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THE DEVELOPMENT OF BASIC MOTORSKILLS THROUGH PLAYFUL ACTIVITIES IN CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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ABSTRACT. ***Introduction*.** A basic characteristic of people with special educational needs is the emergence of a certain state of instability, emotional imbalance, marginalization, or in more serious situations, a total break between individual and society**.** ***Objectives*.** The identification and selection of some motion games; the application of motion games in the development and improvement of motor skills; the evaluation of students' involvement in the proposed motion games. ***Material and methods*.** The research was carried out on a group of 4 students with special educational needs, students of the "School Center for Inclusive Education" from Cluj-Napoca and was held from October 2012 to June 2013. The methods used were: observation, interviews, analysis of documents and case study. After having reffered to different books and works specialized in this field, we identified and selected a number of 12 motion games. This is the material that formed the basis of the present study. ***Results*.** Each of the four students have evolved differently, because each of them have their own pace of development. ***Conclusions***. We arrived at the following conclusions: the improvement of the fundamental movements and postures of the body and of the various segments of the body of all the four students; the organization of movements in actions; the improvement of the motion skills by handling the object of the game, through the implementation of the necessary balance of technical processes and actions of the game.

Key words: special educational needs, motion games, motricity

REZUMAT. ***Dezvoltarea deprinderilor motrice de bază prin intermediul activităţilor ludice la copiii cu cerinţe educative speciale. Introducere.*** O caracteristică de bază a persoanelor cu cerinţe educative speciale, este apariţia unor stări de instabilitate, marginalizare, dezechilibru emoţional, sau în situaţii mai grave, ruperea totală a relaţiei individ-societate. ***Obiective.*** Identificarea şi selectarea unor jocuri de mişcare; aplicarea jocurilor de mişcare în vederea dezvoltării şi perfecţionării deprinderilor motrice de bază; evaluarea implicării elevilor în jocurile de mişcare propuse. ***Material şi metode.*** Cercetarea a fost realizată pe un

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grup de 4 elevi cu cerinţe educative speciale, elevi ai Centrului Şcolar pentru Educaţie Incluzivă, Cluj-Napoca şi s-a desfăşurat în perioada octombrie 2012 - iunie 2013. Metodele folosite au fost: observaţia, interviul, analiza documentelor şi studiul de caz. În urma consultării unor culegeri şi lucrări de specialitate, s-au identificat şi selectat un număr de 12 jocuri de mişcare, acestea constituind materialul care a stat la baza prezentei lucrări. ***Rezultate.*** Fiecare elev din cei patru, au evoluat diferit, deoarece fiecare dintre aceştia au un ritm propriu de dezvoltare. ***Concluzii***. Am constat următoarele: îmbunătăţirea poziţiilor şi a mişcărilor fundamentale ale corpului şi ale diferitelor segmente ale corpului la subiecţi; organizarea mişcărilor în acţiuni; formarea deprinderilor motrice, prin mânuirea obiectului de joc, prin echilibrul necesar execuţiei procedeelor tehnice şi a acţiunilor de joc.

Cuvinte cheie: cerinţe educative speciale, jocuri de mişcare, motricitate.

Introduction

The concept of "special educational needs" was released in 1978 in the UK, on the occasion of the Warnock Report, a document that has been the basis for the reforms of the special education in this country. Since 1995, the term was introduced in the Law of Education in Romania. Thus, this term refers to the educational program requirements for certain categories of students with disabilities and some categories that have difficulties in school.

A basic characteristic of people with special educational needs is the appearance of states of instability, marginalization, emotional imbalance, or in the worst cases, a total breakage of the individual-society relationship.

The category of children with special educational needs includes both children with disabilities and children without disabilities, but who have problems to adapt themselves to the demands of school.

The motion game, as a means of physical activity, represents a complex form of motion that, due to its characteristics of form, content and effects, is used since very early infancy. The many tasks of a moving game requires an ordering of the games based on some criteria: some related to the form of the game, others to the game content, others to the number of players or the season in which it is practiced. During the game, the child runs, jumps, crawls happily, climbs and his movements become more accurate. In the game, children overcome their shyness and timidity more easily and they develop their creativity and their self-esteem. The game also develops attention, memory, reasoning, a sense of responsibility, commitment to the team, spirit of discipline and order, it educates one's determination, honor and fairness.

Objectives

- identification and selection of motion games;
- application of motion games in order to develop and improve basic motor skills;
- assessment of students' involvement in the proposed motion games.

Materials and methods

The study group

The research was carried out on a group of 4 students with special educational needs, pupils of the „School Center for Inclusive Education", Cluj-Napoca and ran from October 2012 to June 2013. The group consists of three boys and one girl, aged between 15 and 16. One of the pupils in the group is cared for by social parents at "Spring" family house from Floresti and three others from the Institution for Child Protection No. 1 –the residential service for children with disabilities in Cluj-Napoca.

Table 1.

Presentation of the study group

Name	Age	Sex	Provenience	Medical data
I.A.	15 years old	male	institutionalized	hyperkinetic conduct disorder, weight deficit
I.Ş.	15 years old	male	institutionalized	hyperkinetic conduct disorder, weight deficit
L.R.E.	15 years old	female	institutionalized	hyperkinetic conduct disorder, spina bifida sacral
L.M.	16 years old	male	institutionalized	dorsal kyphosis

Research methods

The students' personal data were extracted from school records and interviews with the caregivers.

The methods that allowed us to collect data and information about subjects and subsequently to analyze and to organize our goals were: observation, interviews, document analysis and case study.

The motion games applied

After reading different specialized studies, we identified and selected a number of 12 motion games that constitute the material which formed the basis of this paper. The selected games were taken exactly as found in the

bibliographic sources or they were transformed or adapted to the specific needs and characteristics of students with special educational needs.

In the selection of the games we took into consideration the following criteria: the contents of the games that include basic motor skills (walking, running, jumping, throwing and catching), the physical possibilities of the subjects for their execution, affordability and understanding the text (content understanding and respecting rules of the game). The following are motion games used in this paper:

- **Specific motion games for walking:** "the footsteps", "the walking dwarf", "the tripping horse"

Fig. 1. – The game "the footsteps"

Fig. 2. – The game "the walking dwarf"

Fig. 3. – The game "the tripping horse"

- **Specific motion games for running:** "the race numbers", "the twins", "take your island"

Fig. 4. – The game "the race numbers"

Fig. 5. – The game "the twins"

Fig. 6. – The game "take your island"

- **Specific motion games for jumping:** "the decajump", "skip the line", "the string"

Fig. 7. – The game "the decajump"

Fig. 8. – The game "skip the line"

Fig. 9. – The game "the string"

- **Specific motion games for throwing and catching:** "the squirrel", "catch and throw", "the ball through the tunnel"

Fig. 10. – The game "the squirrel"

Fig. 11. – The game "catch and throw"

Fig. 12. – The game "the ball through the tunnel"

Results

The motor activities carried out with the selected group that included motion games were applied systematically throughout the school year. This was achieved by involving the students in some group activities and in activities such as one to one (teacher-student, student-student). Each of the four students has evolved differently because each of them has their own pace of development. However, the activities used differential treatment of the students, thus taking into account the particularities of each individual, with emphasis on those related to their psychomotricity.

We have to mention the purpose of our activities was not to achieve some sport performances among children, but we intended first of all to offer an alternative that would constitute a means of developing some motor skills and then to offer them the possibility to relax and to communicate with others in order to help them to integrate themselves more easily in a social environment. Therefore we followed the results obtained by each subject (level of development and improvement of driving skills) from one activity to another without comparing the subjects among them.

Case study no. 1

With regard to motor skills, the subject is moving through a messy walk inappropriately, showing imbalance while walking. Running up the stairs, alternating feet but less chaotically. Hits with the foot and the ball accurately, throws the ball to 1-2 m, but does not properly assess the trajectory and speed of the ball, does not appreciate the sight distance.

Case study no. 2

It shows limitations in the performance of motor actions. The control and the coordination of movements are relatively good, but there are difficulties in imitating, the movements rate is extremely slow, lazy. The children move forwards, inappropriately, they present balance while walking. They run up the stairs, alternating feet rather rambling. While throwing and catching an object coordination is wrong. They hit the ball with the foot and throw the ball accurately at 1-2 m.

Case study no. 3

He stands up, heels on the ground, but not in proper balance, he climbs stairs alternating feet, runs, jumps, still with both feet together. He hits the ball accurately, throws the ball at 1-2 m, he has control of his breathing.

He imitates some movements and he listens to verbal commands certain hand movements, he crumples a paper sheet; he unbuttons buttons and stitches; he picks up and throws objects with less precision for a particular purpose; he spins whirligig; he makes a circle with a pencil following the outline of a coin; he makes a ball from a string, he knocks the ball with the palm of the earth; he understands the meaning of gestures performed by others and he even follows the instructions; he loosens and blends assembled toys; he kneads the dough; he handles scissors and he cuts by a model but with less precision and he dresses themselves properly.

Case study no. 4

The pace while walking is slow, he walks on his knees because of the length step and his height. He climbs the stairs, alternating feet, he run randomly, he slightly kicks the ball with his foot. He does with lot of difficulty the activity of catching and throwing because of the lack of coordination and interest, he catches weaker than throws, he throws the ball at 1-2 m.

Carried out by imitation, some hand movements, crumples with one hand a piece of paper, folds paper, unbuttons buttons, stitches, picks up and throws objects with little accuracy for a particular purpose; whirligig spins, gathers string on the ball, makes a circle with a pencil outline of a coin designs copied increasingly complex, sews easily, has enhanced writing skills, unwraps and assembles toys, combines knead dough, uses scissors, cuts by model, dresses himself and correctly; turns the pages of a book one; holds a pencil in his hand.

Conclusions

By analyzing the motion games developed by the four subjects, we conclude the following: an improvement of the basic positions and movements of the body and different body segments in subjects; the awareness and the identification of different parts of the body, the body scheme representation, a mental representation of the actions; orientation organization and structuring of spatial and space-time, the perception of time and space in relation to itself; the organization of movements in actions; the training of the motor skills by handling the object of the game, the necessary balance execution of techniques and actions of the game.

Thus, after applying the motion games, the I.A. and I.S. subjects show visible progress in walking and running. If at the beginning of our experiment the body is rigid, their eyes are down and their chin on their chest, at the end the walking and running are balanced, their movements more organized, they have a correct posture, a body alignment and an increase of the stability. Because of the existing motor difficulties the subjects have difficulties in the execution of jumps, throws and catches; there is a lack of coordination in their bimanual and oculomanuale movements, in the orientation in space and in appreciating the shape and the speeds of the objects.

The subject LRE has a very good motricity and a fast pace and he fails to act easily during the games and to complete the task correctly and in time. An availability for the activities, the involvement and a constant attention, the level of the development of the motor skills, the capacity of adaptation and of self-confidence in his capacities are issues that, together, contribute to the further development of his independence, facilitating social integration.

Because of his motor limits at present, subject LM has difficulties in most of the games. During the game his pace movement is extremely slow and lazy, and if the teacher stimulates him, he performs the task in a hurry, without concentration, in a fast pace, giving the feeling that his desire is to escape from work. When walking he presents swings, incorrect posture with rounded back, the running on his knees, lack of precision in the jump movement, throwing and catching. From the social point of view he has a better interaction with others in the group, showing interest in initiating contacts with others.

In the end of our the study we can say that the motion games have proven their efficiency, our student registered visible progress in their the motor capacity and in their communication skills, confirming thus the objectives of the present study, that the involvement of children with special educative needs in activities that satisfy their need for moving, it facilitates the formation of skills and habits which lead to a harmonious development of the whole body, thus maintaining health.

Applied daily in the bodily activities of children with special educational needs, the motion games are considered by experts as important means of formative and educational factors. The participants in the game are learning the motion skills and they order their body movements, thus preparing themselves for work and life.

The activities that include movement games can be applied to other subjects, at any age if they have good results they can be diversified by increasing the complexity of the activities.

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