Editorial.
Pedagogy and Special Didactics.
Reflections and practices for an innovative school
and inclusive education
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This issue of *Education Sciences & Society* (no. 2 of 2022, and 13th volume overall: the journal made its first appearance in 2010) goes back to one of the three vectors or heuristic paradigms of its story and its literary and scientific presence: special pedagogy (as referred to in the ministerial and scientific literature language).

For years, this journal has alternated materials referring to general and social pedagogy, didactics (with the proper consideration of teaching technologies – and, therefore, concerning both instruction and education, following Israel Scheffler's epistemological meaning) as well as special pedagogy and its technologies[1].

As to unitedly represent the richness of the pedagogical-educational domain, and without endorsing any of its different research labels, or institutional and academic slots. Overcoming, or aiming at bypassing, the typical Italian fragmentation, which is nowadays partially reduced, of four distinct domains. This probably produced negative political effects on European comparisons, as well as a condition in which Italian pedagogy does not have the possibility to adequately fit on any ERC sector, torn between psychological and sociological investigation.

This does not mean that we intend to erase the specificities of all the different investigation fields belonging to the pedagogical scenario, returning to a "night in which all cows are black", to quote Hegel. Furthermore, each of the four domains does not present itself in "singularity" for sure, showing a clear "plural" complexity in their nature.

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[1] This issue was edited for the University of Macerata, the institutional headquarter of the journal, by professor Catia Giaconi, co-author of this editorial, and her research team. As, for the other Academic Fields and Disciplines List, by the University of Macerata full professors of reference.

Indeed, this issue as well, under the sign of special pedagogy, is significantly leaned towards inclusive didactics as one of the themes of this essential scientific frontier, leading to theories, educational actions and "civilization" of a new democratic citizenship that can finally turn a Country (like ours), its institutions and organisations, into the land and the "home" of all people. Without excluding any of our citizens: women and men, adults and elders, people with different abilities, and with the scope of outlining a state of the art on the current reflections and practices aimed at the creation of an innovative school, and, in a broader sense, an inclusive community. This issue is focused on painting a picture on the researches and studies on the promotion of paths and project for scholastic, university and social inclusion, including, at the same time, a "section" dedicated to the bond between special didactics and teacher training, with a specific interest in the theoretical and practical "construction" of the professionality and continuing education of teachers from any school level. Additionally, the issue includes a contribution on education philosophy, to echo the total pedagogical matrix of this journal in an indispensable dialogue between national and international pedagogical research, with contributions by authors belonging to multiple countries.

The 20 articles herewith included (21 including the pedagogical-philosophical-educational one), beyond the order in which they are presented in the index, are grouped on the basis of the four matrices aforementioned: school, higher education and university, society and teacher training. For each group, the articles range from the general context to particular ones, and are presented in an order that links the adjacent sections. Overall, there is a bigger picture, a file rouge that gathers the richness and depth of this issue.

We will start from school.

The paper titled *How can school be innovated through Special Didactics?* by Antioco Luigi Zurru opens this section focused on "school" in the broadness of its processes and specifically referring to primary school. Zurru claims the evident necessity of a constant innovation of processes, with a special-didactic perspective that moulds this issue in three different macro-areas: defining inclusive education as a goal to assess the efficacy of renewal actions, identifying the challenges that school must face and analysing the meaning of the construct of innovation itself. Additionally, this contribution outlines the features of a specific training proposal to teachers.

Design and Customization of Inclusive Educational Environments: Strategies and Didactic Technologies by Dolors Forteza Forteza, Alejandro Ramon Rodríguez Martín and Arianna Taddei goes back to the interpretation of inclusive education as a right, acknowledging the diversity of identities that leads to the elimination of any form of exclusion and stating that, from this

point of view, integrating the UDL framework in education is an urgent need. The necessity of considering its plasticity and impact on inclusive education practices emerges from the results of a study on the nervous system. Lastly, the contribution aims at stimulating a multidimensional reflection upon the inclusive educational approach, taking into consideration both its principles, socio-political and cultural values, as well as the pedagogic-curricular design perspectives and the technological instruments that can be considered true current strategic resources.

Francesca Salis, Stefanija Ališauskienė, Lina Miltenienė, Annamaria Riccioni, Veronica PunzoDaiva Kairienė e Rita Melienė con *Diversity and inclusion. Shared meaning between Itality and Lithuania. International comparative analysis of inclusive trajectory in educational polices and practices* analyse the meaning of inclusion inside and outside the scholastic context, with the aim of overcoming any form of exclusion and discrimination, starting from the 2006 United Nation Convention that states the acknowledgement of the same rights to every person, as a human being, beyond stigmas and categorising labels. This paper examines the Italian and Lithuanian inclusive systems, following the social constructivism paradigm and the contribution of national and international scientific literature, with reference to the pedagogical biopsychosocial meanings.

Social inclusion in the class group, by Giombattista Amenta, goes closer into the scholastic world, pointing the attention towards the inclusion vs. exclusion dynamics in the ordinary life of the class group. In particular, the first part of the paper proposes a complex educational situation, characterised by the failed attempt to avoid discrimination and penalisation, to then examine the teachers' interventions to handle it. In the second part then, it examines on a deeper level the inclusion and class context dynamic, specifically the fear of being penalised and isolated, that could be objective or "provided". The contribution closes with the proposal of some guidelines concerning the educators to promote welcoming and inclusive group contexts.

Francesco Paolo Romeo, in *Emotional availability of teachers, inclusive didactics and affective culture in school*, explains how evolutionary studies highlight how our affectivity is inextricably connected to the cognitive sphere, since the person's "form" of physiological and motor responses in a social context (that we can define emotions) are nothing but a cognitive assessment of the stimuli coming from the context itself. The contribution offers a theoretical-methodological framework to understand the emotional dimension of the teacher and the curriculum, and cultivate that personal confidence in the student which is fundamental to re-activate the passionate explorations of knowledge areas. This process can unveil the personal vocations of each student

and, in the meantime, prevent situations of youth problems or more serious moments of existential void following major traumas such as the most recent pandemic situation and the current wartime emergency.

With *Characterization of gaze in handwriting of High and Low Frequency Word of School children with Dyslexia* by Simone Aparecida Capellini, Aldo Caldarelli, Ilaria D'Angelo, Noemi Del Bianco and Catia Giaconi, we peer closer and on a deeper level into primary school, specifically highlighting how writing is extremely important on a scholastic level as well as on a professional one, being additionally capable of influencing our performances in terms of educational and productive activities. Indeed, students with dyslexia present lower scholastic performances due to their deprivation condition in writing, linked to the struggle of acquiring orthographical knowledge and their scarce phonological skills. Specifically, the research analyses the performances of students with dyslexia through the study of eye movements during the handwriting of high and low frequency words, involving a total of 24 students between 8 and 11 years old, attending primary school in the city of Marília (San Paolo, Brazil), and undertaking a computerised evaluation of their handwriting through the use of the Software Ductus. In addition to the evaluation of the frequency and codification parameters related to the Portuguese-Brazilian language, the research examined the eye movements that took place during the interruption of the handwriting to confirm, on the screen, the accuracy of the information on words. The results show a significant difference between the student groups involved, suggesting the existence of a discrepancy between the central processes (orthographical) and the peripheral ones (motor pauses).

Closing this section, *Physical Exercise between Inclusive School and ADHD* by Antonio Ascione and Michele Corriero draws attention to the key role of physical exercise in the inclusion of students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The contribution suggests how the effects of physical activity, movement and sport can help reduce the main symptoms of ADHD, leading to improvements on the executive functions as well. The aim of this study is to assess the improvement of the inclusion of students with ADHD in the scholastic context, following the execution of aerobic exercises, and taking into consideration ten students diagnosed with ADHD, whose age ranges from eight to eleven years old, splitting them randomly in two equal groups. The research shows that proposing a regular aerobic exercises program generates positive effects on ADHD symptomatology, producing benefits for the psycho-physical wellbeing of the students.

Moving to the second section, referred to as "higher education and university", the first contribution titled *Special didactics and development of working and independent life skills* by Angelo Lascioli and Ivan Traina

highlights the importance of promoting, starting from school in its general meaning (with a perspective that links the first two sections) aimed didactic actions, working and independent life skills for students with disabilities, to then give a particular value to high school, where teachers are demanded to design experiences of extended work-related learning experiences (PCTO), to which a specific section of the IEP must be dedicated. This is a true educational challenge, that consists in finding concrete and meaningful connections between didactic actions and Life Project. The reference to ICF, as planned in the new IEP (D. Lgs. 66/2017), is an opportunity for teachers in the design of PCTO for students with disabilities. The study includes an experience conducted by the University of Verona, that developed an online platform to support the design of the IEP based on the ICF, and offers a series of tools to analyse the skills and working potential of students with disabilities. Referring to the project from the Provincial Scholastic Office of Vicenza that, during the 2021/2022 school year, created an "Inter-institutional worktable for extended work-related learning experiences (PCTO)" with the scope of creating a protocol shared by schools and services supporting the working integration and promotion of students' skills taken into consideration.

Sexism and Traditional Masculinity in Country Music: Practising Inclusivity and Innovation in Research and Education by Nancy C. Jones and Mathieu Deflem illustrates a successful attempt of inclusivity and higher education innovation, showing the results of a research on popular culture conducted jointly by a student and a professor. The study focuses on sexism and traditional masculinity in the contemporary country music lyrics (2019 and 2020), to examine the representation of conventional heterosexual relationship and its potential impact on gender dynamics. The authors additionally conducted an analysis of the percentage of sexist songs and their distribution based on the gender of the artist that performs them, where, specifically, songs from country female artists often resulted to be reproaching sexism, while male country artists would promote it.

Moving, then, to the university field, three contributions are present.

The first one, titled *Academic Activism for Inclusion: the case study of the UNESCO Chair of Inclusion in Higher Education & CINESUP Foundation (Chile)* by Isabella Quatera, shows how the number of students with disabilities enrolled in Italian and foreign universities is constantly increasing. As we cannot overlook the fact that this phenomenon presents some criticalities that do not always result in the active participation of the most vulnerable in university life. In particular, the contribution aims at providing a relevant testimony by the author in the Latin America academic context, focusing on the experience of academic activism that has been taking place in Chile for thirty

years and, specifically, at the UNESCO Chair Inclusion in the Higher Education (University of Santiago de Chile USACH) and through the CINESUP Foundation (International Center for Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education), on the thought of Prof. Francisco Javier Gil (1951-2021).

Still in the university field, *Remote cooperative teaching and mutual enrichment as an inclusive experience of internationalization in university* by Anna Maria Mariani offers an example of an inclusive internationalisation of university teaching through a digital platform. The research highlights how inclusive and comprehensive internationalisation requires us to reframe our thinking, also by taking advantage of the opportunities offered by digital transformation and exploring new methods of achieving internationalisation goals. The contribution investigates how mutual enrichment and cooperative teaching practices among lecturers, positively affected by internationalisation experiences, can support self-efficacy and motivation to study. The research has involved, as participants, students belonging to two different universities that attended three sessions delivered remotely by a team of multi language teachers. Data, collected before the start of the project (T0) and at the end of it (T1), showed that two of the subscales of the perceived self-efficacy scale in managing complex problems (Context Analysis and Emotional Maturity) were significantly different between the two administrations, with an improvement in T1.

Closing this section, *Fostering interculturally responsive educators for a sustainable society* by Nicolina Bosco, Carlo Orefice, Loretta Fabbri and Mario Giampaolo highlights how the COVID-19 pandemic rendered social inequalities more visible in the last two years and negatively impacted different spheres of life all around the world. Questioning how to enhance quality education and reduce inequalities in the teaching and learning process, the paper presents the main results derived from a quantitative study involving university students who are enrolled in Bachelor's and Master's Degree courses in Italy. Students were asked to fill out surveys concerning the Student Measure of Culturally Responsive Teaching (Italian version) and the Sense of Belonging in order to explore their perceptions of culture-based teaching practices applied during lessons and their sense of belonging to the academic context. Data coming from statistical analysis shows a higher level of CRT and SoB, and reveals a moderate and positive correlation between the examined variables. These results can foster the reflection upon the role of the active development methodologies, which can be applied in the educational contexts to promote intercultural dialogue and future culturally engaged professionals in order to reduce social barriers in the learning process and promote a more sustainable world.

The passage from the third section is therefore simpler, since it focuses on "society", including five contributions.

Programmes to support the transition to work for young people with intellectual disabilities: an integrative review by Ivan Traina, Marco Andreoli, Luca Ghirotto and Geraldine Leader, focuses on mapping the school-to-work transition programs addressed to young adults with intellectual disabilities, carried out in the last decade to inform potential paths in the Italian context. Taking into consideration childhood, adolescence and adulthood of persons with intellectual disabilities, in particular looking at the transition programs to employment and adult life, the contribution implements the systematic review process to identify evidence-based educational practices. The analysis and synthesis of results emerged from the studies selected allowed the identification of six researches, further evaluated with respect to their quality. Results were discussed and implications for future research in this area were highlighted, in order to enrich the debate on transition programs addressed to young adults with intellectual disabilities.

Scan Italy: Bridge the gap between History and schools by Stefano Di Tore, Aldo Caldarelli, Michele Domenico Todino, Lucia Campitiello, Veronica Beatini and Simone Aparecida Capellini aims, on one side, at offering an insight of the widespread implementation of *Extended reality*, specifically concentrating on the immersive typology (*Virtual Reality*) and showing the growing market of available devices; on the other, at proposing an existing system called "ScanItaly Project", created for the digitisation of museum artefacts collected in public databases for a 360 degree utilisation in *Extended Reality* under the free Creative Commons licence. The idea of the system is allowing the creation of immersive environments, virtual museums or simply easing the download of single scans for educational scopes. The research perspectives suggested by such a system range from a complete reconsideration of museum education for schools to the creation of inclusive virtual environments.

With *Co-designing inclusive museum itineraries with people with disabilities: a case study from self-determination* by Karrie A. Shogren, Aldo Caldarelli, Noemi Del Bianco, Ilaria D'Angelo and Catia Giaconi we somehow go back to museum education. The paper, after an outline of the theoretical framework used to define self-determination, describes the importance of structuring a research context that fosters the self-advocacy of people with disabilities. In this direction, the contribution presents a protocol of participatory research with people with intellectual disabilities Specifically, the paper expands the procedure to support the creation of accessible museum captions, thanks to the application of Easy-to-Read guidelines.

Adolescent gazes at child educational poverty. A Student Voice Research Experience by Simona Finetti starts from the definition of *child educational poverty* as the depriving of children of all ages of the possibility to learn, experiment with, develop and give free rein to their abilities, talents and aspirations given by Save the Children Italia in 2014. The construct has been detailed over the years, progressively shifting the focus from deprivation to potential learning, even in non-cognitive dimensions, simultaneously proposing indices to measure the phenomenon. This contribution poses two questions: what is educational poverty for adolescents? do the indicators selected over time measure dimensions perceived as a priority by minors?. This research experience, inspired by the Student Voice movement, collected the voices of 121 adolescents from Fiorenzuola d'Arda (PC) in April and May 2021. Without pretending to be representative and exhaustive, the article introduces the evolution of the *educational poverty* concept, to then explore images, experiences and meanings attributed to it by boys and girls, as well as directions of meaning suggested by their "adolescent gaze" in order to prevent and counteract the phenomenon in its multiple dimensions.

This section ends with *The Application of Quality of Life in Services for Persons with Disabilities: lines of intervention in Spain and Italy* by Catia Giaconi, Miguel Angel Verdugo, Noemi Del Bianco, Laura E. Gomez, Ilaria D'Angelo and Robert L. Schalock. The Authors examine in detail the concept of Quality of Life (QOL), which has become a measurable construct of remarkable value for all people, including people with developmental and intellectual disabilities (IDD). In particular, the field of IDD is currently experimenting a paradigm shift concerning beliefs, concepts, policies and practices involving people with disabilities and their families, as well as their role in society. The contribution, starting from a reconstruction of the state of the art concerning the application of QOL in social services, pieces together the research developments, the operational ramifications and the influences on social policies in Spain and Italy.

The section dedicated to "teacher training" (formazione docente) closes this editorial, with three contributions.

The first one, titled *A cross-case analysis of ICT courses in teacher training programmes for special needs: technology affordances and Universal Design for Learning* is written by Laura Fedeli. The Author states how the special needs teacher has to be a highly qualified professional whose role is to work in collaboration with all class teachers to activate an inclusive approach for the benefit of all students and to enable individual potentialities. In this context, technology can be of paramount importance in designing learning activities according to the principles of Universal Design for Learning in an

interdisciplinary approach and with a holistic perspective of all involved actors in the teaching/learning process. In Italy, the prospective special needs teacher has the opportunity to be fully trained thanks to a comprehensive specialization course where the areas of competence of digital literacy are addressed in a specific course. The study reports a cross analysis of three editions of an Information and Communication Technology course, with a focus on the results of the last edition, whose online format was discussed starting from strengths identified in the first two face-to-face editions of the same course.

The contribution titled *What educational-didactics coordinates for the special needs teacher in an innovative school perspective? New educational research paths to strengthen and enhance existential complexities* by Anna Maria Murdaca analyses in detail the role of teachers and, specifically, special needs teachers, which is increasingly important in the new horizons and strategies designed by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan in response to the pandemic crisis that affected every dimension of public and private life, and that imposed a new vision of educational contexts, considering new social justice and inclusion needs. In this direction, the paper focuses on the new functional paradigms aimed at reshaping a new ethic awareness that is based on wide and informed competences, which are necessary to the design of inclusive educational contexts.

An article by Filippo Bruni, Livia Petti and Marta De Angelis, titled *Initial training of special needs teachers. Results of an explorative analysis on professional beliefs and educational needs of University students about to complete the specialisation*, closes this section. The article describes the results of an explorative analysis that involved 448 participants out of 463 students enrolled at the VI cycle of the specialisation course for educational support activities for students with disabilities at the University of Molise. The scope of the study was defining a general profile of the participants, investigating some of their professional beliefs, and understanding their educational needs. The results of the research provided useful information for the management of the course and coordination activities between teaching, workshops and traineeship; on the other, but also for the subject areas of competence that need further developments.

This editorial ends with the article titled *History is always contemporary. Pedagogical reflections on the adult feeling of loss* by Massimiliano Stramaglia, selected for the "Alia" section. If the contribution is not directly attributable to the field of special pedagogy but rather belongs to philosophy of education, it is still functional to it since it focuses on Martin Heidegger's thinking, with particular reference to *Being and Time* (or, possibly *Being is Time*), offers an insight on the benefit that existential psychotherapy can

provide to pedagogical reflection and the special education (with the appropriate mediations and translations). The scope of this paper is to strengthen the "power" (with the related awareness of the absence of a total control) that every person can have on their destiny by being "presence" and "in presence", and with an increasing responsibility of their own actions and the total take-over of their own existence.

For now, have a good reading and *ad maiora* for special pedagogy and inclusive didactics, its scholars and its academics.