central dimension of the learning process beyond a neurological paradigm

normative, since each subject responds according to the interaction mediated by the symbolic field and the

deprivation of this mediation, whether through organic or material barriers. The subject merely imposes the

the need to build a relational apparatus that can overcome these barriers as we have found

in the creation of pedagogical devices and methodologies, if we consider the educational context.

These assumptions aim to reflect on the importance of the educational environment in

promoting activities that take into account their physical condition, according to their capacity.

a momentary challenge for each child, encouraging them to engage with the world and thus building a

Personal knowledge, derived from subjective experience. From this, it becomes possible to...

orientation of psychic development that is geared towards a better way of supporting oneself.

existence and emotional autonomy. Promoting an environment that welcomes the body and subjectivity is,

therefore, to favor not only learning, but human development itself in its

totality.

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