

## The special pedagogy between research and training during Covid-19.

### The possible inclusion after pandemic

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*Available online: 28/06/2021*

It was a specific intention of Catia Giaconi to dedicate the first topic of 2021, during this pandemic time and therefore of great uncertainty, to the dimensions of research and training in the field of special pedagogy.

In order to trace a frame of reflections, researches and studies aimed both at promoting the university social and work inclusion projects for young people and adults with disabilities, and at experimenting new paths for trainers' education: educators, pedagogues and support teachers.

These are the two pillars around which the various contributions published here refer, and that we are going to report briefly within a dossier including articles both in Italian and English, and written by Italian and foreign authors. These contributions came from joint collaborations among colleagues from different nationalities and generations, as true research should always be: without any boundaries and wisely mixed inside; with different communication channels as a manifestation of the different research schools, where the same linguistic tools used reply to a principle of maximum fidelity to a thought that does not intend to give rise to ambiguity and misunderstandings.

The use of a language rather than another is not the result of nationalisms or provincial closures, but the best means to bring out all the richness of a heuristic articulation that could not find, in any other expressive code, all its fullness and its various diagnostic, prognostic and therapeutic nuances. In a single term: scientific, in the complexity of the different junctions and argumentative and design steps.

The journal's first article is a contribution written by one of the co-editors of the journal: Michele Corsi, with ages that act as a context for the various texts to follow, and with particular attention to young people, also to young people with disabilities. Even the process preceding this specific evolutionary age is considered including previous and following generations. In this view,

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Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa12056

the individual is seen as the focal point in all his aspects and existential conditions, especially in this Italian pandemic period.

In “A year of pandemic and crime to the younger generations. Suggestions and hypotheses”, Corsi underlines that what was missing in Italy was, unquestionably, the culture of a serious, authentic, and motivated planning, together with the design styles and the possibility to make forecasts, for many institutions and for most citizens. In addition, he underlines the lack of a necessary and unavoidable recourse to prevention, often limited to a barely “repairing” action.

All these terms also represent the perimeter of science at the service of politics and decision-making power, with an approach which has often been annoying, if not harmful, and often incomprehensible. A pandemic – however, it should not be overlooked – that has caught anyone unprepared and inexperienced.

The second focal point is identified in the school and university and its attendants: from children to young people. These subjects show numerous inequalities in our country: poor students, children lacking services in Southern Italy, and a middle class which is drowning into destitution, misery, and unemployment. These issues had to face the matching between classroom teaching and distance learning.

Corsi elaborated these thoughts in the light of the psychosocial and educational conditions of the younger generations, to keep this age from becoming a time of crisis, which cannot be overcome, but rather to lead it toward opportunities for life, culture, and mental health, and, finally, bearing in mind that the right of education, for each and every one, is the only social elevator that can change the destiny of a country, in this case Italy, and also foster economy and employment. Skills are a fundamental variable of GDP growth as well as of democracy actually implemented and not recited only in words.

Here we intend to group the different texts around the two polarities highlighted at the beginning of this Editorial, being aware that sometimes the watershed between reflections, research, and studies aimed at promoting university, social and work inclusion projects for young people and adults with disabilities and the experimentation of new paths for the trainers’ education, lies a thin veil of Maya of Schopenhauerian memory – as it occurs for any authentically scientific weaving. However, we work willingly for this.

This first group opens with an article written by Márcia Greguol, Cristiana Conti, Bruno Marson Malagodi, Bruna Barboza Seron, Elaine Cappellazzo Souto and Attilio Carraro, entitled “The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the practice of physical activity of people with disability”. Here the authors highlight how the global pandemic caused by COVID-19 has profoundly

changed the daily life of most of the world population. Within it, people with disabilities, who have been particularly affected by these changes, have often accentuated their isolation and marginalization due to greater difficulties in accessing health services.

People with disabilities are also damaged in relation to their ability to participate in physical activity, with even more negative consequences for their quality of life and their health. Pointing out how, regardless of the type of disability, and in most cases, they did not even have the opportunity to access it or to take advantage of some kind of remote driving. With a greater prevalence, therefore, of sedentary behaviours and negative attitudes also in their eating habits as reported by caregivers; finally, to highlight the need for specific strategies and initiatives for people with disabilities in order to maintain healthy habits and a physically active lifestyle.

Likewise, as Serena Sani writes in “The economic, social and educational consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic for immigrant families and their children”, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the consequent lockdown, also had dramatic effects on another fragility condition: foreign families and their children. By highlighting, in particular, the economic, social, and educational problems of these families and their children in the long period of health crisis and the closure of schools. With many foreign students who have not been able to access distance learning and, therefore, take advantage of the necessary relationships with teachers and classmates; remaining, therefore, completely outside the school circuit and from all those opportunities for interaction and learning that are fundamental for their training path.

In a broader perspective, which we could define as a further context, we mention the article by Stefania Montebelli, entitled “The territory as space for social creativity. An example of a laboratory for a Welcoming City”, in which the author emphasizes how the current trend of urban transformation no longer affects only the expansion of urban centers, but rather the conversion of existing heritage. With an urban space that, today, is often discontinuous, composed of places that time has placed close, but often without any planning, demonstrating that the evolution of territoriality is, not infrequently, faster than that of the territory that keeps the material inventories. Thus forming interstitial spaces in the urban fabric that only social creativity can reinsert into the planning of an inhabited and vital context, giving them a new meaning. This should be grasped in all its urgency because, whether territorialisation concerns the conquest of extraterritorial spaces, or the best use of those within one’s own territory, the abandoned urban space represents a sort of threatening indeterminacy that can come to be de-structuralizing for the territory, as well as for the collective identity. Creativity, therefore, turns out to be a territorializing strategy through

which society can nevertheless educate to active citizenship by reifying, signifying, and functionalizing the spaces of living, self-representing itself.

Finally, in a sort of transition between this first group of contributions and the second, in a narrative that passes from the existing to the project, is the article by Francesca Salis and Britt Rodhes: “Trauma-Informed Care During a global pandemic: synergies and multidisciplinary boundaries for working with childhood, adolescence, senility, and disability”. The question of an informed approach to trauma is here faced from a multidisciplinary perspective and from global and systemic management. With particular regard, in the current pandemic context, for the most fragile people at every stage of existence. Especially when fragility is due to deficit and disability. Trauma-Informed Care organizations, the most widespread and present in the Anglo-Saxon context, refer, for example, to the following principles: create a safe and reliable environment; allow the relationship, or support, between peers and self-help; implement personal empowerment, self-representation, and self-determination. Aiming to reduce exposure to adversity and implementing collective skills for assistance, education, and guidance.

In the second part of the work, however, the role of special pedagogy in trauma and in the problems highlighted by the COVID 19 pandemic is outlined. With the importance of recognizing, evaluating, and dealing with traumatic stress in promoting collaboration with families and social networking, and in the hope of creating policies and cultures capable of managing emergencies in relation to everyone’s needs, but with a priority and greater attention aimed at the most exposed people, such as people with disabilities.

In the second group, we will try to follow a chronological-evolutionary path from birth to youth and beyond.

Starting, also here, from a “framework” given by Antonio Manuel Amor, María Fernández, Miguel Ángel Verdugo, Alba Aza and María Isabel Calvo, in their contribution entitled “Towards the fulfilment of the right to inclusive education for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities: framework for action”. The authors argue that, since the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) was approved, inclusive education has evolved towards a right capable of guaranteeing education for all students. Despite this, students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have not benefited from this important legal opportunity on a par with others. On the contrary, in the last 15 years they are experiencing a stagnation. There remains an important gap between the policies approved at national, regional and local level aimed at including these students and the educational experiences they received within the educational systems. In order to address this gap, the authors present a conceptual and practical support paradigm and quality of life model that provide educators with a system

of actions capable of shortening the distance between the current education of students with IDD and what is desirable. This global approach is capable of directing the access, participation, learning and development of students with IDD to their maximum potential, and allowing the achievement of the necessary aims for inclusive and quality education.

Hence, with a focus instead on birth – so as to start the aforementioned chronological-evolutionary path –, the contribution of Gianluca Amatori: “Preterm infants: parental implications and perspectives of special pedagogy for early childhood” in which the author highlights how preterm birth is an event that currently affects about 30,000 children a year in Italy.

The great advances made in the field of neonatology (especially in recent decades) have in any case drastically reduced the risk of mortality. However, it should be remembered that these children – writes Amatori – can run a significant danger: that of developing complications so serious as to potentially lead to permanent diseases or disabilities, especially for those born at a lower gestational age. The article then delves into the phenomenon of prematurity according to the parental and pedagogical dimension. Interdisciplinary synergistic actions of special education should be promoted both in direct support to families and in the preparation of generative welfare actions able to involve educators and teachers as valid allies in early intervention and in the implementation of efficient educational services for early childhood.

Two contributions concerning the 3-6 year range follow below.

The first is by Luigi d’Alonzo and Roberta Sala: “The educational needs of teachers for the early diagnosis of difficulties in kindergarten”, in which the two authors present a reflection on potential training courses for kindergarten teachers. In particular, the data reported derive from a phase of the research-action promoted within the European project Erasmus+ More Opportunities for Every Child (MOEC), which involved colleagues from Italy, France, Spain and Poland, to investigate the possibility to build observation tools capable of detecting the difficulties of preschool children.

The results of the project refer to the growing need to promote reflections on the value of observation, which should be increased through adequate teacher training. Other aspects deserving particular attention, are the appropriate educational strategies to guarantee the quality of education and creation of real communities of practice. In this direction, the authors stress the need to develop new professional skills to support the educational and learning growth of every kindergarten child.

With the article by Lucia Dinacci: “Philosophizing in the age of pandemic: topicality and new challenges for Philosophy for Children”, instead, these are explored starting from the challenges and criticalities in which the pandemic situation from Covid-19 has placed us, the possibilities that the “Philosophy for

Children” curriculum could offer not only at the didactic level, but also at the communitarian level, through the specific educational device of the “Philosophical Research Community”. In particular, the proposal of the “Philosophy for Children”, which is expressed in the dialogic practice of philosophy-making, could allow the pandemic experience to be reorganized into a new horizon of sense and meaning, recovering, in the context of this “new normal” in which reflexivity has been replaced by an emergency-type action, a perspective oriented to the value and care of the other. Also underlining the importance of the latent dimension of the “communitas”, as an original condition and transcendental presupposition of our existence, making it “dialogue” with the “Philosophical Research Community”, considered as an ideal model towards which all communities should strive.

Here we introduce three contributions on primary school, and a fourth, also, on the age of childhood.

The first is by Donatella Fantozzi: “Teaching and learning in secondary school: theoretical paradigms and operational declinations for an inclusive school”, in which the author argues the need to think about a training path that allows the future teacher to experience their own theoretical learning through operational methods such as internships, laboratory activities, the coaching of experienced colleagues during the first period of service and continuous training for the entire time frame of the profession. As clearly emerges from both scientific research and OECD international monitoring on the state of the school and the skills of teachers, as well as directly from aspiring teachers who express, in the survey presented, the need to acquire specific skills about inclusive teaching, collegiality and interdisciplinary, considered indispensable devices for being able to and knowing how to decline teaching in learning. And presenting, upon completion, the results of an exploratory survey carried out among the students of the University of Pisa, in the academic years 2018-19 and 2019-20, relating to the training course for the acquisition of the 24 University Educational Credits necessary to access teaching: survey aimed at measuring the satisfaction and wishes of the participants.

The second is by Fabio Bocci and Ines Guerini, entitled “Remote laboratory experiences on inclusive pedagogy and didactics. Teacher training in the covid era”, in which the authors highlight how the Covid-19 pandemic has largely forced a rethinking of social spaces in the relationship, including education and training, bringing out a whole series of critical issues and issues already present in the pre-pandemic era, but which the forced confinements and the limits imposed by the distancing have further amplified. Therefore, in the university context, a reconfiguration of spaces (presence vs distance) had to be carried out, like the training paradigm itself. Representing, in this way, an opportunity not to be lost, and opening up to experiences which, despite their tendency to re-

adapt the old into the new, are nevertheless able to introduce some innovative elements, together with the experimentation of fields of action so far only partially explored. This is what happened – we read – also to the authors of this contribution in which some laboratory experiences conducted in the context of the initial training of primary school teachers are described. And in which the scientific background consists of the reference context of inclusive pedagogy and teaching, which represents not only the disciplinary content to be conveyed, but also the horizon of meaning for the methodological-didactic choices adopted and for the choice of the same object of study proposed to the participants.

The third is the contribution of Simone Aparecida Capellini, Isabela Pires Metzner, Noemi Del Bianco, Ilaria D’Angelo, Aldo Caldarelli and Catia Giaconi: “Perceptual-visual-motor measures, reading and properties of eye movements of students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder”. This study aims to compare and relate the performance of students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) to academic performance in perceptual-visual-motor and reading processes, in order to verify the progress of eye movements when students with ADHD are reading. Twenty primary school students, of both sexes, and aged between eight and twelve, participated in this research, divided into two groups: Group I (GI), consisting of 20 students with interdisciplinary diagnoses of ADHD, and group II (GII), made up of 20 students with good academic performance, matched by gender, age group and education with GI. All students were subjected to the evaluation protocol of reading processes (PROLEC) also in the computerized version and to the visual perception development test 3 (DTVP 3). During this activity, Gazepoint GP3 Eye Tracker equipment was used, which records eye movements and analyzes the properties of these movements using Gazepoint Analysis UX Edition software to capture eye movement while reading. These procedures were then applied individually to the students of both groups. The results were therefore statistically analysed, revealing that the difficulties of students with ADHD in reading processes can be justified by the perceptual-visual-motor deficit and by the shorter fixation time in grasping the information of each word read. This obviously compromises the ability to identify and decode words, leading to difficulties in accessing the meaning of words and texts. The results were then studied in depth according to an inclusive pedagogical and planning perspective.

Finally, always paying attention to childhood, the article by Arianna Taddei, Esmeralda Azahar López and Rebeca Abigail Recinos Reyes: “Children with Hearing Disabilities during the Pandemic: Challenges and Perspectives of Inclusion”, in which the reader can grasp how COVID-19 has significantly increased existing inequalities in educational opportunities and health services

for children with disabilities. The data collected by international agencies between 2020 and 2021 have shown, in fact, the increased risk of exclusion for children with disabilities, especially in developing countries. The marginalization of people with sensory disabilities during the pandemic has therefore further increased compared to the pre-Covid situation: the authors argue. Further, the barriers that children with hearing disabilities have encountered in accessing socio-educational and rehabilitation services are investigated, and reflect on the importance of social support in a flexible way for the various local actors. In this perspective, therefore, the Center of Attention for Communication, Hearing and Language of the Central American University José Simeón Cañas of El Salvador provides an educational and rehabilitation service aimed at children with hearing disabilities, transforming their methodologies and practices of inclusion. On the basis of these analyses, suitable prospects for action and research are consequently envisaged, capable of planning the future, starting from the lessons learned.

We then move on to the university, with two additional contributions.

The first is the contribution of Noemi Del Bianco and Laurel Mason. In “Specific Learning Disorders in Higher Education: the University of Arizona case study”, the authors document the growth, over the past decade, of students with attention and learning disorders at universities around the world. The difficulties encountered by students during their academic career have led to an increase in the support services offered by universities to meet their needs. Also outlining an example of a program implemented in the United States by the “Salt Center” of the University of Arizona capable of achieving optimal results in favor of this specific population.

The second is by Gigliola Paviotti, Ilaria D’Angelo, Simone Capellini Aprecida and Catia Giaconi: “Inclusion in the University context and the role of internship in the education of students with disabilities: critical issues, perspectives and good practices”. In it, the theme of university inclusion, today at the center of the national and international debate, identifies the reasons, which are linked to a significant increase in the number of students with disabilities enrolled at the university, as shown in the first report “Disability, DSA and access to university education”, recently presented by ANVUR (National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research System) and by the CNUDD (National Conference of University Delegates for Disability). From this report several useful steps emerge for the insertion of university students, but also different critical dimensions that still require the attention of research and academic policies. Finally, the article examines the state of the art, focusing on the exploration of one of the critical issues of university inclusion, namely the role of internships in the educational experience of students with disabilities and in their life plan. Completion of



studies in higher education is therefore identified as a factor that can impact on the increasing value of social and labor inclusion of people with disabilities (Union Strategy for the Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities) and consequently improve the quality of life levels. However, one of the main obstacles for obtaining a qualification is the accessibility of internships. Specifically, addressing the implications of internships for the construction of skills and subsequent insertion into the labor market by graduates with disabilities.

Lastly, it was decided to close the presentation of this booklet with the contribution of Sofia Tancredi, Rachel Chen, Christina Krause, Dor Abrahamson and Filippo Gomez Paloma: “Getting up to SpEED: Special Education Embodied Design for Sensorially Equitable Inclusion”, which describes the implications of a new approach to research represented by the “Special Education Embodied Design (SpEED)” for inclusive education. This article, in our opinion, is a sort of crossroads between the heuristic investigation and the training activities to be favored in the future.

“SpEED”, in particular, is a new way of thinking about how students with special educational needs can learn through the participation of their whole body, with the aim of encouraging continuous updating in favor of special education and inclusion, based on the latest developments in cognitive sciences.

The usefulness of embodied design for teaching and research in the field of special education is therefore illustrated, through examples of students with hearing sensory disabilities and with autism spectrum disorder, etc. Focusing, each project, on deepening the learning opportunities offered to them, using the embodied resources at their disposal, and concluding with some interesting considerations regarding the implementation of “SpEED” in the Italian education system.

A rich and articulated number of *Education Sciences & Society*, capable of giving life to further research and new teaching and training experiences, which give merit to pure and applied research of a scientific and operational dimension such as that represented by pedagogy and from special didactics, and on a frontier of current civil importance such as inclusion, already indispensable today as knowledge, but even more in the future, for the progress of these sciences themselves, but also for the growing increase in people with the most varied disabilities.