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**INVESTIGACIÓN/RESEARCH**

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**PEDAGOGICAL FUNCTION OF MATERIAL RESOURCES IN EARLY  
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION****Franciso Manuel Moreno Lucas**<sup>1</sup>: San Antonio de Murcia Catholic University. Spain  
[fmoreno@ucam.edu](mailto:fmoreno@ucam.edu)**ABSTRACT:**

Materials are key elements in planning educational activities in Early Childhood Education, along with the organization of space and time. This is one of the main reasons for the importance of knowing how to select and classify the different materials that are in continuous contact with students to foster and adapt them to the rapid changes that occur in children at this age. Many and varied are the material resources that can be used in the teaching of students at this stage, and it is clear that not all material can be adapted to the learners' characteristics and needs. Therefore, teacher training is necessary in selection and classification of materials to support the teaching-learning process. The teacher must know the different characteristics that must meet any type of material that is in contact with students, its main qualities, uses, how it can promote learning, etc. A classroom can not be configured without considering the environment, that is, the climate where the child develops and internalizes relevant educational skills. Space and time are also resources that have to be taken into consideration and planned together with the materials.

**KEY WORDS:** teaching materials - kindergarten - Material selection - educational resources - learning.

**FUNCIÓN PEDAGÓGICA DE LOS RECURSOS MATERIALES  
EN EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL**

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## RESUMEN

Los materiales son elementos principales en la planificación de las actividades educativas en educación infantil, junto con la organización del espacio y tiempo. Esta es una de las razones de la importancia de saber seleccionar y clasificar los diferentes materiales que están en continuo contacto con los alumnos para fomentar y adaptarse a las rápidas transformaciones que se dan en el niño en estas edades. Son múltiples y variados los recursos materiales que se pueden utilizar en la formación integral de los alumnos de educación infantil, y está claro que no todo material se adapta a las características y necesidades de los discentes, es por ello necesario una formación del profesorado en selección y clasificación de materiales que apoyen el proceso de enseñanza/aprendizaje. El docente ha de conocer las diferentes características que debe reunir cualquier tipo de material que entre en interacción con los alumnos, que cualidades poseen, que funciones realiza, como puede fomentar el aprendizaje, etc. No se puede configurar un aula sin tener presente también el ambiente, el clima donde el niño se desarrolla e interioriza las pertinentes competencias educativas. Espacio y tiempo son también recursos que se han de cuidar y planificar junto con los materiales.

## PALABRAS CLAVE

materiales didácticos – educación infantil – selección material -- recursos educativos – aprendizaje.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*"The materials offered to children must be carefully prepared, selected and they must promote physical and intellectual activity."* (Moll and Pujol<sup>2</sup>, 1998, p. 467)

Education is a process of training and development through which the student gradually grows and acquires the necessary proficiency to be an active part of society. The teacher has to provide the child with abundant materials and resources in a planned and systematic way. The material resources used in child education are media support to pedagogical intervention made by the teacher, who acquires greater enrichment of learning for the child the more diverse the types of materials that are present.

Ruiz and Garcia<sup>3</sup> (2001) talk about the lack of specific training of many teachers in using different materials in teaching and the various possibilities of use that the same material can have for different purposes. It is obvious that many teachers only have, as information on the use of the material, the one that is supplied from the factory in

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<sup>2</sup> Moll, B and Pujol, M.A. (1998). The materials at kindergarten. In Moll, B. (Dir) (1998) Kindergarten from 0 to 6 years (pp. 250-266) Madrid. Ediciones Anaya, S.A.

<sup>3</sup> Ruiz, F and García, M. E. (2001). Methodological Issues on the Use of Materials in the School Context. In Ruiz, F. and García, M. E.. *Development of Motor Functions through Playing*. (pp. 169-196). Madrid. Editorial Gymnos.

the form of instructions. It is pertinent to select the type of material that must accompany certain experiences, trying that materials do not replace the activity of children. All materials can develop both a motivating and a supporting role in the activity, but the protagonist and the one who has to take action should be the child himself. As discussed by Gassó<sup>4</sup> "*The materials should be well varied for children to have different and rich experiences so that materials foster learning of all kinds of content, autonomy and interaction*" (p. 81).

Castillejo<sup>5</sup> (1989) notes that, in early childhood education, the educational functions of the resources we use in the classroom are the main axis on which the pedagogical conditions that must be achieved, such as the general objectives of the course, rest, we must delimit the functions we want the different materials we use to develop, always adapted to the personal characteristics and developments of students.

We must be professional in the construction, selection, classification and utilization of material resources that enable better learning in children in a harmonious way with themselves himself and with the environment in which they develop.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

With this research study, we intend to inform practitioners of early childhood education of those strategies and teaching uses that can be done with the material resources available in the classroom.

In order to achieve the overall objective, we developed the following specific objectives.

- Know the characteristics of the materials used in early childhood education
- Inform of and analyze the different classifications that can be done with the material resources in the classroom
- Describe the features of materials in teaching / learning in the early childhood stage.
- Inform of on the selection of materials in early childhood education

## 3. METHODOLOGY

Using all the information gathered from different authors skilled in the field, we want to inform the faculty of early childhood education of the important value of a good selection and classification of materials to be used in the classroom for the teaching / learning process to be more efficient and effective.

The methodology has focused on the systematic search for information in publications by authors who have worked on the design, construction and use of educational materials, conducting research that has critically analyzed all the found documents, to develop a posteriori a guiding instrument that education professionals can use when planning the material resources available in the classroom.

The collection of information was carried out through literature review where all

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<sup>4</sup> Gassó, A (2005) *Kindergarten. Methods, Techniques and Organization*. Barcelona, Ediciones Ceac.

<sup>5</sup> Castillejo. J. L. (1989) The Educational Action in Kindergarten. In Carretero, M et al. *Pedagogy of Kindergarten*. (pp 101-114) Madrid: Santillana.

found sources such as journal articles, books, electronic resources, research reports, etc., as well as the very experience resulting from teaching in early childhood education have been processed.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

As mentioned above, we prepared a document that has synthesized all the relevant information about the pedagogical role of properly using material resources in early childhood education, through knowledge of the functions and features thereof and the study of patterns and strategies to be developed in time to select and sort the materials in the classroom. Any developed material also becomes an educational resource at the service of teachers to encourage and help students to acquire the habit of study. The analysis presented below is built as a source of consultation for teachers.

##### **4.1 The functionality of materials in education**

Materials have a major influence on the teaching / learning process throughout the academic career of humans. By way of a methodology based on manipulation and experimentation of materials, the learner can internalize more efficiently all the knowledge and skills that are necessary for full development. If we give that importance to the use of material resources during the training stage, it is necessary, if possible, to pay attention to early childhood education, a period where learning is more fruitful and will condition the learner's development at a cognitive, social and adaptive level in the future.

All teachers whose work is aimed at early childhood education have to know the roles material resources can play at this stage, to adapt to the needs and interests of students and make this method of learning a more efficient way for the comprehensive education of learners. Ruiz and Garcia<sup>6</sup> (2001) believe that, by treating the materials as neutral instruments, we significantly reduce the educational options they can offer to the training of students. We cannot turn students into mere repeaters of predetermined activities and actions, without freedom of exchange of material, as this will undermine their imaginative, creative and recreational skills. Materials have appropriate characteristics for the assimilation of some experience, while stimulating the motivation to implement the planned activities, reducing boredom that can result from using limited material or material not adapted to the educational interests at that stage.

Ruiz and Garcia<sup>7</sup> (2001) continue to assert that "the functions that material resources can and should play as curriculum materials at the service of teaching / learning are multiple" (p. 175). Any material or educational resource can become educational if it meets in advance a set of criteria or features that ensure certain learning. To do so,

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<sup>6</sup> Ruiz F. and García, M. E. (2001) Methodological Issues on the Use of Materials in the School Context. In Ruiz, F. and García, M. E. *Development of Motor Functions through Playing* (pp. 169.196) Madrid: Editorial Gymnos.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem

Rodríguez<sup>8</sup> (2005) provides three functions to be performed by any material used in education:

- ✓ **Function of support to learning:** Materials promote internalization of the contents in an effective and meaningful way in the process of acquisition of learning. Given the manual nature of the childhood stage, materials play an essential role as they channel the selection and storage of information.
- ✓ **Structuring function,** they help when arranging and structuring all the information they receive, so that what is abstract will be transformed into more concrete and accessible knowledge, thereby achieving that students get more specific and concrete learning.
- ✓ **Motivating function,** any material resource in early childhood education has to be flashy, a source of interaction and facilitate learning in a nice, funny and enjoyable way, where the child does not conceive himself the main objective, which is learning, but considers all educational activities as an extension over his daily life.

Authors like Abengoechea and Romero<sup>9</sup> (1991) suggest two other functions: *the innovative function* of materials as producers of stimuli resulting from what is novel and creative that is provided by the material to the student; and *the conditioning function of learning*, in relation to the kind of information processing that students perform. These two functions are added to materials to expand the number of possible materials to be used in the classroom as the development zone that one wants to strengthen in students. This way, we can bring about new stimuli in students and develop their creativity through objects that are not in their daily life such as utensils from labor occupations or materials from other cultural contexts.

Domenech and Viñas<sup>10</sup> (1997) agree that the basic function of materials is to complement and serve as a basis for the educational activity that takes place in any educational space. Thus, the innovative and motivating role in the educational itinerary helps to acquire new knowledge. Materials support the educational practice due to their motivating nature when potentiating the learning one pursues, strengthening learning and reinforcing those processes that have not been treated safely, because of the rhythms of learning and individual development of students. Parcerisa<sup>11</sup> (2010) also refers to the functions performed by the use of materials in the teaching / learning process, such as being structuring elements of reality; help control learning to be acquired; be consumer products; methodological guidance; support the construction of learning; motivating.

Thus, these functions performed by the teaching resources used in education, as

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<sup>8</sup> Rodríguez, M. (2005) *Materials and Resources in Early Childhood Education. Handbook of Practical Uses for the Teacher*. Vigo: Ideaspropias Editorial.

<sup>9</sup> Abengoechea, S. and Romero, E. (1991). *Selection and Use of Means*. Barcelona: Master in training of trainers RENFE-UAB (Polycopied document)

<sup>10</sup> Domenech, J. and Viñas, J. (1997). *Organization of Space and Time in the Educational Center*. Barcelona: Graó

<sup>11</sup> Parcerisa, A. (2010) Didactic Materials as a Resource in Community Action. In Area, M, Parcerisa, A. and Rodríguez, J. (coords) *Didactic Materials and Resources in Community Contexts* (pp 15-29) Barcelona: Graó

Rodriguez<sup>12</sup> continues commenting (2005), must be tied to the critical attitude the teacher must have when selecting materials and resources in accordance with the needs, interests and characteristics of children, and be supported through teamwork of the entire educational community of the child education cycle, when preparing teaching materials, organizing and systematizing the content, type of methodology to be used, and finally, in assessing the suitability of the materials used.

In this sense, the participation and collaboration of teachers in the development and implementation of tutorials is convenient, with the combined use of own resources, teaching materials, introduction of new experiences, activities with other professionals, etc. to thereby achieve a tutorial being richer as regards variety, originality and efficiency and more customized to the needs and interests of students to whom it is addressed, as well as the social context where students are, while minimizing, as far as possible, the use of exclusive materials and lesson plans made by entities specializing in childhood education but showing a training, through their contents, in a generalized manner in order to reach the largest number of groups, without paying attention to the idiosyncrasy of the environment where students grow.

Diaz<sup>13</sup> (1996) believes that teaching materials and resources must comply with the basic functions of supporting the curriculum taught in the educational stage, thus becoming enabling elements in the activities of teaching / learning. In addition to the motivating, structuring and supporting functions mentioned by Rodriguez<sup>14</sup> (2005), Diaz<sup>15</sup> (1996) also highlight a strictly didactic function, in which the materials are in harmony with the objectives of the stage in which the materials are used, other learning-enabling function, and finally, a supporting function to the teacher, supporting the teaching practice in order to achieve the desired learning.

All materials perform a function or another according to the type of learning one wants to perform. As mentioned above, the critical attitude of the teacher and his discernment have enough influence on the learning outcomes of the student, therefore, one should try, in early childhood education, to use simple, concrete materials that can gradually be modified and developed, according to student's need, into more complex and complete materials that provide and / or increase other types of learning.

Chateau<sup>16</sup> (1963) emphasizes the support of objects in the process of assimilating meaningful learning, saying that when knowledge is desirable, it has to impose the function of the object known so that knowledge remains attached to the role of the object presented. One of the functions performed by the materials is to promote manipulation, exercise and experimentation in the child through the various materials, the child can relate to the reality around him. The object provides children

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<sup>12</sup> Rodríguez, M. (2005). *Materials and Resources in Early Childhood Education. Handbook for Practical Uses for the Teacher*. Vigo: Ideaspropias Editorial.

<sup>13</sup> Díaz, J. (1996) Didactic Resources and Materials in Physical Education. *Notes on Physical Education and Sports*, 43, pp. 42-52.

<sup>14</sup> Rodríguez, M. (2005). *Materials and Resources in Early Childhood Education. Handbook of Practical Uses for the Teacher*. Vigo: Ideaspropias Editorial

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem

<sup>16</sup> Chateau, J. (1963) *Le Réel et l'imaginaire dans le jeu de l'enfant*. Paris: J. Vrin (3<sup>a</sup> edition)

with a posteriori knowledge that they can use to start building their own knowledge, so that many materials will be uniting bridges between the proposed learning. In this sense, Perez and Calzada<sup>17</sup> (1998) discuss the properties that materials used in early childhood education must have, one of them is having stimulatory capacity in order to capture the child's attention to the proposed activity, another property that materials must have is that they can enable the development of certain processes, such as the internalization of concepts, categories, status, etc.

### 4.3 The selection of material resources in the classroom

The selection and arrangement of the materials must be careful and consensual, since these resources will ensure learning, reinforcing the acquisition of autonomy and independence, and internalization of values, standards and attitudes that help socialization and relationship among peers. Sugrañes, Alós, Andres Casal, Castrillo, Medina and Yuste<sup>18</sup> (2012) emphasize the importance of selection and systematization of materials in order to achieve the proposed learning, "in the researching action of children, we should offer them a variety of materials that allow them to touch, smell, compare, do and undo as a strategy to get education." (p.74) In this vein, it is very important to have a variety of materials that can meet the needs and interests of all students, and to have such a list of materials, training and cataloging types of materials and resources that can be used is required as well as the various functions that can meet the objectives to be achieved.

Herkowitz<sup>19</sup> (1979) (quoted by Ruiz, 1988) discusses the existence of three trends when designing and building materials for children, one of the trends would be the one that focuses on the design of materials with identical form as the objects adults use, adapting them to children in relation to size and weight; another trend believes that materials and equipment have been designed for children to act upon them and transform them according to the real possibilities of each one; finally, there is a trend to design materials whose difficulty of use is progressive according to the skills the learner is achieving.

Another author, Castillejo<sup>20</sup> (1989), considers that educational teaching resources must meet two conditions when in interaction with learners; on the one hand, they have to satisfy the criterion of congeniality, be appropriate to the level of development of children, in order to make their use as beneficial for learning to be assimilated as possible and, on the other hand, educational resources to the service of students must have an accessible nature in order to be used by everyone and in every educational context, without the need for aid, barriers or any other hindrance that is different from the rules established for their use.

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<sup>17</sup> Pérez, M. L. and Calzada, P. (1998) The Teacher, In Moll, B. (dir) (1998) *The early childhood school from 0 to 6 years* (pp. 115-132). Madrid: Ediciones Anaya, S.A.

<sup>18</sup> Sugrañes, E.; Alós, M.; Andrés, N.; Casal, S.; Castrillo, C.; Medina, N. and Yuste, M. (2012) *Watching for Interpreting. Everyday Activities for Early Childhood Education (2-6)* Barcelona: Editorial Graó

<sup>19</sup> Ruiz, L. M. (1988) Spaces, Equipment, Materials and Development of Motor Behaviors. *Note on Physical Education and Sports*, 13, pp. 7-8, Spanish version.

<sup>20</sup> Castillejo, J. L. (1989) The Educational Action in the Early Childhood School. In Carretero, M. et al. *Pedagogy of the Early Childhood School*. (pp. 101-114) Madrid: Santillana.

There are many criteria to consider when selecting the material to favor acquisition of educational skills, we highlight the criteria of Rodriguez<sup>21</sup> (2005) for materials on childhood education:

- ✓ The material has to be attractive both aesthetically and functionally, it has to attract the attention of the child, inviting him to interact with it.
- ✓ Materials should be appropriate to the developmental stage of children, adapted to their abilities, characteristics and needs.
- ✓ The material should be affordable and able to be manipulated, that children can use the material autonomously and independently.
- ✓ It must enhance and promote the motor, cognitive, emotional and social activity.
- ✓ It must meet the respective safety standards.
- ✓ It must provide the stimuli corresponding to its choice.
- ✓ It should not facilitate sex-discriminating or militaristic attitudes.
- ✓ It should provide children with all the possibilities of action that it can develop.

#### 4.4 Characteristics of material resources

Besides knowing the criteria that the different materials we use in our educational work should meet, it is necessary to distinguish the characteristics of these materials, in order to adapt ourselves to the educational goals pursued in the educational courses of the student. In this regard, Bautista<sup>22</sup> (2010) provides a number of features that materials should have in relation to the additional function performed in the educational activity, such as:

- *motivating character*; since according to the shape, texture, color and particular characteristics of the material, it will awaken interest and curiosity for its use.
- *versatile character*; materials can be used as elements in various school activities and as elements of different games.
- *collective character*; its use can be individual or collective.
- *accessibility character*; It is organized and available for the free choice of the students.

Regarding the characteristics that the material must have to be used in the classroom, Pose<sup>23</sup> (2010) states that the materials must be of a marked playful and entertaining nature, but avoiding to fall into the trap of creating attractive, funny and playful materials but empty of content, since not all fun and entertainment promote

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<sup>21</sup> Rodriguez, M. (2005) *Materials and Resources in Early Childhood Education. A Handbook of Practical Uses for the Teacher*. Vigo: Ideas propias Editorial.

<sup>22</sup> Bautista, j. M. (2010) *Materials as Mediators*. Taken on 05/23/12 from [http://www.investigalog.com/el\\_juego\\_como\\_metodo\\_didactico/tema-8-los-materiales-como-mediadores/](http://www.investigalog.com/el_juego_como_metodo_didactico/tema-8-los-materiales-como-mediadores/)

<sup>23</sup> Pose, A. (2010) Didactic Materials in Museums, a Resource for Community Dynamization. An Outlook of the State of the Art. In Area, M.; Parcerisa, A. and Rodríguez, J. (coords) *Didactic Materials and Resources in Community Contexts* (pp. 95-102) Barcelona: Graó

meaningful learning. Gassó<sup>24</sup> (2005) also gets from Montessori the learning methodology based on the use of a type of material that promotes the development of children's intelligence. To implement this type of learning, the materials to be used must meet a number of features:

- **Structured:** the doctor offers children limited materials in order to, this way, help to sort their mind, facilitate understanding of things and give them security in their learning materials.
- **Attractive:** it is essential that the material be attractive, be well cared and monopolize the children's interest for their aesthetic appearance without being strident.
- **Strong:** materials must be robust so that children can realize their motor activity on them without fear.
- **Self-correcting:** in most of materials, you can check the error if you are wrong. Children, therefore, can repeat the exercises with that material as many times as they want to, if they like it, get it right. Thus, success, not failure, is encouraged and, therefore, a positive self-concept of oneself is helped to build. In addition, children can be truly autonomous, no need for the adult to intervene, they can handle the error by themselves (Gassó, 2005, p. 45).

In line with this, in order to promote attitudes of infants and provide greater opportunities for learning, Martin<sup>25</sup> (2011) also speaks of a number of features that the materials that go into interaction with children should have: hygienic and nontoxic, with aesthetic and sensory qualities, offering opportunities for exploration, discovery and experimentation, in good conditions of use and having attractive power to their use.

Another contribution that we found in relation to the didactic conditions materials should have in early childhood education is the one expressed by Artiga<sup>26</sup> (1991), who considers that the materials we use have to respond to the proposed objectives proposed in the annual schedule. Materials must be adapted to the evolutionary development of children, be a resource that enables them to go through each stage of development. Ruiz and Garcia<sup>27</sup> (2001) also highlight what types of features any material is to have for being used in education in order to improve motor development, development must also be taken into account especially in the second cycle of early childhood education.

#### 4.5 Classification of materials in early childhood education.

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<sup>24</sup> Gassó, A. (2005). *Early Childhood Education, Methods, Techniques and Organization*. Barcelona: Ediciones Ceac.

<sup>25</sup> Martin, L. (2011) Looking inside the School: Arranging the Space and Materials. In Antón, M. (coord.) *Planning the 0-6 stage. Commitment of their agents and everyday practice* (pp. 185-210) Barcelona: Graó

<sup>26</sup> Artiga, C. (1991) *The School Material. The Nursery School and Initial Cycle*. Barcelona: Abril Editorial.

<sup>27</sup> Ruiz, F. and García, M. E. (2001) Material Resources to Develop Motor Functions in Kindergarten and Elementary Education. In Ruiz, F. and García, M. E. *Development of Motor Functions through Playing* (pp. 123-168) Madrid: Editorial Gymnos.

In relation to the systematization of materials on early child education, Martínez<sup>28</sup> (1993) considers it important for the teacher to select and sort the materials according to the intended purpose and in accordance with the rhythms and needs of students. Students must be presented with different materials that they can use and contribute to development in various fields, such as materials that support the development of communication and language, sensory materials that promote education, objects that allow students to direct contact with nature and exploration of the surrounding environment, etc. Soler<sup>29</sup> (1989), expresses that the material must always be located within reach of the school children, open to their manipulation and management, important premise to promote the principle of active teaching. We have to let children be sufficiently autonomous and independent to catch and handle any material that we have groped around, so that children can apprehend it, as Soler<sup>30</sup> (1989) recommends, "*free access to school supplies and everything around them and is part of their environment is a basic principle of this pedagogy of education*" (p. 144).

Every classroom organization should materially enhance interaction and the acquisition of physical, emotional, social and intellectual learning, especially in early childhood education, materials will help to promote the emotional development, movement, habits of postural control, communication and language, coexistence and social relations, positive image and personal autonomy, and the discovery of the physical and social characteristics of the environment.

Materials must comply with the continuous and rapid transformations taking place in children in the early stages of their life, providing educating with new materials to replace others that are finite when it comes to promoting new skills and performing a restructuring of all elements that are in continuous interaction with students after their comprehensive development. Flexibility and capacity for change will be relevant factors in the early years of a child's life because of their progress at the psychomotor and cognitive level, for which this transformation should be anticipated with a catch of materials that support school learning, "*so that the material can be a useful tool to help develop an educational project (and thus to facilitate learning processes), it is necessary to use it at the right time, in the right way and for the relevant objectives.*" (Parcerisa<sup>31</sup>, 2010, p. 23)

Materials are to be structured according to the objectives that are marked at the school stage and according to the needs and interests of learners; therefore, there is no single way to catalog all susceptible materials used in the teaching / learning process of children, but we should configure as many catalogs of materials as educational purposes or objectives are pursued. Overall, in early childhood

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<sup>28</sup> Martínez, A. (1993) The Classroom in Early Childhood Education. In V. García, (Dir) *Customized Early Childhood Education* (pp. 225-261). Madrid: Ediciones Rialp.

<sup>29</sup> Soler, E. (1989) Sensorial Education, In Carretero, M. et al. *Pedagogy of the Early Childhood School* (pp. 101-114) Madrid: Santillana.

<sup>30</sup> Soler, E. (1989) Sensorial Education. In Carretero, M. et al. *Pedagogy of the Early Childhood School* (pp. 101-114) Madrid: Santillana.

<sup>31</sup> Parcerisa, A. (2010) Didactic Materials as a Resource in Community Action In Area, M; Parcerisa, A. and Rodríguez, J. (coords) *Didactic Materials and Resources in Community Contexts* (pp. 15-19) Barcelona: Graó.

education, the materials that are more used and we more frequently find will be called basic materials for use in various activities, such as paper, pencils, fabrics, paintings, threads, clay, dough, cardboard, ropes as well as any waste material that can be profitable. Other materials that are also used in kindergarten are the tempera, threads, scissors, paintbrushes, stickers, rollers, sponges, glues, punches, musical instruments, supplies for hygiene and toilet utensils. Picture books, books, games, digital tools (computers, DVD, CD), sheets, etc can also be considered essential. Materials must not be fixed in a defined manner imposed from higher levels of the educational system, but as Diaz<sup>32</sup> (1996) comments, they must suggest a way of working with learning the knowledge, material resources must be used to the service of the teacher as elements that invite to reflection and debate, and not mere tools to be used in a robotic fashion. All materials must be flexible and open, allowing the teacher to investigate and modify their functions to make them be as close as possible to the interests and needs of learners. In this sense, it is not necessary to invest a lot of money on materials that achieve the learning outcomes but, as highlighted by Gassó<sup>33</sup> (2005), there are several methods for classification of materials, such as the one used by the Agazzi sisters where guidelines are given to develop and get all the necessary training materials, emphasizing that the real engine and encouragement to foster learning in learners is the vocation and spirit of the teacher.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

During early childhood education, students are in a stage of development where they are more receptive to the assimilation of new learning and knowledge, they are unlimited volume containers that will condition their academic and professional future to a greater or lesser extent. Given this premise, the teacher has to select the materials used in the teaching / learning process as teaching aids that contribute significantly to acquire the educational skills planned for that school stage.

Knowledge of the various functions performed by material resources in the education of students, the recognition of the characteristics of the materials used in the tasks and activities as well as making a good selection and classification of material resources in the classroom will provide the teacher with tools of highest relevance for the training of people with autonomy and critical thinking.

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<sup>32</sup> Díaz, J. (1996) Didactic Resources and Materials in Physical Education. *Notes on Physical Education and Sports*, 43, pp. 42-52.

<sup>33</sup> Gassó, A. (2005). *Early Childhood Education. Methods, Techniques and Organization*. Barcelona: Ediciones Ceac.

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