

Editorial

The Life Project: Lines of analysis for a pedagogical reflection oriented toward Quality of Life

Michele Corsi, Catia Giaconi**, Ilaria D'Angelo****

In the current educational and social landscape, the concept of the “Life Project” and its theory-practice are emerging as one of the most significant challenges for an «individual, personalised and participatory» care of the person with disability (D.lgs. n. 62/2024).

Far from being a simple bureaucratic formality or a set of fragmented intervention, the Life Projects rather represents a complex, profound, and multidimensional pedagogical vision, which can orient the existential trajectories of the people involved, in accordance with the principles of self-determination, inclusion, and active involvement. In this sense, the Life Project presents itself as the outcome of a process that, on the one hand, starts off early and, on the other, is nourished over time by desires, relationships, learning, and choices. In the dialogue between personal aspirations and contexts of reference, support needs and implementation resources, it represents a dynamic intertwining of individuality and collectivity.

Such a “vision” is called upon to address the cultural, legislative, and organisational transformations that are currently redefining the practices of “care provision”. In particular, the recent Legislative Decree n. 62/2024 introduced significant changes in the field of multidimensional assessment and personalisation of pathways, setting forth the Life Project’s central role in terms of regulations and values.

However, the efficacy and implementation of such trajectories strongly depend on the capacity of the pedagogical community to interpret them with a reflective stance, operationalise them across educational, sanitary, and social

* Professor emeritus of General and Social Pedagogy, University of Macerata. E-mail: michele.corsi@unimc.it.

** Full professor of Didactics and Special Pedagogy, University of Macerata. E-mail: catia.giaconi@unimc.it.

*** Senior researcher in Didactics and Special Pedagogy, University of Macerata. E-mail: i.dangelo@unimc.it.

contexts, and sustain them adequately through targeted training activities and methodological tools.

In this perspective, the Life Project also represents a systemic challenge, that requires inclusive networks, shared responsibility between institutions, and lasting educational alliances, promoting an integrated understanding of the person in their multiple life environments: from education to work, from relationships to “dwellings”, from leisure to any other aspect and dimension of the person themselves.

Accordingly, it is only by adopting this specific “point of view” that the people concerned, families and organisations (without exceptions), civil society and the State, pedagogy and, in particular, special pedagogy, schools, history, humanity and democracy, can “think” (through Heidegger’s approach) of a real promotion of “Quality of Life” (QoL). QoL, in this sense, is to be understood not only as a universal standard, but as a “situated and dialogical construction”, in which the person with disability is no longer understood as a passive recipient of other’s decisions, but as the real and authentic protagonist of an integral and integrated journey, capable of enhancing their potential, desires, and self-determination.

It is in the wake of these assumptions that we present this issue of the journal *Education Sciences & Society*, which brings together a wide range of interesting, foundational, rigorous, and well-articulated theoretical, empirical, and operational contributions from numerous different Authors. Belonging to different “schools” of thought, these Authors have addressed, in our opinion through an admirable and scientific manner, the topic of the Life Project for what it is, namely, an educational and cultural device par excellence, in all the transformations that concern it and through which it is potentially and currently declined. Accordingly, the aim is also to promote a wide-ranging, interdisciplinary and interinstitutional dialogue, capable of “mapping out” a comprehensive and robust cultural and operational overview of “practices”, open questions and potential trajectories, with a view to improving QoL.

Let us now move on to present, albeit briefly, the contributions that belong to this issue of the journal, which are grouped into four thematic areas or sections: first, eleven articles, written by single or multiple authors, focusing on the pedagogical essence and historical-educational articulations of the Life Project; subsequently, six essays, by one or more authors, addressing themes that are “transversal” to the main topic of this issue as a “collection – in particular – of professionals or caregivers’ perspectives”, also in terms of “testimony” and “witnesses”; finally, ten additional scientific contributions, personal or by small groups, referring, on the one hand, to the dimension of the “school” and, on the other, to that of the “transition from school to work and

independent living”. Six of these articles address the former topic, while four address the latter.

Below there is a very brief summary of all the contributions, in the same order in which they have been indexed.

Following on from that, the first section.

The Life Project in the context of Quality of Life: critical reflections and research perspectives by Catia Giaconi, Noemi Del Bianco, Ilaria D’Angelo and Lucia Borsini, proposes a pedagogical reflection concerning the Legislative Decree 62/2024, adopting the QoL paradigm as a framework of meaning and operational trajectories for the construction of the Life Project, and with the intention, nonetheless, of highlighting the transformative potential of this provision for the creation of authentically personalised and inclusive pathways. In this analysis, conducted through a critical-interpretative approach, the decree itself is considered as a generative space of educational possibilities oriented towards self-determination, participation, and the recognition of people with disabilities as protagonists of their own life paths. In this perspective, the concept of alignment is also introduced as an intentional process of coherence between individual functioning, QoL domains, project objectives, life contexts, and assessment systems. Three main levels are identified: the integrated reading of the functioning profile with the QoL domains, the consistency between the objectives of the interventions and the overall design of the Life Project, and, lastly, the connection between life environments, educational practices and monitoring processes. These dimensions ultimately form a pedagogical framework capable of translating the Decree into quality practices, setting forth the Life Project’s deepest meaning as a continuous process of identity, relational, and participatory construction.

The “Life Project” between pedagogical horizon and legal framework: critical analysis and implementation perspectives within the framework of Legislative Decree 62/2024 by Angelo Lascioli and Luciano Pasqualotto analyses the changes introduced by the Legislative Decree 62/2024, offering readers an analysis of the fundamental elements that characterise the reformulation of the meaning of the Life Project within the general framework offered by the decree. In fact, the Authors believe that the Life Project represents a pedagogical-legal device and should be interpreted as such. Therefore, the reading and application of its provisions, if placed outside of a pedagogical perspective, risk transforming the Life Project itself into a technical device, emptying it of meaning. These pages also report on a research project launched by the University of Verona aimed at supporting actions and interventions in favour of people with disabilities, making the online platform www.icfapplicazioni.it available free of charge to operators, which can be used

to perform an ICF-based bio-psycho-social assessment of their needs, as well as to obtain significant indicators to support their QoL.

From legal framework to pedagogical device: the Life Project for work inclusion by Enrico Miatto and Claudia Maulini examines the pedagogical implications of Legislative Decree 62/2024, introducing the Life Project as a central tool for the development of inclusive pathways and arguing that it should not be considered as a mere administrative tool, but rather as a pedagogical device capable of intertwining rights, education, and social bonds. In particular, the contribution underlines the role of the Life Project as a driver for workplace inclusion and, at the same time, as an experience of identity, education, and active citizenship. Nevertheless, three dimensions that characterise the Life Project are highlighted: *processuality*, which requires tools for continuous review and flexible support; *relationality*, which calls for forms of co-design between individuals, families, institutions, and communities; and *transformativeness*, which calls on for social and work contexts to reorganise themselves in terms of accessibility and equity. The Author also underscores three critical issues that represent challenges and research opportunities for special pedagogy, namely the construction of equitable governance models, the experimentation of inclusive co-design practices, and the training of new professionals capable of mediating transitions and promoting the necessary processes of organisational innovation.

The Life project as a tool of community governance for the implementation of systemic and synergistic care interventions by Alessandro Romano, Antonio Giannone and Marinella Muscarà analyses the role of the individual, personalised and participatory Life Project as a central tool to promote inclusion and wellbeing of people with disabilities, especially in situations of multiple vulnerabilities. Starting from the regulatory framework under consideration and the bio-psycho-social pedagogical paradigms, the study emphasises how the holistic and person-centred approaches can overcome the fragmentation of welfare systems, which are still too narrow and discontinuous. Lastly, the contribution presents the research conducted by the Kore University of Enna as part of the project “Facciamone di tutti i colori: moltiplichiamo i luoghi dell’inclusione!” (“Let’s do it all: let’s multiply the places of inclusion!”), the results of which confirm the presence of structural criticalities in the coordination of interventions, with a particular impact on migrant families, while highlighting the potential of “poliferie educative” (“educational polypheries”) model as pedagogical infrastructures capable of integrating multiple actions and actors. This further configures the Life Project as a device for generating inclusive processes, aimed at strengthening self-determination, co-design, and QoL.

Background, political and cultural assumptions, and emerging pedagogical issues surrounding the Life Project by Marco Leggieri, Giorgio Crescenza and Fabio Bocci brings to attention what can be defined as the political and cultural assumptions inherent in the Life Project, with an analysis of related pedagogical issues. Moving away from the logic (and risk) of framing the Life Project as a “simple” technical-bureaucratic-administrative tool, it reaches, *happily*, the idea that it rather is an “extraordinary” mediator or activating authentic processes of self-determination and self-realisation, in the perspective of independent living. The contribution adopts pedagogical, but also social, cultural, and political coordinates, and finally focuses on some highly topical and relevant educational themes, such as stigma, hate speech, and emotional education.

Life Plan: reflections and practical suggestions to construct it by Ines Guerini reflects on the concept of the Life Project, integrating the regulatory provisions of the Legislative Decree 62/2024 into this reflection. In particular, after explaining what is meant by Life Project and why it is preferable to continue distinguishing between the Life Project itself and the “Individual Project” (Despite this distinction is no longer present in the aforementioned decree), it discusses the principle of self-determination as a crucial factor to ensure the centrality of the person with disability in their own life path. Finally, it also provides some interesting practical suggestions for those involved, in various capacities, in the assessment and drafting of the Life Project.

The Life Project: Toward an Integrated Paradigm Bridging Universal Design for Transition and Life Designing by Rosa Sgambelluri and Francesca Placanica discusses the Life Project as one of the most relevant challenges for the creation of inclusive and self-determined pathways, within the contemporary pedagogical debate. It defines it as a complex and multidimensional device, capable of supporting and guiding the existential choices made by people with disabilities through constant dialogue between personal aspirations, life contexts and social opportunities, basing this perspective on the QoL construct as a situated, dialogic and participatory dimension, that places these people at the centre of the educational process, recognising and valuing them as active protagonists of their own development. Nevertheless, the contribution ultimately proposes the integration of two complementary paradigms: *Universal Design for Transition* and *Life Designing* as tools for the conscious and socially situated construction of one’s own Life Project.

Lives, choices, territories: Life Project, Quality of Life, Capabilities and Person-Centred Planning in light of Legislative Decree 62/2024 by Antonio Cuccaro, Chiara Gentilozzi and Claudia Maulini addresses the topic of the Life Project, personalised and participatory, as a central element of the Legislative

Decree 62/2024, offering both a theoretical-empirical analysis and an operational interpretation based on the current regulatory and scientific landscape. The contribution has the dual objective of “enhancing”, on the one hand, the conceptual understanding of the Life Project in relation to person-centred planning and supported decision-making models with respect to QoL theories, and, on the other hand, providing a reflection on possible guidelines and recommendations for the design, implementation, and evaluation of the Life Project in the territories, with a particular focus on the regional model of Umbria. In this perspective, it is aimed not only at social, educational, and health service operators, researchers, and the educational communities, but also at policy makers and organisations that determine the implementation guidelines of the national regulatory framework. ***On an Equal Basis: sociopedagogical conditions for a life project that guarantees freedom and right*** by Natascia Curto highlights the individual, personalised, and participatory Life Project as a mechanism aimed at ensuring, in essence, the full enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms. Through the use of the relational definition of disability contained in the UN Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the related conceptualisation of citizenship, it then identifies the socio-pedagogical conditions that underpin the Life Project itself, also outlining the infrastructural, epistemological, value-based, and operational conditions that are necessary for the Life Project to be concretely constructed as the powerful tool for emancipation required by the CRPD.

Moving on to the last three contributions in this section, ***The life project as a pedagogical capacity device: from theoretical foundations to methodological frameworks*** by Cecilia Maria Marchisio qualifies, in the context of the most recent Italian and global legislation, the Life Project as a personalised infrastructure for accessing citizenship, reconstructing its main elements and highlighting the pedagogical foundations and methodological structures necessary to harmoniously recompose its implementation with the regulatory and cultural transformations currently underway. In parallel, ***The Life Project of People with Disabilities: A Process-Oriented Approach to Build a Quality Life*** by Mariachiara Feresin and Elena Bortolotti approaches the Life Project as an educational and cultural tool capable, today, of guiding processes of individual and social transformation, in a complexity that questions the conditions, constraints, and possibilities that make the development and implementation of authentic and sustainable Life Projects feasible, and as a continuous process of negotiation between personal aspirations, material conditions, educational opportunities, and social constraints. The aim, nevertheless, is to outline educational and institutional strategies capable of promoting a QoL understood not only as individual well-being, but also as a collective horizon of transformation.

We can now proceed with the presentation of the second section, with the six contributions here listed.

From ***Representations and Meanings of the Individual, Personalized, and Participatory Life Project: Pedagogical Perspectives from the Narratives of Parents and Young adults with Disabilities*** by Nicole Bianquin and Stefano Joly, which explores the meaning and representations of the individual, personalised, and participatory Life Project that emerge from the narratives of parents and young adults with disabilities. Set within the rights paradigm, this article adopts a qualitative narrative-participatory approach to investigate how the Life Project is experienced, imagined, and constructed in everyday life. The thematic analysis of the interviews shows, nevertheless, how desires, supports, and contexts intertwine in defining proximal self-determination trajectories, where artistic and work practices, relationships and networks of proximity become the concrete scenarios of the project itself; to ***Quality of Life of siblings and parents of people with intellectual disabilities: a pilot study*** by Catia Giaconi, Noemi Del Bianco, Ilaria D'Angelo and Lucia Borsini, which analyses Quality of Life of family caregivers of people with intellectual disabilities, with particular attention to the perspective of parents, brothers, and sisters. Specifically, through a precise and targeted qualitative approach, the research aims to understand their perceptions of the levels of QoL they experience, highlighting the importance of rethinking policies and practices in order to provide more effective support to families, both in the “During Us” phase and in the long-term planning of the “After Us”.

From ***Pedagogical Implications of Law 62/2024 in the Training of Healthcare Professionals*** by Gianluca Amatori, which places the Life Project itself at the centre of its reflection, redefining assessment practices in a multidimensional key and analysing the pedagogical scope of the legislation in question, in light of the ICF bio-psycho-social model and the principles of inclusive education, with particular attention to the initial and in-service training of healthcare professionals. It also emphasises how doctors and healthcare professionals are required today to develop not only clinical skills, but also educational, relational, and interprofessional skills, with a view to shared responsibility in planning, identifying training as a strategic lever for the full implementation of the reform; to ***Women with disabilities and Life Project: Personal Assistance and support for motherhood*** by Barbara Alesi and Arianna Taddei, which clearly highlights how women with disabilities currently face numerous challenges in exercising their parental rights, including the inaccessibility of gynaecological health services and the lack of parental support services capable of meeting their needs. In particular, it examines both the role of the self-managed personal assistant, describing it as a form of support capable of improving the quality of life of mothers with disabilities and promoting

appropriate and adequate self-determination processes, and the many gaps still existing in current socio-psycho-pedagogical services, confronting special pedagogy and policy makers with the need to design new ways of intervention and care provision of parents with disabilities. Finally, the contribution proposes possible inclusive and pedagogical trajectories to improve the support due to the people with disabilities in their parenthood.

Then: ***From Theory to Practice: Evaluation in Socio-Educational Services in the Brescia Area*** by Enrico Orizio and Katia Montalbetti, which investigates evaluation cultures and practices in socio-educational services in the territory of Brescia, is managed by third sector organisations, focusing its observational research on the frequency with which evaluation is conducted in services, the functions attributed to it, the “aspects” taken into consideration, the methods used, and how the results are used, employing, for data collection, a structured questionnaire aimed at the coordinators of 87 services, with 74 valid responses. The data collected shows that evaluation is widespread in larger and more structured services and, above all, in those where training initiatives on this topic have been carried out. Overall, an encouraging picture emerges, which nevertheless calls for even greater investments in the evaluation of processes and impacts, and in the strategic role played by training on evaluation, both initial and in-service, for the dissemination of methodologically sound and rigorous practices.

Lastly: ***From Project to Quality of Life: A Pedagogical–Narrative Approach to Disability*** by Farnaz Farahi, in which the narrative approach here discussed presents itself as a perfectly suitable tool to address and resolve the multiple current pedagogical challenges relating to disability. It does not merely give voice to the subject, but also allows them to emerge as the narrating protagonist of their own experience: a subject capable of claiming rights and agency in their Life Project. This article takes primary school as the specific field of investigation, well underlining the narrative approach as a fundamental determinant in making the Life Project a truly transformative and inclusive tool for the child with disability, thus contributing to the improvement of their QoL.

Then there is the third section dedicated to school, with six contributions listed here in ascending order.

The educational alliance between school and family for an inclusive life project: the opinions of system figures at school by Flavia Capodanno and Iolanda Zollo, which explores the role of systemic figures in the school, particularly in favour of a genuine alliance between schools and families as a *conditio sine qua non* for the creation of a truly inclusive Life Project, presenting the results of an exploratory study conducted with 52 Italian teachers with systemic roles. The results, obtained through Reflexive Thematic Analysis, highlight how these figures clearly recognise their function as mediators of the

school-family relationship and the need, at the same time, for a joint institutional commitment aimed at further strengthening collaborative processes and educational co-design strategies.

Inclusive Life and School Project: from the Individualized Educational Plan to existential planning by Alessandra Lo Piccolo and Daniela Pasqualetto, for its part, considers the Individualised Educational Plan (IEP) as a fundamental tool for personalising pathways, although it still presents the limitations linked to its prevailing focus on the school environment and its fragmentation with respect to other areas of life. In this context, self-determination emerges as a “right and competence” to be promoted, shifting the focus from mere scholastic adaptation to existential planning, ensuring that the person plays an active role in defining their own pathway. Finally, the article takes a close look at the continuing inconsistencies between the IEP and the Life Project: two tools of great pedagogical value, but which still need to be integrated with each other. ***A perspective on the “Progetto di Vita” of students with SEN: results of a field study*** by Giuseppe Filippo Dettori and Barbara Letteri proposes an interesting planning perspective to guarantee the full realisation of the Life Project in favour of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN), in line with the recent provisions introduced by the Legislative Decree 62/2024. In this context, the contribution illustrates a specific field research conducted using the focus group methodology on a sample of 23 participants, aimed at analysing issues related to the Life Project and pave the way for actions capable of overcoming the fragmentation of traditional interventions, outlining a systemic, integrated, and multidimensional approach that can enhance self-determination and active participation. Here are illustrated, for instance, the introduction of the Life Project tutor, self-determination workshops and school-work transition plans, making this project a significant transformative tool in educational, health, and social contexts.

Simplicity and Life Project between music and educational technologies: inclusive trajectories by Alessio Di Paolo, Anna Rescigno and Michele Domenico Todino explores, on the other hand, the paradigm of simplicity as a hermeneutic key to governing the complexity inherent in the construction of the Life Project of people with disabilities, placing itself in line with the most recent pedagogical and regulatory reflections. Moving on, then, from the evolution of the legislative framework and the adoption of the bio-psycho-social model, the article highlights the need to overcome reductionist or rigidly linear approaches, recognising in simplicity an operational trajectory capable of translating plurality in functional elegance. In this perspective, the arts and didactic technologies emerge as simplex mediators and vicarious tools that generate participation, symbolisation, and planning, restoring centrality to the physicality and relational dimension of learning.

Storytelling, cooperation and life design in secondary school: pathways to promote Life Projects, wellbeing and inclusion by Davide Di Palma, Giovanna Scala, Gianluca Gravino and Giovanni Tafuri focuses on lower secondary school, a stage of life in which students begin to build identity, aspirations, and socio-emotional skills. By evaluating the effectiveness of an 8-10 weeks didactic path, based on narrative education, life design, and cooperative activities, aimed at enhancing self-determination, school engagement, personal wellbeing, and an inclusive classroom environment. The research reported here was conducted using a mixed methods approach in a school in Naples, involving approximately 100 students, including those with SpLDs, showing how the use and integration of narrative and cooperative practices promote the development of the Life Project and improve the overall quality of school life.

This section concludes with ***The role of the Instrumental Function for Inclusion in building a “Life Project” through PCTO*** by Maria Antonietta Maggio, which presents the results of an exploratory research conducted on a group of support teachers in training, with the aim of outlining teachers with instrumental functions as significant systemic figures in the practice of constructing the Life Project. Through the administration of a quanti-qualitative questionnaire, the representations and expectations of teachers in training were investigated with regard to the systemic figures involved in the area of inclusion within school contexts, with particular reference to their role in the construction of PCTO pathways. The article brings to light the “presence” of competent and experienced teachers, capable of supporting their colleagues and professional community in the knowledge, planning, and implementation of educational experiences aimed towards the Life Project itself.

We now move to the last section in this issue, with the last four contributions. From the first: ***The Socio-Occupational Inclusion of Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder: The Experience of the Social Cooperative Artemista*** by Laura Fedeli, Gigliola Paviotti, Chiara Mignucci and Elisabetta Tombolini, which investigates the topic of employment of people with disabilities, with a focus on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), retracing the evolution of Italian legislation: from targeted placement to the recent reform introduced by the Legislative Decree 62/2024. Despite an evolving regulatory framework, the data collected here highlight how integration into the workplace remains a complex challenge marked by prejudice, difficulties in access and a lack of stable pathways. On the other hand, the experience of the Artemista social cooperative represents a significant point of reflection, having succeeded in translating training occasions into real employment opportunities, in line with a systemic and interprofessional approach.

Then, ***The Life Project: Connections between Simulation and Reality*** by Donatella Fantozzi, which analyses professional inclusion of people with

disabilities, in relation to cultural and organisational dynamics that tend to normalise difference, rather than specialise normality, proposing a unified theoretical and methodological framework for the transition from school to work based on the bio-psycho-social perspective (ICF), the principle of reasonable accommodation (CRPD), and universal design for learning (UDL). This article addresses: the value of work as a means for identity and citizenship, the function of school and PCTO as “educational bridges”, the “ambivalent” and ongoing role of tutors (school, company, and peer), and the need for interinstitutional networks oriented towards proper relational welfare, and the related implications for orientation and early school leaving prevention, offering a set of operational guidelines for integrating IEP, PCTO and target placement into a coherent Life Project design.

Finally, the last two articles of this section.

Synergies and educational alliances for an inclusive life project: the school-to-work transition in young people with ASD by Emanuela Zappalà and Erika Marie Pace, which addresses the transition from school to work as a “critical phase” for all young people, but one that is more complex for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Exploring the concept itself of the Life Project in these pages, intended both as a multidimensional pedagogical construct and as a regulatory-administrative tool, the Authors highlight its full potential in the construction of educational and inclusive pathways. From an ecological-systemic perspective, the Life Project therefore takes shape as a tool for shared responsibility between institutions, families, school, services, and communities, capable of promoting self-determination, participation, and quality of life throughout the entire lifespan, overcoming deficit-centered approaches and enhancing the aspirations and potential of young people with ASD.

Where, lastly, ***Life project and Self-Determination. Tinkering as a pedagogical approach to foster Universal Learning*** by Vincenza Barra, Antinea Ambretti, Giuseppe Baldassarre and Rosa Sgambelluri highlights self-determination as the ability to exercise agency, make informed choices, and actively participate in co-designing one’s own growth path. In line with this pedagogical framework Tinkering emerges, in particular, as an innovative didactic approach, based on the principles of embodied cognition and oriented towards the enhancement of concrete experience, experimentation, and personalisation of learning processes, in line with UDL principles. Starting from these assumptions, the contribution offers both an interesting theoretical framework and some useful operational insights for the design of flexible and inclusive didactic pathways.

In conclusion, this is truly a comprehensive, rigorous, and operationally valuable issue: an excellent “toolbox” for scholars and practitioners working in the fields and practices addressed herein.

So, just one final message: enjoy reading and good luck with your work!