ICF and SEN: a National project for identification toward quality of life model

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Abstract
The school represents a privileged context for observing individual and social conditions, and for early interventions, according to an ecological and capability perspective. The Quality of Life model and the ICF model are valid references for the development of customized projects in this direction.
Our study starts from the assumption that it's necessary to work according to a model that meets a logic of possible defined relations among the areas in the anthropological paradigm of the ICF. Particularly it's necessary to take advantage of the aims of Physical Education, a discipline that allows people to show themselves completely and to dialogue with the environment through the body. This research project has as its objective the validation of tools for the identification of Special Educational Needs through observation and evaluation of psycho-affective students' indicators (Personal Factors of ICF and some essential factors of quality of life) during the lessons of Physical Education.
Although the research data have not been collected yet to make an analysis, it's useful the promotion of this project to realize a scientific model for the identification of SEN in the framework of the ICF, evaluating Physical Education that is often underestimated as interpretative key of students' behaviors and educational failures.

Keywords: ICF, SEN, Physical Education, inclusion, quality of life.

Introduction: framework and objective

The challenges of current and future society ask global citizens for global,

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The contribution is the result of the joint work of three authors. Only for reasons of scientific attribution, we declare that Paola Damiani is Author of Introduction: framework and objective, Method and Results, Cristiana D'Anna is author of Abstract and References and Filippo Gomez Paloma is author of Discussion and Conclusion.

complex abilities, and in many aspects still unimaginable, which must be formed and evaluated according to dynamic and valid models throughout life; these challenges are even more demanding for people with disadvantages, disabilities and neurobiological disorders. The school represents a fundamental opportunity for the detection and the early intervention on various situations of feebleness through the identification of the Special Educational Needs, according to a longitudinal ecological perspective that goes beyond the focus on the single child and guy thought only as a "student".

In order to guide individualized and personalized educational projects of people with SEN in an authentically inclusive and convincing direction, which takes into account the longlife and longwide dimensions of development and learning (in school, beyond school and after school), it is necessary to refer to strong and shared models and tools such as the ICF model (WHO, 2001; 2007), the life project of life and the Quality of Life model (QOL).

Despite the numerous points of contact, the linking of models cannot be taken for granted. In fact, as noted in 2007 by the American Institute of Medicine, one of the critical points of the ICF consists precisely in the lack of consideration of the concept of Quality of Life and of the factors connected to the subjective dimension of people not directly attributable to the factors described in the Manual. The need to describe environmental factors and their impact as a barrier and facilitators also in this field is underlined, through the assumption of a dynamic model, not only descriptive, which simplifies the application of the ICF also in the field of education and of social and working inclusion (Francescutti, 2018). We will try below to clarify some points for reflection in this direction.

Towards the "Quality of Life"

As regards the Quality of Life (QOL) construction, despite the multiplicity of studies and research in recent years, it is not possible to provide an univocal definition because of its inherent complexity. However, this feature allows to think, to respect and to sustain the existential complexity of every single person according to an ethical and multidimensional perspective. The various models present in the literature take into account specific conditions of fragility or disability (autism, intellectual disabilities, etc.), but examinate dimensions that are fundamental for all people. In this sense, the QOL model represents a functional framework for the inclusive model: the explored domains are the same for all, what changes, is the "content" in terms of values and importance, which changes over the course of life. In the models, the role

of the experiences, of the perceptions of the different systems and contexts of life, in addition to the relevance of the space-time dimension is highlighted (Giaconi, 2015). Here we will consider some aspects that allow us to identify relations between QOL and ICF useful for the elaboration of the conceptual framework of our research project.

As mentioned, the QOL construction overtakes personalist anthropology and dichotomic concept between normality and disability, in support of a conception of life according to which all people need to be recognized in their specific characteristics and supported in the development of their abilities, in full coherence with the ICF model and with the school regulatory framework on SEN in Italy (MIUR, 2012; 2013).

In this sense, the dynamic and descriptive vision of the construct that recalls the processes, projects and tools related to it, is very interesting. According to Brown et al. (1994), the improvement of the QOL depends on the decrease of the disparity between the needs of the person which are satisfied and those that are not. Brown, Raphael and Renwick identify three factors of the Quality of Life, interpreted as the degree of satisfaction through which people benefit from the possibilities and the opportunities considered important for their existence (Renwick & Brown, 1996): *being, belonging and becoming*. For each factor the relative domains (physical, psychological, spiritual been; physical, social and community belonging; becoming on a practical level, in free time, in personal growth) and descriptors / behavior indicators are defined. The latter concern numerous aspects related to the personality, to the corporeity and to the emotional-motivational and relational dimensions of people. As can be seen from the table below, also the Schalock & Verdugo Alonso model (2002; 2006), assorted by Lombardi (2013) identifies three Quality of Life factors and the related domains and indicators in the form of perceptions, behaviors and conditions that define them from the operational point of view, whose measurement allows to evaluate the personal results (Schalock et al., 2010). It is therefore a model that offers important prompts both for its operation within training contexts and for the possible points of contact with other descriptive models of people's functioning such as the ICF model and the Capacity model.

Within this perspective we can observe that the indicators describe behaviors that assume the possession of skills or, according to Sen's (1989) and Nussbaum's (2003) Capability Approach, of competence and freedom. "Capacitation refers not only to the person's abilities, but also to the degree of freedom and opportunity created by the combination of personal skills and the political, social and economic environment in which he or she lives" (Caserta *et al*., 2015, p. 24).

Tab. 1 - Schalock & Verdugo Alonso model (2002; 2006), assorted by Lombardi (2013)

QOL Factors	***QOL Domains***	***Indicators examples***
Indipendence	Personal development Self-determination	Level of education, personal skills, adaptive behavior Choices/decisions, autonomy, self-control, personal goals
Social partecipation	Social relationships Social integration rights	Social net, friendships, relationships, social activity. Participation in the community, roles in the community
Well-being	Physical well-being Emotional well-being Material well-being	Health and safety, positive experiences, restraints, self-concept, lack of stress, Physical / recreational exercise, nutritional status, Work status, housing status

The relationship between corporeity and personal aspects, emotions, resilience, motivation and awareness is highlighted (as well as social and material aspects) as essential factors for the possibility of self-determination and independent living. These abilities and freedoms have their origins and development in early life contexts, above all the family, but they become more evident and significant starting from their entry into educational and scholastic contexts, because they find a complex social environment advantageous to their manifestation and because they can/must be object of attention and intentional planning by educators and teachers.

The relationships between QOLs, the educational context and the development of abilities useful to live a "valuable life" (Sen, 1985) are described in literature, despite in perspective terms. As stated by Caserta *et al.* (2015), The dynamic character and the connotation of the variable of the factors that personalize the QOL indicators depend in a consistent manner on the positive impact of capacitation phenomena, that is, on the maturation and education paths to which person has been progressively exposed as a result of a responsible community capable of taking care of all its citizens.

In sociomedical contexts, the evaluation of the QOL is used in the individualized support plan for its improvement at the individual level, through the integration of the customized indicators for measuring the outcomes. This process involves the need to arrange the support and the action of the support provided in the continuum between full capability of person and total protection by the Civil Society, based on the scientific knowledge and available technique, on the respected ethical and legal principles and on the available resources. It is a perspective that also leads to reconsider individualized and personalized educational and didactic school projects (Individual Educational Plan-IEP and Personalized Didactic Plan-PDP) as early and fundamental elements, an integral part of the life project

and capacitation of people. It is therefore necessary that schools are able to develop and use these tools in a coherent, functional and heuristic way.

We therefore consider it useful to develop a device to work in this direction, coherent with the Quality of Life, Capabilities and ICF models starting from school contexts, according to the longlife perspective.

The research model: ICF, SEN observation and capacity building at school

Thinking, in a pedagogical form, the entire methodological, strategic and didactic framework of the ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability, Health, OMS, 2001; 2007) means, firstly, providing the cultural and anthropological frame in which you can read and interpret *special educational needs* in the light of a perspective of the overall functioning of the *subject-person*, respecting the inviolable principle of the holistic nature of his being and the intertwining space in which there are many aspects of own life.

From the pedagogical point of view, it's necessary to outline and, at the same time, to focus the fondant principle (as well as rational criterion of legitimacy) inside of which place and make visible the entire framework of ICF, since the mere declination of its components does not constitute *ipso facto* reason o educational relevance.

Although the debate about the structural and methodological-functional articulation of the ICF is now articulated and rich in a variety of fields related of education teaching, the fondant principles of its being give wide room of free interpretation.

Education, as *e-ducere*, to take out, peering into the depths of man, is basically a process intrinsically linked to the life's project of each person and to his sense of direction in the constellation of knowledge, skills, meanings and values that represent the milestones which could lead to the meaning horizon of own life.

The training-education assumes, if so understanding, the meaning/value of educational intentionality, the ICF (for the strategic peculiarity of its structure) the most suitable instrument to cross the danger of distortions that could exploit educational careers towards social, cultural and moral life's models, defined inclusive.

In the intersection *pedagogy/education/human relation*, the ICF arises, therefore, as a model approach to the person, to own special educational needs, special defined here, by providing, on the one hand the interpretation and the preliminary remarks for the design of a personalized teaching plan and permitting, on the other side, to catch the concept of educability inside a

theoretical horizon of long life learning, understood as a general purpose to pursue.

This line of thought is rich in implications because:

a) it enshrines the right and duty of each person to define and follow a life project which aims basically to give meaning and direction to their existence;
b) it recognizes the right of an educational society to elaborate and carry out educational projects, starting from systems of values and meanings of life in which people with special educational needs are carriers;
c) it focuses on the teacher's personal and social responsibility who choose the most suitable formation in keeping with the life's project of each person with SEN;
d) it allows to catch the drift of *education* as a particular mode of institutionalized training, according to specific rules and its aim is the person's integration inside *functional-systemic* flows of life which characterized the social and cultural contest.

The ICF rules a line of paradigmatic change for the concept of disability. It is defined as «the consequence or result of a complex relationship between the state of health of a person and personal and environmental factors, that represent his life's situation» (WHO, 2001).

It's also important to specify the essential principles declared by the WHO to structure the theoretical and conceptual model of the ICF.

They are:

a) *Universality* (as universal aspect of Humanity);
b) *Environment* (environmental factors that characterized disability);
c) *Neutral language* (as a particular interpretation of languages' classifications);
d) *Equality* (there aren't any differences between physical and mental factors in this classification);
e) *Bio-psycho-social model* (it's more considered the personal, social and physical background of a disabled person).

The QOL model could be considered as a perspective and a modus operandi that gathers classified information, in other words, values of variables that, while the Individualized Plan of Support unfolds in response to the Life Project, allow the management, control of the entire process towards the improvement of the QOL (p. 54).

For the purposes of our research, it is also important to observe that the biopsychosocial model of Health at the basis of the ICF is fully coherent with the eight domains of the QOL perspective (Physical Wellbeing, Material Wellbeing, Emotional Wellbeing, Self-Determination, Personal Development, Interpersonal Relationships, Social Inclusion, Rights and Empowerment).

This perspective allows us to think about the definition of the life project in the light of the human functioning model. The conformity between Human Operation, interpreted as an articulated set of ecological variables that define it on the qualitative, quantitative and inclusive level of the expectations of person, and expected results of improvement of the quality of life, allows the identification of the dimension of the Project of Life as a path in becoming of realization and expression of Person, of material and spiritual satisfaction and of full participation in the community to which she belongs, in an attempt to provide all the support that the Person herself needs to follow a path, however arduous, towards a quality Life (Croce & Bertelli, 2015). Each life project oriented towards the improving of the QOL conforms with the uniqueness of the Person and the peculiarity of the circumstances and environments in which Person lives (Brown & Brown, 2003). In this way the focus is placed on the ability to read and understand (evaluate) the operators of the complexity of the person's functioning, needs, values and potentialities, in relation to contexts, in order to elaborate a life project authentically oriented towards QOL and full inclusion.

The deep and indissoluble relationship between corporeity, education of own individual and social identity and learning, support a new holistic view of motility that cannot be reduced only to a simple resultant of strictly biological processes, but it has also be considered as an expression of intelligence, affectivity and conscious self-determination.

Cognitive processes related to learning, in a dynamic exchange with social behavior and communicative systems, can all be considered cognitive mechanisms based on motility. So, the teaching setting so delineated in the context of Physical Education in the first cycle, represents an excellent framework for the identification of SEN. The class and its structural and relational commitments often limit or suppress all the functional, social and relational expressions that could be expressed or communicated by the students. In fact, the interpretation of phenomena conducted in the classroom could be artificial and could invalidate data get from tests and estimative tools. This risk is more dangerous if you use qualitative tools to analyze data and psycho-social and social-relational indicators. These indicators have to be more examined and they are linked to some factors quoted in the ICF (Personal and Environmental Factors) that could hardly be taken in a formal context, for example during a medical examination or a psychological and pedagogical advice. If all the indicators are well supported by data collected by families, it will be possible an interpretation of the phenomenon SEN according to a new scientific qualitative approach.

Physical Education has ever been known as a disciplinary area that allows students to express their own personality, showing motor behavior linked to

eye-hand coordination (an excellent index for the skills of reading and writing) and showing relational dynamics as intrapersonal and interpersonal elements; these characteristics can direct teachers to identify SEN objectively.

The National Guidelines of 2012 confirm this view of Physical Education, that:

«promotes awareness of themselves and own abilities, always keeping a contact with the environment, the objects and other people. (...) is therefore an opportunity to promote cognitive, cultural, social and affective experiences (...) it promotes the value of shared rules and the abidance and basic ethical values for human society (...) The involvement for physical and sports activities permits to share experiences with other people in the group, also promoting the inclusion of children with other forms of diversity and enhancing the value of cooperation (...) through physical activity student is facilitated in the expression of communicative demands and unease of various kinds that is not always able to communicate with verbal language» (p.76).[1]

Therefore, the National Guidelines of 2012 recognizes Physical Education as setting to observe and record useful actions and behavior, not only to identify the SEN, but also to draft any Dynamic Functional Plan (DFP).

Method

In relation to the Quality of Life construction and the relevance of personal, emotional, relational, motivational and bodily dimensions, identified by the QOL model and the ICF health model, and in consideration of the absence of codes for the description of personal contextual factors in the WHO Manual, we propose some tools for observation, survey and description of the same in the school environment, during the hours dedicated to Physical Education. Personal factors represent the essential human elements for the independent life of people with SEN (Pavone, 2014) and for everyone's quality of life and cannot be taken into consideration in the construction of the longlife educational and life project, also on the basis of their importance for social and working inclusion. As noted, they constitute essential abilities for life and their development and empowerment is realized early in premature and intensive family and social contexts, such as school.

Referring to the Schalock and Verdugo Alonso model reported above, we can see how the ICF considers only two of the three Quality of Life factors,

[1] MIUR (2012), *Indicazioni Nazionali per il curricolo della scuola dell'infanzia e del primo di istruzione*, p. 76.

but it describes them as Body Functions (b), according to the medical model that cannot be used directly by teachers and educators and, above all, not informative of the functioning of the individual in a "global ecological" context, such as the school during sporting and motoric activities with mates.

This work departs from the assumption that it's necessary to discuss with all school's actors (school heads, teachers, students, parents) to realize an efficient model for the identification of SEN in the framework of the ICF and it's also necessary to work according to a model that meets a logic of possible relations defined between the areas in the anthropological paradigm of the ICF. It's necessary to underline that the identification process is not accompanied by a labeling process. The special normality, as defined by Ianes (2006), is the base to realize tools and criteria for the identification of students' strengths and weakness. It's just this mapping of the various anthropological aspects of the subject that, whit its inherently dynamism and transience, gives the teacher the opportunity to read the phenomenon of inclusion according to a holistic vision and non-selective, where health prevails over the disease and the quality of the subject becomes the pivot on which to turn the various strategies.

Despite operating the entire class with respect to the ICF, this specific project focuses on the subcategories of subjects with SEN who have no impairment in "Structures and Functions Body" and that, therefore, have not been subjected to identification procedures (diagnosis) according to the law n. 104/1992 (the disabled) and n. 170/2010 (Specific Learning Disorders-SLD).

In fact, if a student is not certified but shows behavior and/or learning problem, school has to take note of his difficulties, according to the criteria of identification and consequent application of an inclusive teaching method, even if scientific community has not yet considered these subjects. In fact, according to the ICF model, the MIUR has issued in the past 15 months a Ministerial Directive (27/12/2012) and two Ministerial Circulars (08/03/2013 and 22/11/2013) that invite schools to restructure the system for students with difficulty, orienting teachers towards a holistic and inclusive culture, for the identification of students' difficulties. This model is not limited to a clinical view of a person but it also examines, I would say especially, the psycho-social factors that may affect the academic success of the student. The following scheme (Fig. 1) allows you to see the areas of the ICF framework which refer mainly to "Personal and Environmental Factors" and "Business Personal and Social Participation" of the subject, underlined by research unit.

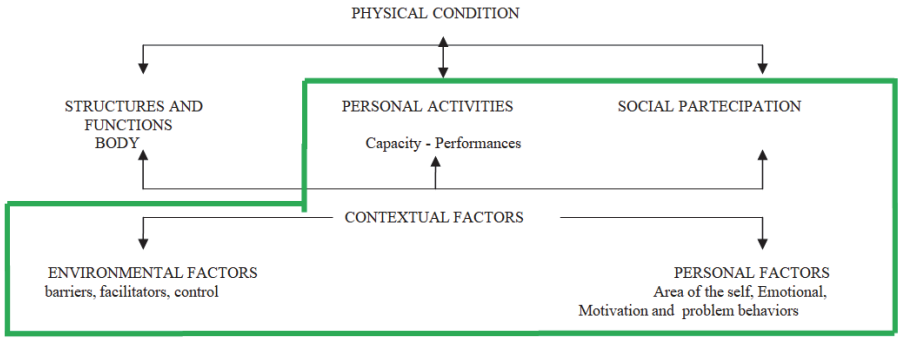
Starting from the principle that the ICF asks you to operate according to the diagram in Figure 1, there is a need to:

1. To recognize and metabolize by teachers the ICF model;

2. Scientifically to hypothesize a model of possible relationships between the various areas of the ICF;
3. To realize measuring instruments, quantitative and qualitative indicators belonging to multiple areas of the ICF;
4. To test, the hypothesized model and confirm the level of significance and scientific reliability, thanks to the active collaboration of teachers;
5. To build a useful product to teachers for the identification of students and to find inclusive strategies, according to results.

According to each of these voices, the research unit has produced a methodological procedure that responds to the needs stated above.

Fig. 1 – Areas ICF which is focused on the search



Sample

Networks of schools: 5 in Campania, 2 in Sicily, 1 in Sardegna, 3 in Piemonte. Total 40 schools.

Teachers: Childhood 68, 142 Primary, 94 Secondary Grade I, 73 Secondary Grade II. total 377.

Students: 920 Childhoods, 2027 Primary, 996 Secondary Grade I, 575 Secondary Grade II. Total 4518.

Results

The results cited here will be limited to the list, with a brief comment, of the instruments designed and developed which will be used by the teachers of Physical Education and colleagues from other disciplines.

For the teacher of Physical Education were built:

National Guidelines - Plant Conceptual ICF (Annexes 1)

- Ann. 1INF - Board guidance of abilities and contextual performance in personal activities and social participation in Physical Education according to National Guidelines of 2012 for the Curriculum of Kindergarten with *proposals for educational deliveries which will guide the teacher and observable indicators during that specific delivery proposal.*
- Ann. 1PRI - Board guidance of abilities and contextual performance in personal activities and social participation in Physical Education according to National Guidelines of 2012 for the Curriculum of Primary School with *proposals for educational deliveries which will guide the teacher and observable indicators during that specific delivery proposal.*
- Ann. 1SIG - Board guidance of abilities and contextual performance in personal activities and social participation in Physical Education according to National Guidelines of 2012 for the Curriculum of Middle School with *proposals for educational deliveries which will guide the teacher and observable indicators during that specific delivery proposal.*
- Ann. 1SIIG - Board guidance of abilities and contextual performance in personal activities and social participation in Physical Education according to National Guidelines of Physical Education and Sport Sciences referred to Art.10, paragraph 3, Decree of the President of 15 March 2012, n.89 of the Regulation of Secondary School with *proposals for educational deliveries which will guide the teacher and observable indicators during that specific delivery proposal.*

Detection of Personal Factors – ICF(Annexes 2)

- Ann. 2SIF – Descriptive scheme with indicators and frequencies to be detected during the hours of Physical Education
- Ann. 2DB – Logbook for noting attitudes, situations, behavior, postures during the hours of Physical Education
- Ann. 2GTG – Model for students daily trascription/indicators collected during a single lesson of Physical Education
- Ann. 2GTR – Model for students resumptive trascription/indicators/frequencies collected during Physical Education classes in the entire two months April/May 2014

For teachers of other disciplines have been realized:

Detection Personal Activities and Social Participation – ICF (Annexes 3)

- Ann. 3SIQINF – Descriptive scheme with coded indicators (Area of basic learning and Application of knowledge) and qualifies *to be detected in the*

two months of experimentation in the classroom (*April-May 2014) – Kindergarten*

- Ann. 3SIQPRI – Descriptive scheme with coded indicators (Area of basic learning and Application of knowledge) and qualifies *to be detected in the two months of experimentation in the classroom* (*April-May 2014) – Primary School*
- Ann. 3SIQSIG – Descriptive scheme with coded indicators (Area of basic learning and Application of knowledge) and qualifies *to be detected in the two months of experimentation in the classroom* (*April-May 2014) – Middle School*
- Ann. 3SIQSIIG – Descriptive scheme with coded indicators (Area of basic learning and Application of knowledge) and qualifies *to be detected in the two months of experimentation in the classroom* (*April-May 2014) – Secondary School*
- Ann. 3GTUINF – Model for only students transcription/indicators/qualifiers *collected during two months of experimentation in the classroom (April-May 2014) – Kindergarten*
- Ann. 3GTUPRI – Model for only students transcription/indicators/qualifiers *collected during two months of experimentation in the classroom (April-May 2014) – Primary School*
- Ann. 3GTUSIG – Model for only students transcription/indicators/qualifiers *collected during two months of experimentation in the classroom (April-May 2014) – Middle School*
- Ann. 3GTUSIIG – Model for only students transcription/indicators/qualifiers *collected during two months of experimentation in the classroom (April-May 2014) – Secondary School*

For school heads, teachers and parents have been realized:

Detection Environmental Factors – ICF (Annexes 3)

- Ann. 4QDS – Questionnaire for school heads *complete on platform on line before the beginning of activities experimentation*
- Ann. 4QD – Questionnaire for teachers *complete on platform on line before the beginning of activities experimentation*
- Ann. 4QG – Questionnaire for parents *complete on platform on line before the beginning of activities experimentation*
- All. 4GTRQG – Model for transcription results *use after collecting all of the parents filled out questionnaires*

Discussion and conclusion

Compared to the results, that is tools processed to make the research, you can comment on, in a descriptive way, the critical points and the strengths of all the completed steps, as mentioned in the method.

Recognize and metabolize the ICF model

The research unit has considered useful to promote a training for selected classrooms' teachers who are involved in the project EDUFIBES to find a suitable model for the ICF framework and to help teachers to apply scientific criteria for the identification of SEN and the development of effective inclusive teaching strategies.

The training course include 12 hours of activity in presence during which speakers debate about ICF (Ianes, 2006), Embodied Cognitive Science (Borghi, 2012; Gomez Paloma, 2013), SEN (Ianes, 2013) and educational research. It's necessary to understand the scientific principle of this model to avoid teachers can be reduced to mere executors of a protocol, but they would be active player in the research to experiment new teaching tools.

Assumptions scientific model for relations areas of the ICF

The research unit has realized a model able to verify the real relationship between different indicators of ICF, through instruments of observation and questionnaires to detect indicators of most areas of ICF, coherent to QOL Model described above.

According to the theoretical and methodological framework, physical Education represents an excellent sitting of observation thanks to its high principles of expressive and communicative authenticity. In fact, Personal Factors are considered a basic element of the model because they influence student's learning according to the new neuro-scientific and psychobiological researches, even if they aren't encoded in the framework of ICF as other areas (Personal Activities, Social Participation, etc.) (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Gallese, 2007; Siegel, 2001; LeDoux, 2002; Damasio, 1995).

Construction of tools for indicators and qualifiers of ICF areas

Teachers can activate processes of teaching/learning through the construction of tools for indicators and qualifiers of some ICF areas: objectives and purposes. In fact this project is based on a national

announcement by MIUR that designed the funds for some research projects to improve National Guidelines of 2012.

The instruments listed in the queue to this work are aimed to:

1. Detect students' behaviors, situations, attitudes and postures to examine the quality of their Persona Factors, thanks to Physical Education;
2. Detect students' skills and abilities according to the Chapter I – Learning and Applying Knowledge – thank to the normal teaching;
3. Detect professional training of teachers and school heads about SEN;
4. Detect students' Environmental Factors to interpret results, thanks to parents

Experimentation model for scientific check

The research unit can better understand the ICF framework through results. It can calibrate the scientific value of the model and represents it on a paper or electronic way, if there will be directly and inversely correlations between different indicators of more areas.

Framework for educational and inclusive strategies for the classroom

The aim of this project is not only the realization and the validation of a scientific model for the identification of SEN, but also didactic consequences of this model.

After analyzing data, a scientific model will be realized to help teachers to set students pedagogically, according to the different areas of ICF. The same model will help teacher to find new strategies for an inclusive teaching method. So, teachers will work analyzing the relationships between the different anthropological areas of ICF; it will be clear that basic learning and application of knowledge are not the only element for student's education.

At the same time, the elaboration of the individualized educational program and the personalized didactic plan of the students with SEN is oriented in a more conscious way and aimed at the construction of a life project aimed at evaluating and strengthening the capacitation processes in a long-life perspective.

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