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# The importance of psychomotricity in the development of children's motor coordination during school physical education classes

*A importância da psicomotricidade no desenvolvimento da coordenação motora infantil nas aulas de Educação Física escolar*

*La importancia de la psicomotricidad en el desarrollo de la coordinación motora infantil en las clases de educación física escolar*

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**Abstract:** Psychomotricity plays an important role in child development because it involves the relationship between bodily movement, cognition, affectivity, and social interaction. In this context, school Physical Education classes provide a relevant educational setting for stimulating motor coordination and expanding children's bodily experiences. This article aims to discuss the importance of psychomotricity, with an emphasis on motor coordination, in school Physical Education classes, considering its contributions to children's overall development. Methodologically, this study is characterized as a narrative literature review with a qualitative and descriptive approach, based on books, scientific articles, and official documents concerning motor development, psychomotricity, and school Physical Education. The discussion draws on Freire (1997), Tani et al. (1988), Manoel (1994), Darido and Rangel (2005), and the Brazilian National Common Curricular Base (Brazil, 2018). The literature discussed indicates that activities such as games, play, motor circuits, dance, and ball activities can provide experiences that support balance, spatial awareness, rhythm, laterality, and movement coordination. However, these outcomes depend on pedagogical planning, consistent opportunities for practice, and respect for individual differences. It is concluded that Physical Education, when intentionally, inclusively, and appropriately developed according to children's characteristics, contributes to expanding their motor repertoire and fostering autonomy and participation.
**Keywords:** Psychomotricity. Motor coordination. School Physical Education. Child development. Bodily practices.

**Resumo:** A psicomotricidade desempenha papel importante no desenvolvimento infantil, pois compreende a relação entre movimento corporal, cognição, afetividade e interação social. Nesse contexto, as aulas de Educação Física escolar constituem um espaço pedagógico relevante para estimular a coordenação motora e ampliar as experiências corporais das crianças. O objetivo deste artigo é discutir a importância da psicomotricidade, com ênfase na coordenação motora, nas aulas de Educação Física escolar, considerando suas contribuições para o desenvolvimento integral infantil. Metodologicamente, o estudo caracteriza-se como uma revisão bibliográfica narrativa, de abordagem qualitativa e caráter descritivo, fundamentada em livros, artigos científicos e documentos oficiais relacionados ao desenvolvimento motor, à psicomotricidade e à Educação Física escolar. A discussão apoia-se nas contribuições de Freire (1997), Tani et al. (1988), Manoel (1994), Darido e Rangel (2005) e na Base Nacional Comum Curricular (Brasil, 2018). A literatura discutida evidencia que atividades como jogos, brincadeiras, circuitos motores, danças e práticas com bolas podem proporcionar experiências que favorecem o equilíbrio, a orientação espacial, o ritmo, a lateralidade e a coordenação dos movimentos. Ressalta-se, entretanto, que os resultados dependem do planejamento pedagógico, da continuidade das experiências e do respeito às diferenças individuais. Conclui-se que a Educação Física, quando desenvolvida de maneira intencional, inclusiva e adequada às características das crianças, contribui para ampliar o repertório motor e favorecer a autonomia e a participação infantil.

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**Palavras-chave:** Psicomotricidade. Coordenação motora. Educação Física escolar. Desenvolvimento infantil. Práticas corporais.

**Resumen:** La psicomotricidad desempeña un papel importante en el desarrollo infantil, pues comprende la relación entre movimiento corporal, cognición, afectividad e interacción social. En este contexto, las clases de Educación Física escolar constituyen un espacio pedagógico relevante para estimular la coordinación motora y ampliar las experiencias corporales de los niños. El objetivo de este artículo es discutir la importancia de la psicomotricidad, con énfasis en la coordinación motora, en las clases de Educación Física escolar, considerando sus contribuciones al desarrollo integral infantil. Metodológicamente, el estudio se caracteriza como una revisión bibliográfica narrativa, de enfoque cualitativo y carácter descriptivo, fundamentada en libros, artículos científicos y documentos oficiales relacionados con el desarrollo motor, la psicomotricidad y la Educación Física escolar. La discusión se apoya en las contribuciones de Freire (1997), Tani et al. (1988), Manoel (1994), Darido y Rangel (2005) y la Base Nacional Común Curricular (Brasil, 2018). La literatura discutida evidencia que actividades como juegos, circuitos motores, danzas y prácticas con pelotas pueden proporcionar experiencias que favorecen el equilibrio, la orientación espacial, el ritmo, la lateralidad y la coordinación de los movimientos. Sin embargo, los resultados dependen de la planificación pedagógica, la continuidad de las experiencias y el respeto a las diferencias individuales. Se concluye que la Educación Física, desarrollada de manera intencional, inclusiva y adecuada a las características de los niños, contribuye a ampliar su repertorio motor y favorecer su autonomía y participación.
**Palabras clave:** Psicomotricidad. Coordinación motora. Educación Física escolar. Desarrollo infantil. Prácticas corporales.

## 1. Introduction

Childhood is a fundamental stage of human development, marked by profound physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes. During this period, children expand their opportunities for communication, exploration of their surroundings, interaction with others and understanding of their own bodies. Childhood experiences are therefore relevant to the development of autonomy, identity and different forms of participation in society.

Children should be understood as rights holders, capable of actively participating in educational experiences and producing knowledge through interactions with their surroundings and other people. The Child and Adolescent Statute, established by Law No. 8,069/1990, provides for comprehensive protection and recognises fundamental rights concerning education, leisure, dignity and development (Brasil, 1990). From this perspective, schools play an important role in offering experiences that contribute to children's overall development.

Among these experiences, bodily movement holds a prominent place. Through actions such as running, jumping, rolling, balancing, throwing, catching objects, dancing and playing, children explore their bodily capabilities, develop motor skills and establish relationships with

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space and other people. Movement should therefore be understood as a form of expression, communication, exploration and learning, as well as physical displacement.

This understanding is consistent with Henri Wallon's contributions, whose perspective on child development considers the relationships between movement, affectivity and intelligence. In this approach, the dimensions of development do not occur in isolation, since they participate in an integrated process through which the child develops (Wallon, 1995). Bodily experiences can thus simultaneously involve motor, emotional, cognitive and social aspects.

In this context, psychomotricity becomes relevant to understanding child development. It addresses the relationships between the body, movement and the processes of organising action, considering elements such as body schema, balance, laterality, spatial orientation, temporal organisation and motor coordination. These components are involved in children's everyday experiences and can be explored pedagogically in different learning situations.

Motor coordination, the central focus of this study, is the ability to organise and adjust movements according to a given task or situation. It involves control of body segments, precision of gestures, regulation of force, balance and integration between perception and action. It can be expressed in broad movements, such as running, jumping and throwing, and in actions requiring greater precision, such as handling small objects, fitting pieces together and controlling materials.

The development of motor coordination does not occur identically in all children. Previous experiences, opportunities for practice, environmental conditions, individual characteristics and pedagogical mediation influence learning opportunities. School activities should therefore be planned with different skill levels in mind, avoiding rigid comparisons and respecting developmental rhythms.

In Physical Education, Tani et al. (1988) contributed to consolidating a developmental approach that values the organisation of motor experiences suited to students' characteristics. Manoel (1994), in turn, discusses the implications of motor development for school Physical Education, highlighting the relevance of understanding the acquisition and transformation of motor skills to guide pedagogical practice.

In discussing whole-body education, Freire (1997) emphasises the importance of recognising children as a whole and valuing games and bodily experiences as opportunities for learning. This perspective shows that Physical Education classes should extend beyond the mechanical repetition of exercises or the selection of children with superior sporting

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performance, fostering participation, exploration and the construction of knowledge about the body and movement.

The Brazilian National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) recognises interactions and play as the structuring axes of Early Childhood Education and includes bodily practices within the Physical Education curriculum component in Elementary Education (Brasil, 2018). Motor experiences should therefore form part of pedagogical proposals that value bodily culture, inclusion, autonomy and children's development.

Physical Education classes can support motor coordination through traditional play, cooperative games, motor circuits, rhythmic activities, dance, balance challenges and practices involving throwing, catching, kicking and moving objects. When planned with defined objectives, these activities expand opportunities for experimentation and enable teachers to monitor students' progress, identifying support needs and learning opportunities.

Against this background, the following guiding question arises: what is the importance of psychomotricity, with an emphasis on motor coordination, in school Physical Education classes for child development?

The general objective of this article is to discuss the importance of psychomotricity in developing children's motor coordination in school Physical Education classes. Specifically, it seeks to understand the concepts of psychomotricity and motor coordination, analyse Physical Education's contributions to child development, identify pedagogical strategies that stimulate motor skills, and reflect on teachers' role in planning inclusive practices suited to children's characteristics.

## 2 Materials and methods

This study is a narrative literature review with a qualitative and descriptive approach, intended to discuss the importance of psychomotricity, particularly motor coordination, in school Physical Education classes. Bibliographic research brings together and interprets previously published knowledge, enabling an informed discussion of a given topic.

The theoretical framework was organised from reference books on school Physical Education and motor development, scientific articles concerning children's motor coordination, and official Brazilian education documents. Particular consideration was given to Tani et al. (1988), Manoel (1994), Freire (1997), Darido and Rangel (2005), as well as the Brazilian National Common Curricular Base (Brasil, 2018) and the Child and Adolescent Statute (Brasil, 1990).

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To guide the literature search, the following descriptors were defined: “psychomotricity”, “children's motor coordination”, “motor development”, “school Physical Education”, “fundamental motor skills” and “child development”. Sources considered for consulting academic publications included SciELO, the CAPES Journals Portal, Google Scholar and scientific journals in Physical Education.

Priority was given to publications concerning motor development in childhood, psychomotricity, Physical Education teaching practices and the contributions of movement to children's learning. Official documents relevant to education and children's rights were also considered. Texts without a direct connection to the study objective were given secondary consideration.

The material was analysed through thematic reading, organising the discussion around four axes: concepts of psychomotricity and motor coordination; Physical Education's contributions to child development; pedagogical strategies to stimulate motor skills; and teaching practice, assessment and inclusion in classes.

As a narrative review, the study does not seek to present an exhaustive systematic search, a complete count of publications or a statistical evaluation of results. Its conclusions reflect an interpretation of the literature discussed and should be understood within the limits of this methodological design.

## 3. Results and discussion

The literature analysed showed that psychomotricity and motor coordination are important dimensions of child development and can be addressed pedagogically in Physical Education classes. This understanding is consistent with Wallon (1995), in considering the integration of movement, affectivity and psychological development, and with Tani et al. (1988), who emphasise the relevance of understanding motor development to guide teaching. The contributions identified were organised into four axes: understanding psychomotricity and motor coordination; contributions of Physical Education classes; pedagogical strategies for motor development; and the teacher's role in assessment and inclusion.

### 3.1 Axis 1: Psychomotricity and motor coordination in child development

Psychomotricity helps explain movement in relation to children's cognitive, emotional and social experiences. By exploring their surroundings, handling objects, moving and

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interacting with classmates, children develop ways of perceiving their own bodies, organising their actions and responding to the different situations they experience.

From Wallon's (1995) perspective, movement is important in children's relationship with their surroundings and contributes to their psychological development. This understanding helps overcome a restricted view of the body as an instrument for performing tasks, also recognising it as a means of expression, communication and interaction.

In schools, psychomotor components can be addressed in an integrated manner. Body schema relates to recognising and organising the capabilities of one's own body; laterality involves preferential use and differentiation of the body's sides; spatial orientation concerns understanding positions, directions and distances; temporal organisation involves perceiving rhythm, sequence and duration; and balance contributes to postural control during static and dynamic movements. Tani et al.'s (1988) developmental approach helps explain the importance of providing varied motor experiences suited to students' development.

Motor coordination connects different components so that children perform movements adapted to the task. For example, when throwing a ball towards a target, children need to organise their posture, direct their gaze, adjust their force and coordinate arm movements. In hopscotch, they need to combine balance, spatial orientation, rhythm and lower-limb control. According to Manoel (1994), understanding motor skills and their development provides a basis for organising more appropriate pedagogical interventions.

For teaching purposes, fundamental motor skills can be grouped into locomotor, manipulative and stability skills. Locomotor skills include walking, running, jumping and moving in different directions. Manipulative skills involve actions such as throwing, catching, kicking, rolling and bouncing objects. Stability skills include balance, postural control, rotations and body adjustments. This organisation helps teachers select content and movement experiences consistent with learning objectives, reflecting the concern with motor development presented by Tani et al. (1988).

These categories do not operate in isolation in practice. In games and play, children combine different skills to solve motor challenges. Physical Education classes can therefore offer varied situations that allow them to experiment, repeat, adapt and improve movements. Freire (1997) also advocates valuing bodily experience and play in proposing an education that recognises children in their entirety.

Tani et al. (1988) contribute to this discussion by stressing the importance of considering motor development when organising teaching. Manoel (1994) also draws attention to the

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pedagogical implications of motor development, indicating the need to understand the characteristics of skills and the conditions under which they are learned.

Motor development does not depend exclusively on biological maturation. Opportunities for movement, previous experiences, motivation, available materials and pedagogical intervention also contribute to this process. Schools can therefore help by offering varied and accessible experiences, without requiring all children to achieve the same performance within a rigid time frame.

3.2 Axis 2: The importance of Physical Education classes for motor coordination

School Physical Education provides a valuable pedagogical setting for experiencing bodily culture and expanding movement possibilities. Through planned activities, students can experience motor skills, understand rules, solve challenges and interact with classmates. According to Darido and Rangel (2005), school Physical Education should be understood as a curriculum component with its own knowledge and pedagogical objectives, rather than merely a time for recreation.

Freire (1997) advocates a conception of education that considers children as a whole, valuing movement and play in learning experiences. This perspective helps recognise play as a practice that can mobilise bodily knowledge, decision-making, creativity and social interaction.

In Physical Education classes, motor coordination can be stimulated through situations involving running, jumping, throwing, catching, kicking, balancing, turning, dancing and handling materials. Teachers can organise tasks with different levels of complexity, allowing children to progress gradually and experience movements in varied ways.

Darido and Rangel (2005) contribute to understanding Physical Education as a curriculum component with its own knowledge and pedagogical objectives. Lesson planning should therefore go beyond filling time with recreational activities lacking educational intention, addressing learning objectives, content, strategies and forms of assessment.

Pedagogical practice aimed at developing motor coordination should extend beyond training sporting gestures. Although sports can contribute to the motor repertoire, traditional games, rhythmic activities, chasing games, circuits and bodily challenges also provide learning opportunities. Freire (1997) emphasises the value of play and bodily experiences in education, while Darido and Rangel (2005) contribute to a broad understanding of the content and objectives of school Physical Education.

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Another relevant aspect is that Physical Education can foster children's confidence and autonomy when facing motor challenges. When the classroom environment values attempts, effort, cooperation and individual progress, students have better conditions for participating and exploring their bodily capabilities. This requires teachers to avoid humiliating comparisons, exposing difficulties and systematically selecting the highest-performing students. This guidance is consistent with Freire (1997), who proposes recognising children as a whole, and Darido and Rangel (2005), who situate teaching practice within broader educational objectives.

The BNCC (Brasil, 2018) reinforces the importance of interactions, play and bodily practices in students' education. From this perspective, motor coordination development should be associated with meaningful experiences, access to bodily culture and every child's right to participate.

Thus, the contribution of Physical Education classes depends on the quality of the proposed experiences, continuity of practice opportunities and suitability of activities to students' characteristics. An isolated class does not by itself guarantee lasting progress; the set of pedagogical experiences connected over time can foster an expanded motor repertoire.

### 3.3 Axis 3: Pedagogical strategies to stimulate motor coordination in Physical Education classes

Motor coordination development requires planning activities that address different skills and enable children's active participation. Teachers should consider age, previous experiences, class characteristics, learning objectives and available resources. Tani et al. (1988) and Darido and Rangel (2005) provide foundations for relating the organisation of teaching to students' characteristics and Physical Education's pedagogical objectives.

Pedagogical possibilities include motor circuits, ball games, traditional play, balance activities, rhythmic activities and object-handling experiences. These strategies can be adapted to space, materials and students' needs. Valuing varied experiences is consistent with Freire (1997), who recognises play and movement as important dimensions of children's learning.

#### a) Motor circuits

Motor circuits can include moving between cones, passing over low obstacles, jumping on floor markings, walking along lines, changing direction and balance tasks. These activities combine locomotor and stability skills, stimulating spatial perception and movement control.

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Diversifying and organising motor experiences is supported by the developmental approach presented by Tani et al. (1988).

Complexity should be adjusted progressively. Teachers can change distances between obstacles, modify paths or propose different ways of moving, observing children's responses and ensuring safety. Manoel (1994) stresses the importance of considering motor skills' characteristics and the conditions under which they are learned, which justifies adapting challenges to the group.

b) Games with balls and other objects

Throwing, catching, kicking, rolling and bouncing balls help develop manipulative skills and coordination between visual perception and motor action. Objects of different sizes, weights and textures can be used, provided they are age-appropriate and safe for the activity. Offering varied motor experiences is consistent with Tani et al.'s (1988) foundations for organising movement teaching.

One possible activity is to arrange nearby and distant targets, allowing students to experiment with different throwing intensities. Another possibility is paired activities, in which children exchange passes and adjust movement direction and force.

The objective should encompass experimentation, identifying strategies and progressively improving actions, going beyond merely hitting a target or performing a gesture quickly.

c) Traditional play

Games such as hopscotch, tag, statues, rope skipping and imitation games can mobilise different psychomotor components. Hopscotch, for example, involves balance, spatial organisation and jump control. Rope skipping requires coordination between bodily movements and the activity's rhythm. Tag can involve movement, changes of direction and perception of classmates' movements. Freire (1997) highlights play's relevance in education, enabling these games to be understood as learning experiences rather than merely pastimes.

Besides motor aspects, these games offer opportunities to work on rules, cooperation, respect for participants and resolving situations during play. Teachers should select and adapt activities to ensure everyone's participation.

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d) Dance and rhythmic activities

Dance and rhythmic activities offer opportunities to explore temporal organisation, coordination of body segments, laterality and spatial perception. Teachers can propose simple movement sequences, movements to music and collective creations, respecting the class's cultural characteristics and preferences. This diversity of experiences relates to BNCC guidance (Brasil, 2018), which values bodily practices as part of schooling.

Participation should be valued regardless of the precision with which movements are performed. The pedagogical focus can be on exploring bodily capabilities, perceiving rhythm and creating different forms of expression.

e) Balance and body-awareness activities

Walking along lines drawn on the floor, maintaining different body positions, moving with changes of direction and performing imitation movements are examples of activities that can stimulate balance and body awareness. Tani et al. (1988) help substantiate the importance of offering varied motor situations suited to learning objectives.

These activities should present achievable challenges and safe conditions. Complex equipment is unnecessary: floor markings, ropes, cones and other simple materials can be sufficient to organise meaningful motor experiences.

f) Cooperative games and group challenges

Cooperative games can involve carrying objects, completing courses as a team, synchronised movements and challenges requiring communication between participants. Besides mobilising motor skills, these activities develop collaboration and collective participation. Valuing play as an educational experience is consistent with Freire (1997), while the BNCC (Brasil, 2018) guides the promotion of bodily experiences and learning that foster student participation.

Teachers should avoid making competition the only way of organising classes. Cooperative activities and individual challenges for personal improvement can expand opportunities to participate, especially for children less familiar with certain skills.

Across these strategies, planning should consider clear objectives, progressively challenging tasks, diverse experiences and continuous assessment. Activities should be

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understood as means of promoting learning rather than exercises designed exclusively to classify children's performance.

3.4 Axis 4: The Physical Education teacher's role in assessment and inclusion

Physical Education teachers play a fundamental role in organising bodily experiences and monitoring children's motor development. Their work involves selecting content, establishing objectives, planning activities, adapting materials and observing how children participate and respond to challenges. Darido and Rangel (2005) reinforce the understanding of Physical Education teaching as intentional pedagogical practice organised around learning objectives and content.

Motor coordination assessment should consider the learning process and individual progress, as well as a task's final result. Children may find running and jumping easy but need more experiences to develop throwing and catching. These differences should be interpreted as information helping teachers plan appropriate interventions, without automatically regarding them as inability.

Pedagogical assessment instruments can include observation records, participation notes, activity portfolios, guided self-assessment and monitoring progress throughout classes. Teachers can observe aspects such as body control, balance, spatial orientation, force adjustment, participation, autonomy and the use of strategies to solve challenges. Darido and Rangel (2005) provide support for understanding assessment as part of the pedagogical organisation of Physical Education, connected to the objectives and content addressed.

Pedagogical assessment must be distinguished from clinical diagnosis. Classroom observation can help identify persistent difficulties requiring attention, but does not replace specialist assessments. When necessary, schools can communicate with families and competent professionals, respecting privacy and avoiding labelling children.

Inclusion should also guide lesson planning. Children with disabilities, different motor experiences or specific needs should have access to bodily practices through adaptations that foster participation. This may involve modifying rules, changing distances and times, offering materials of different sizes and textures, presenting instructions in different ways and organising collaborative groups.

An inclusive perspective requires recognising that diverse skills are part of the class. Teachers should therefore avoid practices that publicly expose students' difficulties or establish sporting ability as the main criterion for recognition. Planning should provide meaningful

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challenges for everyone, respecting their circumstances and expanding their learning possibilities. This guidance aligns with school Physical Education as an educational curriculum component, discussed by Darido and Rangel (2005), and the value placed on participation in bodily practices in the BNCC (Brasil, 2018).

The BNCC (Brasil, 2018) guides the organisation of learning related to bodily practices and reinforces the importance of educational experiences promoting student participation. Teaching should therefore connect motor development with broader educational objectives, considering children as active participants in learning.

Teachers' role thus extends beyond demonstrating movements and correcting gestures. It involves creating safe, welcoming and challenging environments in which children can explore their bodies, experiment with different movements, learn from classmates and recognise their own progress. This pedagogical mediation is essential for Physical Education to contribute to motor development and overall education.

## 4. Final considerations

This study aimed to discuss the importance of psychomotricity, emphasising motor coordination, in school Physical Education classes and its contributions to child development. The literature discussion showed that movement is an important dimension of children's experiences and relates to cognitive, emotional and social aspects.

Psychomotricity provides elements for understanding how children organise movements, perceive their own bodies and interact with their surroundings. In this context, motor coordination plays a relevant role by involving adjustment of bodily actions, balance, spatial orientation, rhythm, precision and integration between perception and movement.

Physical Education classes can expand opportunities to develop these skills through motor circuits, ball games, traditional play, dance, balance activities and cooperative challenges. For these experiences to have educational intention, they must be planned according to learning objectives, class characteristics and different developmental rhythms.

The contributions of Freire (1997), Tani et al. (1988), Manoel (1994) and Darido and Rangel (2005) reinforce the importance of understanding movement as pedagogical content and organising bodily experiences that foster learning. The BNCC, in turn, provides references for valuing interactions, play and bodily practices in schools.

Motor coordination development should also extend beyond sporting performance or comparison between children. Pedagogical monitoring should value individual progress,

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participation, autonomy and each student's opportunity to experience and expand their motor repertoire. Inclusion should be present in planning, ensuring that all children have conditions to participate in activities.

As a limitation, this study is based on a narrative literature review and does not present data collected directly from children or an empirical assessment of pedagogical interventions. The discussion therefore does not establish that a specific activity produces the same results in every school context. Field research investigating different pedagogical strategies and monitoring their effects on children's motor coordination over time is recommended.

It is concluded that psychomotricity, particularly when connected with motor coordination development, is a relevant dimension of Physical Education teaching. Offering varied, systematic, inclusive and meaningful bodily experiences can help expand children's movement possibilities and foster their participation in bodily practices. School Physical Education thus reaffirms its importance as a curriculum component committed to learning and children's overall development.

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