

## Curricular treatment of body image, self-esteem and self-concept in Spain

### Tratamiento curricular de la imagen corporal, autoestima y autoconcepto en España

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## Summary

Adolescence is a period of human development in which problems with the perception of body image, self-esteem and self-concept proliferate, while the child is studying for Secondary Education. This study analyses the curricular treatment given to body image, self-esteem and self-concept in different legislative elements in the region of Valencia (Spain), using a qualitative methodology, through the technique of non-interactive documentary analysis. The results of the analysis of relevant academic planning stage documents in this region showed a presence of these statements contained in both the national Education Law and the regional education Law. They specifically appear in some elements of curriculum subjects such as Physical Education, Citizenship Education, Mathematics, Biology and Geology, Natural Science and Music, although not all of them take on the same role, emphasizing in this sense Physical Education as a subject that focuses more both on working and developing these aspects. Within the latter, an imbalance is shown in terms of prominence achieved in what is intended to learn (objectives) and its negligible representation in the tools proposed to achieve it (content) as well as how to evaluate it (evaluation criteria).

**Keywords:** Body image, self-concept and self-esteem, adolescence, high school curriculum, documentary analysis.

## Resumen

La adolescencia es un periodo del desarrollo del ser humano en el que proliferan problemas con la percepción de la imagen corporal, la autoestima y el autoconcepto, mientras el niño se encuentra cursando estudios de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria. Este estudio analiza el tratamiento curricular que se dedica a la imagen corporal, la autoestima y el autoconcepto en los diferentes elementos legislativos en el ámbito educativo de la Comunidad Valenciana (España), mediante una metodología cualitativa, a través de la técnica del análisis documental no interactiva. Los resultados del análisis de los documentos, correspondientes a la ordenación académica de la etapa en esta comunidad autónoma, mostraron una presencia de estos contenidos tanto en los planteamientos del ámbito nacional concerniente a la LOE (2006) y el Real Decreto 1631/2006, como en los regionales materializados en el Decreto 112/2007. Aparecen específicamente en algunos elementos del currículo de materias como Educación Física, Educación para la Ciudadanía,

Matemáticas, Biología y Geología, Ciencias de la Naturaleza y Música, a pesar de que no en todas ellas adquieren el mismo protagonismo, destacando en este sentido la Educación Física como materia que más se centra tanto en el trabajo como en el desarrollo de estos aspectos. Dentro de ella se muestra un desequilibrio en cuanto al protagonismo alcanzado en lo que se pretende que aprendan (objetivos) y en su ínfima plasmación en las herramientas para alcanzarlo (contenidos), así como en el cómo evaluarlo (criterios de evaluación).

**Palabras clave:** Imagen corporal, autoconcepto y autoestima, adolescencia, currículo de secundaria, análisis documental.

## Introduction

Adolescence is a specially vulnerable phase in which it's common to experience problems regarding body image (BI), self-esteem and self-concept, because it's a moment in the life cycle characterized by physiological, emotional, cognitive and, above all, social changes (Festorazzi, Castañeras & Posada, 2011) that contribute to the increase of concern about physical appearance (Estévez, 2012; Ortega, 2010). The collected empirical evidence highlights that this concern is different according to gender, teenage girls being in a risk position because of their greater desire to lose weight, although, in many cases, they don't need it (Ramos, Rivera & Moreno, 2010). Also, young people in this age frequently show strong fluctuations in their self-esteem levels, which tend to diminish as they grow old and they become adults (Block & Robins, 1993), also with gender-based differences. BI is constantly changing, modifying through biological factors and life circumstances, accentuated by pleasure or pain (Benninghoven, Eckhard, Mohr, Heberlein, Kunzendorfy & Jantschek, 2006). Currently, BI is very important to young people and, although weight control can decrease the risk of suffering from chronic diseases in adulthood (Kannel, Dágostino & Cobb, 1996), and excessive concern about being thin could lead to practices that are detrimental to health (Serdula, Collins, Williamson, Anda, Pamuk & Byers, 1993) which pose a risk factor of malnutrition and for developing eating disorders (ED) (Killen & Taylor, 1996). This is why it's important to know the factor that influence on the development of these attitudes in adolescence. It is known that different biological, psychological, environmental, social and cultural aspect interact with and contribute to an excessive care about BI, which has become a public health problem in adolescence (Levine, Smolak, Moodey, Shuman & Hessen, 1994).

On the other hand, self-concept and self-esteem have a long joint trajectory, their disquisition being quite problematic. The contributions made by Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton (1976) and Rosenberg (1979) show that individuals self-evaluate different areas or aspects of their lives (self-concept) and, additionally, have a general feeling of worth as a person (self-esteem). Despite of the difficulties the investigation of these to concepts entrails, Harter (1999) makes important contributions, focusing specially on the adolescence as a consequence of physical and social changes that take place in puberty and considering it as a key phase in the formation of self-concept and

self-esteem, awaking a great general interest in researchers (Marsh, 1989) specially on the physical dimension of self-concept and physical appearance (Balaguer, 2002; Eiser, Eiser & Havermans, 1995; Hagborg, 1993; Harter, 1988; Trent, Rusell & Cooney, 1994). Self-esteem is the attitude than one has towards oneself, the habitual way of thinking, loving, feeling and behaving with oneself, the permanent description according to which we face ourselves (Alcántara, 1993) which is generally a positive valuation of ourselves, but Rosenberg (1979) widens this concept, considering also a negative attitude.

In general, self-concept answers to the perceptions a person has of themselves, shaped from their experience and their interpretations of the environment, initially considering it as a one-dimensional and global construct (Pastor, Balaguer & García-Merita, 2003). However, starting the '70s, their multi-dimensional conception is taken into account and with a hierarchy in different domains, collecting both the evolutionary and descriptive aspects of the person. This multi-dimensional model of hierarchical self-concept is organized showing the general self-concept on top and divided, below, in academic self-concept (which is also divided in more specific concepts according to different areas: english, history, mathematics and science) and non-academic self-concept (social, emotional and physical), in more specific situation levels (Shavelson, Hubner & Stanton, 1976). Physical self-concept, in particular, is constituted on the base of global self-concept and on the strengthening of self-esteem, a factor which moulds character, personality and human behavior (Espinoza, Rodríguez, Gálvez, Vargas & Yáñez, 2011). The most accepted structure of physical self-concept is the one which takes four dimensions into account (Fox & Corbin, 1989): physical ability, physical condition, strength and physical attractiveness (Cox, 2009; González, 2005; Goñi & Ruiz, 2009). The latter dimension is closely related to multiple variables: risks of suffering from ED, lifestyles, performance, gender, age (Contreras, Fernández, García & González, 2010; Soriano, Navas & Holgado, 2011). The multi-dimensional nature of self-concept allows people to attain satisfactory global self-concepts through different paths; those who don't have adequate levels of competences in certain domains can complement or replace them from other sub-domains, hence, Physical Education, for instance, can be a valid means to improve some individuals self-esteem.

Dissatisfaction with BI has been linked to low self-esteem, depression and the initial impulse in ED behavior, such as anorexia and bulimia nervosa, especially in teenagers (Baile, Raich & Garrido, 2003; Thompson, 2004),

modulated by multiple biological, social and cultural factors, which are difficult to evaluate in some cases (Gupta, Chaturvedi, Chandarana & Jonson, 2000). For this population, appearance is more focused on self-concept and the evaluation of others (Grogan, 1999), finding the ideal of feminine beauty in extreme thinness and a muscular prevalence in males, hence the professionals working in the field of health and education often use the BI perception as a measurement of self-esteem, of self-concept and of the degree of satisfaction with their own image (Dowson & Hendersen, 2001). This is why, in the current education framework, health education is among the contents which, transversally, must be approached between every subject in Mandatory Secondary Education (MSE). In this regard, fundamental contributions of the different subjects (reflected on the legislative framework) are indispensable, being the teachers' task to integrate and organize them, approaching one problem, situation or topic of interest from several different perspectives. We are addressing a horizontal relationship between the programs of different subjects. Only commitment and a shared effort will allow the achievement of such ambitious goals (Ley Orgánica de Educación, Organic Law of Education –LOE–, 2006).

After the implantation of the LOE, in the regulation of minimal education, basic competences, which are identified with the teachings considered as indispensable for the MSE students should have acquired by the end of this stage, have a special relevance, through the contribution of different areas and curriculum subjects (if there is an unequivocal correlation between teaching certain subjects and the development of certain competences), in which different aspects of mental health, such as self-esteem, self-concept and BI satisfaction are included. As pointed by the LOE in its Preamble: teamwork between teachers will be ensured, aiming to provide a multi-disciplinary approach of the teaching process, guaranteeing the coordination of every member of the teaching team that attends every student in their group. The influence of the education received by students in schools regarding acquired habits is, thus, fundamental, consolidating in adolescence and with great possibilities of lasting through adulthood (Fuentes, 2011). This is why this work aims to investigate about the curricular treatment given to BI, self-esteem and self-concept in different legislative elements in the educational field in the Community of Valencia; this is the objective of the research described in the following section and answered to in the subsequent ones.

Despite of its importance for every author that has diffused their studies and the existence of specific programs to work the previous dimensions both in and out of the educational center, there are no studies that make out the contemplation of said dimensions in official documents of the teachers' work. Documents such as the ones that we intend to analyze in here, that is to say, legal regulations, which become actual guides or "supports" of the documents which, once concretized, help the development of the class. Every educational system, every norm regulating it, every curricular concretion; and to sum up, they should be submitted to comprehensive analysis of the dimensions they develop and how they do it, and the previous elements deserve such consideration and diagnose. This is justified by the approach that there are two ways, positively complementary, of them being properly worked on in the classroom, namely: a) that the teacher is aware and convinced of their importance and prepared and supported for their development and b) that the institutional and legal documents from which they derive live up to their consideration and proper preparation.

## **Method**

In order to satisfy the previously proposed article, a qualitative methodology has been chosen, through the technique of non-interactive documentary analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005), sufficiently justified as an investigative modality in the transversal type design (Cohen & Mani3n, 2002). Concretely, the documents evaluated are the law for academic planning corresponding to self-esteem, self-concept and BI development, in every elements if the MSE curriculum for the Community of Valencia, specifically the LOE with a basic character, the Real Decreto 1631/2006, which establishes the minimal teachings corresponding to this educational level and, in this Autonomous Community, the Decreto 112/2007, which establishes and plans de MSE curriculum. While it is true that it's a legislation previous to the current one, LOMCE, it must be considered that the latter is a modification of a single element of the previous one and is has been proved that, in whatever it concerns the contests analyzed in this research and which data are presented in the following section there are no modifications. Additionally, in the current legislation of the Community of Valencia, its primary implantation is taking place, but in primary school, trough the Decreto 108/2014, which hasn't happened yet in the educational stage, subject of this research.

Accordingly, this research could be considered as a sole instrumental case study (Stake, 2010) where the case to scrutinize is the legislation on shaping self-esteem, self-concept and BI satisfaction in adolescents, because it's restricted to the secondary education stage, because this is the most determinant stage, according to the studies contemplated in the revision for the previous qualities. Therefore, it's a delimited and integrated case, as Ceballos (2009) advised.

In order to collect the data from the legislation, codes about the categories contained in theme were used, about the previous topics regarding this research. Indeed, for the categorization, according to the postulates of educational research, estimated deductive codes must be used, that is to say, codes based on the explicative theoretical models of the phenomenon, or a posteriori of the analysis, for there is no theoretical model that could lead their study (Angulo & Vázquez, 2003; Flick, 2004).

Since there are enough theoretical models on self-esteem, self-concept and BI satisfaction, as it was explained in the previous section, but there are none on their development in educational systems, let alone in their guiding legislations, in this occasion the postulation of codes that are posterior to the analysis of the document has been chosen. In this way, every time that in the document subject of study showed up any relevant value related to the development of self-esteem and/ or self-concept, it has been properly coded. For the assignation of these codes, the suggestions of methodologists specializing in such assignation have been followed: exclusivity, objectivity, concreteness and triangulation (Krippendorff, 2002).

Several researchers, who assured both the triangulation of the codes, as stated above, and their interpretation, participated in the analysis of the data. The process followed for the data analysis and the interpretation of the collected information was the one recommended by Miles and Huberman (2004) for content analysis, which takes place after the reduction and grouping of the codes corresponding to the analysis categories into more global interpretation meta-categories, addressing, in this occasion, the theoretical postulates about the research topics: self-esteem, self-concept and BI, on account of their acquisition and development. The interconnected tasks that had to be undertaken, and they were, are the triangulated collecting



of the information, its reduction, the disposition of the data in categories and meta-categories and their deepening.

## **Results and discussion**

Regarding the legislative aspects concerning the MSE in the Community of Valencia, the “Preamble” of the LOE tells us, referring to the students’ education, that:

*“Education is the most appropriate means to build their personality, to fully develop their capacities, to form their own personal identity and to configure their understanding of reality, integrating the cognitive, the affective and the axiological dimension. For society, education is the means for transmitting and, at the same time, for renovating culture and the repertory of knowledge and values supporting it”.*

That is to say that, we must cover this fields that will develop their personality from education. Inside the three main principles on which the LOE is sustained, the “Preamble” continues as follows:

*“It’s about making all citizens reach the maximum development levels that are possible in all of their individual, social, intellectual, cultural and emotional skills, for which they need to receive a quality education that is adapted to their needs. At the same time, an effective quality of opportunities must be guaranteed, giving whatever support is necessary, both to the students who require it and to the centers they study in”.*

This is part of the first of the three main principles, a quality education for all citizens of both genders and on every level of the educational system.

Article 2 refers to the objectives of the Spanish educational system. We specially mention the following:

*a) The full development of the students’ personality and skills.*

This is understood as the development of all of their potentialities, both social and individual, and it corresponds to the balance the Law is aiming

to between comprehensiveness and diversity, factor that procure this full development of a person.

*f) “The development of the students’ capacity to regulate their own learning, trust their aptitudes and knowledge, and to develop creativity, personal initiative and entrepreneurial spirit.”*

Betting on the learning how to learn, developing with it their autonomy and self-esteem. In Article 5, we can read the following:

*“Every person must have the possibility to educate themselves through their lifetime, both in and out of the educational system, aiming to acquire, update, complete and widen their capacities, knowledge, skills, aptitudes and competencies for their personal and professional development.”*

This article, which is the continuation of what was analyzed in the Preamble and the “Preliminary Title”, is still about giving importance to the personal development of the students. The Decreto 112/2007, in tis Article 5 (Basic competencies), refers us to the Annex I of the Real Decreto 1631/2006, where they are developed and organized. Below, the treatment of the concepts is detailed:

1) In competency 1 (Competency in linguistic communication) the following noticed:

*This competency refers to the use of language as an oral and written communication instrument, of representation, interpretation, understanding of reality, building and communicating knowledge, and the organization and self-regulation of thought, emotions and behavior. The knowledge, skills and attitudes inherent to this competency allow to express thoughts, emotions, experiences and opinions, as well as engaging in dialogues, forming a critical and ethical judgment, generating ideas, structuring knowledge, give coherence and cohesion to speech and to their own actions and tasks, to make decisions, and to enjoy listening, reading or expressing themselves orally or in a written manner, all of which contributes,*

*additionally, to developing self-esteem and confidence. The ability to select and apply certain purposes or objectives to the actions inherent to linguistic communication (dialogue, reading, writing, etc.) is linked to some fundamental traits of this competency such as the abilities to represent oneself mentally, to interpret and understand reality, and to organize and self-regulate knowledge and action by giving them coherence.*

This competency refers directly to the development of self-esteem and self-confidence, besides the self-regulation of thought, emotions and behavior.

2) Inside number 3 (Competency about knowledge and interaction with the physical world), the following appears:

*Ultimately, it incorporates abilities to perform properly, autonomously and with personal initiative in very diverse fields of life and knowledge (health, productive activity, consumption, technological processes, etc.) This competency, and starting from the knowledge of the human body, of the nature and interaction of men and women with it, allows to rationally argue the consequences of their lifestyles, and to adopt a disposition to a healthy physical and mental life in a healthy natural and social environment.*

*Likewise, it supposes the consideration of the double dimension –individual and collective– of health, and to show attitudes of responsibility and respect towards others and oneself.*

It can be seen how it refers to personal initiative, healthy mental life and self-respect.

3) Regarding competency number 5 (Social and citizen competency) it is noticed that:

*Consequentially, among this competency's abilities stand out the ability to know oneself and to value oneself, to know how to communicate in different contexts, to express your own ideas and to listen to those of other people, and to make decisions in different levels of*

*community life, conjunctively valuing individual and group interests. It also implies valuing the differences as well as the recognition of equal rights between every collective, particularly, between men and women. It equally implies practicing dialogue and negotiation in order to reach an agreement as a way of solving conflicts, both in the personal and the social domain.*

This competency directly refers to the social competency, being the latter integrated by aspects of both social skill and social acceptance, which conform the dimensions of social self-concept (Fernández & Goñi, 2006; Goñi & Fernández, 2007), where a very influential factor is the teachers' teaching style; when a professor tends to be dominant, irritable, not joyful, impersonal and formal, students tend to act passively, answering only when they are asked to. Likewise, when the teacher tends to be active, joyful, flexible and calm, the affective climate that prevails is joyful, stimulating and with great communication between teacher and student and, at the same time, initiative, flexibility, self-confidence, creativity and enthusiasm about learning are seen in the student. (Arancibia, 1986; Esteve, 2005). On the other hand, the affective implication in their children's socialization for the right psychological and emotional adjustment of teenagers is highly important (Fuentes, García, Gracia & Alarcón, 2015). The perception a person has of themselves influences on beneficial behaviors, both for the individual and for society in general. It's fundamental to encourage the self-concept of people, because with a right personal perception, the individual will be more capable of achieving their goals, which will redound in social improvement (Krueger, Vohs & Baumeister, 2008).

4) In competency number 7 (Competency to learn how to learn) the following can be read:

*This competency has two fundamental dimensions. On one hand, the acquisition of an awareness of their own capacities (intellectual, emotional, physical), of the process and strategies necessary to developing them, as well as what one can do for oneself and what one can do with the help of other people or resources. On the other hand, to have a feeling of personal competency, which redounds in motivation, self-confidence and a taste for learning. It also makes*

*perseverance necessary for learning, from its valuation as an element that enriches personal and social life and that therefore, deserves the effort it takes. It requires to be able to self-evaluate and self-regulate, responsibility and personal commitment, to know how to administer efforts, to accept mistakes and to learn from and with others. To sum up, to learn how to learn implies awareness, management and control of one's own capacities and knowledge from a personal competency or efficacy feeling, and it includes both strategic thinking and the capacity to cooperate, self-evaluate. Also, the efficient management of a set of resources and intellectual work techniques, which develop through conscious and gratifying learning experiences, both individual and collective.*

We highlight the allusion made to the awareness of one's own capacities, self-confidence, self-evaluation and self-regulation.

5) In competition number 8 (Autonomy and personal initiative) the following elements are highlighted:

*This competency refers, on the one hand, to the acquisition of awareness and the application of a set of personal values and attitudes that are interconnected, such as responsibility, perseverance, self-knowledge and self-esteem, creativity, self-criticism, emotional control, the capacity to choose, to calculate risks and to face problems, as well as the capacity to learn from mistakes and take risks. Another important dimension of this competency, which is quite related to this social aspect, is constituted by the abilities and attitudes linked to project leadership, which include self-confidence, empathy, an overcoming spirit, abilities for dialogue and cooperation, the organization of time and tasks, the capacity to affirm and defend rights or to take risks.*

In this competency, we can find self-knowledge, self-esteem, creativity, self-criticism, emotional control and self-confidence.

To sum up, it can be observed how in almost every basic competency the aspects related to and improvement in self-perception, mental health, self-concept and self-esteem are important. The importance of psychological,

affective and emotional aspects are gaining more and more prominence in the current educational system. Effort and autonomy, to bet on the learn how to learn, developing with it their autonomy and self-esteem. This is why in communities such as Castilla La Mancha, in their Decreto 69/2007, which establishes and organizes the curriculum of the MSE, contemplates it by making nine basic competency, adding the “emotional competency”, and incorporates them as a curricular referent in every stage, adapting their content to the evolutionary development of the students:

*“The adolescent builds a self-concept and develops self-esteem in the development of every action which, in a wider and wider horizon, they perform. Emotional balance facilitates or complicates school performance as it intensifies or reduces the interferences in learning (Decreto 69/2007)”.*

In the introduction of the Decreto 112/2007, the following appears: “the educational intervention must contemplate as a principle the diversity of the students, ensuring the personal development of all of them”.

Additionally, we highlight the following from the “Article 4. Stage objectives: the MSE will contribute to the development of skills that will allow the students to”:

*b) Acquire, develop and consolidate discipline, study and individual and team work habits as a necessary condition for an efficient performance of the learning processes and as a mean of personal development.*

*e) To strengthen their affective capacities in every aspect of personality and in their relationships with others, as well as to reject violence, prejudgments of any kind, sexist behaviors and to peacefully solve conflicts.*

*h) To develop and entrepreneurial spirit and self-confidence, participation, a critical sense, personal initiative and the capacity to learn, plan, make decisions and take responsibilities, as well as to value effort in order to overcome difficulties.*

*l) To know and accept the functioning of the human body and to respect differences. To know and appreciate the beneficial effects on health of hygiene habits, as well as of physical activities and the right nutrition, incorporation sports and physical education to enhance personal and social development.*

*m) To analyze the mechanisms and values that direct the way societies work, especially those related to rights, duties and citizen freedoms and to adopt personal judgments and attitudes about them.*

*n) To critically value social habits related to health, responsible consumption, caring for living beings and the environment, contributing to its conservation and improvement”.*

In this stage’s goals the aspects that our revision addresses are quite relevant. The school center must play an important role in the development of a healthy self-esteem, self-concept and the BI satisfaction, which are sources of wellbeing and an insurance against possible disorders and problems deriving from feelings of low self-appreciation. It would not be new to try to confirm the educational adjustability of self-concept and self-esteem, in general, the efficiency of the educational system regarding those aspects. Esnaola, Goñi and Mandariaga (2008) think it is very important to give special attention to building didactic materials with quality that comes both from the point of view of its theoretical soundness (connection to – and articulation of- processes that intervene in the construction of the dimensions and the domains of self-concept), its technical quality (the incorporation of new technologies) and its didactic adequacy (potentiality of use for educator, easiness to apply, attractiveness for the student, etc.).

In the development made for the curriculum of the MSE subjects for teaching centers of the Community of Valencia, which appear in the annex to the Decreto 112/2007, we shall start with the analysis of physical education, which, related to the object of our study, is explicit in the introduction below, as follows:

*“Physical education must not only contribute to developing instrumental capacities and to generate habits of continuous practice of physical*

*activity in MSE; it must also link it to a scale of values, attitudes and norms, and to the knowledge of the effects it has on personal development, thus contributing to attaining general stage goals. The approach of this subject as a comprehensive character and it includes a lot of functions, such as cognitive, expressive, communicative ones, and those related to wellbeing. On one hand, movement is one of the main cognitive instruments of a person, both in order to get to know oneself and to structure their immediate environment. Through the organization of their sensitive-perceptive-motor capacities, one becomes conscious of their own body and of the world around us, but also, through movement, one's own motor skills are improved in different situations and for different objectives and activities, even allowing to show skill, to overcome difficulties and to compete.*

*(...) Equally, physical exercise contributes to the conservation and improvement of health and fitness, the prevention of certain illnesses and dysfunctions and to psychic balance, as long as people release their tensions, engage in leisure activities and enjoy their own movement and corporal efficiency through exercise,*

*(...)On the other hand, of education through the body and movement to acquire affective and relationship-linked competencies, which are necessary for life in society”.*

In the introduction of the subject the effects of PE on personal development, self-knowledge, body awareness and psychic balance are mentioned: “Physical Education acts, in this way, as a first order prevention factor”.

In the contribution of Physical Education to the acquisition of basic competencies, regarding the social, citizen, cultural and artistic competency, the following is highlighted:

*The practice and organization of collective sport activities demands the integration of a common project and the acceptance of the differences and limitations of the participants, following democratic norms in the organization of the group and with every participant assuming their own responsibilities. The compliance of the norms and rules that direct sport activities collaborate in acceptance of the behavior codes inherent to a society.*



*(...) To the appreciation and comprehension of the cultural fact, it contributes through the acknowledgement and valuation of human movement-related cultural activities, such as sports, traditional games, expressive activities or dancing and its consideration as part of the cultural patrimony of the people. To the expression of ideas it contributes through the exploration and use of possibilities and expressive resources of the body and movement. To the acquisition of perceptive skills, it collaborates especially from sensory and emotional experiences inherent to corporal expression activities. On the other hand, the knowledge of ludic, sport and corporal expression activities of other cultures helps acquire an open attitude towards cultural diversity.*

In the contribution of the subject to the acquisition of basic competencies, Physical Education plays a leading role in aspects of behavior codes acceptance, self-control, self-esteem, feeling and emotion expression. It's important that the students positively value their own body and other people's body in order to avoid possible dissatisfaction or corporal distortion which would lead to negative attitudes towards oneself. With this, school programs must also focus on education and a behavioral change to encourage participation in appropriate activities outside of the classroom, emphasizing on the fun and recreational aspects of exercising (Manonelles et al., 2008).

In the subject goals, teaching Physical Education in this educational stage would have as a goal the development of a set of skills, from which, due to their accordance to our study, the following stand out:

1. To know the traits that define healthy physical activity and the beneficial effects it has on individual and collective health.
2. To value regular and systematic practice of physical activities as a mean to enhance health conditions and quality of life.
3. To perform tasks aiming to increase motor skills, physical condition enhancement for health and improvement of corporal adjustment, mastery and control functions, being self-exigent while performing them.
4. To know and consolidate healthy habits, basic breathing and relaxation techniques as a mean to decrease imbalance and relieve tensions produced in daily life and in physical-sport practice.

5. To plan activities that will allow to satisfy the needs related to physical activities and specific skills starting from initial level valuation.
6. To practice and design expressive activities with or without a musical base, using the body as means of communication and creative expression.
7. To adopt a critical attitude regarding the treatment of the body, physical activity and sport in a social context.

We can appreciate how, in seven of all fourteen objectives of Physical Education, we enter in aspects related to BI, self-esteem and self-concept. Physical Education can contribute to improving BI satisfaction, the stimulation the development of positive attitudes towards self-image and body acceptance, the manifestation of a critical attitude towards the media, which encourage certain models and body stereotypes and the promotion of healthy lifestyles (Ortega, 2010).

Regarding the contents, a series of “*guide-contents*” appear in order, in blocks formed by four contents. Regarding the development of BI, self-esteem and self-concept, those who are more related are presented in the following tables:

**Table 1.**

*Selection of contents of the Physical Condition and health block*

Block 1: Physical Condition and health	
<p><b>1º MSE</b>                      Progressive muscular relaxation that allows the distinction between muscular tension and relaxation states, contributing to the wellbeing and peace with oneself and other people.</p>	<p><b>2º MSE</b>                      Better appreciation of one's physical condition and a predisposition to improve it with appropriate work.                      Positive valuation of having a good physical condition as a mean to achieve a higher level of quality of life and health.</p>
<p><b>3ºMSE</b>                      Positive valuation of the repercussions physical activities have on one's BI.</p>	<p><b>4º MSE</b>                      Better appreciation of the importance of avoiding inappropriate postural attitudes.                      Better appreciation of one's own physical condition level in order to establish one's own needs and development possibilities.                      Valuation of wellbeing activities for the proper rest of the mind and the body, the healthy state of the body and the release of tensions.</p>

This block of contents refers to aspects related to one of the self-concept dimensions (Shavelson, Hubner & Stanton, 1976): physical self-concept (better appreciation of one's own physical condition, valuation of physical condition...), framing its work on the four subjects forming the MSE, in which physical education is a mandatory subject. For the first time we see there is a content which revolves around the repercussions of physical activity on BI. In this regard through physical activities, physical education has a leading role in knowledge and valuation of BI, according to the opinions expressed by the students on this subject (Estévez, Palomares, Torres, Cepero, Collado & López, 2014).

**Table 2.**

*Selection of the Game and Sports block contents*

Block 2: Games and Sports	
<p><b>1° MSE</b> Valuation of the importance of movement development and positive disposition to learn in this field.</p>	<p><b>2° MSE</b> Game as a learning and personal development framework. Implications in physical, psychic and socio-affective domains. Valuation of the ludic possibilities of games and sports for making groups more dynamic and for personal enjoyment.</p>
<p><b>3° MSE</b> Recognition of one's own competency level in different sport activities regarding a reference entourage. Positive disposition to self-demands and overcoming one's own limitations.</p>	<p><b>4° MSE</b> Valuation of the game and sports as learning and physical, psychomotor and socio-affective developing means.</p>

There are aspects related to the valuation of motor development, the recognition of one's own level, the development and personal enjoyment and the development of psychomotor and socio-affective qualities. In the Games and Sports block there are important aspects of physical self-concept, between the dimensions that compose it (Fox & Corbin, 1989), of motor dimension and motor development.

**Table 3.**

*Selection of Corporal Expression block contents.*

Block 3: Corporal expression	
<b>1º ESO</b>	Positive attitude towards inhibition.
<b>3º ESO</b>	Open, uninhibited and communicative attitude in relationships with other people.

In this block of contents, the achievement of an uninhibition, self-acceptance and acceptance of differences by the students is sought, which would improve the group’s dynamic, that is to say, group cohesion, which would improve the classroom climate, the relationships, etc.

**Table 4.**

*Selection of Physical Activity in a Natural Environment block contents.*

Block 4: Physical Activity in a Natural Environment block contents	
<b>3ºMSE</b>	<b>4º MSE</b>
Acceptation of safety rules and performing orientation activities.	Valuation of safety based on the knowledge of rescue contingencies and protocols, as well as on good physical condition.

After this analysis, it is confirmed that the contents referring to self-esteem, self- concept and BI do not explicitly appear in the four blocks of contents of physical educations for the MSE, despite of the capacities they aim to attain (area objectives) a special prominence is shown, exposing an imbalance between what it’s expected of them to learn and the tools to actually do it, coinciding with research about the same educational stage (Ortega, 2010) and even in other educational stages such as primary education (Cuesta, 2013).

Finally, about the evaluation criteria we can read the following, differentiated by courses:

First course

*4. To improve the execution of the fundamental technical aspects of an individual sport and to accept the achieved level.*

## Second course

*4. To show self-control while applying force and regarding the adversary, in physical contact situations in games and wrestling activities.*

## Fourth course

*5. To manifest a critical attitude towards practices and valuations about sports and the body through the different media.*

*9. To use the breathing types and the relaxation techniques and methods as means to reduce imbalances an everyday life tensions.*

Analyzing the four courses' evaluation criteria, in our research line we find an initial level of acceptance, self-control, so the students, starting from the analysis of the information offered by the media, will approach topics related to sports and body, current in our society, and will critically analyze topics such as BI and lifestyle in today's society and they will be capable of autonomously applying different types of breathing and relaxation, linked to psychological wellbeing.

Important aspects of one of the new incorporations to the curriculum are highlighted: "Education for the citizenship", in which we have also analyzed what the Real Decreto 1631/2006 states. In its introduction we can read the following:

*... "It aims to improve the development of free, upstanding people through the consolidation of self-esteem, personal dignity, freedom and responsibility and the formation of future respectful, participative, caring citizens with their own criteria, who know their own rights, who will assume their duties and who will develop civic habits so they can exert their citizenship in an efficient, responsible way".*

In the contribution of the subject to social and citizen competency (Decreto 112/2007):

It contributes to strengthen autonomy, self-esteem and personal identity: it improves the development of skills allowing to participate, to make decisions, to choose the appropriate way of behaving in certain situations

and to take responsibility for their own actions and their consequences, and helps improve personal relations by making the students have a better appreciation of their own thoughts, feelings and actions.

Among the objectives for Education of the Citizenship stands out, in the first place, the one directly referring self-esteem (RD 1631/2006):

*To recognize the human condition in its individual and social condition, accepting one's own identity, the characteristics and personal experiences, respecting other people's differences and developing self-esteem.*

On the other hand, regarding the introduction of Mathematics, the following words appear:

*In this block, are also introduced the capacity to verbally express the process being followed and the confidence on one's own skills to interpret, value and make decisions about situations including a mathematical support, highlighting the importance of affective factor in teaching and learning maths.*

*Likewise, in the objectives of this subject we can read as follows:*

*To manifest a positive attitude, which is preferred to a negative one, regarding the solution of problems and to show confidence in one's capacity to successfully face them and to acquire a proper self-esteem level, which will allow them to enjoy the creative, manipulative, esthetic and utilitarian aspects of mathematics.*

Within the evaluation criteria of 3º, in the Biology and Geology subject, the following stands out:

*To recognize that physical, psychological and social aspects impact on health (...). To analyze the influence of some lifestyles on health, specially referring to the Comunitat Valenciana.*

In the contribution to basic skills acquisition by Nature Sciences it reads:

*This is the case, for example, of the knowledge of one's own body and of the relations between habits and lifestyles and health.*

Regarding Technologies, the following text has been extracted:

*The contribution to autonomy and personal initiative: through this path many opportunities are offered to develop personal qualities such as initiative, overcoming spirit, perseverance in the face of difficulties, autonomy and self-criticism, contributing to the increase of self-confidence and to an improvement of the self-esteem.*

In the case of Music, it can be read:

*On the other hand, in those activities particularly related to musical interpretation, capacities and skills such as perseverance, responsibility, self-criticism and self-esteem are developed. These are key factors for the acquisition of this competency.*

It can be appreciated how, in the different elements of the curriculum of Education for the Citizenship, Mathematics, Biology and Geology, Nature Sciences and Music, we can find the aspects targeted in our research as the consolidation of self-esteem, personal dignity, autonomy, personal identity, confidence in one's own capacities, knowledge of one's own body, initiative, overcoming spirit, perseverance in face of difficulties and self-criticism, without them being especially relevant, given their scarce presence.

## **Conclusions and Future Perspectives**

Regarding the LOE, in the preamble and preliminary title different aspects related to self-esteem are quoted and, in the Real Decreto 1631/2006, we also see how in most basic competencies the aspects related to a better self-perception, mental health, self-concept and self-esteem are important.

In the Decreto 112/2007, in the stage goals, the aspects targeted in this review are given a lot of importance. Physical Education has the lead role, and the description of the subject revolves around personal development aspects, cognitive and wellbeing functions, self-knowledge, better

appreciation of one's own body, psychic balance, classifying this subject as a first order prevention factor. In the contribution to the acquisition of basic competencies, Physical Education plays an important role regarding the acceptance of behavior codes, self-control, self-acceptation, and feelings and emotions expression. In this subject's objectives the aspects related to BI, self-esteem and physical self-concept are very important, as well as the terms emphasizing on the beneficial effects on health, adjustment, body control, motor performance, self-demands, decrease of imbalances and treatment of the body in a social context. The blocks of contents refer to the aspects regarding physical self-concept (better appreciation of one's physical condition, valuation of physical condition, aspects related to recognition and acceptance of one's own level), development of psychomotor and socio-affective qualities, uninhibited attitude, acceptance of the norms and the differences with other people and the repercussions of physical activity on the BI. In a direct way, in the evaluation criteria, BI is related to a specific criterion of the 4<sup>o</sup> of MSE, which expects the students, starting from the analysis of the information offered by the media, will approach topics related to sports and body. However, an important imbalance can be seen in the subject of Physical Education between the prominence achieved in what they want the students to learn (objectives) and its little influence on the tools needed to achieve it (evaluation criteria).

In the other subjects of the MSE curriculum, there are some references to the subject of our study only in Education for the Citizenship, Mathematics, Biology and Geology, Nature Sciences and Music. Given their scarce presence, the aspects regarding BI satisfaction, self-esteem and self-knowledge are contemplated as irrelevant, in terms of acceptance of one's own identity, work on affective factors, psychological factors, social habits, self-confidence, overcoming spirit, initiative, perseverance, responsibility and self-criticism. Their presence is scarce comparing to it in Physical Education.

However, after what has been stated in this analysis, it's advised, in the first place, to pose research studies similar to this one, with the legislation of other educational stages, such as children's education or primary education as their object of study. This would provide us with data about its treatment in previous stages and about its continuation in the following ones. And, of



course, to extend this research to other autonomous communities with their own norms, and even those that it would be interesting to contrast because of their lack of autonomic decentralization, such as Ceuta and Melilla. Of course, it would also be enlightening to contrast these results with the ones obtained with foreign legislations, at least from the EU, given the globalizing character of our society.

The need to strengthen the results in this dimension is due to the conviction that every member of our educational society must know them in order to motivate the teachers and to raise awareness about the possibility of improving the students' self-esteem and self-concept, as long as they participate too. In this way, the educational authorities could take action towards a more direct implication in legislation to work on aspects as relevant as self-esteem, self-concept and BI satisfaction.

Another didactic projection proposal of this study is the formation of an expert team in charge of the valuation of the contribution of every new norm to the acquisition and development of the skills this study targets. This team would also value the concretions of said norms, who rule the educational system, to the documents of the institutions of the center, center educational projects, stage curricular projects and classroom programs. This is the best contribution that can be made, in our opinion, from the theorization and research of these dimensions to the practice of their teaching. Unfortunately, in order to do this there is no room to make generalizations or universal, contextual or timeless proposals, because they have to be made for every educative system, for every leading legislation and the norms that concrete them, for every center and every room, and even for some individual students. In this argument underlies the proposal of attention to the current diversity, now extended and generalized, of the curricular concretion levels of the minimal teachings proposed by the Educational Administration to specific students, going through certain regions of the nation, specific centers and different classrooms.

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