

EDUCATION SCIENCES & SOCIETY

Rivista Semestrale

Anno 12 n. 1

Gennaio-Giugno 2021

ISSNe 2284-015X

**Pedagogia Speciale
tra Formazione e Ricerca
ai tempi della pandemia**

**Special Pedagogy between
Training and Research
during pandemic times**

FrancoAngeli

OPEN  ACCESS



EDUCATION SCIENCES & SOCIETY

Rivista Semestrale

Anno 12 n.1

Gennaio-Giugno 2021

**Pedagogia Speciale
tra Formazione e Ricerca
ai tempi della pandemia**

**Special Pedagogy between
Training and Research
during pandemic times**

FrancoAngeli

OPEN  ACCESS

Copyright © FrancoAngeli

This work is released under Creative Commons Attribution - Non-Commercial –
No Derivatives License. For terms and conditions of usage

please see: <http://creativecommons.org>

Education Sciences & Society (ESS) is an international scholarly open access, peer reviewed biannual journal. The journal aims at highlighting and discussing the main issues arising in the pedagogical and didactical fields. The journal objective is also to provide the educational scientific community with the state-of-the-art and tools to interpret the ongoing debate.

The issues of *Education Sciences and Society* offer their professional and academic knowledge in the fields of General Pedagogy, Philosophy of Education, Social Pedagogy, Learning and Teaching, Technology of Education, Special Education and Education Research and related disciplines.

Editors in chief: Michele Corsi (Università di Macerata, Italia); Pier Giuseppe Rossi (Università di Macerata, Italia)

Editorial Committee

Michele Corsi (Università di Macerata, Italia); Pier Giuseppe Rossi (Università di Macerata, Italia); Laura Fedeli (Università di Macerata, Italia); Catia Giaconi (Università di Macerata, Italia); Lorella Giannandrea (Università di Macerata, Italia); Massimiliano Stramaglia (Università di Macerata, Italia)

Direction Committee

Fabrizio d'Aniello, Rosita Deluigi, Catia Giaconi, Lorella Giannandrea, Luca Girotti, Chiara Sirignano, Massimiliano Stramaglia, Raffaele Tumino

Scientific Committee

Serge Agostinelli (Université Paul Cezanne de Marseille, France); Marguerite Allet (Université de Nantes, France); Anna Ascenzi (Università di Macerata, Italia); Massimo Baldacci (Università di Urbino, Italia); Vitalij G. Bezrogov (Russian Academy of Education, Moscow, Russia); Boris M. Bim-Bad (Russian Academy of Education, Moscow, Russia); Marc Bru (Université de Toulouse, Francia); Renza Cerri Musso (Università di Genova, Italia); Cristina Coggi (Università di Torino, Italia); Piero Crispiani (Università di Macerata, Italia); Elio Damiano (Università di Parma, Italia); Jean-Marie De Ketele (Université Catholique de Louvain-La Neuve, Belgio); Juan Manuel De Pablos Pons (Universidad de Sevilla); Gaetano Domenici (Università di Roma Tre, Italia); Yrjö Engeström (University of Helsinki, Finlandia); Franco Frabboni (Università di Bologna, Italia); Luciano Galliani (Università di Padova, Italia); Jim Garrison (Virginia Tech University, U.S.A.); Larry Hickman (Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, U.S.A.); Jean Houssaye (Université de Rouen, Francia); José Antonio Ibañez-Martin (Universidad de Madrid, Spagna); Cosimo Raffaele Laneve (Università di Bari, Italia); Yves Lenoir (Université de Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada); Sira Serenella Macchietti (Università di Siena, f.r., Italia); Susanna Mantovani (Università di Milano Bicocca, Italia); Anna Maria Mariani (Università di Torino, Italia); Luigina Mortari (Università di Verona, Italia); Maria Teresa Moscato (Università di Bologna, Italia); Anatolij V. Mudrik (Russian Academy of Education, Moscow, Russia); Concepción Naval Durán (Universidad de Navarra, Spagna); Luigi Pati (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano, Italia); Philippe Perrenoud (Université de Genève, Svizzera); Franca Pinto Minerva (Università di Foggia, Italia); Aleksandr N. Poddjakov (State Research University, Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia); Jean-Pierre Pourtois (Université de Mons- Hainaut, Belgio); David Rasmussen (Boston College, U.S.A.); Pier Giuseppe Rossi (Università di Macerata, Italia); Naoko Saito (Università di Kyoto, Giappone); Albert Sangrà (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spagna); Roberto Sani (Università di Macerata, Italia); Luisa Santelli Beccegato (Università di Bari, Italia); Giuseppe Spadafora (Università della Calabria, Italia); Bianca Spadolini (Università di Roma Tre, Italia); Flavia Stara (Università di Macerata, Italia); Jean-Marie Van der Maren (Université de Montréal, Canada); Renata Viganò (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano, Italia); Emil Visnovsky (Accademia Slovacca delle Scienze, Slovacchia); Carla Xodo (Università di Padova, Italia)

Peer Review Process

Manuscripts for publication in ESS are selected through a rigorous peer review to ensure originality, timeliness, relevance, and readability. The main aim of the journal is to publish peer reviewed research and review articles in rapidly developing field of Education and all other related fields. ESS is an online journal having full access to the research and review paper.

Aut. Trib. Roma n. 80/12 del 15.3.2012 – Semestrale – Dir. Resp: Michele Corsi Copyright © 2021 by FrancoAngeli s.r.l., Milano, Italy Issn 2038-9442, ISSNe 2284-015X. Stampa: Logo srl, sede legale: Via Marco Polo 8, 35010 Borgoricco (Pd).

Publicato con licenza *Creative Commons Attribuzione-Non Commerciale-Non opere derivate 4.0 Internazionale* (CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0) *L'opera, comprese tutte le sue parti, è tutelata dalla legge sul diritto d'autore. L'utente nel momento in cui effettua il download dell'opera accetta tutte le condizioni della licenza d'uso dell'opera previste e comunicate sul sito <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.it>*

I semestre 2021 – Finito di stampare: giugno 2021

Pedagogia Speciale tra Formazione e Ricerca ai tempi della pandemia

Special Pedagogy between Training and Research during pandemic times

Sommario

Editorial

Michele Corsi, Catia Giaconi e Vanessa Perry

The special pedagogy between research and training in the time of Covid-19. The possible inclusion after the end of the pandemic pag. 7

Articoli

A pandemic year and the offense to the younger generations. Suggestions and hypotheses

Michele Corsi » 17

Il territorio come spazio della creatività sociale. Un esempio di laboratorio per una “città accogliente”

The territory as space for social creativity. An example of laboratory for a Welcoming City

Stefania Montebelli » 40

Le conseguenze economiche, sociali e scolastiche della pandemia da Coronavirus per le famiglie immigrate e per i loro figli
The economic, social and educational consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic for immigrant families and their children

Serena Sani » 56

The teachers' educational needs for early detection of difficulties in kindergarden

Silvia Maggiolini, Paola Molteni, Elena Zanfroni, Roberta Sala, Luigi d'Alonzo » 74

Towards the fulfillment of the right to inclusive education for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities: Framework for action <i>Antonio M. Amor, María Fernández, Miguel Á. Verdugo, Alba Aza, M. Isabel Calvo</i>	pag.	95
Getting up to SpEED: Special Education Embodied Design for Sensorially Equitable Inclusion <i>Sofia Tancredi, Rachel Chen, Christina Krause, Dor Abrahamson, Filippo Gomez Paloma</i>	»	114
Preterm Infants: Parenting Implications and Perspectives in Early Childhood Special Education <i>Gianluca Amatori</i>	»	137
Trauma Informed Care During a Global Pandemic: Synergies and multidisciplinary boundaries for working with childhood, adolescence, senility and disability <i>Francesca Salis, Britt Rhodes</i>	»	149
Insegnare e apprendere nella scuola secondaria: paradigmi teorici e declinazioni operative per una scuola inclusiva Teaching and learning in secondary school: Theoretical paradigms and operational declinations for an inclusive school <i>Donatella Fantozzi</i>	»	164
Children with Hearing Disabilities during the Pandemic: Challenges and Perspectives of Inclusion <i>Arianna Taddei, Esmeralda Azahar López, Rebeca Abigail Recinos Reyes</i>	»	178
Inclusion in university contexts and the role of internships in the education of students with disabilities: Critical issues, perspectives and good practices <i>Gigliola Paviotti, Ilaria D'Angelo, Simone Aparecida Capellini, Catia Giaconi</i>	»	197
Specific Learning Disorders in Higher Education: The University of Arizona case study <i>Noemi Del Bianco, Laurel Grigg Mason</i>	»	219

Filoso-fare nell'epoca della pandemia: attualità e nuove sfide per la Philosophy for Children Philosophizing in the age of pandemic: Topicality and new challenges for Philosophy for Children <i>Lucia Dinacci</i>	pag.	230
Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on physical activity practice of people with disabilities <i>Márcia Greguol, Cristiana Conti, Bruno Marson Malagodi, Bruna Barboza Seron, Elaine Cappellazzo Souto, Attilio Carraro</i>	»	240
Perceptual-visual-motor measures, reading and properties of eye movements of students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder <i>Simone Aparecida Capellini, Isabela Pires Metzner, Noemi Del Bianco, Ilaria D'Angelo, Aldo Caldarelli and Catia Giaconi</i>	»	252
La formazione degli insegnanti in era Covid. Descrizione e analisi di una esperienza laboratoriale sui temi della pedagogia e della didattica inclusiva Teacher training in the Covid era. Description and analysis of a workshop experience on the themes of pedagogy and inclusive didactics <i>Fabio Bocci, Ines Guerini</i>	»	271
Recensioni /Book reviews	»	287

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

The possible inclusion after pandemic

*Michele Corsi, Catia Giaconi and Vanessa Perry**

Available online: 28/06/2021

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

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

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

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

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

* Professor of Practice in the Counseling Program at the University of Arizona, USA. E-mail: vmpperry@arizona.edu.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa12056

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A pandemic year and the offense to the younger generations. Suggestions and hypotheses

*Michele Corsi**

Abstract

To summarize this article with a single expression, we could enclose it in a lack, which has been widely argued on all its pages: the programming one. Moreover, there was a lack of planning and ability to predict for many institutions and most of the citizens.

Or, still, there was often a failure to prevent, in order to remedy instead, and not always adequately.

With a particular reference to Italy on these pages.

The above-mentioned four limits or wounds are particularly serious for our country in this pandemic year.

Furthermore, this pandemic caught everyone unprepared and inexperienced.

And, then, too many people - I am referring to the Government here - sold themselves to a lot of virologists and various mass media exponents, etc., who have frequently ended up increasing the unease of a nation, which is exhausted at a sanitary, economical and psychological level, with an excess of self-representation and easy self-confidence, too.

In particular, this text makes school and university and, therefore, those who attend them, from children to young people, its focal point. They are not considered as abstract entities, but embodied people still belonging to an Italy at high speed: from the rapidly increasing poor people in the Southern Italy, which has not progressed yet and is in a great difficulty, to a middle class who, far from being as the fundamental nerve centre of the Italian productive fabric in the last century, is being overcome by pockets of poverty, misery and unemployment on the other hand.

Thus, the invitation to reopen school and university rooms, as it has happened for factories and companies for months. Obviously, in safe conditions. And with all the necessary due contextual measures. Moreover, in the desirable interpenetration between classroom teaching and distance learning for the next future, which is still to be entirely created in the Italian reality.

* Emeritus Professor in General and Social Pedagogy at the Department of Education, cultural heritage and tourism of the University of Macerata (Italy). E-mail: michele.corsi@unimc.it.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa11433

We have written these reflections, having in mind the psycho-social and educational conditions of the younger generations, so that an age of crisis does not become a double crisis in the way we are risking, and not for a little while, at present. With negative repercussions on them and all the times to come, whose signs are already evident, although they are mostly ignored. It is rather indispensable to translate them into opportunities for growth and life, culture and mental health.

And with an Italian socio-economic gap which is nevertheless increasing.

Finally, we have in mind that the right to study for each person and everyone is the only social lift which can change the destiny of a country, Italy, and also restart its economy and employment.

Because skills are also a fundamental variable of GDP growth, such as a democracy effectively implemented and not only acted in words.

Keywords: covid-19, school, university, adolescence, youth.

First submission: 12/04/2021, accepted: 21/04/2021

Available online: 28/06/2021

1. Perimeters

There are three perimeters. From the widest one to the most targeted or focal one. In a sort of three hierarchically progressive Chinese boxes (and this reference is not accidental, given the origin of this virus). Or a lower species of Russian matryoshkas.

The first one is precisely chronological and refers to time: this pandemic, this year or a little more, from February 2020 or earlier – for the truth which is gradually being revealed (Corsi, 2020) – and the historical context where these reflections are placed.

The second one is methodological. The thought expressed here is obviously a reasoning which derives from the arranged combination of a theoretical structure consolidated for decades (not to say for more) and data, which are always the results of interpretations and experiences (Besozzi, Colombo, 2014). These data are or “would be effective” (but the facts multiply according to different points of view) on the one hand and represent the most varied tones, with which we place ourselves in their regard on the other hand. Hence, the use of the term “suggestions” to immediately indicate that we do not intend to attribute to these solicitations a chrism of apodictic

truth, if it was possible (Popper, 2009), but a motivated way to start a debate and to confront each other¹. These suggestions open the way to a series of hypotheses or converge into them and represent the core business of this contribution.

It is like proceeding through a straw or a funnel and, in some way, descending, so that the third perimeter becomes the text of these two contexts or, better, the direction of these pages, which make up this article all together.

Starting from the ages taken into consideration: from pre-adolescence to youth. In particular, with reference to the social, affective, cognitive, school and university dimensions – not least at a relational and almost daily level - (Carver, Scheier, Giampietro & Iannello, 2014).

Especially in relation to two important development factors: growth (products) and sociality (process, food). Sociality as the primary nourishment for growth, as an effect, a result, but also a manifestation of the other two interconnected areas: culture, the achievement of information, which is the training viaticum, where it is well placed and founded, [Corsi, 1993; Corsi, 2016(1)]; and affectivity: from friendship to falling in love and real love (Corsi, 2003). All these fields need to have experiences, to consume them, to be considered and to expand. In practice, actions (processes) and acts (products for new achievements) to be accomplished. Therefore, sociality as a perennial transformation goal of a moving itinerary represented by socialization.

Pre-adolescence, adolescence and youth are already unstable evolutionary phases, as we write later in more details. Always and, especially, today. They are evolutionary and, therefore, already terminologically characterized by the condition of a journey². A non-adult journey, made up of pervious and impervious up-and-downs, catching various means of locomotion; and often with unreasonable and risky hitchhiking. And, not infrequently, even catching ramshackle wagons to the point of various psychic, social and legal breakdowns; with sudden stops and returns backwards; apparently unmotivated pauses and stops, which are at times euphoric and at times depressed.

¹ There is notoriously no evaluative neutrality (Nagel, 1968). Just as naive realism has been widely renounced from classical psychoanalysis (for example, Freud, when he argues that it is true what they believe for his patients) to Gestalt psychology, from the most accredited philosophy of the sciences to various economic theories, to the international political debate, too (Corsi, 1980).

² So much so that one wonders whether developmental psychology still has a precise and delimited range of contents or time today. Formerly referred to as the psychology of developmental age, it was used to ascribe the first 18 years of a person's life in it until the late 1950s. This term has been gradually expanding forward starting from the 1970s. And this pandemic pathologically risks procrastinating it at present.

This further terrible and dramatic precariousness represented by the current pandemic (a drama for which we will perhaps pay for several decades and generations) is being inserted into the condition of psycho-social precariousness: schools and universities which are opened/closed with an often extemporaneous, unpredictable and sudden stop and go³; the possibility to go out, to see one another, to meet: yes/no; the necessary extended times of falling in love and future love which are broken down, made difficult or reduced to a minimum and marginalized, when they are not indeed completely hindered or made impossible to be practiced.

The decline of practice, the fundamental and irreplaceable nourishment of these ages.

The fall of the meeting or, even, the confrontation, which are surely necessary in these years.

Therefore, the surrender of the project to be created, verified, validated and changed, if it is considered no longer functional or vital, shareable or not in the eyes of the others. In a time of life which is hungry to throw itself forward. And often without a net.

And in this writing I address to such ages, for whom this pandemic has meant offense and injury, with all the related (right or not) choices.

In this text, my reflections intend to be a diagnosis for prognosis and therapies⁴ to be achieved as soon as possible, without certainly denying the coronavirus tragedy in all its terrible aspects and even more.

But the scene was only left to virologists, who have widely occupied it, even when they disagree with each other⁵.

³ So much so that the new Minister for Education Bianchi immediately declared that he wanted to reopen schools in the total consistency with President Draghi and his agenda.

⁴ With so many diagnoses which were abundant for the past thirty years both in pedagogy and politics, to limit ourselves to these two areas. So, for example, thanks to this article, we know everything about the Rt index, but almost nothing about the timing of vaccination in view of a herd immunity (the therapy for an “auspicious” prognosis), while waiting for the phantom “primroses” we hope that Draghi will be able to block and he can more appropriately use: for the 171 industrial disputes pending at MISE for some time, Alitalia relaunch, the revision of social buffers, etc.

⁵ And with some virologists who often speak in the place of the Minister of National Health and should communicate their reflections and analyses to him, and not already to the country. They often want to be the centre of attention and it is annoying to say the least. And always hoping that it will not occur for them what happened to certain celebrities, when the spotlight suddenly went out. However, these virologists often said everything and the opposite of everything: from masks to vaccines, they declared they know almost nothing about this virus, but then they have an equally sudden 360° competence. And, even in the face of these latest coronavirus variants, firstly they almost trivialized them, to identify the scientific solution which is able to stem them now: the lockdown. On this regard, even men and women coming from the so-called streets, without a degree in medicine or a medical specialization, could have perhaps reached this position.

It is the same situation when there was only medicine, psychiatric hospitals, electro-shocks, etc. for psychiatric patients.

And pedagogy and psychology?

Psychology is mostly scarce and only therapeutically oriented: with the call or the clinic whistle to lord it.

And pedagogy is absent with street or school psychologists who entirely replace it.

Far be it from me to want to simulate a court, to identify faults and to attribute reports.

Virology has widely beaten pedagogy, because pedagogy has been asking for it for decades and, therefore, wanted it.

In summary, this has been the triumphant year for medicine and medicaments with human and social sciences being very rarely called into question or, in any case, only when it was impossible not to talk about the main depression (Stramaglia, 2018), which has increased in these recent months, or a more consistent use of psychotropic drugs than in the recent past.

On this regard, I recall an old saying: “Whoever is not sitting at the table is on the menu”. Well, there have been neither these above-mentioned disciplines, nor our young people, nor school, nor even university at the table in this last year. They have been on the menu in order to “be eaten in their head”, with the impossibility of being able to eat.

And someone could also add “nor even the people” in a cultural perspective which does not belong to me, because it is generic and not because it is already fundamentally democratic.

2. From pre-adolescence to youth

Three splendid and frightfully extraordinary ages in an intersected succession with each other: pre-adolescence, adolescence and youth (Caplan, Lebovici, 1979).

They are not in Rousseau’s style, like the three consecutive carriages on the train of life.

Rather, they are established with Necker de Saussure’s odd crossed histograms or in the hybridized or practicable concatenation in Fröbel’s idealistic perspective. On this regard, both of these points of view will then open the way to Freudian hermeneutics.

With close reference to today’s situation, the Western world and, particularly, Italy – which is the meta-text of the three perimeters I have written about, the country about which I am arguing – pre-adolescence ranges on average from 10-11 to 14-15 years old. Indeed, it includes a time span

which extends from about the last year of primary school to the entire compulsory middle school, up to the first or the beginning of the second year of secondary school, in some geographical areas, for certain social classes or parts of them, and for more or less numerous students.

Instead, adolescence is “The Party”, the gymnasium, the technical institutes (all these school grades to be reformed in a technological and multilingual era) and so on. It is the muff of life, the existential choice, the dreams and the delirium, the turning and crisis point of the second, effective and essential opposite self-affirmation. Etymologically speaking, crisis is considered as a progressive conquest of judgment.

The call to gather the previous evolutionary phases in a harmonic-disharmonic representation of perspective synthesis, a self-representation: who I am, or I think to be and, above all, who I want to become. With whom and for what. How I want to fulfil myself. What kind of adult I aspire to be. With projects which sometimes have the time of a morning or the darkness of a night crossed by nightmares. The age of the shrimp: two steps forward and one step back, when it is okay. An identity who slowly consolidates and takes shape zigzag, when the peer group, the best friend, the tones of opposition to parents and relatives and, through them, to institutions and the prevailing or main culture are fundamental parameters and experiences, which need time and con-tact to evolve and to mature in the chiaroscuro above described. The con-tact, I repeat.

An age made up of great illusions and as many disappointments, fears and dismay, where the other people always stand out, both if they are mortifying and destructive or, on the contrary, constructive and companions, with a return to food and nourishment.

A period to which we often return with a widespread nostalgia on the way of the sunset of life, when we rather remember it with a melancholic sensation for the non-responsibility, the first strong emotions, the first kisses and disturbances and more, purified by the memory of the days of rain and hail, like an era of lightness, levity and, above all, heart, because after that, in particular, the years of mind will come.

But, in short, this is a really disturbed evolution, so that Anna Freud referred to it as a “developmental disorder” (A. Freud, 2007).

And between adolescence and adulthood: youth.

Youth can also be found as the first stage of adulthood in the past.

The years of university or the first inclusion into the world of work, after obtaining the diploma, until the late 1960s or, at most, during the 1970s, with regard to the years following the economic boom and the social expansion of the so-called middle class.

A sort of five-year period: from 18-19 to 23-24 years old.

At the time working was possible. And if we mostly come back to the university dimension, after graduating, there were a lot of people who also contracted marriage and set up “their” house. In those times, cohabitation was very scarce, while accommodations were cheaply available, perhaps in the suburbs, which have now become the main centres of many large cities: from Rome to Milan.

Everything simple? Everything easy? Certainly not, but immeasurably lighter than today.

And, from a psycho-social point of view, the fog of adolescent developmental disorder was gradually lifting and clearing away, the person was created (Stramaglia, 2011), more or less long, summer and para-summer flirtation and falling in love left the ground to that affective-relational field once called “engagement”.

A period of less suffering and greater creation, when the promises of the best parents were almost punctually fulfilled (Corsi, 2001): firstly study, secondly work and, finally, the consolidation of love choices.

Now? Or, better, until a year ago?

For decades, adolescence has been overflowing into youth like a river full of mud and alluviums, after an almost equatorial flood.

So, we wonder: when does adolescence end in a more or less recent present?

And when does youth begin?

Fifty years ago, Peter Blos (1971) had already written and argued about prolonged or protracted adolescence.

This adolescence beat youth like the dirty engine of a car and made it retreat in its rising until the age of 30 and later, because the progressive employment crisis with the consequent lack of economic autonomy opened the “stables” of social autarchy wide and put the planning of a stable affectivity in a critical position, giving life to a nomadism of more or less intense affective-relational experiences, which could be short or very short in days, hours or limited intervals. Sexism versus healthy and relaxed sexuality.

Therefore, this adolescence had been becoming stable over a duration of almost twenty years during the pre-covid period. And tomorrow? In the years to come?

On the contrary, Bettelheim (2013) had identified that adolescence as the typical one of a very small social minority in the 19th century, only to gradually expand in the 20th century and to become recognizable and almost widespread throughout the Western world, progressively gaining the characteristics of a homologation. In fact, in Pasolini's interpretation (1999), the difference in class and wealth between proletariat and bourgeoisie was very clear and evident before 1968, while then it gradually disappeared not

with regard to liras or euros, but certainly for customs and choices or more or less legitimate desires, which people tempt to reach even with illicit means (because it sometimes deals with temptations), when they are not practicable. An example: drugs are taken in good neighbourhoods and suburban areas. Girls prostitute themselves for need, constraint, fun or boredom.

Therefore, adolescence stands out today with some forms of a frightening and jagged tumour growth, without limits and clear boundaries.

Keeping real adulthood silent after this adolescent magmatic lava.

Therefore, youth is also precariously inserted into adulthood in an imprudent way (nowadays, prudence is not fashionable, it is an ancient virtue), when it was laboriously reached as an intermediate stage with its myths above and below. The times of youth and maturity are confused and dispersed with less and less mature adults, a very few real adults and "young" people in their sixties and over, who are pathetic and out of time (Corsi, 2015).

3. Growing up together among peers and the need for certainties

I repeat that the three just described ones are ages of psychological and social disturbance.

Years ago I talked about theft in several of my writings, with reference to the crisis of the first republic and its end – a period about which history will have a lot to say with the unedifying mixture between judicial system and international political and economic-financial interests –: the theft of work, on which our mistreated Constitution is based and introduced. It seems too tight like a small jacket with all due respect to democracy and intellectual honesty and, with it, the theft of hope for younger generations.

They are desperate and unemployed, using a socio-pedagogical reading of context with respect to the text of Blos' psychoanalytic point of view.

Now, this pandemic year has operated another theft against our children, students and young people: not being able to be together, to make a group, to live the group, to meet and to gather on the streets, in bars, outside school, to talk, to tell each other, to confront each other, to touch each other, to read each other in their faces, to grasp the nuances of emotions without masks. And, instead, today everyone has masks.

Of course, it has been said that there are telephones, mobile phones, tablets and video calls.

But until a year ago wasn't the civilization of these aids criticized, invoking the return to the wall on the streets (Recalcati, 2019)?

Didn't we speak about them and the proposing culture as pathological behaviours regarding children and young people who spent their days closed in their room in front of their computer, counting likes and virtual and extra-terrestrial friends on social media?

But currently it is argued that it has not been possible to act otherwise.

Are we really sure?

Or has the easier choice been made? Certainly in a period when nothing has been simple or easy. And we did not certainly have a manual about pandemic and there was not a consolidated history of choices made in the past.

But also about this: the silence of pedagogy.

I softly remember that educating is not repressing. This has been affirmed and reiterated for at least two centuries in the history of this discipline. Rather: to allow, motivating; to prevent, discussing. After decades of permissiveness, however, here is the return to an imposed and medically justified authoritarianism, but it is not educationally argued, with the guilt widely used and flaunted to lord it, as in the worst pre-conciliar Old Catholicism when all the young people were ugly, bad and guilty of killing grandparents and parents in poor health.

But, however, organizing is not forbidding at a socio-political level.

Organizing is certainly much more tiring and difficult.

Forbidding is easier and more simplistic.

Moreover, a Neapolitan saying states that life is a bite and all depends on the flavour we want to give it.

Our teenagers and young people need to give more bites, infinite bites to life, because they do not know yet which flavour they intend to give to the days of their life. They need to try and to try again and, therefore, they need experience and time⁶.

Now, however, we have closed their mouth and we have made them almost silent and voiceless.

They are socially and emotionally anorexic. I will talk about their cognitive level later, but not only about it because of the mixture of their entire personality within it, with reference to school and university, starting from the social classes to which they belong and in relation to the society to come.

That is, we have taken their main food away: being together and meeting in relax, in order to grow up together as an individual.

Therefore, even the certainties: the external ones of predictability and their own internal and personal ones, with the need of a com-pany to make them

⁶ In literature, compare Salinger's *evergreen* novel (2014), *The Catcher in the Rye*.

more or less autonomously, between individual and group conflicts and their possible resolutions.

And, nevertheless, to verify those values which family had given them during infancy and childhood, in the best families where fathers and mothers are still committed to parenting [Corsi, Stramaglia, 2009; Stramaglia, 2009; Corsi, 2016 (2)], even in an age of crisis we are dealing with.

On the contrary, which certainties are there in a pandemic year of uncertainty? Society, psychology, school, etc. often sailing in some uncharted waters? A second wave: yes/no; a third wave: perhaps; the vaccines will arrive, but then they will not arrive or, in any case, be almost difficult to be delivered to us, even it is committed by a European program; vaccination will solve everything and, instead, “maybe” not with the South-African, Brazilian, English, etc. variants, with a new anxiety for each day; above all, the anxiety of not being able (fault or not, responsibility or its exact opposite, with all the intermediate nuances of the case) to prevent... let others prevent, not being able to plan even the most banal and almost daily experience at least. If this is true for adults who, in any case, have greater resources to live with precariousness and have often encountered it in their lives anyway, what about adolescents and young people?

In addition, omnipotent adolescents (Coleman, 2015). Or does psychology no longer count for anything during the covid time?

Or the young people in Gino Paoli's song about four friends at the bar. Destroying, dreaming, rebuilding, and then getting old... they are resigned to what is possible and practicable. But it is not pessimism, it is a principle of reality.

None of this. Impotence is rather slammed in their face.

So, our temporal heirs have been more lonely and terribly lonely since a year. They are lonely with their fears, nightmares and delusions, with a hungry body (Lavanchy, 1994) and, equally, hungry heart and mind, without containers and restrictions, with an intermittent sociability. They do not know if they are in yellow or orange or, worse, red zone in the following day and if they are able to meet their boyfriend or girlfriend, their friends or group belonging to another municipality. They are deprived of associative rites, confrontations and reference points. And I could go on indefinitely.

I think young people and even adults - therefore, tomorrow's society in a few subsequent decades - will personally pay for all of it.

Growing up and living with instability during the time of instability is a double curse. Speaking well in an age when we need to speak well and to feel good.

Thus, no wonder if how they can, they gather together and cause confusion: yellow zone and so on.

It is like a ball held underwater which shoots upwards when you free it⁷.

It is like when parents go out or on vacation, and their children have the opportunity to stay at home. We all did it: friends, invitations, parties and whatever is cheerful and noisy.

Now, they say: – Oh no! One must be responsible –. They must be 40 or 50 at the age of 15-20 years old. If practiced, this monstrosity would make the flesh creep.

And then, down with hypocrisy, which 40-50 year-old people are we talking about?

Today's people, at least in large numbers?

Should I proceed with today's socio-behavioural analyses and descriptions, or can I stop?

4. Distance learning and the right to study

Anyone who is sufficiently familiar with my thinking and my writings knows very well that teaching does not mean only educating - taking for granted and universally recognized that schools and universities are teaching places -.

But both teaching and being teachers mean educating in a combined conjunction with each other (Scheffler, 1972). They have the same commitment, and not the detriment of the other one.

Moreover, there is another refrain of mine: – now, a certain prevailing dull, sickly, not adequately founded or epistemologically rigorous, self-congratulatory didacticism, especially in school (while OECD rankings will also want to say something about the bad school positioning in Europe⁸, or is it just students and their families' fault?), has almost banished most of the interpersonal relationship for the pedagogical-educational activities to the loft for years in the late 19th century or the first half of the 20th century. Or it has done its best at least in the last thirty years; I always refer to Italy, even if what happens or happened in the rest of the Western world in relation to the educational eclipse is not very different.

⁷ A bit like the situation for Draghi Government Ministers, who were happily assembled slapping each other on their shoulders during the transfer from the Quirinale banqueting hall to the cuirassiers' room for the ritual photo, after the oath and the spontaneous human anxiety for the appointment or the confirmation obtained on February 13th, 2021.

⁸ These rankings define both Italian schools and universities as inferior. This opinion also expanded to the international rankings, where (many) Asian universities are virtuously growing by now, while our country annually loses several positions, instead.

Even starting from the widespread diffusion of the television, then we also witnessed another progressively increasing phenomenon with the advent and the subsequent gigantic expansion of the media towards the 1970s: the flourishing and the arrival of distance learning, starting from the Anglo-Saxon world and, from here, to countries with large areas and big logistical difficulties, such as the very advanced Finland, or Asia, with the undeveloped Mongolia characterized by nomadic and pastoral settlements, or the Australian universities chosen by a lot of students coming from the South-eastern Asia.

We have four important reflections to be noted, though.

Firstly, school distance learning in Finland is not just education: it is a 360° teaching or, at least, there is a significant care on this regard – only to consider this paradigmatic example –.

Secondly, and it is no small thing, in those countries there has been a whole course of training and technological progress, which is almost at the year zero or still laughable in Italy. In those countries, teachers were trained for their subject and not obliged on this regard.

Thirdly: most of this proposal, especially in the USA or Western Europe, mainly concerned higher education and, above all, university. So, they are people already “sated” and certainly not people less “sated”, such as those who live in the ages of growth, as my Master claimed in the 1960s (De Giacinto, 1966).

And I conclude with a fourth further reflection, which is by no means trivial and particularly concerning the university institution: the possibility of choosing distance learning. Users are addressed to an online university rather than matriculating in a face-to-face one for their well thought-out and personal considerations. They choose the best distance universities in the world which, through a fully interactive teaching and a whole series of high-level services for their students, are certainly not limited to video-recorded lessons and that’s it, but they assume the responsibility for the entire complexity of their learners.

Instead, there is no discretion for schools and universities in Italy during the covid emergence: just take it. In a period in which we certainly do not regret they would have been said: – Obey and keep quiet.

In addition, this has often happened overnight since the first closure at the end of February-May 2020 and, even after that, it often keeps on happening almost frequently overnight and suddenly, with all due respect to family organization.

Therefore, on such a complex regard, everyone is often unaware both of the country and its goals – non-goals achieved in this field with a deliberate mystification, and that’s an euphemism, when we were not filled with an

annoying and obscene proto-romantic molasses. And I keep quiet because I could go on with many other examples, not only concerning distance learning.

Nor should it be overlooked that the university system has always neglected its students' education; mostly with the advent of mass post-diploma education and the liberalization of curricula⁹. University is considered as a single container of classroom conferences-lectures mostly addressed to the front rows with most of the professors who are motionless and embalmed on their chairs like Egyptian mummies. Woe betide if they stand up. And, in this way, the exams, the ongoing (scarce and not very widespread) marking and ex post etc. Universities are cold bodies wrapped in rigor mortis.

But let's go back to school.

Then we will resume all the happy combination to be created between distance learning and classroom teaching, both for school and university environment.

And, now, let's wonder what school is.

A large container which offers experiences and contains.

Experiences of culture, sociability and affective relationships.

And it contains them with its rules and opportunities.

Restriction rules. And God only knows how much they are necessary during pre-adolescence and adolescence.

For example, the possibility of socializing, confronting, loving some teachers and caricaturing others needs to keep on growing up in some decision-making dimensions and improving the identification processes.

It is an extraordinary gym where you can exercise for life.

But all the gyms were closed. Even the school one.

At the same time, good functioning orders were also given, only to be denied and trashed the next day, in an immeasurable triumph of improvisation and total shifts, as for the situation of restaurants etc.

So much so that all our students were on vacation at home but, after the euphoria of ten-eleven months ago, they woke up from this poisoned gift and began to complain that they want to go back to school. They were more high-minded than adults and rulers on duty.

⁹ Why did they want a finally democratic university or did they rather make it as a sort of gymnasium once it was evident that it was difficult to find a job with a diploma mostly in the following years? That is a typical habit of the worst Italian politics, after the years of the great ethical post-war reconstruction: instead of solving problems, they postponed them. And, in the meantime, we survived and made a living. Not bad if the country slowly ran the risk of collapsing. It was not the fault of that generation or those rulers, but those who would have later picked up that poisonous and toxic apple.

They began to feel the emptiness of their human and training possibility for global growth, existential opportunity, education, self-education and co-education, complete reciprocal exchanges, con-tact with each other, con-tact with culture, which has finally and positively rediscovered.

Culture is not intended as superficial factual knowledge, dates and galleries of madmen, etc. (as in a few secondary school lessons in history of philosophy), but as various cultures, learning, dialogue and confrontation with history and stories.

This is not everyone's consideration, but the people who mostly pay attention to their future destiny certainly think so.

But I come back to the great mystification of distance learning in Italy in the last year.

It seemed that teachers were well trained on the subject but, on the contrary, their level is very scarce and limited.

Schools have also been described technologically equipped: it is false for at least one third of the country. For example, a distance learning, which is near the city where I live, has been solved giving homework through the electronic register for months.

Nevertheless, we have imagined (with an imagination bordering on disease if not beyond) a country with wealthy families in possession of several equipped and well-functioning computers and cameras. We have also imagined sufficiently capacious accommodations where children of different ages could safely and positively have distance learning with the help of some parents who are maybe in smart working. And not the dramatic reality of a consistent part in Italy where the network does not arrive or arrives badly: 39% of the country. Not to mention the houses located in an authentic basement, 40 sqm accommodations for 4-5 people, a South which is not certainly the South Tyrol. And I could go on indefinitely with a whole series of other references.

Or even I suspect that the right to study has been confused, overlapped and badly amalgamated with the family organization.

For example: who does not remember the babysitter bonus, which could also be used by grandparents (Stramaglia, 2013), when both parents had to go to work and the entire school sector was closed?

Now, we do not talk about it anymore.

For different and more recent choices.

In fact, it was decided that it was possible to go back to school from the entire cycle of primary school to the first class of the middle school in a large part of our country for this school year 2020-2021.

Perhaps, we hope that children from 12 to 14 years old could stay alone at home without checks and custody, while their parents were at work.

Someone should explain to me where the pedagogical ratio for this choice is.

I do not know why childhood and early pre-adolescence need school, education, restriction and socialization, while the subsequent turbulent flourishing of the latter age can do without them.

According to public opinion, do children in the second and third class of the middle school make more crossroads among themselves, after lessons, and does the virus spread?

Is it only sure, because primary school children are usually taken to school by their parents' almost medically safe cars, while from 12-13 years old onwards: away with parents, and everyone by public transport?

On this last regard, how can we keep silent about the government idleness in relation to transport, for which nothing has been done?

Or does everyone go to school by those charming and radical-chic push scooters?

I forgot: the use of wheeled desks as well. Moreover, they are not fully delivered in the middle of this school year 2020-2021 yet.

It must be remembered – These wheeled desks are not magic wands, being able to widen the capacity of classrooms, which are often scarce for dimension and reduced for the possibility of movement.

Why, then, wasn't it thought about drawing up agreements with the private school world to have more containers and areas available?

This was done in the past when earthquakes occurred. Has this pandemic perhaps anything less than an earthquake¹⁰?

After all, double shifts for both parents have been currently discarded at work (with the hope it lasts and a frightfully growing female unemployment).

Of course, double shifts have been the rule for several years, immediately after World War II. I remember them well. I lived them in "Fratelli Bandiera" primary school in Rome, which I attended in the mid-1950s. But at the time 80% and more women or mothers were housewives.

In other words, the product "school" was once again badly operated, without appropriately taking care of the processes: transport and areas.

Moreover, schools are adequately sanitized with school headmasters and teachers who had worked well on this regard, before reopening the current school year. A useless work¹¹.

¹⁰ So, the above-mentioned Minister Bianchi properly referred to earthquake when he said that schools must be reopened, as it was usually done after an earthquake as a sign of life, recovery, hope, growth and future.

¹¹ Like the sudden non-reopening of ski resorts, hotels and mountain huts etc., on February 14th, 2021, four hours after their planned and announced start-up. It was another useless and expensive work, so much so that compensation is now being requested and not only financings.

And, then, another oddity: the first year of secondary school in classroom and the following years not.

Beyond the tale they told us about letting them breathe their new school choice, the other suspicion concerns a mere marketing action: not to lose students enrolled in gymnasiums and technical institutes and not to consequently create further unemployment in the teaching staff.

Wouldn't secondary school students of the final year also need to go back to the classroom in view of their secondary school diploma and university choice?

The cheap economy and a certain prevailing medicine won¹².

Pedagogy was kept silent again. It is lost in its literature and is not even found in the best and the most well-stocked bookshops in the country. And I do not think that everything can be solved with an a-scientific justification of conspiracy against this discipline¹³.

The choices made by public and private state universities were not different.

Distance learning by edict in universities (and there are many) which have always spurned and rejected it.

They have some equipment often scraped together at the last hour, video-lessons and professors who are mostly untrained to use these aids. And I am not even talking about competence (this word is too demanding and out of place here) in relation to this specific and special teaching method.

In my opinion, this was also a marketing or a survival decision, as for schools.

Face-to-face lessons have been possible and made practicable only for the first years of the three-year and master's degrees. While the students, who have been already matriculated for some time, have distance learning.

They always have a few computers, which are actually suitable, good numbers of defective cameras and euphemistically small accommodations.

On the contrary, all the students – except for those who matriculated in online universities by free choice – need to breathe school and university air.

¹² Like journalists: they have been too many in this last year, with an excess of visibility and an often annoying self-representation. They have been sometimes more ideologized than the most burning and revolutionary party men. While the country rather needs facts and silence than bombastic proclamations which are disavowed the next day, euphemistically low narcissisms or worse, that is, pentacostal interpretations of history or individual events.

¹³ So, we could only greet with pleasure President Draghi's double claim for the role of education in his programmatic speech to Parliament on February 17th, 2021. An economist rebuked pedagogy. Instead, this year pedagogy has been predominantly silent about adolescents and young people, schools, universities and teaching, which are, or would be, their main fields of intervention and writing, too, except for those interventions which have been sometimes too "biased".

Particularly, in relation to university, it is necessary to experience libraries, to confront each other, to learn from each other, to contaminate each other as soon as possible.

However, as far as schools and universities laboriously could, in this last year they have no longer been those social lifts, which are so necessary and, mostly, still celebrated only or largely in words and with evidently scarce and not conclusive measures in our country.

The right to study was offended and marginalized.

This is valid especially for those pupils belonging to poor or culturally deprived families.

For example, the Italian university is not only attended by the upper-middle class, who often goes to study abroad and has bookcases and volumes within their own house.

On the contrary, in many Italian families, there are only tired and used schoolbooks, which are resold to buy other books for the following years. And newspapers are very rare avis. And I stop here.

Therefore, social class and wealth disparities have inevitably increased or, rather, have emerged to be crystallized and to become things: Sartre's hell (2014).

The last question – Why was it possible to come back to work in the factories, but not to come back to school?

Are working adults more responsible?

Does it happen only because companies directly and immediately contribute to GDP creation, while training concerns the future and it is not therefore a today's matter?

But what has our country still done for young people's education, at least in these last forty years, when we were talking and writing about the crisis of education everywhere, including at the Italian Bishops' Conference?

I close this item saying that in this last year I have personally and progressively realized a lower preparation in the exams for students who had kitchens or bedrooms with a few dozens of books as background, when I have watched them on the computer.

These students of ours should be treated the most, because they are our future.

Before making a proposal of due interpenetration between distance learning and classroom teaching, there is a last observation for a future I hope it is near, but it is all to be seriously created.

I immediately declare that I have not tackled the very important and strategic chapter about pupils with disabilities from kindergarten to university either: this is a question of great civilization and authentic democracy. I did not do it, because I should have created another article, instead of writing a

paragraph, nevertheless I am aware that it will be the central and thematic focus of this ES&S issue.

Then, what is the proposal?

In the current mass-media era, when everyone and, in particular, young people – and, before them, adolescents, pre-adolescents, children, etc. –, are real digital natives (Ferri, 2011), teaching voices and ways must be multiplied to compensate and to interpenetrate each other.

Classroom teaching needs to modernize. No longer just face-to-face lessons, blackboards, chalks and photocopies.

And a well created and refined distance learning must be able to enter all the schools and universities.

For example, this latter institution must create an extraordinary mix of actual effective right to study for those who attend or cannot attend lectures, in order to really reach our students' heads, habits and skills today.

But it is necessary to train teachers, to master the complexity of these aids and to know how to really manage them, to have specific aids for students with disabilities, to put in place a new methodology for the transmission of knowledge, and so on.

However, it takes time and not improvisation. But it does not take an eternal time, waiting everything falls into oblivion, once the pandemic is over.

Therefore, it is necessary to act in favour of a working alliance between online universities and their didactic research and face-to-face universities and their heuristic courses.

It needs a cultural unity, such as the national unity government born in these days. This is the last chance for our country before sinking into the abyss.

Therefore, balance and competence are needed; and the best energies must be put together, because they are always useful, especially today.

Balance: a word and a way of being I particularly love.

5. To conclude: a socio-cultural regression, a youth emergency and a new reconstruction of the country

I think I was clear that schools and universities are crucial, fundamental and founding areas for the growth of the country, nevertheless in GDP terms: a public debt reduction, an implemented and not acted democracy, a social equity, a reduction of the gap, a real overcoming of many human and economic peripheries of our nation, a present which must be carefully planned in view of a healthier and more democratic future, crossed by a greater wealth.

Otherwise, many references to the values and the attentions above-mentioned risk being only configured as *warnings* or mere verbal pronouncements, which aren't then translated into real change actions all over the place, on both sides of the Tiber, including the Vatican.

I repeat we have a debt, which has dramatically increased in this last year, while economic growth has frightfully regressed.

So much so that it represents a real alarm for the European Union, who wisely came to help us with the 209 billion Recovery Fund, because the Italian crisis risked and risks representing a non-trivial criticality for other European economies with heavy repercussions on this regard and their business structures, other industries, etc.

More closely taking into account our nation, the necessary stopgap provision for blocking dismissals and the related use of unemployment benefits will not be able to last long or to solve these age-old dramatic problems in Italy.

This is especially with regard to the poorer classes, the workers (many of them are close to unemployment), the elderly who do not know how to live etc.

A far-sighted and decisive advancement is rather needed: it must not exclusively operate for subsidies and financings - as it is happening too often at present -, but for provisions and strategies which create jobs, increase employment for young people and women and are able to promote a greater widespread economic and social well-being as much as possible.

It must happen overnight, not too far away, especially with regard to our "heirs": children and young people, in order not to leave them a selfish pile of rubble, which already abounds a lot.

Someone could say that this is politics, but where is pedagogy?

Well, I think that pedagogy and politics, education and education in politics refer to each other; one is the premise and the consequence of the other one. Politics must favour and implement a greater growth for a country and the people who live there. Just as education – the theoretical-practical object of pedagogy – should be able to nourish the ambition to improve politics, in order to interpenetrate each other, as in the best centuries of human history.

Moreover, education cannot ignore the political context and its decisions for the future to be created, in order to write the best pedagogical text, or otherwise, as it happens too often, it gives life to a badly made and schlocky plot.

Therefore, we are very far from a metaphysical and non-embodied pedagogy in this perspective, so as to support the "physical" science of opportunities and practicability.

Otherwise, we would not write today's pedagogy for the future we would like for the benefit of a magnificent and progressive human destiny, but a rhetorical speech, which is not contextualized and is more or less valid for all the seasons and, therefore, none in particular.

We must be as Saint Philippe Romolo Neri said: "be good if you can" and, currently, it could perhaps be good for the heart and the simplest and the most immediate emotions, thanks to the progress of all the sciences, including psychology, but not for the mind, the pockets and the real life.

This synergy between pedagogy and education in politics was one of the aspects of a research doctorate for both Luisa Santelli and myself at the universities of Bari and Macerata about fifteen years ago. My very valid pupil and heir to the chair I left for retirement two years ago, Massimiliano Stramaglia¹⁴, came out from this very happy experience.

Let's come back to schools and universities in this last pandemic year.

Their closure, the sporadic didactic, classroom teaching and (mainly) distance learning, 50% of the lessons in the classroom today and 50% online have stopped the country and most of our students' overall maturation, at least, with the exception of the luckiest or, perhaps, the wealthiest pupils; without betting too much on it.

But, a huge number of pre-adolescents, adolescents and young people: those who have less personal, cultural and economic resources, have undoubtedly lost a lot.

A greater ignorance spread and was not scarce before either. For example, many university students ignore the 1968 phenomenon in Italy and the Western world or the fall of the Berlin Wall. Two significant facts and symbols.

Therefore, if we have poor people who are economically poorer and poorer and lined up for charitable meals, an agonizing evidence at present, nevertheless we are witnessing poor people who are also culturally and intellectually poorer and poorer. They are deprived of the fundamental notions, the necessary critical spirit and that wealth of information, which is useful to rule themselves, their history to be still created and defined and, through them, the future history.

¹⁴ A very strong common thread for continuity connects us. Although we are children of different times, both of us love contemporaneity, we serve it and we have introduced it in our studies and work. Perhaps, I was the first Catholic pedagogist to take care of the transition from the singular term of family to the plural, complex, evident and indelible term of families or to make the political reading a necessary magnifying lens to understand and to relaunch school, family and social policies in more recent times. And he opened the doors of our local pedagogy to an internationally widespread trend with his research on mass-media, icons of modernity and pop cultures, etc., so as to be mentioned abroad and in volumes belonging to other scientific-disciplinary fields.

This pocket of ignorance will make our nation go back or, in any case, will not throw it forward.

Instead, it is necessary to make an effort to increase skills, including the digital ones. All and none excluded.

The future of a country is based and “risks” on the growth of skills.

It particularly deals with the skills of the younger generations who will inhabit the future of a nation, which must be better than today’s.

We have discussed about cognitive skills in the last few passages of this article.

There are social, affective and relational skills and, nevertheless, technical and IT skills elsewhere in this writing as well.

It is necessary to play a winning symphony, white keys and black keys, treble clef and bass clef on this entire keyboard.

We must observe especially our children, from their birth to their entry into adulthood.

This is why it is necessary to create different and innovative schools and universities, “with the lights always on”.

It is essential to economically, culturally, educationally and didactically invest in them.

It is necessary to give rise to a different and better training for learners as well as teachers.

This is important if we do not want to further divide our country from north to south and the social classes among them. Then, it would be the premise of a social unease which is difficult to solve and a very bad prophecy.

As already mentioned, pre-adolescent, adolescent and youth emergency is, finally, the sub-text of that school-university text about which we have discussed so far – or, in any case, a fundamental sub-text, besides a different teaching training –. And, for at least ten years, it has been indicated to us as an area where we must intervene with an effectively therapeutic strength and ability, because we do not know what to do with more or less complete diagnoses or relatively poor prognoses if the processes do not proceed and the products are not created.

Moreover, it is no coincidence that the Recovery Plan has the title “Next Generation You”, in line with what has been argued so far.

And a part of this fund should be allocated to education in general and, especially, higher education for their modernization.

Skills cannot be cast off or set aside. One is not worth the other one. Future cannot be abandoned, in order to keep on wandering on a dark night when all the cows are black.

I close saying that we have had to appeal to the most competent Italian person we have in recent days: Mario Draghi, to take us out of many fords where our country has got bogged down.

So, I end with a wish, almost a dream, in an article where I hope I have moved in the light of a principle of reality, instead.

I would like the future of our country to be inhabited by a lot of people like Mario Draghi. Each one in their own way.

We must start from here for the overall reconstruction of the country: from schools and universities – social lifts of the only revolution I love: culture and progress, and not blood –, from the development of educational, relational and personal skills as well as great specific and well-founded cultural skills.

We must also do it quickly, because time is up and recreation is over (Bottani, 1986). Indeed, this should have ended almost forty years ago according to the illustrious Swiss scholar. But in Italy we love to especially extend the time of what is worth less.

References

- Bettelheim B. (2013). *Un genitore quasi perfetto*. Milan: Feltrinelli.
- Besozzi E. & Colombo M. (2014). *Metodologia della ricerca sociale nei contesti socio-educativi*. Milan: Guerini Scientifica.
- Blos P. (1971). *L'adolescenza. Una interpretazione psicoanalitica*. Milan: FrancoAngeli.
- Bottani N. (1986). *La ricreazione è finita: Dibattito sulla qualità dell'istruzione*. Bologna: il Mulino.
- Caplan G. & Lebovici S. (1979). *Problemi psicosociali dell'adolescenza*. Turin: Bollati Boringhieri.
- Carver C. S., Scheier M. F., Giampietro M. & Iannello P. (2014). *Psicologia della personalità. Prospettive teoriche, strumenti e contesti applicati*. Turin: Pearson.
- Coleman J. (2015). *Perché non mi parli? Il conflitto tra genitori e figli adolescenti*. Milan: Raffaello Cortina.
- Corsi M. (1980). Il ruolo dello psicologo nel consultorio familiare. In: C. G. Vella, *Gli operatori dei consultori familiari*. Rome: Città Nuova Editrice.
- Corsi M. (1993). *Governare il cambiamento. Le risorse della scuola italiana*. Milan: Vita e Pensiero.
- Corsi M. (2001). Educazione e promessa. In: Giambalvo E., *Cinquant'anni di personalismo critico. Tra metafisica e ricerca pedagogica*. Palermo: Edizioni della Fondazione Nazionale "Vito Fazio-Allmayer".
- Corsi M. (2003). *Il coraggio di educare. Il valore della testimonianza*. Milan: Vita e Pensiero.
- Corsi M. & Stramaglia M. (2009). *Dentro la famiglia. Pedagogia delle relazioni educative familiari*. Rome: Armando.

- Corsi M. (2015). The Adults are the Problem of the Young. Pedagogical Itineraries and educational Emergencies. *MeTis*, 9: 16-25.
- Corsi M. (2016 (1)). Culture will defeat Violence. *Pedagogia oggi*, 1: 15-26.
- Corsi M. (2016 (2)). *La bottega dei genitori. Di tutto e di più sui nostri figli*. Milan: FrancoAngeli.
- Corsi M. (2020). *Il tempo sospeso. L'Italia dopo il coronavirus*. Milan: FrancoAngeli.
- De Giacinto S. (1966). *La struttura dell'insegnamento*. Naples: Morano.
- Ferri P. (2011). *Nativi digitali*. Milan: Bruno Mondadori.
- Freud A. (2007). *Normalità e patologia del bambino. Valutazione dello sviluppo*. Milan: Feltrinelli.
- Lavanchy P. (1994). *Il corpo in fame. Anoressia e bulimia: riflessioni sui disordini alimentari*. Milan: Rizzoli.
- Nagel E. (1968). *La struttura della scienza. Problemi di logica nella spiegazione scientifica*. Milan: Feltrinelli.
- Pasolini (1999). Scritti corsari [1973-1975]. In: Sisti W. & De Laude S., *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*. Milan: Mondadori.
- Popper K. (2009). *Congetture e confutazioni. Lo sviluppo della conoscenza scientifica*. Bologna: il Mulino.
- Recalcati M. (2019). *Le nuove melanconie. Destini del desiderio nel tempo ipermoderno*. Milan: Raffaello Cortina.
- Salinger J. D. (2014). *Il giovane Holden*. Turin: Einaudi.
- Sartre J.-P. (2014). *L'essere e il nulla*. Milan: Il Saggiatore.
- Scheffler I. (1972). *Il linguaggio della pedagogia*. Brescia: La Scuola.
- Stramaglia M. (2009). *I nuovi padri. Per una pedagogia della tenerezza*. Macerata: EUM.
- Stramaglia M. (2011). *Amore è musica. Gli adolescenti e il mondo dello spettacolo*. Turin: SEI.
- Stramaglia M. (2013). *Una madre in più. La nonna materna, l'educazione e la cura dei nipoti*. Milan: FrancoAngeli.
- Stramaglia M. & Rodrigues M. B. (2018). *Educare la depressione. La scrittura, la lettura e la parola come pratiche di cura*. Bergamo: Junior.

Il territorio come spazio della creatività sociale. Un esempio di laboratorio per una "città accogliente"

The territory as space for social creativity. An example of urban re-generation laboratory

Stefania Montebelli

Riassunto

L'attuale tendenza della trasformazione urbana non interessa più solo l'espansione dei centri urbani, quanto piuttosto la riconversione del patrimonio esistente. Lo spazio urbano è discontinuo, composto di luoghi che il tempo ha posto vicino, spesso senza alcuna pianificazione, a dimostrazione che l'evoluzione della territorialità è più rapida di quella del territorio che ne conserva le rimanenze materiali. Vengono a formarsi, così, degli spazi interstiziali nella trama urbana che solo la creatività sociale può reinserire nella progettualità di un contesto abitato e vitale, risignificandoli di nuova funzione. Questa dovrebbe essere vista come un'urgenza perché, sia che la territorializzazione riguardi la conquista di spazi extraterritoriali, che quelli interni al proprio territorio, lo spazio urbano abbandonato rappresenta una sorta di minacciosa indeterminatezza che può arrivare ad essere de-strutturalizzante per il tessuto territoriale, così come per l'identità collettiva. La creatività risulta essere, quindi, una strategia territorializzante attraverso cui la società educa alla cittadinanza attiva reificando, significando e funzionalizzando gli spazi del suo vivere, autorappresentandosi.

Parole Chiave: Città accogliente; partecipazione creativa; significazione culturale; territorializzazione.

Abstract

The current trend of urban transformation does no longer affects only the expansion of urban centres, but rather the conversion of the existing patrimony. The urban area almost seems to be a discontinuous construction of irreducible places that the events have placed nearby along time, too often without any planning, therefore showing that the evolution of territoriality is faster than that of the territory that preserves its material rests. In this way, interstitial spaces are formed in the urban area that only the social creativity can reintegrate into the project of an inhabited and vital area, giving them a new function. This should be seen as an emergency because, whether the territorialisation concerns the

* Professore associato di Geografia presso l'Università degli Studi Guglielmo Marconi, Dipartimento di Scienze Umane. E-mail: s.montebelli@unimarconi.it.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa10030

conquest of spaces external or internal to the territory; the abandoned urban space represents a sort of threatening oxymoron possibility, an unknown new world whose indeterminacy can become de-structuralizing for the territorial structure, as well as for the collective identity. Creativity therefore appears as a strategy to create a territory, through which the society educates to active citizenship by reifying, signifying and functionalizing the spaces of its life, representing itself.

Keywords: Welcoming City; Creative participation; Cultural signification, Territorialisation.

Articolo sottomesso: 16/04/2020, accettato: 21/04/2021

Pubblicato online: 28/06/2021

1. Territorio, paesaggio, territorializzazione: la messa in scena della significazione culturale

Ogni mutamento del territorio e del suo scenario paesaggistico, in senso ambientale e culturale, è mosso da nuove aspettative dettate dalle contingenze temporali e storiche nelle quali la società e il singolo individuo si trovano ad agire. Il territorio e la cultura si influenzano in: «uno scambio mutuo di messaggi che corrisponde al realizzarsi del rapporto tra condizioni locali e adempimento culturale» (Turri, 2008, p. 138). In questo “mutuo scambio” la semiosi territoriale formerà la società entro il palcoscenico territoriale che essa stessa contribuirà a rendere mutevole nel tempo, in un processo continuo di identificazione e re-identificazione. L’attore sociale non potrà che avere, quindi, un ruolo attivo in questo processo dialogico visto che la re-identificazione è messa in atto da un’azione territorializzante che implica una presa di coscienza critica dell’intorno spaziale. Questo meccanismo è alla base della risoluzione delle eventuali problematiche che minano l’autodeterminazione di una comunità, così come della salvaguardia delle caratteristiche che alimentano la coesione identitaria con il proprio territorio¹. Dunque: «La concezione del paesaggio come teatro

¹ Quando i mutamenti territoriali non sono coadiuvati da un processo di reidentificazione culturale allora avviene quello che è accaduto in Italia dagli anni ‘50 del Novecento, nel passaggio di riconversione economica dalla società rurale a quella industriale. Una riconversione che ha prodotto, come afferma Eugenio Turri (1979), lo: «squallore e il vuoto dei nuovi paesaggi». La società italiana, infatti: «(...) non ha vissuto a tutti i livelli quel processo di identificazione o ‘reidentificazione’ di sé e del proprio paese che si poneva come fondamentale nel passaggio dalla condizione rurale, locale, propria dell’Italia divisa in tante geografie, alla condizione industriale di portata nazionale: ‘reidentificazione’ come presa di coscienza del posto e del ruolo richiesti

sottintende che l'uomo e le società si comportano nei confronti del territorio in cui vivono in duplice modo: come attori che trasformano, in senso ecologico, l'ambiente di vita, imprimendogli il segno della propria azione, e come spettatori che sanno guardare e capire il senso del loro operare sul territorio» (Turri, 1988, p. 12). In questa prospettiva il territorio è spazio dell'azione, nonché dell'apprendimento sociale in cui ogni individuo si forma e nel quale deve imparare a vivere. Così la realtà urbana può essere concepita come una scuola a cielo aperto, dove si educa alla cittadinanza attiva a favore di una territorializzazione capace di trasgredire (*trans-gradi*, andare oltre) il confine, anche degli spazi istituzionalizzati deputati all'educazione perché: «La città è in sé stessa un ambiente educativo, e possiamo usarla come tale se impariamo a maneggiarla, controllarla o modificarla» (Ward, 2018, p. 96). La città che educa è, quindi, anche quella che trasgredisce per creare spazi nuovi, e, all'occorrenza, rigenerare quelli esistenti. In tal senso: «La storia è una teoria della trasgressione. (...) il territorio è ristrutturato per permettere lo sviluppo di nuove territorialità» (Raffestin, 2017, pp. 31-32)². Territorializzare è agire creativo che costruisce, in una ridefinizione continua, lo spazio del sociale quale teatro entro cui andrà rappresentandosi la vita dei singoli individui, immersa nell'ampio palcoscenico della significazione culturale. Il territorio diventa, pertanto, campo segnato dai processi di territorializzazione, de-territorializzazione e ri-territorializzazione: materia plasmabile, sulla quale l'attore sociale apprende e configura la propria territorialità, in una pulsione trasgressiva alla conquista. Proprio questo fa del territorio uno spazio educativo che si riscrive nel tempo e si compone delle sue cancellature, correzioni, riscritture aumentando, così, la complessità della sua significazione e della sua leggibilità, della sua interpretazione e della sua percezione.

Le territoire, tout surchargé qu'il est de traces et de lectures passées en force, ressemble plutôt à un palimpseste. Pour mettre en place de nouveaux équipements, pour exploiter plus rationnellement certaines terres, il est souvent indispensable d'en modifier la substance de façon irréversible. Mais le territoire n'est pas un emballage perdu ni un produit de consommation qui se remplace. Chacun est unique, d'où la nécessité de «recycler», de gratter une fois encore (mais si possible avec le plus grand soin) le

dal mutamento in atto, dei problemi che occorre affrontare per costruire un paese diverso, per saldare il passato al presente, la geografia rurale alla geografia industriale», (p. 8).

² Secondo Claude Raffestin (2017), una vecchia città caratterizzata dalla gentrificazione può essere trasformata grazie a una nuova territorialità che, guidata da un sistema di relazioni sociali, trasgredisce i limiti del vecchio territorio. Raffestin prende ad esempio le antiche città che, nel diciannovesimo secolo, avevano un sistema di fortificazione e in cui scoppiò una lotta tra conservatori e progressisti per distruggere le antiche mura al fine di rendere possibile lo sviluppo industriale: «Allo stesso modo, la ferrovia ha avuto problemi a raggiungere le città e le stazioni erano sempre lontane dal centro», (p. 32).

vieux texte que les hommes ont inscrit sur l'irremplaçable matériau des sols, afin d'en déposer un nouveau, qui réponde aux nécessités d'aujourd'hui avant d'être abrogé à son tour (Corboz, 1983, p. 35).

2. Partecipazione creativa per una rigenerazione urbana. L'esempio del laboratorio di progetto *Idee per una città accogliente* dell'Università di Sassari

In quest'ottica, il territorio può essere interpretato come punto d'incontro tra le storie passate e le urgenze del presente, dalle quali si intravedono i bisogni futuri della comunità. Pertanto, è necessario riflettere sulla costante relazione tra storia e progetto per un'adeguata costruzione della qualità dei paesaggi urbani che deve saper tenere adeguatamente conto della loro evoluzione, così come della loro conservazione. La progettualità deve, quindi, misurarsi con il cambiamento, ma anche con la dimensione storica, identitaria della città e del territorio (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018, p. 84). Cosa non semplice, soprattutto alla luce della frammentarietà ed eterogeneità della città contemporanea che: «è per sua natura instabile: sede di continui cambiamenti che danno luogo al formarsi di situazioni critiche e a soluzioni transitorie dei problemi. (...) L'uscita dalla modernità (...) è anche dismissione, trasformazione e riuso di molte sue parti» (Secchi, 2000, p. 61). Lo spazio urbano appare quasi sempre costruzione discontinua di luoghi irriducibili che gli eventi del tempo hanno posto vicino, troppo spesso senza alcuna pianificazione, a dimostrazione che l'evoluzione della territorialità è più rapida di quella del territorio che ne conserva le rimanenze materiali (Raffestin, 2017, p. 32). La discontinuità e la frammentazione del tessuto urbano, la loro permanenza caratterizzante conduce a ripensare le modalità di azione su e per la città. I processi di riuso urbano dovrebbero implicare, infatti, la riappropriazione e la risignificazione spaziale in relazione all'intero corpo della città rendendo sempre più necessaria:

un'apertura al dialogo fra processi di governance e livelli scalari differenziati, fra ambiente e cultura dell'abitare, fra materiale e immateriale. (...) L'indirizzo culturale nella concezione dell'habitat non è limitata ai soli aspetti fisico-formali, ma è attenta alle determinazioni *immateriali* del progetto e orientata a un'idea di sostenibilità ambientale e socio-economica correlata agli approcci della *governance* ambientale urbana" (Losasso, 2017, p. 9).

Se fino a non molto tempo addietro era in auge il concetto di riqualificazione che portava con sé una trasformazione fisica dello spazio urbano, ora si sente parlare sempre più spesso di rigenerazione urbana quale ripensamento della città attraverso il controllo e la gestione della complessità che la abita (economica, sociale, ambientale, urbanistica).

La rigenerazione urbana può essere descritta come un'attività che mira non solo a una riorganizzazione spaziale, ma si associa a interventi di natura culturale, sociale, economica e ambientale, finalizzati a un miglioramento della qualità della vita, nel rispetto delle aspirazioni degli abitanti e in un orizzonte a lungo termine. In questo senso tutte le possibili azioni che si sviluppano in un territorio sono esito di una domanda di cambiamento espressa dalle comunità locali e dai contesti di appartenenza (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018, p. 18).

La rigenerazione urbana si basa sul rispetto dei diritti di uso dello spazio da parte di pubblici differenti che presuppone un'accessibilità per la collettività, nell'eterogeneità dei suoi soggetti, che alimenti l'attivazione sociale e, così, il senso di appartenenza alla città (Ostanel, 2017, p. 7). Proprio questo tema che coinvolge non solo lo spazio urbano nella sua reificazione, ma la qualità della vita che in essa abita e l'accessibilità alle diverse aree urbane, soprattutto a quelle più degradate, ha interessato il laboratorio di progetto *Idee per una città accogliente* con il quale si è inteso trattare il tema della rigenerazione urbana nel contesto della città storica di Sassari. Il laboratorio di progetto è stato coordinato dal prof. Giovanni Maciocco e organizzato dal Laboratorio Internazionale sul Progetto Ambientale - LEAP del Dipartimento di Architettura, design e Urbanistica (DADU) dell'Università di Sassari ed ha interessato gli studenti frequentanti il primo anno di due corsi di laurea dell'università sarda³. Le attività didattiche hanno coinvolto non solo docenti e tutor universitari, ma anche professionisti ed esperti dell'ambito socio-culturale⁴. Un approccio interdisciplinare che ha dato vita a un "cantiere di cittadinanza" attraverso la progettazione del territorio e il coinvolgimento delle diverse parti sociali che lo abita rendendo, così, l'ambiente urbano spazio dell'educazione civica.

In questo senso la ricerca è stata indirizzata verso l'obiettivo di rivelare la città come luogo propizio all'accoglienza e aperta al dialogo in cui sia possibile costruire un ambiente formativo capace di favorire l'incontro e sviluppare differenti forme di socialità. Il laboratorio ha posto un'attenzione specifica alla coerenza con le aspettative e le aspirazioni delle società locali, e al riconoscimento della sua importanza come azione cooperativa, che si dispiega sia attraverso l'esplorazione delle aspirazioni degli abitanti, sia

³ Le principali attività di laboratorio e seminari, effettuate dal 2015 al 2018 dagli studenti del primo anno in Scienze dell'Architettura e del Progetto e in Urbanistica, sono state documentate all'interno del sito web <http://leap.uniss.it>. Hanno collaborato con il laboratorio di ricerca LEAP anche l'Assessorato alla Cultura e al turismo del Comune di Sassari per promuovere – attraverso iniziative culturali, studi, ricerche – un dibattito sul territorio in merito alle prospettive urbane di sviluppo culturale, sociale, turistico e ambientale.

⁴ Nello specifico nel laboratorio sono stati coinvolti: come docenti Giovanni Maciocco e Antonello Marotta; come co-docenti e tutor Giovanni Maria Biddau, Giovanna Laura Casula, Lura Lutzoni, Michele Valentino; come professionisti ed esperti in ambito socio-culturale, le associazioni Intergremio Città di Sassari e la cooperativa theatre en voi.

attraverso il loro coinvolgimento; ciò richiede che il progetto si costruisca non in modo risolutivo, ma come processo che apre a differenti possibilità (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018, p. 17).

Il progetto, seppur sia stato caratterizzato da incontri programmati⁵, non è stato scandito da una predefinita sequenza di stadi formativi nettamente delineata. Infatti:

Tali incontri hanno attivato un processo di progressivo coinvolgimento di energie apparentemente latenti (...). In questo senso la partecipazione, strumento potenzialmente rilevante per migliorare le trasformazioni urbane, è un processo non stabilito a priori attraverso fasi e procedure, ma un'attività complementare allo sviluppo del progetto nelle sue varie fasi per metterlo costantemente in discussione (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018, p. 25).

Pertanto, non potendo parlare di una vera e propria scomposizione in fasi dell'esperienza di apprendimento⁶ e dopo un'attenta analisi degli obiettivi nonché delle azioni laboratoriali, è stato possibile individuare tre blocchi esperienziali. Il primo di questi ha visto coinvolti i docenti e gli studenti in un'analisi del contesto territoriale, quindi delle strutture generative del territorio, preliminare all'individuazione dei nuclei di urbanità e di quegli spazi bisognosi di essere rigenerati nella relazionalità con il contesto della città storica di Sassari. Il secondo blocco esperienziale è stato caratterizzato dalla conoscenza e dal confronto tra gli attori territoriali – l'università, i residenti, le istituzioni, le associazioni culturali – invitati a dibattiti, seminari che hanno portato alla luce l'importanza di un coinvolgimento capillare delle forze sociali che abitano il territorio, per favorirne il suo naturale presidio. Questi due primi blocchi hanno fornito agli studenti il quadro d'insieme del contesto ambientale e sociale a cui i

⁵ Gli incontri programmati hanno fornito un quadro d'insieme utile all'individuazione dei requisiti necessari: «for the creation of open city to needs of inhabitants and, at a later date, to discuss some operational proposals on the themes of the laboratory. Starting from reflections and project scenarios proposed by the students and exposed to citizenship, some questions addressed aimed at understanding how the project can promote urban regeneration processes. This active collaboration has been fundamental to foster the planning process, in which citizens represent agents of change in the overall action of urban regeneration. These meetings triggered a process of progressive involvement» (Valentino and Lutzoni, 2020, p.7).

⁶ Come sottolineato ulteriormente da due co-docenti del laboratorio Valentino e Lutzoni (2020): «In this sense, participation, a potentially valuable tool for improving urban transformations, is a process not established a priori through phases and procedures, however, a complementary activity to the development of the project in its various phases to challenge it regularly. In this sense the project constitutes a “probe” to explore the possibilities of the reality that gives rise to positive or negative aspects producing an incremental knowledge: the process activated inside the laboratory has indeed triggered a response to contingencies, interacting with them, with the goal to promote urban regeneration of the historic city of Sassari», (p. 8).

vari progetti realizzati hanno dovuto far riferimento, per l'ideazione di una visione rinnovata degli spazi urbani presi ad esame. Il terzo e ultimo blocco esperienziale è stato quello creativo e di presentazione dei lavori prodotti che ha portato a due significativi eventi: il primo, una mostra nel 2016 delle diverse ipotesi di riorganizzazione dell'antico centro urbano della città di Sassari elaborate dagli studenti (disegni, progetti, foto, video)⁷; il secondo, l'esposizione dei risultati dei vari laboratori alla prestigiosa Biennale dello Spazio Pubblico 2017.

La metodologia seguita dal laboratorio si è sviluppata sulla scia del concetto batesoniano di apprendimento continuato, che passa dal livello del proto-apprendimento a quello del deutero-apprendimento in cui il soggetto: «*apprende ad apprendere*. Non solo risolve i problemi postigli dallo sperimentatore e che singolarmente sono problemi di apprendimento semplice, ma al di là di questo egli diventa sempre più capace di risolvere problemi in generale» (Bateson, 2000, p. 207)⁸.

Se la fase di proto-apprendimento all'interno del laboratorio è stata rappresentata dal confronto su temi specifici affrontati durante gli incontri con gli attori sociali operanti nel territorio; quella del deutero-apprendimento si è aperta all'ampio contesto nel quale le attività laboratoriale hanno avuto luogo, favo-

⁷ Evento, questo, nel quale si è inoltre rinnovata l'opportunità per diversi attori territoriali di partecipare a seminari e laboratori in relazione alla progettazione degli spazi urbani comuni.

⁸ Bateson (2000) afferma che nel primo livello di proto-apprendimento o 'Apprendimento 1', si può dire che: «il soggetto apprende a dirigersi verso certi tipi di contesto, o che sta acquisendo un certo 'intuito' per il contesto del risolvere i problemi. (...) il soggetto ha acquisito la capacità di cercare contesti e sequenze di un tipo piuttosto che di un altro, un'abitudine a 'segmentare' il flusso degli eventi per evidenziarne ripetizioni di un certo tipo di sequenza significativa», (p. 207). A questo livello segue il deutero-apprendimento in quanto: «cambiamento nell'Apprendimento 1 (...). In breve, io credo che i fenomeni dell'Apprendimento 2 possano essere tutti classificati come cambiamenti nel modo in cui il flusso di azione ed esperienza è segmentato o suddiviso in contesti (...)», (p. 339). Il procedimento con cui si arriva a "apprendere ad apprendere" è descritto dallo stesso Bateson: «È possibile apprendere in un certo istante una data premessa (Apprendimento 1) e apprendere in un istante successivo la premessa opposta, senza con ciò acquisire la capacità di apprendere l'inversione: in tal caso non vi sarà progresso da un'inversione alla successiva. Semplicemente un elemento dell'Apprendimento 1 ha sostituito un altro elemento dell'Apprendimento 1 senza che vi sia stato un Apprendimento 2. Se, viceversa, nel corso delle successive inversioni interviene un miglioramento, ciò costituisce una prova a favore dell'Apprendimento 2», (p. 349). È l'Apprendimento 2 a rendere la mente capace di assimilare l'imprevisto e/o la mutabilità di una determinata situazione all'interno del personale modello di abitudini di segmentazione inconscie: «(...) *ciò che viene appreso nell'Apprendimento 2 è un modo di segmentare gli eventi; ma un modo di segmentare non è né vero né falso; in effetti non c'è nulla nelle proposizioni di questo apprendimento che possa essere verificato per mezzo della realtà. È come una figura vista in una macchia d'inchiostro: non è né giusta né sbagliata, è solo un modo di vedere la macchia*», (p. 347).

rendo una conoscenza incrementale (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018, pp. 25-28). Importanti, in tal senso, i seminari svolti proprio sulla capacità di “apprendere ad apprendere”, che sono stati presentati dagli studenti universitari ai vari soggetti sociali ed economici, rappresentativi degli interessi eterogenei di questa particolare area della città, consentendo confronti e dibattiti che hanno condotto a idee, progetti, ipotesi di riorganizzazione dello spazio urbano del centro storico di Sassari⁹.

Entrando nello specifico dell’analisi del contesto territoriale, in quello che qui è stato definito come primo blocco di apprendimento, si è proceduto allo studio delle strutture generative dello spazio urbano sassarese. Le strutture generative comprendono: da una parte la natura ambientale, ossia si riconoscono nella morfologia fisica del territorio; dall’altra quella storica, quale insieme delle forme attraverso cui l’evoluzione dell’insediamento antropico ha caratterizzato culturalmente il territorio¹⁰. Le strutture generative ambientali rappresentano un vero e proprio basamento per quelli che vengono definiti nuclei di

⁹ La metodologica laboratoriale del progetto dell’Università di Sassari, oltre alla manifesta impronta batesoniana, rimanda alla classificazione elaborata da Jacques Delors (1996) basata sui quattro pilastri: imparare a conoscere, imparare a fare, imparare a vivere insieme, imparare ad essere. «Learning to know, by combining a sufficiently broad general knowledge with the opportunity to work in depth on a small number of subjects. This also means learning to learn, so as to benefit from the opportunities education provides throughout life. Learning to do, in order to acquire not only an occupational skill but also, more broadly, the competence to deal with many situations and work in teams. It also means learning to do in the context of young peoples’ various social and work experiences which may be informal, as a result of the local or national context, or formal, involving courses, alternating study and work. Learning to live together, by developing an understanding of other people and an appreciation of interdependence – carrying out joint projects and learning to manage conflicts – in a spirit of respect for the values of pluralism, mutual understanding and peace. Learning to be, so as better to develop one’s personality and be able to act with ever greater autonomy, judgement and personal responsibility. In that connection, education must not disregard any aspect of a person’s potential: memory, reasoning, aesthetic sense, physical capacities and communication skills. Formal education systems tend to emphasize the acquisition of knowledge to the detriment of other types of learning; but it is vital now to conceive education in a more encompassing fashion» (p. 35).

¹⁰ Ulteriore esempio di strutture generative, oltre a quelle di Sassari trattate nel presente contributo, possono essere individuate nel sistema ambientale e nel sistema storico dell’insediamento di Olbia, definito dai grandi segni che ne strutturano il sito e che lo rendono naturalmente propizio alla vita urbana. Per quanto concerne il sistema ambientale, Olbia è caratterizzata: «dal golfo esterno disegnato dalle rias, i paleo alvei della sua storia naturale, al golfo interno, articolato nelle sue insenature e nei suoi promontori, la scena del teatro collinare, cui si lega attraverso i filamenti del sistema idrografico dei rii e dei canali, all’isola di Tavolara che con Capo Figari delimita il golfo esterno e rappresenta la dominante ambientale che dall’esterno introduce alla città e dalla città all’esterno affermando la sua presenza come un’apparizione; un sistema di segni ambientali che rivela la natura tettonica, quasi monumentale, di un territorio propizio alla città, luogo di convergenza di significati sovra locali che rinviano alla regione urbana della Gallura e alle diramazioni verso il Monte Acuto e le Baronie settentrionali» (Comune di Olbia, 2014, p. 14). Per

urbanità in cui le condizioni ambientali e l'insediamento umano si coniugano, producendo ambiti geografici significativi e identitari della città. Sono, i nuclei di urbanità, "luoghi densi" di natura e di storia, dove le dimensioni biologiche e culturali della città sono inscindibili¹¹. Lo studio delle strutture generative ambientali di Sassari svolto nel laboratorio ha, quindi, messo in evidenza il forte e indistricabile rapporto che lega la città al substrato fisico, supporto di ogni struttura antropica e, nel caso specifico, l'importanza del progetto dei nuclei di urbanità che su esse insistono:

Le strutture generative ambientali, riconosciute nella specificità ambientale delle valli, si ancorano alle strutture generative secondarie che, attraversando trasversalmente la città storica, mettono in relazione i singoli frammenti. (...) La città può costruire una prospettiva ambientale attraverso il riorientamento sulle valli che consentono di riportare al centro alcune situazioni periferiche attraverso trasformazioni del tessuto storico, per tentare di adeguarlo alle esigenze urbane (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018, p. 34).

Proprio sulle valli, che costituiscono la struttura generativa ambientale del centro storico di Sassari, si sono andati nel tempo a costituire specifici nuclei di urbanità:

In this general framework, the project formed through the identification of a set of urban nuclei, spaces and significant areas of the city that create "tension". These localized elements have taken on a general meaning, recalling the structure-form of the city (De Carlo, 2008): starting from these, an overall order has identified which finds its generative structure in the environmental system of the city valleys. These nuclei become the occasion to relate spaces of different nature, involving open and interstitial areas hidden within public buildings that are redesigned to become places of being. At the same time, secondary generative structures allow urban generative structures to be integrated with urban centres, giving rise to a non-hierarchical but relational urban landscape. (Valentino, Lutzoni, 2020, p. 10)

quanto concerne, invece, il sistema storico dell'insediamento antico di Olbia esso appare: «imperiato sul disegno della città punica e romana e sulle tracce dell'insediamento antico nel territorio, che imprime la sua presenza nella mente degli abitanti per fare in modo che la città possa evolversi e traggere le sue prospettive senza scomporre la sua forma» (*Ibidem*).

¹¹ Ad offrire un'esemplificazione dei nuclei di urbanità, oltre quanto scritto in testo sulla città storica di Sassari, è ancora una volta la città di Olbia dove sono individuabili ne: «i canali di bonifica e il sistema dei parchi radiali [ossia] gli elementi di continuità tra il golfo interno e il campo urbano che consentono di rapportare ogni luogo della città ai significati sovralocali del suo territorio: il golfo esterno, il golfo interno, la pianura e il sistema dei rilievi testimone (Monte Pino, Monte Telti, ecc.) che incorniciano la pianura disegnando una forma di territorio di vasta area che degrada verso Olbia secondo tre livelli geomorfologici, che rinviano a tre livelli territoriali della città: la Gallura, la prima corona di centri intorno a Olbia e il suo campo urbano» (Comune di Olbia, 2014, p. 11).

La presenza delle valli all'interno del tessuto urbano sassarese ha portato alla creazione di particolari ambiti spaziali con un grande potenziale aggregativo e, in tal senso, spazi vitali al progetto di rigenerazione urbana¹². «L'ancoraggio alle valli e ai luoghi della città storica, attraverso la riorganizzazione di alcuni spazi, consente di avviare un processo di rigenerazione urbana che potrà innescare nuove forme di uso dei luoghi pubblici» (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018, p. 44). L'intento del laboratorio è stato proprio l'ideazione di spazi di comunicazione e interazione sociale capaci di alimentare la socializzazione predisponendo alla condivisione in una sorta di contaminazione educativa che fa dei luoghi pubblici dei veri e propri spazi educativi¹³. Pertanto, successivamente all'individuazione dei nuclei di urbanità, tracce latenti di un sistema denso e ricco di significazione culturale, si è proceduto ad un ripensamento creativo degli spazi comuni, anche sulla base di quanto estrapolato dalla partecipazione attiva degli attori sociali coinvolti nel progetto laboratoriale. Le soluzioni progettuali prodotte dagli studenti hanno avuto l'obiettivo di dimostrare come proprio i nuclei di urbanità, quali ambiti insediativi particolarmente significativi e storici della città, possano diventare degli spazi relazionali nuovi, capaci di incentivare una partecipazione sociale attiva a favore della creazione di una città 'accogliente'. Questo riuscendo a mettere in relazione i diversi nuclei di urbanità della città: «interpretandone il ruolo specifico nel sistema generale delle strutture generative della città» (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018), al fine di risolvere la frammentarietà del centro storico sassarese, caratterizzato dalla presenza di diverse realtà insediative che, convivendo sullo stesso territorio, contribuiscono a costituire un paesaggio urbano ibrido.

Le varie possibilità di rigenerazione urbana presentata nei progetti creati dagli studenti hanno rispettato le categorie interpretative di: spazi tra natura e artificioso, spazi educativi, spazi della memoria, spazi intermedi e spazi in attesa. Categorie interpretative così pensate per permettere una rilettura razionale della

¹² «Si tratta di luoghi di vita quotidiana di una condizione urbana che privilegia sempre più la propria dimensione relazionale. Il progetto si articola attraverso un sistema di terrazzamenti ed edifici di residenze e servizi. A partire dall'asse di Corso Trinità che permette l'accesso alla valle del Rosello si viene a definire una geometria capillare più articolata di spazi che integrano alle preesistenze il verde e alcuni nuovi edifici. Questo microsistema si confronta con il principale accesso alla valle, la rampa che conduce alla fontana del Rosello» (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018, p. 40).

¹³ Nello specifico e ad esempio, attraverso un sistema di spazi si è progettato di mettere in relazione un'area marginale come quella del Fosso della Noce con il resto della città attraverso la delimitazione di spazi di sosta, lungo un percorso che segue la morfologia del territorio. Questo consentirebbe la creazione di spazi educativi per la socializzazione: «Gli spazi educativi sono costitutivamente luoghi di socializzazione, incontro e scambio di esperienze. Per questo motivo declinarli in maniera differente permette di attribuire all'educazione un ruolo centrale nell'ambito dei processi di rigenerazione urbana. In questa prospettiva, attraverso il progetto di spazi diversificati, prende avvio un processo di 'contaminazione' educativa» (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018, p. 50).

struttura spaziale della città storica di Sassari, reinterpretata nella capacità relazionale delle sue parti. Volendo esemplificare ed entrare nella specificità di ogni categoria laboratoriale, i progetti sugli “spazi tra natura e artificio” hanno presentato il paesaggio nella sua dimensione ecologica e più propriamente estetica, come un *unicum* capace di diventare elemento strutturale della città ed offrire una nuova dimensione allo spazio pubblico. In tal senso, gli spazi verdi interni alla città appartenenti al sistema delle valli sassaresi, hanno offerto un’inedita possibilità di rigenerazione urbana rispetto alla dimensione della relazionalità sociale¹⁴. Il rapporto tra città e educazione è stato sondato nei progetti della categoria “spazi educativi” basati sulla concezione di: “un microcosmo urbano come luogo del confronto tra modelli pedagogici e modelli spaziali. (...) Il territorio nel suo complesso diviene educativo e quindi generatore di esperienze formative” (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018, p. 49)¹⁵. Per quanto concerne la categoria degli “spazi della memoria”, i progetti hanno cercato di ricostituire un legame diverso tra la città e la sua memoria storica in un’ottica di recupero dei significati del territorio al fine di creare nuove opportunità rispondenti alle odierne necessità. In tal senso, si è ripensato lo spazio dell’ottocentesco ex carcere di San Sebastiano come luogo d’integrazione e incontro¹⁶. Sono state anche presentate proposte di rifunzionalizzazione di quegli spazi interstiziali, di margine e scarto, coincidenti con il confine territoriale urbano, quali potenziali aree di interconnessione e interscambio culturale per nuove relazioni sociali¹⁷:

¹⁴ Per la categoria “spazi tra natura e artificio” è stato presentato un progetto che: «si articola attraverso un sistema di terrazzamenti ed edifici di residenze e servizi. A partire dalla linearità dell’asse di Corso Trinità che permette l’accesso alla valle del Rosello si viene a definire una geometria capillare più articolata di spazi che integrano alle preesistenze il verde e alcuni nuovi edifici. Questo microsistema si confronta con il principale accesso alla valle, la rampa che conduce alla fontana del Rosello» (Maciocco *et al.* 2018, pp. 39-40).

¹⁵ Tra i progetti della categoria “spazi educativi”, si ricorda quello che interessa l’area di San Donato a cui si è cercato di offrire, dopo i lavori di sventramento subiti nel 1939 che ha portato alla realizzazione di una struttura scolastica su tre piani, una nuova centralità attraverso un ripensamento dello spazio pubblico fuori l’istituto scolastico, con la creazione di servizi sociali, ricreativi, sportivi inseriti nel verde della valle Rosello (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018, p. 52).

¹⁶ Giovanni Maciocco, Laura Ltzoni e Michele Valentino (2018, p. 60) descrivono la rifunzionalizzazione della struttura originale della prigione. Nella struttura interna, la parte inferiore dei bracci diventa uno spazio pubblico con sale studio, aree espositive; la parte superiore dei bracci ospita l’ufficio giudiziario. All’esterno dell’edificio principale, la differenza di altezza, dipendente dalla pendenza naturale del terreno, crea un particolare spazio pubblico su cui ospitare un parco e una residenza per studenti.

¹⁷ In particolare il progetto ha preso in esame l’area compresa tra la città storica di Sassari e l’area artigianale-commerciale di Predda Niedda, quale spazio interstiziale potenzialmente capace di collegare la città a diverse situazioni dove: «La linea ferroviaria rappresenta un elemento di discontinuità che segna un confine netto tra questi ambiti e l’edificio in stato di abbandono dell’ex Turrutania (...). La riorganizzazione di questo spazio è finalizzata alla realizzazione di un luogo d’incontro per gli abitanti» (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018, p. 66).

«(...) indagare il concetto di spazio intermedio permette di lavorare sulla linea di demarcazione e sul complesso rapporto di interconnessione tra sistemi differenti che nel progetto non trovano opposizioni. La dimensione territoriale delle strutture generative ambientali lega e incorpora i nuclei di urbanità in una visione allargata della città» (Valentino, 2018, p. 115). Spesso gli spazi interstiziali sono “spazi in attesa” di un cambiamento di senso, così come gli spazi della memoria restano sospesi tra il passato e l’indeterminatezza del divenire. In tal senso, scopo dell’esperienza laboratoriale per gli spazi in attesa: «non è attribuire a questi un senso *ex novo*, ma significare luoghi con forti valenze ed elevato potenziale. L’azione di risignificare è anticipatrice di una realtà possibile che è oggetto di una riformulazione dell’esistente» (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018, p. 71)¹⁸.

Un ripensamento creativo degli spazi comuni relazionali quindi, quello promosso dal laboratorio *Idee per una città accogliente*, basato sulla riprogettazione dei nuclei di urbanità da parte degli studenti e sulla partecipazione attiva degli attori sociali al progetto urbano, che ha rappresentato un’opportunità di ricomposizione della frammentarietà territoriale e sociale. Un tentativo di superamento della discrasia urbana tramite la progettazione di spazi propizi all’interrelazione e aderenti ai bisogni delle comunità, dove la territorialità possa cementificare il senso identitario tra comunità e città.

3. Conclusioni

I contenuti educativi della città sono molteplici. Forse quello più importante è l’insegnare fattivamente a viverci, a conoscere i suoi spazi, comprenderne la trama del suo racconto in cui le pause interstiziali tra un volume e l’altro fanno parte della storia di un legame antico tra ambiente fisico e comunità. Da questo punto di vista, probabilmente, la città è la scuola per antonomasia, capace di accogliere e affrontare la complessità del reale di cui quotidianamente si fa esperienza: «Una struttura comunitaria sparsa tra gli esercizi commerciali privati e gli edifici pubblici del quartiere. (...). In questo modo, la vita quotidiana della comunità e quella dei suoi bambini si intrecceranno inevitabilmente, proprio come avveniva diffusamente in gran parte della storia passata» (Ward,

¹⁸ Esempio di “spazio in attesa” il mercato storico a Sassari che, persa la sua funzione commerciale, accoglie eventi culturali. Adiacente il mercato storico è stata costruita una struttura in cui l’attività commerciale si è trasferita. «Il progetto propone una riorganizzazione dell’edificio per la vendita in modo tale da metterlo in relazione con il mercato storico attraverso un sistema di rampe. Questo percorso si articola lungo il dislivello presente tra i due edifici conducendo fino al mercato storico che, conservando intatta la sua struttura in stile liberty, viene reso idoneo alla funzione di scambio culturale e sociale» (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018, p. 74).

2018, p. 208)¹⁹. La città diventata, così, un ambiente di apprendimento e la sua progettazione uno strumento di esplorazione delle condizioni dello spazio urbano del vivere collettivo.

The idea of starting from the school-city link to reinterpret it in the current social complexity allows to operate in both realities and projects towards a broader scenario in which the territory defined total field of urban manifestations that identify it and whose problems, therefore, they cannot approach without explicit reference to the urban context that expresses them (Clemente, 1974). In this perspective, the reflection on the educational city to the landscape-environment extended: the territory becomes educational in its complicated and therefore generates training experiences (Valentino, Lutzoni, 2020, p. 5).

Progettare la città appare conseguentemente il principale strumento per affrontare la complessità dello spazio del nostro vivere, attraverso il quale impariamo a conoscerlo e a viverlo, affrontando fondamentali problemi pedagogici: «come quelli dell'errore, dell'illusione, della parzialità, della comprensione umana, delle incertezze che ogni esistenza incontra» (Morin, 2015, p. 7). In quest'ottica, educare alla cittadinanza non può prescindere dall'educare a *com-prehendēre* la città, quale insieme di *civitas e urbs*, superando la dicotomia natura-artificio che tradizionalmente ne divaricava il senso. L'importanza della dimensione ambientale della città, come possibilità rigenerativa della qualità della vita urbana e dei suoi spazi²⁰, è solo uno dei contenuti educativi insiti nella

¹⁹ Sulla relazione città-scuola di particolare interesse la produzione dell'urbanista Colin Ward che sin dagli anni '70 del Novecento ha analizzato la questione proponendo l'idea di ambiente urbano come alternativa alla tradizionale costruzione scolastica per educare all'uso della città e coinvolgere i giovani ai problemi locali della vita reale. La sua convinzione, infatti, è che l'educazione all'esterno delle mura scolastiche sia di importanza vitale. In particolare in "L'educazione incidentale" (2018), la tematica della città come luogo propizio a un'educazione ambientale resta centrale e strettamente legata per la costruzione di una cittadinanza consapevole: «Per Ward ogni angolo della città è un'aula scolastica, ogni strada uno spazio di incontro e di sperimentazione di relazioni vitali, ogni contesto urbano o rurale è un luogo di apprendimento, ogni occasione è propizia a stimolare l'autonomia e la partecipazione diretta alla vita sociale. Come testimoniano i suoi scritti, è indispensabile riappropriarsi dell'ambiente in cui viviamo, ricondurlo a dimensione di bambino e bambina, trasformandone ogni contesto organizzato in una sorta di aula scolastica. Nella prospettiva di Ward, l'educazione è pertanto necessariamente «educazione ambientale», nel senso duplice che questa idea introduce, ovvero sia l'uso dell'ambiente (contesto), in luogo dell'aula scolastica, come mezzo educativo, sia l'educazione che riguarda l'ambiente naturale. Ma egli sottolinea anche la necessità che l'educazione ambientale «venga intesa come qualcosa che riguarda le città dove la stragrande maggioranza dei bambini europei vive e va a scuola». Questa educazione dovrebbe avere lo scopo di "rendere i ragazzi padroni del loro ambiente: altrimenti non si vede a cosa possa servire"» (Codello, 2018, p. 12).

²⁰ Se, infatti, si assume il territorio come cardine della qualità della vita urbana, il suo progetto deve superare il confronto dicotomico tra natura e artificioso, ormai impraticabile nella città contemporanea (Valentino, Lutzoni, 2020, p. 3).

città, spazio formativo a cielo aperto²¹ in cui: «One might even imagine a society in which each individual would be in turn both teacher and learner», (Delors, 1996, p. 17). Non per nulla, le ipotesi progettuali prodotte dagli studenti coinvolti nel laboratorio *Idee per una città accogliente* sono nate e si sono organizzate intorno ai riferimenti ambientali della città. Questo per, dapprima stimolare lo studente ad uno sguardo attivo, e non più solo contemplativo, sull'ambiente e sul paesaggio quali presupposti fisici del progetto urbano e, successivamente, portarlo a concepire i segni della natura, così come la storia insediativa del territorio, quali “dominanti ambientali” su cui si organizzano i processi di trasformazione della città. Fondamentale per la rigenerazione urbana è stata, pertanto, l'analisi degli elementi dominanti del sistema ambientale e del sistema storico dell'insediamento, ossia delle strutture generative che: «presiedono all'evoluzione della città, dai grandi segni della natura e della storia, rispetto ai quali la società urbana si riconosce nel tempo e nello spazio», (Comune di Olbia, 2014, p. 11). Il laboratorio ha voluto, quindi, trasmettere i contenuti educativi del paesaggio richiamando: «a un'idea di educazione compenetrata appunto con il paesaggio, con la sua arguzia (...). Questo perché gli scolari devono avere punti di riferimento in cui identificarsi, che in qualche modo si ancorino alla loro cultura, alla loro storia, alla loro gente, al loro contesto di provenienza» (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018, p. 10).

Progettare la città è educare alla città e alla cittadinanza consapevole, dapprima a favore della specificità e del valore del contesto territoriale nel quale si vive, e poi del mondo. A questo fine, il progetto laboratoriale, varcando i confini fisici delle aule universitarie, ha stimolato la partecipazione attiva dei vari attori territoriali alla progettazione e conoscenza dello spazio del vivere. Del resto: «L'orientamento di sé nel mondo, (...) l'integrazione costruttiva e non omologante esige spazi di partecipazione e di condivisione» (Perucca, 2003, p. 18). Se la partecipazione sociale è elemento strutturante di ogni progetto urbano, in cui si pianifica la visione di una città autocatalitica²², allora l'intento

²¹ In questa prospettiva: «the city constitutes an instrument of self-evident didactics and the development of learning processes in the city and the territory can assume an enormous potential in social, environmental and economic terms, encouraging innovation and the development of knowledge economies and including within it informal dynamics and processes» (Valentino, Lutzoni, 2020, p. 6).

²² Secondo Alberto Clementi (2018, p. 2, 3), il “Progetto urbano” è collegato all'idea di città autocatalitica: «dove i processi adattivi si basano sull'esistenza di un'intelligenza locale diffusa, che migliora le capacità dei cittadini di promuovere dal basso i mutamenti di contesto e che in definitiva è volta a potenziare il loro capitale cognitivo, favorendo la loro compartecipazione attiva alla costruzione dei progetti per la città» (*Ibidem*). Il Progetto urbano in questa prospettiva: «tende in definitiva a diventare una strategia di rescaling a guida pubblica locale, aperta al confronto partecipato con la popolazione e con gli attori dello sviluppo; una strategia tendenzialmente multi-settoriale, multi-attoriale e trans-scalare, capace di combinare flessibilmente reti infrastrutturali e spazi catalitici a elevata qualità, innescando una varietà di interventi prioritari a

del laboratorio è stato quello di educare alla partecipazione per una visione comune degli spazi pubblici e della loro rigenerazione. Questo ha prodotto un ambiente formativo capace di predisporre al dialogo varie parti sociali (mondo universitario e attori locali dell'area centrale di Sassari), impegnandole in un lavoro di condivisa progettazione del territorio, che è bene comune.

Questa fattiva collaborazione è stata fondamentale per favorire il percorso progettuale, in cui i cittadini rappresentano agenti di cambiamento nell'azione complessiva di rigenerazione urbana. Tali incontri hanno attivato un processo di progressivo coinvolgimento di energie apparentemente latenti, ma con una forte potenzialità urbana per la costruzione di reti cooperative. (...) il progetto costituisce una sonda per esplorare le possibilità della realtà che origina aspetti positivi o negativi producendo una conoscenza incrementale: il processo attivato all'interno del laboratorio ha infatti innescato una risposta alle contingenze, interagendo con esse, con l'obiettivo di favorire la rigenerazione urbana della città storica di Sassari (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018, p. 25).

La riflessione critica sulla città quale creativo cantiere di cittadinanza in stretta relazione con la progettualità dei suoi spazi, non può che essere interpretata come momento educativo utile non solo alla formazione di una conoscenza degli spazi urbani nei quali ci si relaziona ma, e soprattutto, alla presa di coscienza dell'incisivo ruolo che può avere una socialità attiva e partecipativa nella creazione della città, quale: «luogo propizio all'accoglienza e aperta al dialogo in cui è possibile costruire un ambiente formativo» (Maciocco *et al.*, 2018, p. 21). Una riflessione che conduce alla consapevolezza che non basta un progetto urbano per realizzare una società aperta all'inclusione, ma che da questo può essere senz'altro aiutata.

Riferimenti bibliografici

- Bateson G. (1972). *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. New York: Ballantine Book (trad. it.: *Verso un'ecologia della mente*. Milano: Adelphi, 2000).
- Clementi A. (2018). Un nuovo paesaggio urbano Open Scale. *Casa della Cultura*, testo disponibile al sito: <https://www.casadellacultura.it/798/un-nuovo-paesaggio-urbano-open-scale> (10/09/2020).
- Clementi A. (2017). Progetto urbano. Prove di innovazione. *EWT-Eco Web Town*, 15: 1-9, testo disponibile al sito: http://www.ecowebtown.it/n_15/pdf/15_01-clementi-it.pdf (05/09/2020).

diversa grana e un insieme di azioni complementari che hanno effetto cumulativo sul paesaggio. Gli interventi nel loro insieme dovranno essere finalizzati a migliorare le condizioni di funzionalità urbana, di abitabilità e di qualità diffusa del contesto, offrendo al tempo stesso condizioni spaziali di accesso al welfare locale quanto più egualitarie possibile» (Clementi, 2017, p. 2 - 3).

- Codello F. (2018). Introduzione. In: Ward C. *L'educazione incidentale*. Milano: Eléuthera. pp 7-16.
- Comune di Olbia (2014). *Piano Urbanistico Comunale di Olbia. Linee programmatiche e procedure operative*, testo disponibile al sito: <http://2.45.149.43/001-Pub-Ced/Urbanistica/bandoPUC%202014/Linee%20Programmatiche%20procedure%20operative.pdf> (09/09/2020).
- Corboz A. (1983). Le territoire comme palimpseste. *Diogéne*, 121: 14-35, testo disponibile sul sito: jointmaster.ch/file.cfm/document/Le_territoire_comme_palimpseste.pdf?contentid=1042, (13/06/2020).
- Delors J. (1996). *Learning: the Treasure within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century*. UNESCO Publishing (trad.it., *Nell'educazione un tesoro. Rapporto all'UNESCO della Commissione Internazionale sull'Educazione per il Ventunesimo secolo*. Roma: Armando Editore, 1997).
- Maciocco G., Lutzoni L., Valentino M. (2018). Riflessioni sul progetto tra didattica e ricerca. In: Maciocco G., Lutzoni L., Valentino M., a cura di, *Strutture generative e nuclei di urbanità*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Losasso M. (2017). Progettazione ambientale e progetto urbano. *EWT. Eco Web Town*, 16: 7-16, testo disponibile sul sito: http://www.ecowebtown.it/n_16/pdf/16_02-losasso-it.pdf 6/10/2020).
- Morin E. (2015). *Insegnare a vivere. Manifesto per cambiare l'educazione*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore
- Perucca A. (2003). Progetto di sé e costruzione dell'identità. In: A. Perucca (a cura di), *L'Orientamento, fra miti, mode e grandi silenzi*. Castrignano dei Greci: Amaltea.
- Ostanel E. (2017). *Spazi fuori dal comune: rigenerare, includere, innovare*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Raffestin C. (2017). Territorialità, territorio, paesaggio. In: Arbore C., Maggioli M., a cura di, *Territorialità: concetti, narrazioni, pratiche. Saggi per Angelo Turco*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Secchi B. (2000). *Prima lezione di urbanistica*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- Turri E. (1979). *Semiologia del paesaggio italiano*. Milano: Longanesi.
- Turri E. (1988). *Il paesaggio come teatro. Dal territorio vissuto al territorio rappresentato*. Venezia: Marsilio.
- Turri E. (2008). *Antropologia del paesaggio*. Venezia: Marsilio.
- Valentino M., Lutzoni L. (2020). Among territorial project and architectural design. *City, Territory and Architecture*, 7: 1-12, testo disponibile sul sito: <https://cityterritoryarchitecture.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40410-020-00115-w> (17/09/2020).
- Valentino M. (2018). Rappresentare la complessità urbana. In: Maciocco G., Lutzoni L., Valentino M., a cura di, *Strutture generative e nuclei di urbanità*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Ward C. (2018). *L'educazione incidentale*. Milano: Eléuthera.

Le conseguenze economiche, sociali e scolastiche della pandemia da Coronavirus per le famiglie immigrate e per i loro figli

The economic, social and educational consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic for immigrant families and their children

Serena Sani*

Riassunto

Il presente lavoro pone in rilievo i drammatici effetti della pandemia da Covid e del conseguente *lockdown* per molte famiglie straniere e per i loro figli. In particolare, si vogliono evidenziare le problematiche economiche, sociali e scolastiche riscontrate da queste famiglie e dai loro figli nell'attuale lungo periodo di crisi sanitaria e di chiusura delle scuole. Tanti alunni stranieri non hanno potuto accedere alla didattica a distanza e in questi mesi non hanno avuto rapporti con gli insegnanti e con i compagni di classe, rimanendo completamente fuori dal circuito scolastico e da tutte quelle occasioni di interazione e di apprendimento fondamentali per il loro percorso formativo.

Parole chiave: pandemia da Coronavirus, famiglie straniere, scuola, alunni stranieri, didattica a distanza.

Abstract

This work aims to highlight the dramatic effects of the Covid pandemic and the consequent *lockdown* for many foreign families and their children. In particular, we want to highlight the economic, social and school problems encountered by these families and their children in this long period of health crisis and closure of schools. In recent months, many foreign students have not been able to access distance learning and have not had relationships with teachers and classmates, remaining completely out of the school circuit and all those opportunities for interacting and learning that are fundamental for their training.

Keywords: coronavirus pandemic, foreign families, school, foreign students, distance learning.

Articolo sottomesso: 25/04/2021, accettato: 16/05/2021

Pubblicato online: 28/06/2021

* Dipartimento di Scienze Umanistiche, sociali e della Formazione. Università degli Studi del Molise, Via F. De Sanctis snc - 86100 Campobasso. E-mail: serena.sani@unimol.it.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa11758

1. Gli effetti del Coronavirus e del conseguente lockdown sulla situazione economica e sociale di tante famiglie italiane e immigrate già in condizioni di fragilità

In un periodo di grande emergenza globale legata all'improvviso irrompere nella società odierna della gravissima pandemia da Coronavirus e alla conseguente imposizione del distanziamento sociale, molte famiglie italiane si sono ritrovate a fare i conti con una realtà del tutto nuova. Infatti, se prima del Covid, spesso, per esigenze di lavoro, la cura e l'educazione dei figli era ripartita tra i genitori, la scuola, le associazioni sportive ecc., nonché i nonni, improvvisamente la situazione è cambiata, le famiglie hanno dovuto riorganizzare completamente la loro quotidianità e tante situazioni che in precedenza erano viste come conquiste (passare più tempo in famiglia, giocare con i figli e così via), si sono trasformate in obblighi difficili da gestire. Tuttavia, per molti nuclei familiari il problema non è stato solo quello di seguire i propri figli nelle attività didattiche e di organizzare il tempo libero all'interno delle mura domestiche. Secondo i risultati di un'indagine condotta da *Save the Children*, tantissime famiglie hanno visto diminuire rapidamente e in modo sensibile le loro risorse finanziarie a causa della perdita del lavoro o della drastica riduzione delle ore lavorative retribuite o, ancora, della collocazione in cassa integrazione. A questo proposito, dal *Rapporto* pubblicato da *Save the Children* emerge chiaramente che:

l'improvvisa mancanza di disponibilità economica è stata fronteggiata in alcuni casi con il ricorso a risparmi. Nel 63,9% dei casi tuttavia la mancanza di entrate economiche ha portato a dover ridurre sin da subito la spesa per l'acquisto di beni alimentari e in una famiglia su due anche la spesa per l'acquisto o il pagamento di altri beni e servizi di prima necessità (affitto e utenze 35,9%, farmaci 30,8%, prodotti per l'infanzia 26,9%, materiale scolastico 3,8%, materiale per comunicare on-line 2,6%). In questo scenario di difficoltà emergenti, ci sono molte incertezze rispetto al supporto che le famiglie potranno ricevere dalle istituzioni: una famiglia su tre di quelle intervistate non sa se riceverà un aiuto pubblico (30,4%) e più di una su 4 pensa che non lo riceverà (26,9%) (*Save the Children*, 2020)¹.

¹ Al riguardo, per un'analisi più dettagliata sulla situazione causata dal Covid a molte famiglie italiane, si veda il Rapporto *Save the Children* (2020), *Non da soli. Un'indagine sull'impatto sociale del Coronavirus* (<https://www.savethechildren.it/cosa-facciamo/pubblicazioni/secondo-rapporto-non-da-soli-cosa-dicono-le-famiglie>, data di Ultima consultazione 22/07/2020). Si veda anche l'articolo pubblicato dalla Redazione di *la Repubblica*, *Il colpo del Covid sulle famiglie: sei su dieci temono di perdere il lavoro*, del 26 Maggio 2020, nel quale, secondo i dati raccolti e pubblicati da Confcommercio-Censis: «A causa della crisi sanitaria e del conseguente lockdown, il 42,3% delle famiglie ha visto ridursi l'attività lavorativa e il reddito, il 25,8% ha dovuto sospendere del tutto l'attività, il 23,4% è finito in Cig; quasi 6 famiglie su 10 nutrono il timore di perdere il posto di lavoro».

Il documento, inoltre, pone in evidenza alcuni aspetti decisamente significativi; in particolare, rileva la drammaticità degli effetti provocati dalla crisi sanitaria per quei nuclei familiari che già in precedenza vivevano in condizioni difficili, e si mantenevano grazie a lavori precari, occasionali e, spesso, irregolari.

Al riguardo, non si può non pensare alle tante famiglie immigrate che, in genere, proprio per la loro condizione socio-economica, vivono ai margini della società. In questi ambiti familiari non sempre lavorano entrambi i genitori e, comunque, per la maggior parte dei casi, questi ultimi svolgono lavori saltuari, poco retribuiti e non in regola. Per costoro, l'assenza prolungata dal posto di lavoro ha significato non soltanto non poter disporre in questi mesi di alcun reddito, ma anche la totale mancanza di quegli aiuti e dei ristori disposti dallo Stato per coloro che hanno dovuto interrompere il loro regolare rapporto di lavoro.

Secondo il *Rapporto Istat* pubblicato nel 2020, sono circa 2,3 milioni gli individui immigrati occupati irregolarmente. Tale cifra, peraltro, non include gli stranieri senza permesso di soggiorno. Il fenomeno interessa circa 2,1 milioni di famiglie, le quali, potendo contare unicamente su lavori irregolari, sono decisamente più esposte al rischio di povertà (Istat, 2020). Fondamentalmente, tra i nuclei familiari più vulnerabili, quelli stranieri sono indubbiamente i più rappresentati; infatti, «su 100 famiglie con occupati irregolari, ben 26 sono straniere, e su 100 famiglie con unicamente occupati non regolari, addirittura 33 sono straniere» (ISMU, 2021, p. 128).

In questa situazione, ciò che colpisce maggiormente sono le tipologie di lavoro svolto dagli immigrati non soltanto in Italia, ma in tutta Europa. Al riguardo, vale la pena di rilevare che il 43% degli stranieri comunitari e il 40% di quelli extracomunitari in età lavorativa rientrano nella classificazione di *key worker*, ossia occupati in servizi essenziali, come quelli relativi alla sanità, all'assistenza, alle pulizie, all'agricoltura, ecc. (Fasani e Mazza, 2020, pp. 1-36). Si tratta, dunque, di servizi indispensabili anche nell'ambito della stessa pandemia. Molti di questi lavoratori, oltre ad essere risultati più a rischio di contagio rispetto ad altri, in questo periodo hanno dovuto far fronte a maggiori difficoltà economiche dovute alle precarie condizioni di lavoro.

A questo proposito, secondo una stima delle Nazioni Unite, circa il 30% dei lavoratori occupati nei settori più danneggiati dalla crisi è di origine immigrata. In particolare, molti immigrati sono titolari di contratti a termine (soprattutto le donne) e, quindi, più a rischio di perdita di lavoro. In questo periodo di crisi, peraltro, proprio per la tipologia di attività lavorative svolte (per la maggior parte manuali e a bassa qualificazione), non hanno potuto passare allo *smart working* e, in molti casi, non solo sono stati tra le categorie più esposte ai rischi di contagio, ma hanno dovuto scegliere se rinunciare al pro-

prio lavoro – e quindi a qualsiasi forma di reddito – oppure violare le restrizioni. Senza considerare che, in diverse situazioni, i soggetti coinvolti non hanno neanche potuto scegliere, perché sono stati direttamente licenziati (ISMU, 2021, pp. 129-131).

A nostro avviso, questa breve disamina sulle condizioni economiche e lavorative di tante famiglie immigrate ci aiuta meglio a comprendere un dato essenziale: «Nonostante la sostanziale equiparazione agli italiani nella fruizione degli interventi a garanzia dell'occupazione e di sostegno al reddito, sono la loro condizione pregressa e la diffusa contaminazione con il settore informale ad averne compromesso la situazione in misura ancor più accentuata di quanto avvenuto per molti italiani» (*Ibidem*, p. 131).

Vale anche la pena di rilevare che, seppure nel mese di maggio il governo italiano abbia previsto una sanatoria per gli immigrati che svolgevano i lavori sopra indicati², molti di loro non ne hanno potuto realmente usufruire: infatti, «a fronte di una platea di circa 621.000 lavoratori stranieri irregolari, sono state presentate “solo” 207.000 domande». Ciò, probabilmente, è dovuto anche all'impostazione del Decreto di sanatoria, che si fondava essenzialmente sulla volontà dei datori di lavoro di mettere in regola i propri dipendenti (Epi-Centro-Istituto Superiore di Sanità, 2020).

In ultimo, ci preme porre in evidenza un altro problema di non secondaria importanza, ossia quello delle condizioni abitative. In questo periodo di forzata permanenza in casa, anche la qualità degli alloggi ha fatto la differenza e molte famiglie immigrate, al pari di tante famiglie italiane che vivono in analoghe condizioni economiche, hanno avvertito ancor più la difficoltà di vivere nei consueti spazi angusti situati in zone degradate, in condizioni di sovraffollamento e di scarsa presenza di servizi (Petrillo, 2018, pp. 19-37)³.

2. Le difficoltà incontrate dai minori stranieri con la chiusura delle scuole e la didattica a distanza

A causa della pandemia, la scuola, come tante altre istituzioni, si è dovuta rapidamente organizzare per consentire a tutti i suoi utenti di poter usufruire al meglio dei servizi che normalmente è chiamata a fornire. In particolare, per quel che concerne tale istituzione, il problema è stato quello di provare a ga-

² Stiamo parlando della sanatoria prevista dal Decreto Rilancio (decreto legge n. 34 del 19 maggio 2020), *Misure urgenti in materia di salute, sostegno al lavoro e all'economia, nonché di politiche sociali connesse all'emergenza epidemiologica da COVID-19*. (20G00052) (GU Serie Generale n.128 del 19-05-2020 - Suppl. Ordinario n. 21).

³ In merito al tema delle abitazioni degli immigrati, si veda anche E. Fravega, L'abitare migrante. Aspetti teorici e prospettive di ricerca, *Mondi migranti*, 1 (2018), pp. 199-223.

rantire a tutti la possibilità di concludere nel modo più adeguato l'anno scolastico. Indubbiamente, la questione non è stata semplice; tuttavia, grazie all'uso delle "tecnologie digitali" e della "didattica a distanza" (DaD) imposta dal D.P.C.M. dell'8 marzo 2020⁴ e successivi decreti di conferma, nonché alla grande disponibilità dimostrata da tanti insegnanti delle scuole di ogni ordine e grado, è stato possibile assicurare l'ordinato e regolare svolgimento delle lezioni.

In tale situazione, non è difficile immaginare le problematiche incontrate dai figli degli immigrati per via della chiusura delle scuole; per molti di loro non è stato possibile accedere alla didattica a distanza a causa della mancanza degli strumenti informatici necessari; ciò ha significato, fra l'altro, interrompere completamente i rapporti con gli insegnanti e con i compagni di classe e, dunque, rimanere totalmente fuori dal circuito scolastico e da molte occasioni di interazione e di apprendimento necessarie per tutti, ma assolutamente fondamentali per coloro che vivono in situazioni di povertà ed emarginazione.

A conferma di ciò, ci sembra importante rilevare quanto riscontrato dall'indagine condotta dall'INDIRE nel mese di giugno 2020 sulle pratiche didattiche concretizzate in questo periodo di emergenza sanitaria. In tale indagine, dalle domande rivolte ad oltre 3.700 docenti italiani di tutti gli ordini e gradi di scuola, emerge chiaramente che gli allievi con *background* migratorio sono stati tra i più penalizzati dalla didattica a distanza. Dalle risposte degli insegnanti si può evincere chiaramente che la

condizione di svantaggio socio-economico, l'appartenenza a famiglie migranti e l'essere studenti con BES rappresentano le principali cause di esclusione. Nella scuola primaria e nella secondaria di primo grado, gli studenti in condizione di svantaggio socio-economico sono stati nettamente i più esposti all'esclusione insieme agli studenti con BES e a rischio di abbandono scolastico. Nella scuola secondaria di secondo grado sono rimasti esclusi dalla DaD gli studenti e le studentesse che la scuola aveva già riconosciuto come a rischio di abbandono insieme agli studenti in condizioni di svantaggio economico e sociale (INDIRE, 2020, p. 33).

⁴ Il Decreto promulgato dalla Presidenza del Consiglio dei ministri dell'8 marzo 2020, all'art. 1 comma 1 lettera a, stabiliva che i dirigenti scolastici dovessero attivare «per tutta la durata della sospensione delle attività didattiche nelle scuole, modalità di didattica a distanza». Al riguardo, si può trovare il documento completo in *Gazzetta Ufficiale* - Serie Generale n.59 del 08-03-2020. A tale Decreto, il MIUR ha fatto seguire la nota n. 279 dell'8 marzo 2020, con la quale ha fornito le prime indicazioni essenziali per l'applicazione del decreto in questione ed ha emanato le istruzioni operative. Il documento completo si può reperire in <https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Nota+prot.+279+dell%278+marzo+2020.pdf/b6728b73-bee3-a869-0e65-4ee6520b1be6?version=1.0&t=1583701429877>, data di ultima consultazione: 4/08/2020.

Un primo problema legato direttamente a questo nuovo modo di fare didattica è scaturito dal fatto che non tutte le famiglie possiedono almeno un computer o un tablet. Secondo i dati pubblicati dall'Istat e relativi all'anno scolastico 2018-2019, il 33,8% delle famiglie non possedeva computer o tablet in casa; i numeri scendevano al 14,3% tra le famiglie con almeno un minore. Soltanto per il 22,2% delle famiglie ogni componente aveva a disposizione un pc o tablet. Nelle regioni del sud d'Italia, il 41,6% delle famiglie risultava senza computer in casa (rispetto a una media di circa il 30% nelle altre aree del Paese) e solo il 14,1% aveva a disposizione almeno un computer per ciascun componente. Il 12,3% dei ragazzi tra i 6 e i 17 anni non aveva un computer o un tablet in casa; la quota raggiungeva quasi un quinto nel Meridione (470 mila ragazzi). Solo il 6,1% viveva in famiglie dove era disponibile almeno un computer per ogni componente (Istat, 2020).

In questa situazione, appare chiaro che se è vero che ormai quasi tutte le famiglie con figli hanno accesso ad internet – magari attraverso i cellulari dei genitori – è altrettanto vero che non è assolutamente facile seguire le lezioni online o svolgere i compiti assegnati dagli insegnanti se non si è in possesso di almeno un computer o un tablet da poter utilizzare per diverse ore al giorno. Peraltro, come molti di noi hanno avuto modo di sperimentare in questi mesi, la disponibilità di connessione non sempre è adeguata alla didattica a distanza. A questo proposito,

particolarmente toccate dalle conseguenze del gap tecnologico sembrano essere le scuole del primo ciclo, che alle difficoltà comuni aggiungono anche la più giovane età degli studenti che, per quanto nativi digitali, a parità di condizione socio-economico e culturale, hanno meno disponibilità di dispositivi adatti alla didattica e sono sicuramente ancora lontani da un utilizzo diverso da quello soprattutto ludico degli stessi (Censis, 2020).

Al riguardo, si è rivelato particolarmente importante il supporto dei genitori, i quali, nella maggior parte dei casi, seppure con tante difficoltà legate soprattutto alla mancanza di adeguate conoscenze informatiche, sono riusciti – spesso, anche con l'aiuto degli stessi insegnanti – a garantire ai loro figli la possibilità di seguire le lezioni e di svolgere i compiti assegnati.

Per i genitori stranieri, tuttavia, questo compito si è rivelato assai più difficile e talvolta impossibile, poiché per molti di loro, alla mancanza di computer e di competenze informatiche, si è aggiunta la scarsa conoscenza della lingua italiana e quindi l'impossibilità di aiutare i loro figli in questo nuovo percorso didattico.

Per tanti bambini di origine immigrata, l'inevitabile risultato è stato quello di non poter seguire le lezioni online e, dunque, di vedere aumentare ulterior-

mente il divario culturale e formativo con i loro compagni di classe autoctoni, ma soprattutto di sentirsi esclusi dal contesto scolastico.

Tale situazione risulta, a nostro avviso, inaccettabile non soltanto perché mostra chiaramente quanto, ancora troppo spesso, ad essere lasciati indietro siano sempre gli studenti che avrebbero più bisogno di supporto e di attenzione, ma anche perché indica palesemente l'enorme scarto tra la scuola idealizzata da una legislazione scolastica che sottolinea la necessità di garantire a tutti il diritto allo studio e una quotidianità scolastica che, invece, risulta ancora una volta inadeguata a rispondere alle esigenze degli alunni immigrati.

Peraltro, non si può non rilevare che il numero di allievi lasciati indietro non è affatto esiguo; infatti, secondo gli ultimi dati disponibili, relativi all'anno scolastico 2018-2019, nel nostro paese la presenza di studenti stranieri ha superato le 850 mila unità ed è arrivata a rappresentare il 10% del totale degli iscritti nelle scuole italiane, dall'infanzia alle secondarie di secondo grado. Sostanzialmente, possiamo affermare che «è stata dunque raggiunta la soglia simbolica dei 10 alunni con background migratorio ogni 100» (ISMU 2021, p. 144). Di fatto, dopo l'arresto verificatosi nel 2015, il numero di questi alunni ha ripreso a crescere, a differenza degli alunni italiani, che, invece, hanno seguito a diminuire sensibilmente, decrescendo tra il 2017-2018 e il 2018-2019 di oltre 100 mila unità.

Se entriamo nello specifico delle presenze, possiamo notare che nel primo ciclo di istruzione e nelle scuole dell'infanzia è stata superata la soglia dei 10 alunni di origine immigrata ogni 100 (11,4% nella scuola dell'infanzia, 11,5% nella scuola primaria, 10,5% nella scuola secondaria di primo grado); le percentuali si abbassano, invece, nel secondo ciclo (7,4% di alunni con cittadinanza non italiana sul totale degli studenti di questo ambito scolastico) (*Ibidem*, p. 144).

Al riguardo, peraltro, ci sembra giusto rilevare un altro aspetto di non secondaria importanza, ossia che molti di questi studenti che frequentano le nostre scuole sono nati in Italia. Secondo i dati riportati dalla Fondazione ISMU, nell'ultimo decennio il numero di coloro che sono nati in Italia è addirittura raddoppiato. Nell'anno scolastico 2018-2019, infatti, ha superato le 550 mila unità e, a partire dagli ultimi 6 anni scolastici, ha costituito il 64,5% degli alunni stranieri. Fra gli allievi più piccoli, «le seconde generazioni vanno ben oltre la media, con l'83% di nativi fra i bimbi con background migratorio nella scuola dell'infanzia, che rappresentano i $\frac{3}{4}$ degli alunni di origine immigrata alla primaria». Anche nelle scuole secondarie di secondo grado questa componente dei nati in Italia è aumentata in maniera considerevole ed ha raggiunto il 36% degli studenti con cittadinanza non italiana. Per quel che concerne le provenienze, possiamo vedere che la Cina, il Marocco e l'Albania rappresentano i primi tre paesi per l'elevato numero delle seconde generazio-

ni: «esse costituiscono rispettivamente l'83,1% del totale degli alunni di origine cinese, il 76,4% degli alunni appartenenti a famiglie marocchine, il 75,7% di coloro che hanno origine albanese» (*Ibidem*, p. 145).

Un ultimo dato che ci aiuta a comprendere meglio quanto ormai la presenza di questi allievi nel nostro sistema scolastico sia radicata e quindi degna di essere tenuta costantemente presente, concerne l'aumento delle scuole con elevati tassi di allievi stranieri. Nell'anno scolastico 2018-19, il numero di queste scuole è cresciuto, raggiungendo «percentuali fino al 30% di alunni con origine immigrata (oltre i $\frac{3}{4}$ delle scuole del territorio nazionale)», allo stesso tempo, è aumentato anche il numero di scuole «con oltre il 30% di alunni stranieri, quasi triplicate nell'ultimo decennio, che sono complessivamente 3.574, il 6,5% delle scuole italiane» (*Ibidem*, p. 150).

Per questi bambini e adolescenti, la scuola, oltre a caratterizzarsi come ambiente di apprendimento, svolge un ruolo fondamentale ai fini della socializzazione e integrazione.

In generale, la presenza all'interno del contesto scolastico, soprattutto per i bambini della scuola dell'infanzia e della primaria, si rivela fondamentale, poiché è proprio in questa fase della loro vita che avviene lo sviluppo dell'identità. Cerchiamo, a questo proposito, di cogliere la connessione che esiste tra lo sviluppo dell'identità personale e quello dell'identità socioculturale. Non vogliamo qui trattare le diverse teorie circa lo sviluppo dell'identità nel processo evolutivo di ogni individuo: ci preme solo evidenziare il ruolo importante che assume la relazione con l'altro nella costruzione della propria personalità. L'identità personale è il prodotto dell'interazione tra fattori genetici ed elementi dell'ambiente esterno con cui il soggetto entra in contatto, tra ciò che in noi appartiene alla categoria dell'innato e tutte quelle relazioni e acquisizioni prodotte dall'interazione con l'ambiente circostante. Nel rapporto con sé stesso, il soggetto deve arrivare alla maturazione di una equilibrata percezione di sé, delle proprie positività e dei propri limiti: si tratta di quella fiducia nelle proprie potenzialità che gli permette di affacciarsi al mondo che lo circonda come individuo portatore di una propria originalità, con caratteristiche che lo associano e al tempo stesso lo distinguono dagli altri soggetti. Per giungere a questo, però, è necessario il rapporto con gli altri, il contatto, lo scambio, ossia la comunicazione autentica. Inoltre, è nel rapporto con gli altri che ciascun soggetto ha la possibilità di manifestare la propria originalità e al tempo stesso il bisogno di similarità, nel quale si esprime il desiderio «di riconoscersi e sentirsi riconosciuto come appartenente a un gruppo, a una comunità di cui si condividono determinati valori» (Cesari, 1992, p. 102). Avviene, pertanto, una continua interazione tra soggetto e oggetto, da identificarsi non solo nell'ambiente fisico, ma in tutto ciò che è fuori di sé: è per mezzo di questa complementarità di fattori interni ed esterni che si costruisce la

propria identità. In questo senso, la scuola si costituisce come un luogo capace di garantire a tutti – e in particolare a chi incontra difficoltà – l'accoglienza di cui necessitano.

Per quanto riguarda gli alunni di origine immigrata, la scuola consente loro di confrontarsi con la cultura e le istituzioni del paese ospitante e rappresenta «il luogo dove imparare meglio la lingua italiana, dove conoscere altri ragazzi, dove – pur con tutte le difficoltà – mettersi alla prova e trovare una via per la costruzione di una propria identità» (Conti e Strozza, 2020).

Sostanzialmente, la conoscenza della lingua si rivela fondamentale non soltanto per l'integrazione sociale, ma anche per favorire il percorso scolastico. Normalmente, i bambini, a differenza degli adulti, grazie alla scuola e alle relazioni con i compagni, imparano presto a comunicare nella lingua del paese ospitante, ma se questo percorso di apprendimento si interrompe improvvisamente e per diversi mesi, il rischio è quello di una progressiva regressione che potrebbe comportare l'annullamento dei progressi ottenuti.

L'apprendimento della lingua avviene infatti

soprattutto in relazione e in "immersione", nella quotidianità dei gesti e del fare insieme, nel fluire delle esperienze e dei racconti. L'italiano s'impara giorno dopo giorno nella relazione con gli insegnanti e con i compagni. Lo si apprende facendo, esplorando, provando, imparando altre discipline, ma sempre grazie a parole in italiano che circondano e raccontano le azioni. La scuola e i corsi sono il contesto di contatto linguistico privilegiato, quotidiano, affettivo e motivante. Qui, l'esposizione alla seconda lingua è intensa e continuativa, sia nella qualità che nella quantità. È la colonna sonora del tempo insieme, attiva e permeante per 35/40 ore settimanali per i bambini e i ragazzi e per 8/12 ore settimanali per i giovani e gli adulti. Ma il cammino iniziato si è interrotto all'improvviso, bloccato a metà strada, è rimasto sospeso proprio in una fase cruciale. Senza scuola, l'esposizione alla lingua viene interrotta bruscamente e il percorso di apprendimento si blocca e anzi rischia di regredire, riconsegnando molti alla condizione di "neoarrivato di ritorno" (Ministero dell'Istruzione – Osservatorio Nazionale per l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri e l'Intercultura, 2020, p. 1).

La difficile situazione che si è venuta a creare in questo periodo influisce su un quadro già di per sé problematico: come è noto, infatti, per quel che concerne i risultati scolastici degli alunni stranieri, già negli anni precedenti la situazione appariva alquanto critica.

In particolare, un primo importante elemento di vulnerabilità riguarda il ritardo scolastico, il quale rappresenta uno dei dati più utilizzati per individuare le problematiche degli studenti con cittadinanza non italiana nella scuola. Secondo l'Istat, soltanto il 49% degli allievi stranieri nati all'estero viene introdotto nella classe che corrisponde alla sua età anagrafica; circa il 39% viene

inserito nella classe precedente a quella che dovrebbe seguire e il 12,2% viene addirittura iscritto in classi di almeno due anni inferiori alla sua (Istat, 2020). Di per sé questa prassi, in molti casi, ha una sua giustificazione, ma non deve mai essere eseguita senza un'attenta valutazione di chi si ha di fronte e, soprattutto, delle possibili conseguenze. Generalmente, infatti, gli insegnanti sono dibattuti tra lo scegliere di inserire questi alunni nelle classi corrispondenti alla loro età anagrafica in modo da favorire la socializzazione con i compagni di classe e non diminuire la loro motivazione ad apprendere con un arretramento, oppure inserirli in classi inferiori alla propria per dare loro modo di recuperare le lacune linguistiche e poter usufruire di maggiori occasioni di apprendimento. Al momento, il fenomeno del ritardo scolastico «riguarda il 9% degli studenti italiani e il 30% dei non italiani» e, benché nell'ultimo decennio la percentuale di studenti di origine immigrata in ritardo scolastico sia diminuita di oltre il 10%, resta ancora decisamente elevata e stabile soprattutto nelle scuole secondarie di secondo grado, dove, il 57% degli studenti con cittadinanza non italiana è in ritardo di uno o due anni. Per quel che concerne le scuole secondarie di primo grado, il ritardo si attesta sul 32% circa e nella scuola primaria raggiunge oltre il 12%, ossia, un livello considerevole se comparato con quello degli allievi autoctoni (ISMU, 2021, pp. 150-151).

All'interno di questo quadro, già di per sé indicativo della maggiore vulnerabilità degli allievi stranieri, non si può non prendere in considerazione anche la questione delle bocciature. Al riguardo, sappiamo bene che gli allievi di origine immigrata sono respinti più frequentemente rispetto a quelli italiani. Secondo quanto riportato dalla già citata indagine Istat, infatti, «mentre solo il 14,3% degli alunni italiani ha dovuto ripetere uno o più anni scolastici, per gli alunni stranieri la quota sale al 27,3%» (Istat, 2020).

Questo evidente divario rischia di aumentare notevolmente in un periodo così difficile come quello attuale. Se non si cercherà un modo per recuperare i molti studenti di origine immigrata che in questi mesi sono rimasti “indietro”, nei prossimi anni si verificherà una crescente riduzione della popolazione scolastica con cittadinanza non italiana, verosimilmente velocizzata ed amplificata dalle conseguenze di medio e lungo termine dell'attuale pandemia.

Per quanto riguarda le scuole secondarie di primo grado, «gli studenti che non sono stati raggiunti con regolarità dall'insegnamento a distanza sono in numero preoccupante» (ISMU, 2021, p. 153). Indubbiamente, le ragioni sono diverse, tuttavia, non si può non rilevare che molto è dipeso anche dal fatto che: «La didattica a distanza richiede – oltre alle condizioni strutturali di base – una motivazione robusta e la capacità di lavorare in autonomia», caratteristiche che, purtroppo, spesso mancano agli adolescenti, ma, nel complesso, è pure vero che: «A scuola e nel tempo extrascolastico vi fanno argine i docenti, gli educatori, i tutor: tutte figure di accompagnamento e di prossimità che ora

sono assenti, quantomeno fisicamente». Al riguardo, da un'indagine condotta da *Save the Children* a quasi un anno dall'inizio della crisi sanitaria su un campione di circa 1.000 studenti di età compresa tra i 14 e i 18 anni, possiamo notare che certe problematiche esistono anche per gli studenti delle scuole superiori di secondo grado: infatti, in merito alla didattica a distanza, è emerso che «quasi 4 ragazzi su 10 (38%) esprimono un giudizio negativo e più di 1 giovane su 3 (35%) ritiene che durante il periodo di DaD la propria preparazione scolastica sia peggiorata». Per di più, «7 studenti su 10 ritengono che la modalità a distanza renda più complicato concentrarsi durante le lezioni; imparare nuove cose e socializzare con i compagni». Infine, «1 giovane su 2 sostiene inoltre che la DaD rende più difficile rispettare il programma scolastico» (Agostini, 2021). In relazione alla continuità della partecipazione di questi ragazzi alle attività didattiche, «Più di 1 ragazzo su 10 segnala tuttavia di essere stato assente tre o più giorni nell'ultimo mese e quasi un ragazzo su 10 (8%) riferisce che rispetto allo scorso anno scolastico le assenze sono aumentate». In merito alla fruizione della didattica a distanza, «quasi 1 ragazzo su 2 (il 45%)» ha evidenziato una difficoltà nel mantenere la concentrazione durante le lezioni online. A ciò si uniscono i problemi tecnici legati «alla connessione internet/copertura di rete propria (41%) o dei docenti (40%)», nonché, i problemi tecnici «dovuti alla scarsa digitalizzazione dei docenti e la noia (33% ciascuno)». Infine, un altro aspetto, tutt'altro che trascurabile, posto in evidenza dall'indagine di *Save the Children*, riguarda gli effetti della didattica a distanza sulla socialità e sulla sfera emotiva di questi ragazzi: 6 studenti su 10 affermano che il periodo di chiusura delle scuole stia avendo conseguenze negative non soltanto sui loro stati d'animo e sull'umore, ma anche sulla loro capacità di socializzare e di comunicare (Agostini, 2021).

Per quel che concerne gli studenti con *background* migratorio, il pericolo della mancanza di motivazione e di dispersione è ancora più amplificato. Al riguardo, un documento dell'USR Lombardia, pubblicato nel settembre 2020, all'inizio del nuovo anno scolastico 2020/21, registra un notevole calo nella quota di studenti stranieri presenti nelle scuole lombarde, principalmente milanesi, con un abbassamento dell'11%.

Nei mesi successivi all'inizio del nuovo anno scolastico, il continuo passaggio dalla didattica in presenza a quella a distanza ha sicuramente provocato un ulteriore decremento di questi studenti nelle scuole di tutto il nostro paese: «sarà dunque necessario ancora monitorare e indagare l'influenza del lockdown e della DAD sulle famiglie immigrate e sui rischi di dispersione scolastica dei figli, così come sull'eventuale decisione di abbandonare gli studi» (USR Lombardia, 2020).

Su questo versante, ciò che emerge dall'analisi dei risultati scolastici degli alunni immigrati è che l'itinerario scolastico di questi allievi è caratterizzato

da una significativa incidenza di dispersioni, di abbandoni e di ritardi; e, se è vero che il fenomeno dell'abbandono scolastico non riguarda soltanto gli alunni immigrati, ma è molto diffuso anche tra gli autoctoni, è altrettanto vero che il livello medio di abbandono per gli studenti immigrati risulta essere circa il doppio rispetto a quello degli studenti nativi. In particolare, secondo i dati pubblicati dal MIUR a luglio del 2019, nella scuola secondaria di primo grado, per l'anno scolastico 2016-2017, la percentuale di studenti di origine immigrata che ha abbandonato la scuola corrisponde al 2,92%, contro lo 0,45% relativo agli alunni italiani. Dall'indagine condotta dal MIUR, risulta, inoltre che: «Gli studenti nati all'estero sono in maggiore difficoltà rispetto a quelli stranieri nati in Italia: per i primi la percentuale di abbandono è del 4,11% e per i secondi dell'1,84%». Fondamentalmente, gli allievi stranieri raggiungono i valori dell'abbandono più alti in tutte le fasce di età. Al riguardo, infatti, anche nel passaggio dalla scuola secondaria di primo grado alla secondaria di secondo grado emerge che il 5,21% abbandona la scuola a fronte di un 1,8% degli studenti italiani. Pure per questo grado: «Si conferma la maggior propensione alla dispersione degli alunni stranieri non nati in Italia: 6,7% contro il 3,4% dei nati in Italia con cittadinanza non italiana». Per quel che concerne le scuole secondarie di secondo grado, le differenze risultano ancora più marcate: difatti, per gli studenti con cittadinanza non italiana, la percentuale di abbandono si attesta intorno al 10,5%, contro il 3,3% raggiunto dagli studenti con cittadinanza italiana. Anche in questo segmento di scuola, quelli nati all'estero hanno un tasso di abbandono superiore (con una percentuale dell'11,8%) rispetto a coloro che, pur provenendo da un contesto migratorio, sono nati in Italia (MIUR – Ufficio Gestione Patrimonio Informativo e Statistica, 2019, pp. 7-16).

Sostanzialmente, tale disparità è dovuta al fatto che il livello d'istruzione della maggior parte degli alunni immigrati tende ad essere considerevolmente inferiore rispetto a quello dei loro coetanei autoctoni. Come conseguenza, ciò comporta una maggiore percentuale di casi di abbandono scolastico, livelli più bassi di qualifiche ed una parte minore di giovani che accedono all'istruzione superiore.

Rispetto ai loro compagni autoctoni, inoltre, gli alunni stranieri sono meno scolarizzati nel segmento dell'educazione prescolastica e in quello dell'istruzione secondaria superiore. In merito a questo ultimo grado di scuola, peraltro, vale la pena di rilevare che gli studenti immigrati sono sovrarappresentati negli istituti di istruzione professionale, i quali non sempre consentono di acquisire una preparazione adeguata per accedere agli studi universitari.

Indubbiamente, i fattori che contribuiscono a provocare lo svantaggio scolastico degli alunni provenienti da un contesto migratorio sono molteplici.

Alcuni sono legati alla situazione personale: si pensi, ad esempio, al contesto socio-economico sfavorevole dal quale spesso provengono, alla perdita di valore delle conoscenze che hanno accumulato nel paese di origine (in particolare la loro lingua madre, ma anche delle conoscenze riguardanti il funzionamento delle istituzioni); al mancato o ridotto riconoscimento delle qualifiche acquisite precedentemente; alle modeste aspettative delle famiglie e delle comunità; infine, all'assenza di modelli riconosciuti ai quali fare riferimento (Commissione delle Comunità Europee, 2008, p. 8).

Per quel che concerne la lingua, sappiamo bene quanto una buona conoscenza della lingua del paese ospitante rappresenti un fattore essenziale ai fini di una effettiva integrazione e di una positiva riuscita scolastica. Questa, infatti, oltre a rappresentare un valido mezzo di comunicazione nella realtà quotidiana, si caratterizza come un'importante risorsa ai fini della formazione e dell'inserimento nel mercato del lavoro.

Al riguardo, è importante rilevare che, se da un lato non è difficoltoso per gli alunni che provengono da un contesto migratorio imparare le basi della lingua del paese ospitante per avere possibilità di comunicare, dall'altro si rivela molto difficile acquisire le reali conoscenze linguistiche.

A questo proposito, si comprende bene quanto questi mesi di lontananza dalla scuola abbiano costituito per gli studenti immigrati un ulteriore passo indietro rispetto alla possibilità di migliorare, attraverso la scuola e l'istruzione, la loro posizione sociale.

In tal senso, la scuola, oggi, più che mai, deve cercare di recuperare sia le vecchie, sia le nuove criticità, facendo ricorso a sostegni linguistici specifici, progettando percorsi scolastici di integrazione sin dalla prima infanzia, promuovendo rapporti di interazione tra la scuola e la famiglia, nonché, organizzando corsi per l'apprendimento della lingua nazionale destinati anche ai genitori degli alunni immigrati e, soprattutto, garantendo la presenza costante di personale di supporto e di mediatori culturali.

3. Conclusioni

A causa del protrarsi della pandemia, anche l'anno scolastico 2020-2021 ha iniziato e sta proseguendo tra molteplici difficoltà. Nel corso di questi mesi, infatti, abbiamo assistito ad un continuo alternarsi di didattica in presenza e didattica a distanza. In tale situazione di incertezza, appare quanto mai necessario focalizzare l'attenzione sulle problematiche relative agli studenti più vulnerabili e con cittadinanza non italiana.

Sia nella prima fase di emergenza, sia nei mesi successivi, le scuole hanno cercato di supportare gli studenti e di garantire lo svolgimento della didattica.

La situazione, tuttavia, si è dimostrata tutt'altro che semplice ed ha posto in evidenza tante criticità del nostro sistema scolastico, tra le quali è emersa chiaramente l'incapacità di garantire «opportunità formative eguali per tutti e di compensare le disparità determinate dalle differenze socioculturali di partenza» (Ministero dell'Istruzione-Osservatorio Nazionale per l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri e l'Intercultura, 2020, p. 1). Indubbiamente, le scuole non erano preparate a questo nuovo tipo di didattica e, nella maggior parte dei casi, si sono limitate semplicemente a riproporre a distanza le lezioni normalmente pensate per l'aula. Nonostante le buone intenzioni, peraltro, per molti docenti che si sono ritrovati da un giorno all'altro a dover imparare questa nuova modalità di lavoro, a cercare di mantenere viva l'attenzione degli allievi sugli argomenti trattati e a supportare le famiglie con consigli e indicazioni utili per lo svolgimento del lavoro da fare a casa, la questione preminente, a nostro avviso, è stata quella di riuscire a sopravvivere a questa improvvisa 'intemperie'. In molti casi, sono stati lasciati indietro proprio quegli alunni che avrebbero avuto più bisogno di aiuto.

Al riguardo, anche prima della pandemia – nonostante il consolidamento più che decennale del fenomeno migratorio –, molte scuole apparivano ancora impreparate a gestire il percorso di scolarizzazione, di integrazione e di apprendimento linguistico di questi allievi.

Sia chiaro che in tale quadro non bisogna dimenticare le tante scuole che, invece, in questi anni si sono impegnate per favorire l'integrazione scolastica degli allievi stranieri, per valorizzare il bilinguismo e il plurilinguismo, nonché per promuovere gli scambi interlinguistici e interculturali (Ministero dell'Istruzione-Osservatorio Nazionale per l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri e l'Intercultura, 2020, p. 5); tuttavia, nonostante le molteplici disposizioni legislative in materia a livello ministeriale, manca ancora, a nostro avviso, la determinazione necessaria per fare in modo che le cosiddette 'buone pratiche' siano seguite e fatte proprie da tutte le scuole e non siano lasciate soltanto alla buona volontà di alcuni dirigenti e docenti più sensibili a certe tematiche.

Il vero pericolo di questi mesi senza scuola e per molti senza la possibilità di seguire le lezioni a distanza è che alle lacune precedenti se ne aggiungano altre difficili da superare e tanti studenti immigrati siano destinati ad abbandonare la scuola, rinunciando definitivamente alla possibilità di costruirsi un futuro migliore di quello dei propri genitori, costretti a svolgere lavori precari, irregolari e, talvolta, ai limiti della sicurezza personale. In questo senso, difatti, sappiamo bene l'importanza che riveste l'istruzione nella vita delle persone. In particolare, istruirsi

Non significa solo imparare a leggere e a scrivere, ma anche acquisire conoscenze e competenze che aiutano a comprendere la società in cui si vive, a fronteggiare le

difficoltà quotidiane e adottare comportamenti che migliorano lo stile e il tenore di vita. È impossibile uscire dalla povertà senza l'istruzione: l'ignoranza, infatti, rende più vulnerabili allo sfruttamento e alle ingiustizie, mentre la mancanza di una formazione professionale condanna ad una vita di lavori saltuari e sottopagati e quindi alla povertà. L'educazione è requisito necessario ed allo stesso tempo un risultato dello sviluppo, una premessa ed un indicatore del benessere economico, non solo per i singoli individui ma anche per i paesi, sviluppati ed in via di sviluppo (Amnesty International, Coordinamento Bambini/Minori, 2014, p. 1).

Alla fine di questo difficile periodo, non sarà sicuramente facile colmare il *gap* formativo di tanti bambini e adolescenti di origine immigrata; in tal senso, la scuola ha un compito fondamentale, ossia deve ripartire dalle tante criticità alle quali abbiamo fatto cenno e individuare le modalità organizzative e didattiche più opportune per garantire a questi allievi – non solo sulla carta – quel diritto allo studio del quale tanto si parla.

Sostanzialmente, si dovrà focalizzare l'attenzione sulle «forti differenze che ci sono, nel rapporto con la scuola e con l'apprendimento, tra nati in Italia e nati all'estero, tra chi ha alle spalle un regolare percorso di scolarizzazione e una storia di apprendimento linguistico e chi porta il peso di una scarsa scolarizzazione» (Ministero dell'Istruzione-Osservatorio Nazionale per l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri e l'Intercultura, 2020, p. 4) e programmare misure di recupero e di compensazione.

In questo senso, la scuola, non soltanto dovrà riprendere i rapporti con gli allievi e con le famiglie che, in questi mesi, hanno avuto difficoltà a interagire con la comunità scolastica, ma dovrà progettare seri interventi di recupero linguistico e formativo individualizzati, nonché creare una rete con il territorio per dare vita a progetti di studio volti a supportare gli studenti in difficoltà. Al riguardo, appare di fondamentale importanza il coinvolgimento di mediatori linguistico-culturali – «per contatti, ri-motivazione e ricerca di soluzione a fragilità eventuali nel caso di minori “assenti”» – o di tutor che affianchino gli studenti non italofoni. Infine, in sinergia con gli altri enti territoriali, dovrà elaborare adeguati interventi formativi volti a sostenere le famiglie immigrate nel loro stabilire relazioni con la società a livello locale e a creare «ponti tra l'universo delle famiglie e le istituzioni con cui queste entrano in contatto – dalle scuole agli ospedali, ai corsi di formazione ecc.» (Silva, 2006, pp. 30-36).

Un ultimo aspetto che ci sembra importante rilevare e che, comunque, ci lascia abbastanza perplessi è che da una lettura dei documenti ministeriali, a fronte di tante direttive emanate dal Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione per risolvere – anche in vista di un possibile prolungamento della didattica a distanza o, comunque, per il mantenimento delle misure di distanziamento – i molti problemi emersi in questi mesi, non ci siano particolari accenni alle

molteplici problematiche affrontate dagli alunni stranieri in questo periodo e, soprattutto, manchino disposizioni specifiche volte a definire dei percorsi di recupero e degli strumenti di intervento specifici anche per questi allievi. In tal senso, si rivela innanzitutto necessario progettare una didattica differenziata e interattiva, attenta alle esigenze formative individuali. Sostanzialmente, come è già avvenuto in questi mesi per gli studenti diversamente abili, anche per gli alunni di origine immigrata occorre elaborare delle Linee guida nazionali che puntino su una didattica personalizzata, con la differenza, però, che «mentre per i primi c'è una notevole disponibilità di strumentazioni tecnologiche e didattiche molto evolute che si tratta di aggiungere ed integrare nell'insegnamento a distanza per tutti», per i secondi, mancano ancora «strumenti consolidati di semplificazione dei testi e di insegnamento dell'italiano come lingua seconda utilizzabili nelle attività di DaD». Nel caso degli alunni con disabilità, peraltro, esistono figure professionali specifiche, ossia gli insegnanti di sostegno, che si possono utilizzare al meglio e fare intervenire anche nella didattica a distanza; per gli studenti con *background* migratorio, invece, le figure competenti (si pensi, ad esempio, ai mediatori linguistico-culturali o agli esperti in italiano-lingua 2-classe A-23) sono ancora «largamente informali e non specificamente dedicate» (Ministero dell'Istruzione-Osservatorio Nazionale per l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri e l'Intercultura, 2020, pp. 4-5).

Un supporto determinante, allora, può venire proprio da quelle scuole che negli anni passati hanno dimostrato una maggiore attenzione all'integrazione scolastica degli studenti stranieri, al potenziamento del bilinguismo e del plurilinguismo, alla promozione delle interazioni interlinguistiche e interculturali, perché la scuola non deve essere soltanto un luogo dove si tramette il sapere nozionistico, bensì anche un contesto formativo volto a promuovere la crescita personale, il confronto tra realtà e culture diverse, il rispetto per il pensiero e le opinioni degli altri, nonché l'inclusione scolastica e sociale.

Riferimenti bibliografici e sitografici

- Agostini C. (2021). *Abbandono scolastico e povertà educativa, i costi della DAD secondo l'indagine di Save the Children*, testo disponibile al sito: <https://www.secondowelfare.it/povert-e-inclusione/i-costi-della-dad-lindagine-di-save-the-children.html> (Ultima rilevazione: 07/04/2021).
- Amnesty International, Coordinamento Bambini/Minori (2020). *Il diritto all'istruzione*, testo disponibile al sito: https://d21zrvtkxt6ae.cloudfront.net/public/uploads/2017/01/11.Istruzione_20.pdf (Ultima rilevazione: 06/04/2021).

- Argentin G., Aktaş K., Barbetta G.P., Barbieri G., Colombo L. (2020). Le scelte scolastiche al termine del primo ciclo di istruzione. Un nodo cruciale per gli studenti di origine immigrata. In Santagati M., Colussi E. (a cura di). *Alunni con background migratorio. Le opportunità oltre gli ostacoli*. Milano: Fondazione ISMU, pp. 63-79.
- Commissione delle Comunità Europee (2008). *Libro Verde - Migrazione e mobilità: le sfide e le opportunità per i sistemi d'istruzione europei* {SEC(2008) 2173} COM/2008/0423 def. Bruxelles.
- Censis (2020). *La scuola e i suoi esclusi*, indagine Censis, 2020, 9 Giugno, testo disponibile al sito: <https://www.censis.it/formazione/1-la-scuola-e-i-suoi-esclusi-0> (Ultima rilevazione: 23/07/2020).
- Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS-Confronti, *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2020*, testo disponibile al sito: <idos@dossierimmigrazione.it> (Ultima rilevazione: 28/10/2020).
- Cesari V. (1992). La dimensione interculturale nell'educazione: riflessioni e riferimenti per l'azione pedagogica. In Poletti F., *Educazione interculturale*. Firenze: La Nuova Italia, pp. 87-112
- Conti C., Strozza S. (2020). *Scuola interculturale e COVID-19: da dove ripartire?*, 12 Maggio 2020, testo disponibile al sito: <https://www.neodemos.info/articoli/scuola-interculturale-e-covid-19-da-dove-ripartire/?print=pdf> (Ultima rilevazione: 25/07/2020).
- Decreto legge n. 34 del 19 maggio (2020). *Misure urgenti in materia di salute, sostegno al lavoro e all'economia, nonché di politiche sociali connesse all'emergenza epidemiologica da COVID-19*. (20G00052) (GU Serie Generale n.128 del 19-05-2020 - Suppl. Ordinario n. 21).
- EpiCentro-Istituto Superiore di Sanità (2020). *L'impatto della pandemia sulle popolazioni migranti*, testo disponibile al sito: <https://www.epicentro.iss.it/migranti/dossier-statistico-immigrazione-2020-pandemia> (Ultima rilevazione: 10/03/2021).
- Fasani F., Mazza J. (2020). *Immigrant Key Workers: Their Contribution to Europe's COVID-19 Response*, 23 aprile, testo disponibile al sito: <http://ftp.iza.org/pp155.pdf> (Ultima rilevazione: 10/03/2021).
- Fondazione ISMU (2021), *Ventiseiesimo Rapporto sulle migrazioni 2020*, Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Fravega E. (2018). L'abitare migrante. Aspetti teorici e prospettive di ricerca. *Mondi migranti*, 1: 199-223.
- INDIRE (2020). *Indagine tra i docenti italiani. Pratiche didattiche durante il lockdown. Report preliminare, 20 LUGLIO 2020*, testo disponibile al sito: <https://www.indire.it/wpcontent/uploads/2020/07/Pratiche-didattiche-durante-il-lockdown-Report-2.pdf> (Ultima rilevazione: 22/03/2021).
- Istat (2020). *Rapporto Annuale 2020. La situazione del Paese*. Roma, testo disponibile al sito: <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/244848> (Ultima rilevazione: 10/03/2021).
- Istat (2020). *Spazi in casa e disponibilità di computer per bambini e ragazzi*, 6 aprile 2020, testo disponibile al sito: <https://www.istat.it/it/files/2020/04/Spazi-casa-disponibilita-computer-ragazzi.pdf> (Ultima rilevazione: 22/07/2020).

- Istat (2020). *Identità e percorsi di integrazione delle seconde generazioni in Italia*. Roma: Istituto nazionale di statistica.
- la Repubblica (26 maggio 2020). *Il colpo del Covid sulle famiglie: sei su dieci temono di perdere il lavoro*, testo disponibile al sito https://www.repubblica.it/economia/2020/05/26/news/confcommercio_censisi_coronavirus_famiglie_lavoro-257634636/ (Ultima rilevazione: 04/01/2021)
- MIUR, Nota n. 279 dell'8 marzo, testo disponibile al sito: <https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Nota+prot.+279+dell%278+marzo+2020.pdf/b6728b73-bee3-a869-0e65-4ee6520b1be6?version=1.0&t=1583701429877> (Ultima rilevazione: 4/08/2020).
- MIUR-Ufficio Gestione Patrimonio Informativo e Statistica (2019). *La dispersione scolastica nell'anno scolastico 2016/2017 e nel passaggio all'anno scolastico 2017/2018*, testo disponibile al sito: <http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/Attualita/Notizie/Documents/La%20dispersione%20scolastica%20nell%27a.s.2016-17%20e%20nel%20passaggio%20all%27a.s.2017-18.pdf> (Ultima rilevazione: 11/04/2021).
- Ministero dell'Istruzione-Osservatorio Nazionale per l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri e l'Intercultura (2020). *È la lingua che ci fa uguali. Nota per ripartire senza dimenticare gli alunni stranieri*, 16/05/2020, testo disponibile al sito: <http://www.centrocome.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/MIUR-La-lingua-ci-fa-uguali.pdf> (Ultima rilevazione: 18/08/2020).
- Petrillo A. (2018). La crisi dell'abitare migrante in Italia. Una prospettiva storica *Sociologia urbana e rurale*, 117: 19-37.
- Presidenza del Consiglio dei ministri, Decreto dell'8 marzo 2020. *Gazzetta Ufficiale*-Serie Generale n. 59 del 08-03-2020.
- Save the children (2020). *Emergenza coronavirus: un milione di bambini in più a rischio povertà*, 9 aprile, testo disponibile al sito: <https://www.savethechildren.it/blog-notizie/emergenza-coronavirus-un-milione-di-bambini-in-piu-a-rischio-poverta> (Ultima rilevazione: 22/07/2020).
- Save the children (2020). "NON DA SOLI" – *Un'indagine sull'impatto sociale del Coronavirus*, testo disponibile al sito: <https://www.savethechildren.it/cosa-facciamo/pubblicazioni/secondo-rapporto-non-da-soli-cosa-dicono-le-famiglie> (Ultima rilevazione: 22/07/2020).
- Silva C. (2006). Famiglie immigrate e educazione dei figli. *Rivista Italiana di Educazione Familiare*, 1: 30-36, testo disponibile al sito: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/228546067.pdf> (Ultima rilevazione: 13/04/2021).
- USR Lombardia (2020). *La scuola in Lombardia. Documentazione settembre 2020*, Staff del Direttore Generale, Milano.

The teachers' educational needs for early detection of difficulties in kindergarden

*Silvia Maggiolini, Paola Molteni, Elena Zanfroni, Roberta Sala, Luigi d'Alonzo**

Abstract

This paper presents a reflection on potential training courses addressed to kindergarden teachers, working with children of 3-6 years of age. In particular, the data reported derive from a phase of the action research promoted within the Erasmus + European project More Opportunities for Every Child (MOEC), which involved colleagues from Italy, France, Spain and Poland in order to investigate the possibility to build efficient observational instruments to detect the difficulties of pre-school children.

The outcomes of the project call for a growing necessity to promote a structured reflection on the fundamental value of efficient observation, which should be incremented through the training offer addressed to teachers, and on other aspects deserving special attention, such as educational strategies to guarantee quality, the promotion of true communities of practice, the development of professional skills, increasingly suited to support the educational and learning growth of each child in kindergarden.

Keywords: teacher training; early detection; best practice; observation; early childhood; kindergarden

First submission: 29/04/2021, accepted: 20/05/2021

Available online: 28/06/2021

* Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano. Il presente contributo è frutto del lavoro congiunto del gruppo di ricerca del Centro Studi e Ricerche sulla Disabilità e la Marginalità (CeDisMa), dell'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore composto da Luigi d'Alonzo, Silvia Maggiolini, Paola Molteni, Elena Zanfroni, Roberta Sala; tuttavia, sono attribuibili a: Silvia Maggiolini il paragrafo 1; a Elena Zanfroni i paragrafi 2. e 3., a Paola Molteni i paragrafi 4.e 5, a Roberta Sala i paragrafi 6 e 7. Il prof. Luigi d'Alonzo è il referente scientifico del progetto di ricerca.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa11781

1. Research background and State of the Art

The possibility of readily identifying the presence of difficulties, discomfort or developmental disorders during the earliest years of age of a child, and accordingly planning appropriate educational offers, is undoubtedly one of the milestones of general and special needs pedagogy, but it is also a fundamental objective of European and international educational policies.

It is indeed evident how such identification, far from formulating clinical diagnoses or fossilizing evaluations, constitutes a key prerequisite for planning activities, devising intervention strategies, modulating relational modes and thus allowing the reflection to be guided in a mindful and sound way, while avoiding the risk of inaccuracies or gross mistakes. In order for this goal to become feasible and sustainable over time, however, it is essential to promote its conditions, so that the opportunities inherent in the early detection of difficulties do not depend on factors which are internal or external to the organization itself (e.g. the skills of each teacher, the resources of the institute, a possible support from specialists, an inclusive culture promoted by the school, the receptiveness of the Principal, etc.), but are rather a structural component to educational and teaching processes in kindergarten age.

This last aspect calls for different work plans: structuring specific educational offers based on the real needs of teachers, in terms of observation, identification and sharing of child's early difficulties signs; defining pedagogical protocols and tools to support not only the daily action of the teacher, but also a culture of thoughtfulness, of an attitude constantly aimed at finding the meaning of one's own work, and as a measure to avoid the risk – especially in some educational contexts – of translating established routines and practices into a passive and mechanical execution of tasks and sequences; promoting materials and good practices that are already in place, following the example of other European countries; developing a professional *habitus*, and therefore stable and systematically-usable skills, i.e. the ability of reporting data by means of analysis grids or other structured materials; implementing appropriate communication and relational strategies and effective synergies, thus promoting a productive and harmonious work environment, in which the child can be observed under a common and shared perspective, without wasting time and resources.

It is in this theoretical framework that the EU project MOEC – *More Opportunities for Every Child* – was created, funded by the European Commission within the KA2 Erasmus+ program – *Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices*. Specifically, during the first year of work, each partner country (France, represented by the Université Catholique de l'Ouest, Anger; Spain, by the Universidad Pontificia Comillas, Madrid; Poland,

by the Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II, Lublin) led by Italy, with the leading institution Centro Studi e Ricerche sulla Disabilità e la Marginalità (CeDisMa) of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, has started, with each kindergarten involved, a structured path aimed both at understanding and clearly defining the educational needs of teachers, and at building shared languages and perspectives regarding the detection of any difficulties of kindergarten children.

Care, along with the complex implications of such a dimension, represents the epistemological foundation of the pedagogical reflection but it is also, and above all, the basis of the practices and processes through which it is declined. The attention to childhood and to the infinite potential contained in what has been defined as the flower of educability¹ has always been a subject of interest and research in the educational field. There are multiple reasons that can be ascribed to organic, evolutionary, and cultural issues. It can be said that: “at birth, the young of human beings, unlike what happens to other animal species, manifests itself in its condition of psychobiological immaturity and inability to take care of itself, which causes the need for a substantial and prolonged phase of dependence on nursing figures. This neurocerebral fragility has two opposite aspects: that of opportunity, inherent in what has yet to be built and developed; and that of vulnerability, typical of every ongoing reality and with undefined contours” (Maggiolini and Zanfroni, 2019).

Alongside these aspects, it is also important to consider the underlying social factors: each era has been characterized not only by a certain perspective on this specific phase of life, but also by the peculiarity of the responses and the interventions carried out in its favour. Thus, over the years, there has been the emergence, consolidation and even the questioning of theoretical models, principles and approaches that oriented what are defined today as *childcare policies*.

What we are going through nowadays represents a particular, and in some ways unprecedented, historical contingency of many elements that need to be considered in the analysis of the processes aimed at implementing the quality of daily services for the education of children. On the one hand, it thus becomes fundamental to take into account the profound transformations happened within the social structure in the last decades, which contributed to change traditional

¹ Refer to Grange Sergi T., Nidi e infanzia: ricerca pedagogica, educabilità e qualità, in Dozza L., Olivieri S. (edited by). *L'educazione permanente a partire dalle prime età della vita*, FrancoAngeli Milano 2016, p.95 “The image of the flower, the most beautiful part of a plant [...] seems fit to convey the generativity and the precious dignity and intangible delicacy of the principle of educability, which demands a certain care: a pedagogical care, first of all, through constant and attentive commitment to preserve its universality, expression of the utopian direction and of the logic of what is possible, which govern every strictly educational act”.

family structures, to review management and support models, highlighting the emergence not only of different needs and demands, but also of new issues related to fragility and difficulty of some parents. On the other hand, though, it is equally essential to consider the achievements of children in the field of knowledge, from their earliest life, and the development stages promoting their growth and maturation.

Although we are only at the beginning of a long journey towards a deep understanding of the human mind, it is undeniable that the last decades have been marked by revolutionary achievements, on the one hand forcing to rethink about theoretical and practical paradigms in the field of education and training, while on the other hand confirming ideas or intuitions and providing them with a scientific foundation. In particular, since the 1990s – not by chance defined “*The Decade of the Brain*”² – the amount of research carried out in the scientific field has considerably increased, strengthening the necessary association between educational sciences and the knowledge linked to neuro-discoveries. In this regard, worth of mention are the works by Le Doux on the relationship between emotional states and brain structures (Le Doux, 2003); those by Damasio, who analyzed the intellectual functioning through an understanding of the cognitive dimension of feelings and consciousness (Damasio, 2003); the research carried out by Siegel on the connections between neurobiological processes and interpersonal relations, with a focus on all aspects related to the *Mindfulness* approach (Siegel, 2009); that by Cozolino, who questions the ways in which social relations shape the cerebral architecture (Cozolino, 2008). Highly important, moreover, are the well-known contributions of Rizzolatti and of his research unit (among others, Fogassi, Gallese, Fadiga, Sinigaglia) that led to the extraordinary discovery of the mirror neurons, paving the way for a wide and rich series of studies (Rizzolatti, Sinigaglia, 2006). Also, several contributions come from other scientific fields and contexts, which encompass the works of the *National Scientific Council on the Developing Child*, analyzing constructs and dimensions important for the education of kindergarten children, such as the role of resilience³ and its relevant factors, in relation to the

² This expression was created, at the end of the 1980s, by the then U.S. President George H. W. Bush to indicate the expected development in neuroscience during the following decade (1990 – 2000). Later, the British neurobiologist Steven Rose used the definition “The Century of the Brain” referring to the 21st Century.

³ See Barnes, A. J., *Childhood Stress and Resilience*, in *Health Promotion for Children and Adolescents*, Springer US, pp. 85-98, 2016; Obradović J., *Physiological responsivity and executive functioning: Implications for adaptation and resilience in early childhood*, in *Child Development Perspectives*, 10(1): 65-70, 2016; Ernst J., Johnson M., & Burcak F. (2019). *The Nature and Nurture of Resilience: Exploring the Impact of Nature Preschools on Young Children's Protective Factors*. *International Journal of Early Childhood Environmental Education*, 6(2): 7-18.

possibility of its rooting since the early age by promoting those essential processes of adaptation required to face adversities in life; the role of play, either free or structured, as a privileged moment to learn how to process and manage emotions, to experience relational modes, to make decisions, to develop self-regulation mechanisms, enhancing problem-solving abilities and flexible thinking. Therefore, even in this difficult and uncertain time, there are several reasons to take those transformative, sometimes even generative, opportunities to enhance the extraordinary resources offered by education, starting from its earliest levels, to every child and in particular to those with more difficulties.

In this regard, data about the Italian context can stimulate a reflection. In fact, according to the latest data released by MIUR (Source: MIUR – DGCASIS – Ufficio Gestione Patrimonio Informativo e Statistica – Rilevazioni sulle scuole – May 2019), there is a constant increase in the number of certifications of disability in Italian schools – either public or private: “compared to 20 years ago, the number of students with certified disabilities has more than doubled (123,862 in the school year 1997/1998). Such an increase, which certainly partially reflects a refinement in the survey process, is noticeably considerable if we consider that, during the last twenty years, the total number of pupils attending Italian schools has even decreased” (MIUR, 2019). Particularly, in kindergartens, between school year 1997/1998 and school year 2017/2018, the number of children with disabilities increased from 0.8% to 2.1% of the total number of pupils. The same report states: “the percentage of children with disabilities up to 3 years of age is rather low, 0.6% for children under 3 years of age and 1.3% for 3-year-old children, respectively. For the 4-5-year-old age group, the percentage is higher, 2.1% for 4-year-old children and 2.4% for 5-year-old children, respectively. There is an exceptionally high proportion of students with disabilities over 6 years of age: more than half the children who stay back in kindergarten and move to compulsory education late, have a certification of disability”. Therefore, it seems obvious to investigate the links between the scientific achievements mentioned above and their actual, practical translation, between the knowledge in the field of the cerebral development of the child and the possibility of identifying early signs of evolutionary alteration, also making use of appropriate tools for educational professionalism.

As part of the E+ MOEC – *More Opportunities for Every Child* – project, each national research team carried out, during the first year, an exploratory survey aimed at understanding the educational needs of the teachers of the involved kindergartens, in terms of inclusion, difficulties/developmental disorders at age 0-6 and scientific tools to detect signs of potential issues, recognized by national and international literature. The design, structure and results of the research carried out by the Italian working group – CeDisMa –

and by the two participating kindergartens, IC Falcone-Borsellino (Offanengo-CR) and Gabrio Piola (Giussano-MB), will be presented below.

2. Teachers' training needs: a theoretical overview

The analysis of educational needs represents a fundamental subject, particularly at a time when the professional offer is wide and varied, both in presence and in blended mode. This involves different variables: personal, institutional, social, cultural, whose interweaving contributes to form a very articulated and complex structure. Its aim is to help bring out and express the real needs of various school professionals with respect to the development of useful skills in daily activities and to the definition of each worker's profile, with a particular focus on teachers working with students in a critical age such as childhood. In this regard, it is useful to quote Dubar (1980), who defined educational needs as a dialectical process comprising three moments in particular:

- educational needs as hypothetical results of economic standpoints and evolution in jobs and qualifications;
- educational needs as individual representations and motivations in a process of goal setting, requiring an assessment of the current situation and an ability to plan and thus anticipate the future;
- educational needs as differentiated behaviors of different social groups making use of educational opportunities.

This last aspect is, precisely, "dependent on the relationship between the two previous moments. It involves linking collective situations and individual strategies, the constraints of the economic environment and projects of personal development" (Dubar, 1980, quoted in Alessandrini, 2016, p.88). In fact, by virtue of all the above and of the inherent social and cultural complexity, it would be reductive to think that such an important operation of the educational process, i.e. the analysis of needs, could be simplistically declined in a list of what is missing or in a sterile measurement of the gap between the professional skills that one already owns and those that one would like to, or should, acquire. Rather, a survey which significantly aims at reading and understanding the nature of educational needs among explicit statements and implicit messages collected throughout the work described here, using different research methodologies (focus groups, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews), cannot ignore a careful analysis of the different characteristics of territory, organisations and institutions (macrosystem). These dimensions are indeed intertwined with the understanding of the sum of beliefs, convictions,

expectations, and knowledge that people possess, either general, or related to particular epistemological domains (microsystem).

In the light of such considerations, it is believed that an educational need can be conceived as a specific requirement, closely related to the professional skills of individuals and of the team, which is made up not only of what individuals concretely put into practice, but also of what they intend to do and in which ways. Therefore, understanding these needs necessarily implies taking on a multidimensional and complexity-oriented perspective. This is particularly true if the educational project must be structured inside the school environment, where the interweaving that has just been outlined is enriched through strongly intertwined elements: the personal needs of the teachers, the needs of the single school institution linked to its specific historical and cultural path, government guidelines and directives, requests of the territorial network, special educational needs of students and their families.

The European project Erasmus+ Moec – More opportunities for every child – fits right inside this perspective, within a partnership involving Italian, French, Spanish, and Polish research institutions, and kindergardens. In a wider reference framework, the data reported in this essay represent the results of the first phase of implementation of an educational process aimed at teachers working in the kindergardens involved. This process involved the development of survey tools aimed at understanding multiple aspects that are fundamental to the implementation of the European project's work plan. One of them is the knowledge of the educational needs of teachers, with regard to early detection of difficulties of kindergarden children.

3. Research Methodology

The analysis of educational needs lies within a research program adopting a structured methodology, consistent with the twofold requirement of the survey itself: to obtain qualitative answers, which would make sense of the real needs of the school and its professionals, and at the same time, to obtain, through as many participants as possible, quantitatively significant data.

More specifically, the objectives of this research can be summarized as follows:

- to carry out an early identification of the knowhow possessed by teachers, in terms of investigating their previous educational experience;
- to identify the needs of teachers with respect to a particular subject – i.e. the early detection of difficulties – which is considered significantly important, not so much in terms of contents, as in relation to the methodologies of the educational intervention they consider as qualitatively more effective.

The choice of the study type was therefore oriented towards the realization of an action-research, i.e. a methodology of participatory investigation, carried out by people directly involved within an organization or institution, in order to address emerging critical issues and outline possible future prospects (Amado G. & Levy A., 2002; Boog B., Coenenen H & Keune L., 2001; Reason P. & Bradbury H, 2001). The survey was carried out using three data-collection techniques commonly used in pedagogical research: *questionnaire*, *focus group* and *semi-structured interview*.

The **questionnaire**, provided electronically, consists of 31 closed-ended, multiple choice and open-ended questions, divided into 4 areas (fig. 1):

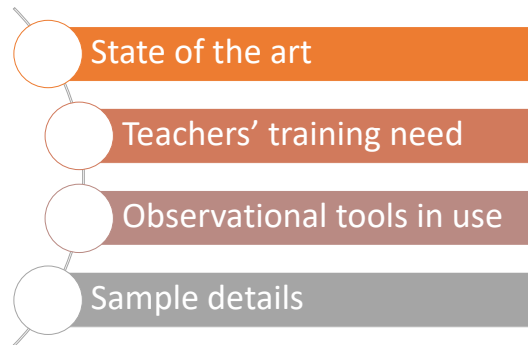


Fig. 1 - Questionnaire research areas

As already mentioned, this essay is mainly focused on the second area of interest.

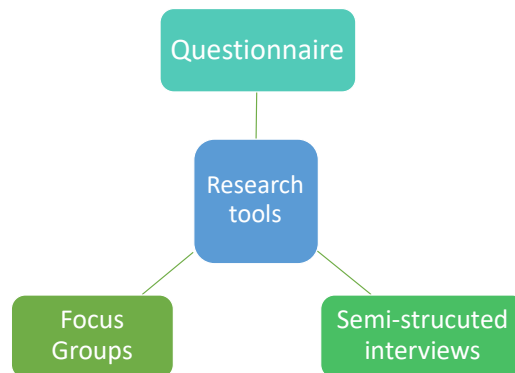


Fig. 2 - Research tools overview

At the same time, the methods of the **focus group** (Krueger, 1994; Bloor,

Frankland, Thomas & Robson, 2005) and of the **semi-structured interview** (Trinchero, 2004) have been adopted in order to obtain qualitative data through the active discussion among participants on some key subjects, with particular attention to the critical issues of normally adopted educational models and the potentialities linked to different ways of implementing learning activities (fig. 2).

4. Research Sample

The sample is composed of 68 professionals, 65 of which are teachers (95,6%) and 3 are school educators (4,4%) (fig. 3), working in the public kindergartens belonging to the two school complexes actively participating in the project partnership – the “G. Piola” school complex in Giussano (MB) and the “Falcone e Borsellino” school complex in Offanengo (CR).

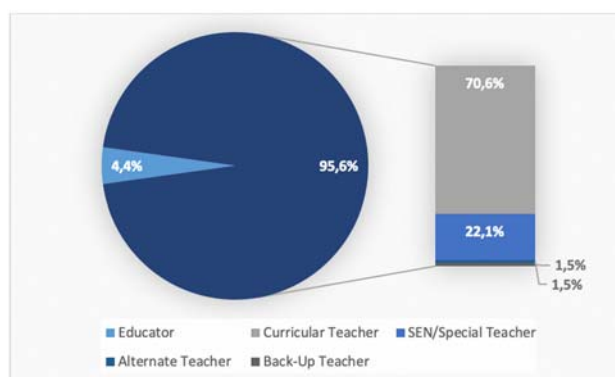


Fig. 3 – Sample Profession

All participants are female; 41% of the sample is over 50 years old (fig. 4 – 51-60 y-o 36,8% and > 60 y-o: 4,4%); 38% has a professional career of over 25 years (32,4% – 26-35 years; 5,9% – >36 years), while only 17,6% of the sample has been working in the school for less than 5 years (fig. 5).

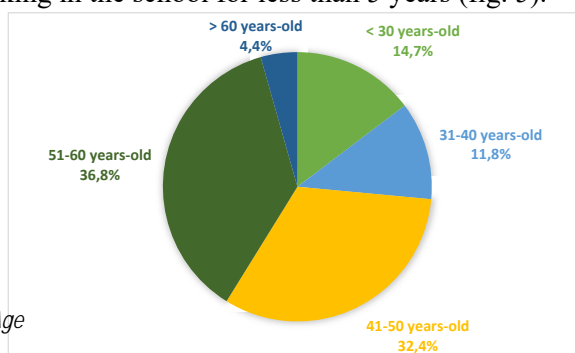


Fig. 4 – Sample Age

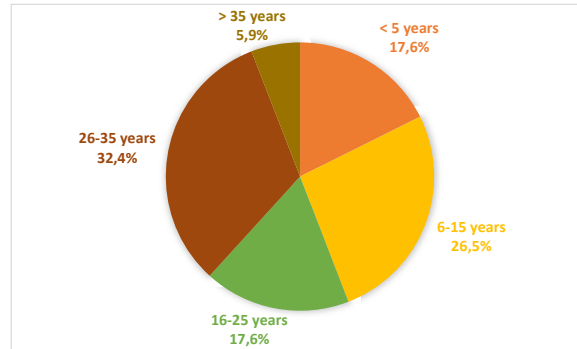


Fig. 5 – Sample school teaching experience

Curricular teachers share longer experience in terms of working years: 51% of them declare to have worked for more than 21 years.

Such data differs if we examine their working experience with students with Special Educational Needs (SEN): one third of the total sample (30,9%) has, in fact, less than 5 years of experience working with children with special educational needs in the classroom, while around 20% of them have been working with such students for more than twenty-five years (26-35 years: 19,1 - > 35 years 1,5%) (fig. 6).

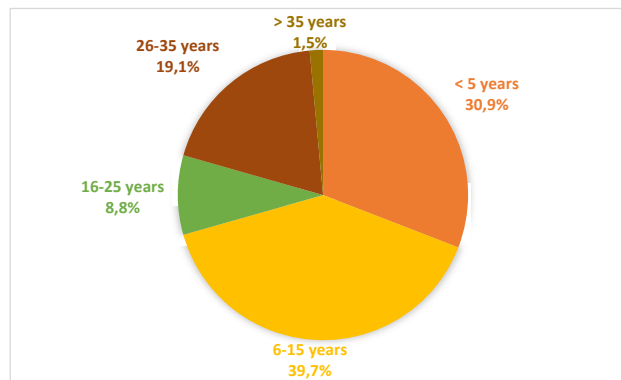


Fig. 6 – School teaching experience with students with SEN

This result, observed in the light of the research sample's profession, does not indicate any noticeable difference and therefore it would seem possible to state that, within the school context of the reference sample, there is no specific category of professionals with a longer teaching experience among children with SEN. In terms of professional competence at school, the picture that emerges is as follows: although the majority of participants have a proven and

long school experience, only a smaller number of them had the possibility to work with children with SEN for a long period of time.

To summarize, the most remarkable aspects of the survey sample are:

- all the participants are female professionals;
- most of them are curricular teachers (71%);
- curricular teachers have longer teaching experience than their support teacher colleagues and school educators.

5. Analysis of the results

The second part of the questionnaire, and a part of the questions during focus groups and interviews, aimed at investigating the educational needs perceived by teachers and educators working in the kindergartens involved in the project. The 97% of participants believe it's important to promote a timely early detection of difficulties in kindergartens (Fig. 7).

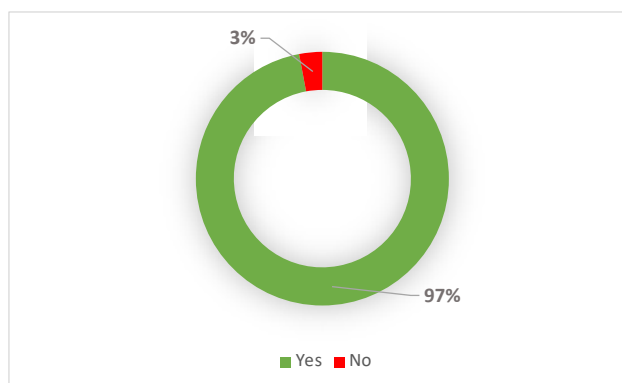


Fig. 7 - Is it important to promote timely early detection of difficulties in kindergartens?

This data is of utmost importance for the purpose of this research, since it indicates how the central theme of the project is strongly felt by the participating teachers, confirming the need to implement specific skills to support a good educational intuition through scientifically-grounded working tools.

In order to improve observation and detection abilities, the research team deemed it appropriate to investigate which educational issues teachers would like to be trained in. The requests that emerged are various and diversified, the following being the most outstanding (fig. 8):

- Child observation (26%);

- Special Educational Needs (15%);
- Family relationship (13%);
- Colleagues relationship (12%);
- Learning strategies (9%);
- Class management (7%);
- Effective communication (6%).

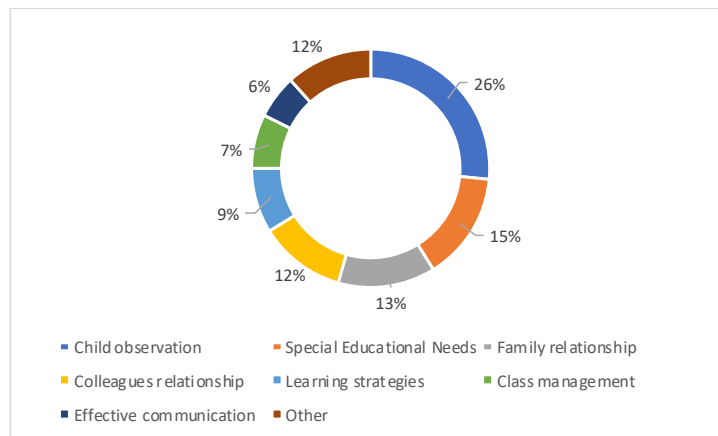


Fig. 8 - Training topic

Other training requests concern behavioral disorders (oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder), the management of a difficult class and the relationship with pupils in difficulty, aggressiveness and hyperactivity in children, disability, and developmental disorders. The ability to develop a correct observational attitude is perceived as an essential competence for those who work in the educational field, like in particular the importance of developing unconditional acceptance of the other person through a willingness to listen that is free from stereotypes, beliefs and biases, in an attempt to understand the child in his or her uniqueness and genuineness. The observation of processes and its dynamics may appear as a well-known topic, which has been widely analyzed, discussed, and investigated; however, often times there are no systematic or accurate detection protocols.

The duration of training courses is frequently variable and depends on the topic addressed. In this regard, most of the participants indicate the need to plan meetings lasting no longer than 3 hours, once a week or once every other week, with an overall average between 15 and 20 hours, in line with the majority of courses already promoted by their school or local authorities.

However, many teachers specify that the duration is not a limiting factor, because the motivation to participate is influenced by the interest in the educational subject.

Finally, according to the participants, trainers should preferably be professionals in the proposed topic (55-81%) or specialized school teachers (35-51%), a third of them indicating university teachers (24-35%) as an option (fig. 9).

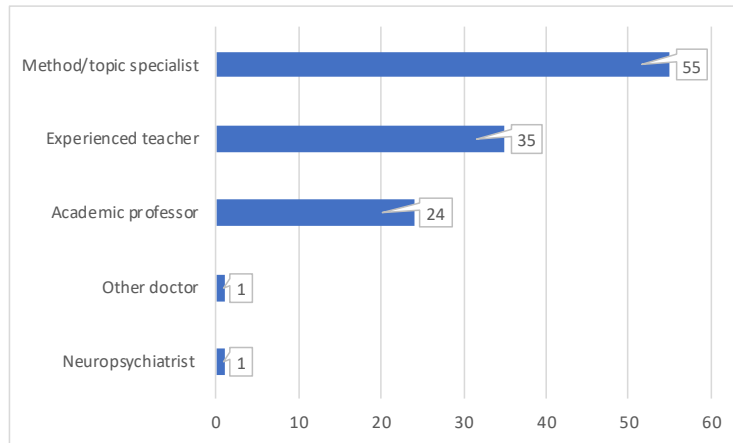


Fig 9 - Trainer profession

Through the questionnaire, the participants were asked to reflect on the training methods they preferred and considered most effective, in order to improve their expertise at early detection of difficulties at school (fig.10): 66% of the participants (n.45) expressed their preference for active and practical workshops, and 49% of the total (n.33) asked for presence training which would facilitate teamwork, cooperation and the sharing of good practices.

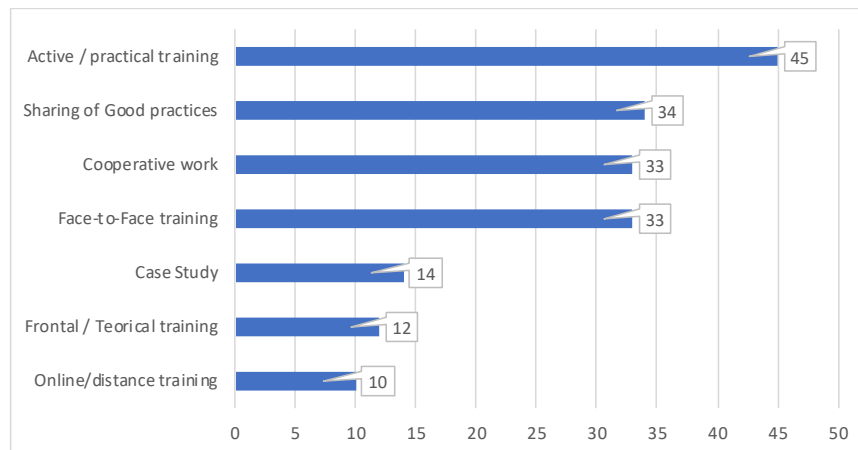


Fig 10 - Training methodology

Lecture-style/theoretical education, case studies and online courses are the least requested training modes, which however account for 15% each.

Qualitative survey tools (focus groups and semi-structured interviews) made it possible to collect further data on educational needs and possible models to improve training offers to teachers.

Many participants highlighted the need to keep the motivational aspect in the foreground, as it is considered the essential element to support specialization paths for teachers and their desire to detect difficulties in children at an early stage.

At the time this research was conducted, in-service training was not mandatory. Taking this premise into account, it is essential for each training course to be presented to teachers in an effective, engaging and challenging way, in order to motivate them to attend the course even though, and precisely because, it is not compulsory.

The members of the focus groups, who belonged to the two schools participating in the project, expressed stimulating ideas to improve the educational offers in the area. What emerged from the group discussion made it possible to outline important guidelines to plan future education. Depending on the needs of the schools, it would be appropriate to offer modular courses structured in workshops, which would allow participants to investigate the topic of early detection of difficulties and the development of educational and didactic strategies, on the basis of their needs, thus offering teachers an opportunity for monitoring, supervising and accompanying their students, exploring different observation tools and sharing a reflection on the warning signals in children aged 3-6 years.

In this regard, starting from the complexity detected inside the school environment, also due to the ever increasing presence of pupils with special educational needs, the qualitative data collected has shown the opportunity to reflect on the need to guarantee teachers the possibility of constant pedagogical supervision, guiding them through the most difficult cases and, more generally, in their daily work. The figure of a pedagogical consultant represents one of the possibilities for schools to cope with the various difficulties arising when managing pupils. This support can thus constitute a valid and impartial help for teachers, useful to define shared strategies and possible training courses, leading also to the identification of variables that, in the presence of particular educational needs, can make a difference in achieving quality of educational processes (Negri, 2014).

As the opinions shared with the researchers highlighted, **workshop mode** is certainly the one preferred by teachers. The research sample also hypothesized the possibility of involving, in the same workshops, different specialists belonging to the school environment and to the healthcare system, in particular

experts on the topics covered, on warning signals and on innovative observational and educational strategies. This would help teachers to learn about the experience of other people working and focusing on the growth of children, thus promoting a combined and integrated network approach.

Regarding the *training specific topics* express by the participants, teachers highlighted the following: i) metacognition in preschool children; ii) the key role of teamwork and communication between colleagues; iii) the child's developmental milestones and phases; iv) the key indicators of child difficulties and how to observe and detect them. Furthermore, it has been suggested that, for it to be more effective, *training should be addressed not only to teachers*, but it should also be designed for principals and auxiliary school personnel, as well as create special modules for curricular and special needs teachers. It could be useful to issue a certificate of attendance at the end of each training level proposed, although it should be important to define in detail methods and criteria to evaluate the actual impact of the course and its functional repercussions on each teacher's method.

As one participant in the focus group explains, "training must be promoted and funded by the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) in different ways: grants to self-governing schools and to school networks through participation in training courses on specific topics, allocation of training resources to CTIs (local centers for inclusion). The promotion of training actions should be the responsibility of those who fund and organize the courses, but I think a certain importance lies in conceiving training as a tool to promote and enhance the professionalism of teachers within each individual school" (participant 3, group 1-IC Giussano, IT).

In particular, the task of the school principal should be to identify educational needs and promote the participation of teachers in the courses. It is also true that, in some instances, the annual changes in the personnel of each institution, and in particular in the appointment of principals, do not always provide for the necessary consistency and depth of the various subjects addressed during the annual training courses.

Training can also be a tool to implement new school policies; indeed, "effective training actions and courses truly responding to previously detected training needs, do change the professional culture, allowing innovation and evolution of complex and delicate systems such as the school" (participant 2, group 2-IC Offanengo, IT)

The effectiveness of different educational offers should also be monitored and detected through the evaluation of participants and the impact on good institute practices. Some teachers suggest evaluating skills before and after the course, reporting the results of the courses and sharing those results within the school.

According to a school Headmaster, “the resistance that teachers often show towards training is largely due to previous unsatisfactory experiences; in most cases, training courses only focus on theoretical contents and do not fully meet their expectations. There is often a lack of examples of ‘good practices’, of experiences that have worked in specific but exportable cases, of solutions to particular cases. Therefore, being able to evaluate the training of teachers is especially important to direct the educational offer in a more effective way” (Headmaster 1).

While this is undoubtedly shareable, it is also true that the initial atmosphere in certain training activities generally addressed to adults, and more specifically to teachers, is of extreme resistance and prejudice against innovative proposals. Trainees are often biased with respect to the effectiveness of the different training courses and they do not understand that, sometimes, what makes a real difference in achieving results could derive from their very attitude and their desire to be trained.

Sometimes, in fact, it is not important to diversify educational topics and analyze individual cases from which to infer good practices, but it is desirable to conceive the course as an opportunity to discuss and exchange views, inducing participants to rethink about different theoretical contents and translating them into their daily work experience.

It is thus important for the trainees to ask themselves how it is possible to make use of the good practices learned on such occasions and share them with their colleagues. The participants in the experimentation also consider as extremely important the support of the institutes to the work and test groups that form in each unit, whose function is collecting the most effective experiences and transmitting them to the other teachers of the network, thus constituting true 'libraries of good practices', to which everyone can access on the basis of their students' needs. In this way, “discussion between teachers could be further encouraged, also through international exchange programs and educational research centers in collaboration with universities, with the task of training, supporting, counselling and evaluating the impact of training, in a perspective of continuous professional development” (Headmaster 2). At the basis of this idea, it is possible to recognize a concrete realization of the construct of the **community of practice** which, as Alessandrini claims, through an integrated and multifocal approach, makes it possible to consider different elements, dynamically interacting in a given professional reality such as the school (Alessandrini G. & Buccolo M., 2010):

- practices, implemented by qualified and motivated teachers;
- intentions, rules/regulations, repertoires, procedures, knowledge, (explicit/implicit) theories supporting the practices of the teachers in a given institution;

- communities of practices, as complex sets of individuals sharing cultures, life and learning histories, knowledge, traditions;
- interface communities with which one interacts in a given context, i.e. the different existing types of communities of practice (Wenger, 2006; Alessandrini & Buccolo, 2010, p.100).

The lack of economic and human resources, the social complexity and the educational emergencies, and the consequent educational needs, therefore, spur a reflection on the value of potential communities of practice in each school and they call for an understanding of the potential methods to be activated in order for those communities to be fully established.

6. Discussion and emerging dimensions

From what has been previously mentioned, it seems evident that teachers consider training as the foundation of a positive path towards the early detection of difficulties in children in kindergartens and, as such, they believe training should be promoted and created to meet the true educational needs of teachers and their network.

In an attempt to summarize the different stimuli from this research, it might be important to highlight some emerging dimensions which are a useful starting point for a reflection on a possible renewal of the training activities addressed to teachers working in kindergartens:

- 1 - The role of the teacher is shifting “from a merely executive role to professional role” (Altet, Charlier, Paquay and Perrenoud 2006); therefore, *teachers need continuous training* in order to be able to respond effectively to the increasingly diverse needs of their pupils.
- 2 - The analysis of needs cannot clearly be a phase unrelated to the whole process and sole responsibility of the research institutions in charge of its implementation. An ecologically grounded analysis of needs cannot in any way disregard the *involvement of trainees* and a shared mode in which teachers take on the role of co-readers of their own educational needs. Within this context, characterized by positive interdependence, the research institution shares its expertise on the methodology (design of a survey plan, development and validation of specific survey tools, elaboration of analysis systems and interpretation of collected data), while schools give appropriate indications pertaining to the needs of the context in which the training must take place. Methodological precision and ecological soundness, in terms of context sensitivity, are two necessary elements along the path of knowledge of educational requirements.
- 3 - It seems fairly established that a training model providing for an aseptic

articulation of meetings, based on the alternation of theoretical inputs and application activities, has now come to an end. Such models, even though often stimulating and skillfully coordinated, are not able to work on the real needs of teachers and convey an idea of technicality, often far from the expectations of individuals and organizations. The current orientation, often desired by the very participants in focus groups, has been the creation of a modular training system based on the interests and knowledge levels of participants, relying on the *learning by doing* principle, flexible in its strategies and, above all, significant at a systemic level, i.e. able to give pedagogically sustainable and realistically transferable indications on methods within the individual school realities, in order to detect the difficulties of students at an early stage.

- 4 - It is now of utmost importance the need, expressed by participants in focus groups, to *monitor the influence and the impact of teachers' training on the processes of children observation*. It is interesting to note how the awareness of the gap between what is learned in training and what is put into practice in a real context reveals possible issues in the training processes: on the one hand, being too distant from reality; on the other hand, being unable to become authentic promoters of a change. A unifying force should be established between the training classroom and the school classroom, in order to give birth to a mutual enrichment between theory and practice, research and field action, acquired skills and new educational needs.

At the present time of the publication of this article, the MOEC partners (as the rest of the world) have faced the very dramatic situation regarding the Covid-19 lockdown and restrictive measures. As a consequence of the massive infection of the population by the coronavirus, in Italy, Spain, France and Poland the Government decreed the suspension of the classes at all educational levels, and this included also every kind of teachers' training.

Before the confinement, the teacher training that is part of the Project was designed and partially delivered in presence. In order to carry on the project and its outcome, the Core team decided, through the national lockdowns, to deliver the training online, thanks to webinars and sharing of digital materials.

This action was an important example of how it's possible to reach teachers also thanks to distance learning, in order to keep the participants engaged and underline their professionalism and dedication to school, even in a struggle situation as it was and still is.

7. Conclusions

In view of the growing complexity in current society, the considerations of

this essay aim at analyzing a current issue of great ethical responsibility, such as the training of teachers. Its objective, therefore, is to promote in an increasingly structured way an articulated reflection on possible training practices, to meet the professionalism of teachers working in all levels of schools.

In this regard, quoting Morin (2000), it is possible to state that the developments of different disciplines have indeed contributed to a focus on the advantages of the division of labor, but at the same time they have generated potential drifts linked to “super specialization, compartmentation and distribution of knowledge”. Not only have they “produced knowledge and elucidation, but they have also generated ignorance and blindness, instead of correcting such developments, our teaching system obeys them. It teaches us, from primary school, to isolate objects (from their environment), to isolate disciplines (rather than acknowledging their solidarity), to separate problems, rather than connecting and integrating” (p. 7).

The ongoing debate on the training of teachers, particularly of special needs teachers, also prompted by the publication of recent decrees on inclusion⁴, strongly underlines the need to empower the main actors who, in different ways, work in schools, to outline the specific elements that must characterize the skills of special needs teachers.

This is necessary in order to avoid both a logic based on hyperspecialism and excessive medicalization against the promotion of a real inclusive approach, and a defeatist attitude of the school personnel, sometimes taking the form of alibis and rhetorical demands. Asking for the opinion of those who work in the field, at the same time allowing them to continuously rethink their personal and professional experience, becomes thus a priority in order to define the profile of authentic, qualified and thoughtful special needs teachers, who fully comply to the demands of their context.

References

- Altet M., Charlier E., Paquay L. & Perrenoud P. (2006). *Formare gli insegnanti professionisti. Quali strategie? Quali competenze?*. Roma: Armando.
- Amadini M., Bobbio A., Bondioli A., Musi E. (2018). *Itinerari di pedagogia dell'infanzia*. Brescia: Morcelliana.
- Bakken L., Brown N., Downing B., (2017). Early Childhood Education: The Long-Term Benefits. *Journal of research in Childhood Education*, 31(2): 255-269.
- Balduzzi L., Pironi T. a cura di, (2017). *L'osservazione al nido. Una lente a più dimensioni per educare lo sguardo*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.

⁴ See D. Lgs. n. 66/2017 *Norme per la promozione scolastica degli alunni con disabilità*.

- Barnett W.S., (2011). Effectiveness of Early Educational Intervention. *Science*, 333: 975-978.
- Bondioli A. (2002). La qualità dei servizi per l'infanzia: una co-costruzione di significati condivisi. *Cittadini in Crescita*, 3-4.
- Bondioli A. (2015). "Promuovere dall'interno": un'estensione dell'approccio del "valutare, riflettere, restituire". In Bondioli A., Savio D., a cura di: *La valutazione di contesto nei servizi per l'infanzia italiani*. Bergamo: Junior.
- Bondioli A. a cura di (2007). *L'osservazione in campo educativo*. Bergamo: Junior.
- Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, *Applying the Science of Child Development in Child Welfare Systems*, October 2016.
- Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, *From Best Practices to Breakthrough Impacts: A Science-Based Approach to Building a More Promising Future for Young Children and Families*, 2016 (retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu).
- Cozolino L. (2008). *Il cervello sociale. Neuroscienze delle relazioni umane*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina.
- d'Alonzo L., a cura di (2017). *La rilevazione precoce delle difficoltà. Una ricerca-azione su bambini da 0 a 6 anni*. Trento: Erickson.
- Damasio A. (2003). *Alla ricerca di Spinoza. Emozioni, senti-menti e cervello*. Milano: Adelphi.
- European Commission Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion, *Investing in Children. Spezzare il circolo vizioso dello svantaggio sociale*, Ceps 2014.
- European Commission, *Early Childhood Education and Care: Providing All our Children with the Best Start for the World of Tomorrow*, Communication COM (2011) 66, Brussels, 17.2.2011.
- European Commission, *Education and Training - Monitor 2016* (Relazione di monitoraggio del settore dell'istruzione e della formazione 2016-Italia).
- European Commission, *Justice and Consumers, Newsroom, Gender Equality*, Report 8.05.2018.
- European Commission, *Proposal for Key Principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care*, Report of the Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission, 2014.
- European Commission, *Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe*, 2016.
- European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe*, 2014.
- Eurydice - EACEA, *Educazione e cura della prima infanzia in Europa. Ridurre le disuguaglianze sociali e culturali*, 2009.
- Eurydice and Eurostat Report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union
- European Commission, *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*, Bruxelles 17.01.2018.
- Eurydice Background Report to the Education and Training Monitor, *Publications Office of the European Union*, Luxembourg 2017.

- Hur E., Jeon L., Buettner C.K., (2016). Preschool Teachers' Child-Centred Beliefs: Direct and Indirect Associations with Work Climate and Job-Related Wellbeing. *Child Youth Care Forum*, 45(3): 451-465.
- Lake A., Chan M. (2017). The Early Years: Silent Emergency or Unique Opportunity. *The Lancet*, 389. Doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(16)31389-7.
- Lake A., Chan M., (2015). Putting Science into Practice for Early Child Development. *The Lancet*, 385. Doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(14)61680-9.
- Lazzari, A. (2017). The current state of national ECEC quality frameworks, or equivalent strategic policy documents, governing ECEC quality in EU Member States. *NESET II ad hoc question*, (4).
- Maggiolini S., Zanfroni E. (2019). *Innovare al nido. La proposta pedagogica di Pulcini & Co.* Brescia: Morcelliana
- MIUR (2019). *I principali dati relativi agli alunni con disabilità.*
- OECD, *Engaging Young Children: Lessons from Research About Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*, Starting Strong. OECD Publishing, Paris 2018.
- OECD, *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*. OECD Publishing, Paris 2015.
- OECD, *Who Uses Childcare? Background Brief on Inequalities in the Use of Formal Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Among Very Young Children*. OECD Publishing, Paris 2016.
- Oliverio A. (2017). *Il cervello che impara. Neuropedagogia dall'infanzia alla vecchiaia*. Firenze: Giunti.
- Siegel D.J. (2009). *Mindfulness e cervello*. Milano: Cortina.
- Siegel D.J. (2015). *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*. New York: Guilford Publications.
- Vandenbroeck M., De Vos J., Fias W., Olsson L.M., Penn H., Wastell D., White S. (2017). *Constructions of Neuroscience in Early Childhood Education*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Vandenbroeck M., Lenaerts K., Beblavy M. (2018). *Benefits of Early Childhood Education and Care and the Conditions for Obtaining them*. European Expert Network on Economics and Education, Brussels.

Towards the fulfillment of the right to inclusive education for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities: framework for action

Antonio M. Amor*, María Fernández**, Miguel Á. Verdugo°, Alba Aza^, M. Isabel Calvo§

Abstract

Since the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was passed (2006), inclusive education evolved from a principle of education towards a right to be guaranteed for all students. Despite this, students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have not enjoyed this right on an equal foot with others, experiencing a stagnation in their inclusion over the last 15 years. Moreover, there is an important gap between the policies passed at national, regional, and local levels aimed at including these students, and the educational experiences that they are currently receiving within education systems. To address this mismatch and to provide educators with a framework for action that shortens what is current education of students with IDD and what should be, the purpose of this work is to present the conceptual and practical implications of the supports paradigm and the quality of life model, two frameworks that have now join together and that offer a systematic approach to address the access, participation, learning, and development of students with IDD to their fullest potential, the necessary goals of an inclusive and quality education.

Keywords: intellectual disability, developmental disability, supports paradigm, quality of life, inclusive education

First submission: 16/04/2021, accepted: 14/05/2021

Available online: 28/06/2021

* PhD, Institute for Community Inclusion (INICO). Department of Personality, Assessment, and Psychological Treatments. Faculty of Psychology. University of Salamanca. E-mail: aamor@usal.es.

** PhD, Institute for Community Inclusion (INICO). Department of Personality, Assessment, and Psychological Treatments. Faculty of Psychology. University of Salamanca. E-mail: mariafernandez@usal.es.

° Director of the Institute for Community Inclusion (INICO). Department of Personality, Assessment, and Psychological Treatments. Faculty of Psychology. University of Salamanca. E-mail: verdugo@usal.es.

^ PhD, Institute for Community Inclusion (INICO). Department of Personality, Assessment, and Psychological Treatments. Faculty of Psychology. University of Salamanca. Author for correspondence E-mail: azhernandez@usal.es.

§ PhD, Institute for Community Inclusion (INICO). Department of Didactics, Organization, and Research Methods. Faculty of Education. University of Salamanca. E-mail: isabelc@usal.es.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa11471

1. Introduction: Current needs regarding the education of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Most countries all around the world are concerned about the education they provide to their citizens, as a mean to keep developing their communities and strengthening their democracies by enhancing the participation of everybody since the early stages of their lifespan (Hernández-Sánchez and Ainscow, 2018). In this sense, a growing emphasis has been placed over the past years in the development of an equitable, quality, and inclusive education (IE) that welcomes all students, no matter their social or personal conditions (UNESCO, 2015). Although advances in IE are evident if we look into the published research (e.g., Amor *et al.*, 2019; Hagiwara *et al.*, 2019), the changes in legislation (e.g., Verdugo *et al.*, 2018), and, most important, in the data reflecting inclusion trends (e.g., Alcaraz-García and Arnaiz, 2020; Buchner *et al.*, 2020), IE has not reached all student groups equally.

One of the groups who is still especially vulnerable to the risk of both educational and social exclusion and, therefore, has not benefited from IE to the same extent than other learners, is the group of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). As an example illustrating this fact, in a recent research comparing the advances towards IE for students with special educational needs (SEN) across seven European countries in the last 15 years, it was found that, although clear steps could be witnessed, the percentage of students with IDD included in mainstream settings have not increased as much as for other students with SEN, and students with IDD still remain a key population within segregated schools (Buchner *et al.*, 2020). Different factors can be appointed to shed lights on this data. First, although many countries committed with the right to IE for students with IDD through the signature and ratification of the *United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNCRPD; United Nations, 2006), many of them still have two parallel education systems that generate the conditions for their systematic segregation (United Nations, 2016). In the European context, there is an important variability regarding this issue. For example, there are countries like Portugal, that took a sudden closure of almost all special schools in 2018 and committed with the supports arrangement for students with IDD in mainstream schools (Echeita *et al.*, 2020); and, at the opposite pole, there are countries like Spain, where education for these pupils still keeps swimming through porridge and legal changes occur on a slow and nonlinear fashion, with steps forward and backward depending on the political sign of governments (Amor *et al.*, 2018; Verdugo *et al.*, 2018). The need to update the knowledge and practices of education professionals towards support needs assessment and planning for students with IDD has also been consistently appointed by different authors as

a reason for the lack of inclusion of students with IDD (e.g., Sandoval *et al.*, 2019; Thompson *et al.*, 2018). Finally, a third factor that hinders the inclusion of these students is the need to better align the development of IE policies with research and practice knowledge, and a clearly defined strategy to gather data under a formative assessment that allows education systems to know what they are doing good or wrong to act consequently and update themselves to be more inclusive with learners with IDD (European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities [EASPD], 2020).

Two main lessons can be derived from what has been outlined above. First, the signature of documents like treaties and conventions does not immediately get translated into a real advance towards IE nor does it mean that the education experiences that are arranged and provided to students with IDD are beneficial. Second, and closely related with the former, there is an important gap between the assumption of IE in countries' education policy agendas and how IE is understood and delivered on a daily basis to students with IDD on the part of schools and educators, the ultimate responsables of translating policies into practice to include students with IDD. Therefore, there is the need to bridge the gap between the situation described regarding the education of students with IDD and what an equitable, quality, and IE should entail for these learners. Shortening the distance between «what is» and «what should be» requires: (a) To better understand the outcomes to achieve in students with IDD through IE (i.e., to have clear goals to pursue); and (b) to empower practitioners in their task of including students with IDD by offering them approaches aligned with IE (i.e., how to advance towards these goals). The purpose of this work is to contribute to fill this gap by shedding lights on these two aspects by highlighting what IE should entail for students with IDD in terms of outcomes to achieve and placement taking as a reference the *UNCRPD's* article 24 (United Nations, 2006), and to offer the conceptual and practical underpinnings of two parallel frameworks that have now join together and that offer a systematic approach to address IE as understood in the *UNCRPD*: The supports paradigm (Schalock *et al.*, 2010; Thompson *et al.*, 2009) and the quality of life model (QoL; Schalock and Verdugo, 2002).

2. Clarifying the «what should be»: What outcomes should inclusive education be aimed at and where should they be addressed?

Answering the «what should be» question requires this work to briefly focus on the advances towards the recognition of IE as a right. Over the last decades, there have been different documents that have addressed IE, making it evolve from a general principle guiding education towards a right to be recognized and

guaranteed for all students, and that is based on normalization, equity, and social justice (Azorín and Sandoval, 2019). Among these documents, they are worth stressing: (a) *The Warnock's Report* (1978), which was the first document ever to claim the need to leave behind diagnostic tags and move towards the consideration of students in terms of the extraordinary supports they might require, giving place to the current concept of SEN; (b) the *Jomtien Declaration on Education for All* (1990), aimed at meeting the basic learning needs of all students, universalizing access to education, and developing policies to address these two goals; (c) the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* (1994), which was focused on enhancing the education opportunities of students with SEN by highlighting the need to develop education systems regarding different level of support needs and to build integrative schools; (d) the *Dakar Declaration* (2000), a new edition of the Education for All, in which participant States set up a series of priorities to be achieved by 2015, like the need to protect and provide education to all children since early childhood, especially among the most vulnerable ones, and the need to cover the learning needs of youths and adults; (e) the *UNCRPD* (United Nations, 2006), which recognized the right to IE and stated the need to develop «inclusive education systems»; (f) the *48th International Education Conference* by UNESCO (2008) whose aims were to shed lights on the IE concept and to advance towards it; and (g) the *Incheon Declaration* (2015), the last edition of the World Education Forum on Education for All, focused to achieve a free, equitable, quality and IE by 2030.

Regarding the education of students with IDD, the most important milestone among the abovementioned is the UNCRPD (United Nations, 2006), given that it claimed IE as a right for all students, regardless of their social or personal conditions. The UNCRPD was passed in 2006 as the very first international treaty of the XXI century and the fastest negotiated in history. Moreover, the UNCRPD supposed a qualitative change in the way to address the rights of persons with disabilities, given that it is legally-binding, so signatories must accomplish changes in their legal system to cover the rights embodied in the document (Verdugo *et al.*, 2013). Looking at its structure, the UNCRPD included 50 articles, being the social and civil rights from articles 5 to 30, while the general principles (which are transversal to all the rights) are described in article 3.

The right to IE is described in the article 24, the longest of the UNCRPD. Regarding this right, the UNCRPD states that States Party must ensure an «inclusive education system» at all levels and lifelong learning for all students directed to: (a) The full development of human potential; (b) the development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents, creativity, physical, and mental abilities to their fullest potential; and (c) enabling persons with

disabilities to effectively participate in a free society. To achieve these elements, signatories are abided to ensure that: (a) Students with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability; (b) persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality, and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live; (c) reasonable accommodation of the person's requirements is provided; (d) persons with disabilities receive the supports they need in general education contexts to facilitate their effective education; and (e) effective personalized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion (United Nations, 2006).

However, as has been shown, signing documents like the UNCRPD (United Nations, 2006) does not mean that the education that is currently being provided to students with IDD enhances their IE-related outcomes. Thus, enabling education systems to advance in the inclusion of their learners with IDD requires to make explicit the goals or the outcomes to achieve in all their students and where to achieve these goals, so that education systems do not lose the sight of what IE entails. In this sense, from the article 24 of the UNCRPD emanate two key aspects regarding the IE of students with IDD that help the present authors to answer to the «what should be» question. First, IE needs to be provided in general education contexts, where all children establish relationships, learn, and interact (i.e., mainstream schools within the communities where children belong to). This does not mean that special schools have no role to play in IE nor does it mean that mainstream schools, as currently designed, are the perfect examples of inclusive settings. It means that: (a) Talking about inclusion requires educating all learners in general education contexts, and; (b) both, mainstream and special schools, need to reorganize themselves, open to community, and redefine their relationships to maximize the opportunities of including students with IDD (Huete *et al.*, 2019). In this sense, there are several experiences that show how special schools can redefine themselves as resource centers that help mainstream schools in their task of including diverse learners (e.g., Echeita *et al.*, 2020). The second point to answer the «what should be» is that, beyond access, learning, and participation – the classic goals of IE –, according to the article 24 of the UNCRPD, education systems must provide all students with the necessary opportunities and supports to achieve the development to their fullest potential. Only by doing so, education systems will truly make all students ready for a transition process beyond education that allow them to be included and contribute to their communities, something necessary to achieve full inclusion in democratic societies.

Until now, the present authors have shown the current needs regarding the education of students with IDD and have clarified the goals to achieve for students with IDD through IE and where to achieve them. However, advancing towards these goals makes it necessary to provide professionals with approaches that go beyond what they have been doing to include their learners. In this sense, in the following section, this work describes the conceptual and applied contributions that the supports paradigm (Schalock *et al.*, 2010; Thompson *et al.*, 2009) and the QoL model (Schalock and Verdugo, 2002) bring to education systems to help in the task of including students with IDD. These two approaches, based in decades of research and practice in the field of IDD, after 25 years of parallel trajectories have now join together and constitute a «Quality of Life Supports Paradigm» (Gómez *et al.*, 2021; Schalock *et al.*, 2021; Schalock *et al.*, in press; Verdugo *et al.*, in press) that provides a systematic approach to meet the rights of persons with IDD at all stages of their lifespan. However, for didactic purposes, these two approaches are presented first separately to help understand the implications of each one for educating students with IDD. Finally, a general orientation on how to align these two approaches with the goals of IE for planning purposes is also provided.

3. Paving the road towards inclusive education: The Supports Paradigm and the Quality of Life model

3.1. *The Supports Paradigm: Conceptual and applied implications*

Although research has shown that it is possible to include students with IDD in mainstream schools and that IE has benefits in different spheres for both students with IDD (e.g., Hehir *et al.*, 2016; Kurth and Mastergeorge, 2010; Shogren *et al.*, 2015) and their typically developing peers (Dell'Anna *et al.*, 2019; Szumski *et al.*, 2017), research and daily practice are two different elements. Research is characterized by implementing controlled and limited (in terms of time) pilot experiences with a small number of participants. However, in day-to-day practice, schools and their professionals have the duty to meet the evolving needs of their students, address curricular goals within pressing deadlines, and deal with a lack of resources. All these factors may be perceived as overwhelming by schools and, therefore, the task of including students with IDD can be seen as an added challenge rather than an opportunity of development and growth (Amor, 2019). Therefore, schools and professionals need clear frameworks for action that help in their task of including students with IDD; they need solutions, no more problems. In this sense, one approach that has gained importance to support professionals in their task to include

students with IDD is the supports paradigm (Schalock *et al.*, 2010; Thompson *et al.*, 2009). The supports paradigm means a way to go beyond the current practices aimed at arranging supports for students with IDD and it provides a renewed view of IDD and of students with IDD (e.g., Sánchez-Gómez *et al.*, 2020), practical tools (e.g., Thompson *et al.*, 2016), and a framework for action that makes it possible a holistic support needs assessment and planning aimed at achieving the goals of access, participation, learning, and development of students to their fullest potential.

From a conceptual point of view, the supports paradigm is embedded in a social-ecological approach and in a strengths-based perspective (Thompson *et al.*, 2009). Through a social-ecological lens, IDD is conceptualized as a mismatch between personal competencies and environmental demands, defined by the contexts of participation and age – and culturally – valued activities in which to participate in such contexts (Schalock *et al.*, 2010). This misfit creates support needs, defined by Thompson *et al.* (2009) as «a psychological construct referring to the pattern and intensity of supports necessary for a person to participate in activities linked with normative human functioning» (p. 135). The main characteristic of the supports paradigm is stressing the interaction «*person by environment*», therefore, every person has support needs given that everybody experiences mismatches in different situations and moments. The key is that the support needs of people with IDD are extraordinary, that is, extend beyond what most of typically functioning people need to participate in the same contexts and activities (Amor *et al.*, 2021). Applying this to education means understanding students with IDD as learners who experience mismatches between their personal competencies and the environmental demands posed by education contexts and activities (Sánchez-Gómez *et al.*, 2020), such as: (a) Access to and learning from the grade-level general education curriculum in the classroom; (b) social interactions and self-determination activities regarding different places of the school, like in the courtyard or when transitioning between classrooms; and (c) education activities linked to the community (e.g., visiting a museum). Hence, given that education contexts are not only limited to the classroom and that education activities cannot be reduced to teaching-learning ones, the supports paradigm asserts that students with IDD present global support needs that are not only related to the curriculum and that will influence their access, participation, learning, and development to their fullest potential (Amor *et al.*, 2021; Verdugo *et al.*, 2018). So then, what this approach brings new to education? In opposition to traditional education perspectives that understand students with IDD in terms of their deficits, the supports paradigm shifts the focus towards the current functioning of the students with IDD and their extraordinary support needs to access, participate, learn, and develop in the same contexts and activities than

their typically-developing peers. Moreover, the supports paradigm is based on a strengths-based perspective that assumes that students with IDD have not only extraordinary support needs but also strengths to identify and to build upon, and that students with IDD should be the causal agents over the supports they receive so that they take a proactive role in the definition of vital goals (including learning goals) used to determine their strengths and support needs (Thompson *et al.*, 2018).

Regarding the practical implications of the supports paradigm to help practitioners in the inclusion of students with IDD, the aforementioned conceptual characteristics are the foundations for its implementation. In this sense, the active role of students with IDD and their self-determined action in the definition of their vital goals, and the knowledge of their strengths and extraordinary support needs to participate in education contexts and activities, are the starting points for the implementation of personalized supports directed at meeting their needs, boosting their strengths, improving their functioning, and achieving personal outcomes aligned with their access, participation, learning, and development to their fullest potential within general education contexts (Amor *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, the critical aspect regarding the implementation of the supports paradigm is to provide the personalized supports that students with IDD require to fill the gap between their competencies and the environmental demands of education. Thus, beyond the foundations, to apply this paradigm, it is essential to determine the pattern and intensity of the extraordinary support needs of students with IDD to provide them with the personalized response they require. In this regard, the supports paradigm brings a resource to schools to assess the extraordinary support needs that students with IDD aged 5-16 years old have to access, participate, learn, and develop in general contexts and activities: *The Supports Intensity Scale-Children's version* (SIS-C; Thompson *et al.*, 2016). The SIS-C enables professionals to systematically address the pattern and intensity of the supports required by children with IDD to effectively participate in 61 activities of seven contexts that are relevant to achieve outcomes linked to the four goals of IE (see Table 1). Further, the tool not only allows to identify areas for which students have extraordinary support needs, it also makes it possible to identify a support needs profile to know in which area(s) the relative intensity of support needs for a given student is higher or lower, to plan consequently and better direct efforts. As a standardized resource, it also enables schools to compare the support needs of two different students with IDD, and the support needs of a given student with IDD with those of a group of students with IDD, to better allocate resources based on a comparative view of support needs (Arias *et al.*, 2020).

Table 1 – Supports Intensity Scale-Children's version domains, exemplary activities and inclusive education goals

SIS-C domain (Nr. Of activities)	Domain's exemplary activities	Inclusive education outcomes related to the domain
Home Living Activities (9)	Eating, using electronic devices	Development of students to their fullest potential
Community and Neighborhood Activities (8)	Using public services, shopping	Development of students to their fullest potential
School Participation Activities (9)	Following classroom and school rules, participating in activities in common school areas	Access and participation
School Learning Activities (9)	Learning, completing homework assignments	Access, participation, and learning
Health and Safety Activities (8)	Maintaining physical fitness, responding in emergency situations	Development of students to their fullest potential
Social Activities (9)	Making and keeping friends, maintaining conversation	Participation, development of students to their fullest potential
Advocacy Activities (9)	Making personal choices, making personal decisions	Development of students to their fullest potential

To end with the practical implications of the supports paradigm, based on the information provided by the SIS-C tool and within the social-ecological approach to education, the SIS-C task force has developed different «support needs assessment and planning strategies» directed to achieve the four goals of IE. Presenting in detail these strategies is out of the scope of this work, although the present authors offer in brief the key elements of these proposals. Interested readership can go to Walker *et al.* (2014) and Thompson *et al.* (2018) to learn more about the frameworks they propose. Walker *et al.* (2014) use a strategy called «*Support Needs Assessment and Problem-solving*» that focuses on redefining the way general education schools understand their students with IDD and prioritizing areas to work with students with IDD after applying the SIS-C and discussing its results. Thompson *et al.* (2018), for their part, develop the «*Systematic Supports Planning Process*», a comprehensive framework to support students with IDD to access to and learning from general education curriculum through the identification and planning of supports for access, instruction, and participation.

3.2. The Quality of Life Model: Conceptual and applied implications

Although necessary, the supports paradigm is not enough to offer full inclusion opportunities to students with IDD. There is a need to adopt

complementary approaches that allow to center the education focus on the whole development of the students, going beyond the view of education as academic achievement and focusing on the students' outcomes in the classroom, the school, and the community (Muntaner, 2013; Verdugo, 2009). Adopting a framework to understand personal outcomes of students with IDD is essential for schools to assess the extent to which they are contributing to their fullest development through the implementation of personalized supports. This issue is critical for the improvement of the inclusion process itself, given that it must be nourished by the ongoing collection of evidence (Azorín and Sandoval, 2019; Booth and Ainscow, 2011) on the students' outcomes as a key point to support processes of transformation regarding educational practices, cultures, and policies (EASPD, 2020; Pazez *et al.*, 2016; Sánchez-Gómez *et al.*, 2020).

This is precisely what contributes to IE the QoL model (Schalock and Verdugo, 2002). This model conceptualizes QoL as a state of personal wellbeing that incorporates objective and subjective elements, is influenced by personal and environmental factors and their interaction, has universal and cultural properties, and considers eight essential domains in students' lives: emotional wellbeing (EW), physical wellbeing (PW), material wellbeing (MW), personal development (PD), self-determination (SD), social inclusion (SI), interpersonal relations (IR), and rights (RI). Bringing a QoL framework to education implies adopting a whole student-centered approach focused on the core domains that make up the students' lives and from which to understand their aspirations and needs as a starting point to define programs and offer supports aimed at enhancing outcomes regarding these domains (Muntaner, 2013; Verdugo, 2009).

Beyond this conceptual view of education, the model offers a measurement framework of personal outcomes consistently validated by research (Schalock *et al.*, 2016). Thus, each domain is operationalized through core indicators that refer to specific conditions, behaviors, and perceptions of each domain and that are observable and measurable. The indicators, in turn, are developed through items, which allow measuring personal outcomes, understood as the aspirations and needs of the person in the core indicators. In addition to being observable and measurable, the indicators are sensitive to the goals established in the articles of the UNCRPD (Gómez *et al.*, 2020). Specifically regarding article 24, different authors (Sánchez-Gómez *et al.*, 2020; Turnbull *et al.*, 2003) have aligned the goals of IE with the QoL domains (through their core indicators): (a) Access is related to RI; (b) participation to SI and IR; (c) learning to PD and SD; and (d) maximum development to EW, PW, MW, SD, and PD. Moreover, EW, PW, and PD are foundational skills relevant to train students ready for transition purposes (Morningstar *et al.*, 2017; Yurrebaso *et al.*, 2020). Based on

the concreteness offered by the model (i.e., translation of conceptual domains into measurable aspirations and needs) several QoL assessment instruments have been developed that serve the purpose of measuring personal outcomes to support decision making based on the evidence gathered of such results.

Table 2 – Quality of life measurement instruments

Tool (authors)	Target group	Educational stage	Assessment approach (self-report or proxy-report)	QoL domains and items
<i>CVI-CVIP: Quality of life assessment questionnaire in childhood</i> (Sabeh et al., 2009)	Children with and without SEN	Primary education (children aged 8-11 years)	Self-report and proxy-report	Self-report: 53 items, EW, IR, PD, PW, and MW domains Proxy-report: 64 items, same domains
<i>CCVA: Questionnaire for assessing quality of life in adolescent students</i> (Gómez-Vela and Verdugo, 2009)	Adolescents with and without SEN	Secondary education (adolescents between 12 and 18 years)	Report of others	56 items, EW, SO, IR, PD, PW, SD, and MW
<i>KidsLife Scale</i> (Gómez et al., 2016)	Children and adolescents with IDD	From elementary education to transition to adulthood (4-21 years)	Report of others	96 items, 12 by each one of the eight QoL domains
<i>KidsLife Scale-Down</i> (Gómez et al., 2017)	Children and adolescents with Down's syndrome	From elementary education to transition to adulthood (4-21 years)	Report of others	96 items, 12 by each one of the eight QoL domains
<i>KidsLife Scale-ASD</i> (Gómez et al., 2018)	Children and adolescents with ASD and intellectual disability	From elementary education to transition to adulthood (4-21 years)	Report of others	96 items, 12 by each one of the eight QoL domains

Note. SEN = Special Educational Needs; IDD = Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities; ASD = Autism Spectrum Disorders; EW = Emotional wellbeing; PW = Physical wellbeing; MW = Material wellbeing; PD = Personal development; SD = Self-determination; SI = Social inclusion; IR = Interpersonal relations

How to gather and use evidence on personal outcomes to support decision-making in education from the QoL model? The last characteristic that helps to understand the applied implications of QoL model is that it is based on a systems perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The ecology of human development assumes that persons live in a complex social system made up of

three levels (i.e., microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem) that encompass the necessary areas for persons to live. The microsystem refers to the immediate context in which the person lives (e.g., household or classmates). The mesosystem includes everything that directly affects the microsystem (e.g., communities or schools). The last level, the macrosystem, refers to the broader cultural patterns, socio-political trends, and economic patterns. The procedure to gather evidence always occurs at individual level, through the assessment of personal outcomes using QoL assessment instruments directly with the students with IDD. The evidence gathered, however, can be used at microsystem, through disaggregated data (i.e., the data obtained from a single person), or at meso- and macrosystem using aggregated data. Regarding the use of evidence on personal outcomes at microsystem, information mainly serves for two purposes: (a) to identify current needs to define programs; and (b) after conducting a pre- and post-assessment, to assess the degree of effectivity of the supports implemented (i.e., to see if the student's outcomes have improved in the domains related to the goals of access, participation, learning, and development). At mesosystem level, the use of aggregated data (e.g., the QoL scores obtained by all the students with IDD of a given school) can be used to see the general impact that school's current cultures, policies, and practices have in their students with IDD regarding relevant domains related to the four goals of IE to act consequently and update these three key elements in a school's life. At macrosystem level, the aggregated data of a given region or country makes it possible to gather general information about personal outcomes of social actions and decision-making concerning the development, implementation, monitoring, and assessment of public policy (Amor and Verdugo, 2018).

3.3. *A systematic approach to supports planning for including students with IDD*

Now it is time to put the pieces of the puzzle together. The last point to address is how to integrate the supports paradigm (Schalock *et al.*, 2010; Thompson *et al.*, 2009) and the QoL model (Schalock and Verdugo, 2002) to offer professionals a systematic support needs assessment and planning framework oriented towards the access, participation, learning, and development of students with IDD to their fullest potential. In this sense, it is essential to adopt a logic model that allows the identification of *input*, *process*, and *outcomes* variables. Figure 1 offers such framework, considering the rights, supports and QoL approaches from a horizontal alignment in terms of *input* variables (i.e., rights, supports, and QoL), *processes* (supports), and *outcomes* (QoL).

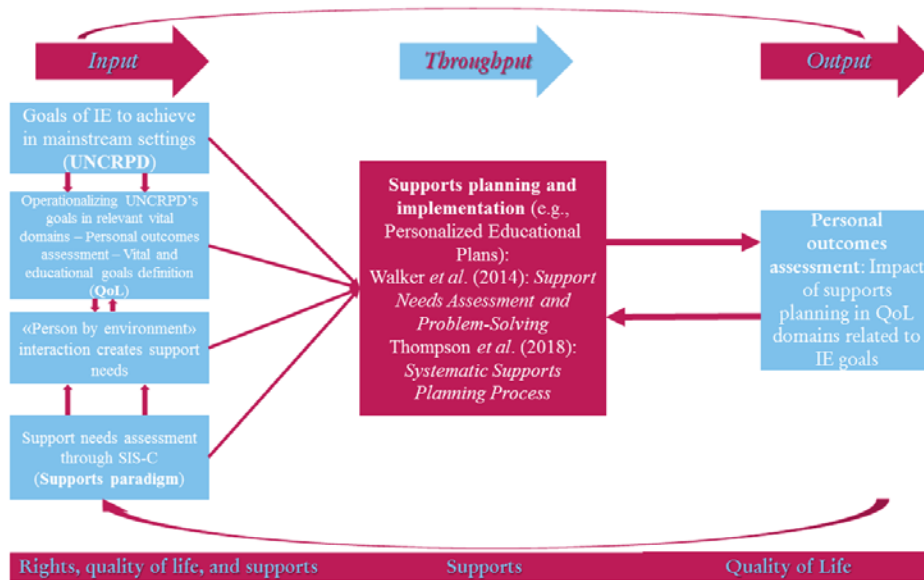


Figure 1 - Alignment between UNCRPD, Supports Paradigm, and QoL model

Within a logic framework, the *input* refers to all the elements that are provided to the framework since the beginning. In this sense, as observed in Figure 1, there is, on the one hand, the UNCRPD (United Nations, 2006), which contributes to the model the goals of access, participation, learning, and maximum development to be achieved with a given student with IDD within general education contexts. For its part, QoL, given its sensitivity to these four IE objectives, makes these goals operative in contexts relevant to the student's life in terms of vital needs and aspirations. The knowledge of the student's aspirations and needs through the assessment of personal outcomes with QoL instruments must be the starting point to define vital and educational goals that, within general education contexts, are directed at achieving personal outcomes in the QoL domains linked to these four IE objectives. Precisely, it is this definition of goals that will introduce environmental demands to the model (i.e., specific contexts and activities to address in the achievement of said goals) that, by interacting with the competencies of the student with IDD, will generate support needs, whose pattern and intensity need to be determined through instruments such as the SIS-C. All this information on the *input* variables must be synthesized as a *process* variable (which mobilizes and transforms the *input*) by means of adequate supports planning strategies. To this end, the strategies proposed by Walker *et al.* (2014) and Thompson *et al.* (2018) offer adequate examples of how to build comprehensive personalized educational plans that

allow the provision of personalized supports within general education contexts to advance the goals of access, participation, learning, and maximum development. Finally, as *outcomes*, it will be necessary to reassess and collect evidence on whether there has been an effective improvement in the satisfaction of aspirations and the coverage of the needs of the students with IDD. If outcomes are improved for that student with IDD, it is indicative that it has been possible to improve his/her participation in the vital domains relevant for his/her inclusion. If, on the contrary, there has been no improvement, it will be necessary to start the process again. Since IE has no end, the process presented here require ongoing feedback and constant review to adjust to the needs and aspirations of students.

4. Conclusions

In the present study, it has been highlighted that progress towards IE is not being the same for all students, being necessary to create the conditions that make it possible to improve inclusion opportunities for students with IDD. To do this, this work has clearly highlighted the goals to be achieved through IE and the context from which to approach them. Subsequently, two interdependent frameworks for action have been offered to direct the efforts of education to promote access, participation, learning, and development of students with IDD to their fullest development: The supports paradigm (Schalock *et al.*, 2010; Thompson *et al.*, 2009) and the QoL model (Schalock and Verdugo, 2002). Presenting models such as those exposed here serve to empower and contribute to the professional development of educators who want to work towards the inclusion of their students. However, educators and schools need to be warned that adopting these approaches only makes sense if the school itself explicitly recognizes the need to improve its response to diversity. Therefore, before undertaking the adoption of the approaches presented here, it is recommended that the schools adopt shared journeys towards questioning their own cultures, policies, and practices in order to identify their barriers to learning and participation, and seek solutions to the problems that, collaboratively, have identified. If done so, then the approaches presented in this study will be seen as an opportunity to address the needs of improving the school to meet the needs of their students with IDD; otherwise, they will be seen as an additional threat to run from.

References

- Alcaraz-García S., Arnaiz P. (2020). La escolarización del alumnado con necesidades educativas especiales en España: un estudio longitudinal. *Revista Colombiana de Educación*, 78: 299-320. DOI: 10.17227/rce.num78-10357.
- Amor A.M. (2019). *Bringing the Supports Paradigm to the Spanish Educational System for Support Needs Assessment and Planning with Students with Intellectual Disability*. Text available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337859025 Bringing the supports paradigm to the Spanish educational system for support needs assessment and planning with students with intellectual disability](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337859025_Bringing_the_supports_paradigm_to_the_Spanish_educational_system_for_support_needs_assessment_and_planning_with_students_with_intellectual_disability) 10th February 2020.
- Amor A.M., Fernández M., Verdugo M.A., Aza A., Schalock R. L. (2020). Shaping the faces of the prism: Rights, supports, and quality of life for enhancing inclusive education opportunities in students with intellectual disability. In Glodkowska, J. (ed.). *Inclusive Education: Unity in Diversity*. Warsaw: Akademia Pedagogiki Specjalnej.
- Amor A.M., Hagiwara ., Shogren K.A., Thompson J.R., Verdugo M.A., Burke K.M., Aguayo V. (2019). International perspectives and trends in research on inclusive education: A systematic review. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23: 1277-1295. DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2018.1445304.
- Amor A.M., Verdugo M.A. (2018). Quality of life and its role for guiding practices in the social and educational services from a systems perspective. *Człowiek-Niepełnosprawność-Społeczeństwo*, 41: 15-27. doi:10.5604/01.3001.0012.7817.
- Amor A.M., Verdugo M.A., Arias B., Fernández M., Aza A. (2021). Examining the suitability of a List of Indicators describing age-related typical support needs. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18: 764. DOI: 10.3390/ijerph18020764.
- Amor A.M., Verdugo M.A., Calvo M.I., Navas P., Aguayo V. (2018). Psychoeducational assessment of students with intellectual disability: Professional-action framework analysis. *Psicothema*, 30: 39-45. DOI: 10.7334/psicothema.2017.175.
- Arias V.B., Amor A.M., Verdugo M.A., Fernández M., Arias B., Aza A. (2020). Toward a better “person-environment fit” through items calibration of the SIS-C. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17: 3471. DOI: 10.3390/ijerph17103471.
- Azorín C.M., Sandoval M. (2019). Apoyos para avanzar hacia una educación más inclusiva en los centros escolares: análisis de guías para la acción. *Sigo Cero*, 50: 7-27. DOI: 10.14201/scero2019503727.
- Bronfenbrenner U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Booth T. and Ainscow M. (2011). *Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools*. Bristol: CSIE.
- Buchner T., Shelving M., Donovan M.A., Gercke M., Goll H., Siska J., Janyskova K., Smogorzewska J., Szumski G., Vlachou A., Demo H., Feyerer E., Corby D. (2020). Same progress for all? Inclusive education, the United Nations Convention on the

- Rights of Persons with Disabilities and students with intellectual disability in European Countries. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1111/jppi.12368.
- Dell'Anna S., Pellegrini M., Ianes D. (2019). Experiences and learning outcomes of students without special educational needs in inclusive settings: A systematic review. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2019.1592248.
- EASPD (2020). *Inclusive Education: The Way Forward. IE+ Policy Recommendations*. Text available at https://www.easpd.eu/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/Projects/IE/policy_recommendations_final1.pdf 10th February 2020.
- Echeita G., Simón C., Muñoz Y., Martín E., Palomo R. and Echeita R. (2020). *El Papel de los Centros de Educación Especial en el Proceso hacia Sistemas Educativos más Inclusivos*. Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional.
- Gómez L.E., Alcedo M.A., Verdugo M.A., Arias B., Fontanil Y., Arias V.B., Monsalve A. and Morán L. (2016). *Escala KidsLife: Evaluación de la Calidad de Vida de Niños y Adolescentes con Discapacidad Intelectual*. Salamanca: Publicaciones INICO.
- Gómez L.E., Monsalve A., Morán L., Alcedo M.A., Lombardi M., Schalock R.L. (2020). Measurable indicators of CRPD for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities within the quality of life framework. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17: 5123. DOI: 10.3390/ijerph17145123.
- Gómez L.E., Morán L., Alcedo M.A., Verdugo M.A., Arias V.B., Fontanil Y. and Monsalve A. (2018). *Escala KidsLife-TEA: Evaluación de la Calidad de Vida de Niños y Adolescentes con Trastorno del Espectro del Autismo y Discapacidad Intelectual*. Salamanca: Publicaciones INICO.
- Gómez L.E., Schalock R.L., Verdugo M.A. (2021). A new paradigm in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities: Characteristics and evaluation. *Psicothema*, 33: 28-35. DOI: 10.7334/psicothema2020.385.
- Gómez L.E., Verdugo M.A., Rodríguez M.M., Arias V.B., Morán L., Arias B., Alcedo M.A., Monsalve A. and Fontanil Y. (2017). *Escala KidsLife-Down: Evaluación de la Calidad de Vida de Niños y Adolescentes con Síndrome de Down*. Salamanca: Publicaciones INICO.
- Gómez-Vela M. and Verdugo M.A. (2009). *CCVA: Cuestionario de Evaluación de la Calidad de Vida en Alumnos Adolescentes*. Madrid: CEPE.
- Hagiwara M., Amor A.M., Shogren K.A., Thompson J.R., Verdugo M.A., Burke K.M., Uyanik H., Aguayo V. (2019). International trends in inclusive education intervention research: A literature review. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 54: 3-17.
- Hehir T., Grindal T., Freeman B., Lamoreau R., Borquaye Y. and Burke S. (2016). *Summary of the Evidence on Inclusive Education*. Text available at https://alana.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/A_Summary_of_the_evidence_on_inclusive_education.pdf 10th February 2020.

- Hernández-Sánchez A.M., Ainscow M. (2018). Equidad e inclusión: retos y progresos de la escuela del siglo XXI. *Retos*, XXI(2): 13-22. DOI: 10.33412/retoxxi.v2.1.2056.
- Huete A., Otaola M.P., Manso C. (2019). Inclusiva sí, especial también: ¿Revolución o resistencia? El ciberdebate sobre el cierre de los centros de educación especial en España. *Siglo Cero*, 50: 75-98. DOI: 10.14201/scero20195047598.
- Kurth J.A., Mastergeorge A.M. (2010). Academic and cognitive profiles of students with autism: Implications for classroom practice and placement. *International Journal of Special Education*, 25: 8-14.
- Morningstar M.E., Lombardi A., Fowler C.H., Test D.W. (2017). A college and career readiness framework for secondary students with disabilities. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 40: 79-91. DOI: 10.1177/2165143415589926.
- Muntaner J.J. (2013). Calidad de vida en la escuela inclusiva. *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación*, 63: 35-49. DOI: 10.35362/rie630421.
- Pazey B., Schalock R.L., Schaller J., Burkett J. (2016). Incorporating quality of life concepts into educational reform: Creating real opportunities for students with disabilities in the 21st century. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 27: 96-105. DOI: 10.1177/1044207315604364.
- Sabeh E.N., Verdugo M.A., Prieto G. and Contini E.N. (2009). *CVI-CVIP: Cuestionario de la evaluación de la Calidad de Vida en la Infancia*. CEPE: Madrid.
- Sandoval M., Simón C., Echeita G. (2019). A critical review of education support practices in Spain. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 34: 441-454. DOI: 10.1080/08856257.2018.1533094.
- Sánchez-Gómez V., López M., Amor A.M., Verdugo M.A. (2020). Apoyos para la calidad de vida de escolares con y sin discapacidad: revisión de literatura. *Revista Internacional de Educación para la Justicia Social*, 9: 327-349. DOI: 10.15366/riejs2020.9.2.016.
- Schalock R.L., Borthwick-Duffy S.A., Bradley V.J., Buntinx W.H.E., Coulter D.L., Craig E.M., Gomez S.C., Lachapelle Y., Luckasson R., Reeve A., Shogren K.A., Snell M.E., Spreat S., Tassé M.J., Thompson J.R., Verdugo M.A., Wehmeyer M. L. and Yeager M.H. (2010). *Intellectual Disability: Definition, Classification, and Systems of Supports* (11th ed.). Washington, DC: American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.
- Schalock R.L., Luckasson R. and Tassé M.J. (2021). *Intellectual Disability: Definition, Diagnosis, Classification, and Systems of Supports* (12th ed.). Washington, DC: American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.
- Schalock R.L. and Verdugo M.A. (2002). *Handbook on Quality of Life for Human Service Practitioners*. Washington, DC: American Association on Mental Retardation.
- Schalock R.L., Verdugo M.A., Gómez L.E. (in press). The Quality of Life Supports Paradigm: Its description and application in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*.

- Schalock R.L., Verdugo M.A., Gómez L.E., Reinders H.S. (2016). Moving us towards a theory of individual quality of life. *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 121: 1-12. DOI: 10.1352/1944-7558-121.1.1.
- Shogren K.A., Gross J.M.S., Forber-Pratt A.J., Francis G.L., Satter A.L., Blue-Banning M., Hill C. (2015). The perspectives of students with and without disabilities on inclusive schools. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 40: 243-260. DOI: 10.1177/1540796915583493.
- Szumski G., Smogorzewska J., Karwowski M. (2017). Academic achievement of students without special educational needs in inclusive classrooms: A meta-analysis. *Educational Research Review*, 21: 33-54. DOI: 10.1016/j.edurev.2017.02.004.
- Thompson J.R., Bradley V.J., Buntinx W.H.E., Schalock R.L., Shogren K.A., Snell M.E., Wehmeyer M.L., Borthwick-Duffy S., Coulter D.L., Craig E.P.M., Gomez S.C., Lachapelle Y., Luckasson R., Reeve A., Spreat S., Tassé M.J., Verdugo M.A., Yeager M.H. (2009). Conceptualizing supports and the support needs of people with intellectual disability. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 47: 135-146. DOI: 10.1352/1934-9556-47.2.135.
- Thompson J.R., Walker V.L., Shogren K.A., Wehmeyer M.L. (2018). Expanding inclusive educational opportunities for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities through personalized supports. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 56: 396-411. DOI: 10.1352/1934-9556.56.6.396.
- Thompson J.R., Wehmeyer M.L., Hughes C., Shogren K.A., Seo H., Little T.D., Schalock R.L., Realon R.E., Copeland S.R., Patton J.R., Polloway E.A., Shelden D., Tanis S. and Tassé M.J. (2016). *Supports Intensity Scale-Children's Version. User's Manual*. Washington, DC: American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.
- Turnbull H.R., Turnbull A., Wehmeyer M.L., Park J. (2003). A quality of life framework for special education. *Remedial and Special Education*, 24: 67-74. DOI: 10.1177/07419325030240020201.
- United Nations (2006). *United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Text available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html> 10th February 2020.
- United Nations (2016). *General Comment No 4. Article 24: Right to inclusive education*. Text available at https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD/C/GC/4&Lang=en 10th February 2020.
- UNESCO (1990). *The World Declaration on Education for All*. New York: UNESCO.
- UNESCO (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO (2000). *The Dakar Framework for Action*. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO (2008). *Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future*. Paris: UNESCO.

- UNESCO (2015). *Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action Towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Verdugo M.A. (2009). El cambio educativo desde una perspectiva de calidad de vida. *Revista de Educación*, 349: 23-43.
- Verdugo M.A., Amor A.M., Fernández M., Navas P., Calvo M.I. (2018). La regulación de la inclusión educativa del alumnado con discapacidad intelectual: una reforma pendiente. *Siglo Cero*, 49: 27-58. DOI: 10.14201/scero20184922758.
- Verdugo M.A., Gómez L.E., Navas P. (2013). Discapacidad e inclusión: derechos, apoyos y calidad de vida. In: Verdugo M.A. and Schalock R.L. (eds.). *Discapacidad e Inclusión. Manual para la Docencia*. Salamanca: Amarú.
- Verdugo M.A., Schalock R. L., Gómez L.E. (in press). El modelo de calidad de vida y apoyos: la unión tras veinticinco años de caminos paralelos. *Siglo Cero*.
- Walker V.L., DeSpain S.N., Thompson J.R., Hughes C. (2014). Assessment and planning in K-12 schools: A social-ecological approach. *Inclusion*, 2: 125-139. DOI: 10.1352/2326-6988-2.2.125.
- Warnock M. (1978). *Meeting Special Educational Needs: A Brief Guide by Mrs. Mary Warnock to the Report of the Committee of Enquiry into [the] Education of Handicapped Children [and] Scottish Education Department [and] Welsh Office*. London: HMSO.
- Yurrebaso G., Martínez-Rueda N., Galarreta J. (2020). Marco de referencia para orientar los programas educativos dirigidos a la transición a la vida adulta de jóvenes con discapacidad intelectual y del desarrollo: una revisión de la literatura. *Siglo Cero*, 51: 7-30. DOI: 0.14201/scero2020511730.

Getting up to SpEED: Special Education Embodied Design for Sensorially Equitable Inclusion

*Sofia Tancredi**, *Rachel Chen***, *Christina Krause****, *Dor Abrahamson*****, *Filippo Gomez Paloma******

Abstract

We present the implications of a novel approach to design-based research, Special Education Embodied Design (SpEED), for inclusive education. SpEED is a new way of thinking about how Special Education students can learn through whole-body participation (Tancredi *et al.*, in press). The goal of SpEED is to update our thinking about special education and inclusion based on the latest developments in cognitive science. We illustrate the utility of embodied design to teaching and research on issues affecting learners in Special Education through examples centering different Special Education populations, including Deaf learners, learners on the autism spectrum, and sensory-seeking learners. Each project focuses on deepening the learning opportunities we offer students by using learners' existing embodied resources. We conclude with a commentary on considerations for implementing SpEED within the Italian educational system.

Keywords: embodied cognition, design, special education, inclusion, accessibility

First submission: 01/05/2021, accepted: 19/05/2021

Available online: 28/06/2021

* PhD student in the Joint Doctoral Program in Special Education at University of California Berkeley and San Francisco State University, California, United States. E-mail: sofiatancredi@berkeley.edu.

** PhD candidate in the Joint Doctoral Program in Special Education at University of California Berkeley and San Francisco State University, California, United States, and Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. E-mail: rachel.chen@berkeley.edu.

*** Postdoctoral Marie Skłodowska Curie fellow at University of California Berkeley, United States and University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany. E-mail: christina.krause@berkeley.edu.

**** Professor at University of California Berkeley, United States. E-mail: dor@berkeley.edu.

***** Full Professor of Teaching and Special Education, University of Macerata, Italy. E-mail: filippo.gomezpaloma@unimc.it.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa11818

1. Introduction

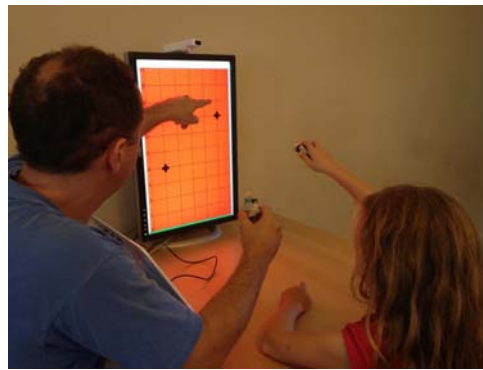
The separation of mind and body in Western scholarship tracing back to Descartes has long implied a separation of mind and body in education. In this view, a math teacher must focus on the mind, and a sports teacher on the body. Recent developments in cognitive science, however, challenge this neat divide. Embodied models of cognition (Newen *et al.*, 2018) establish the body as *participating in* the activity of the mind. Rather than just manipulating abstract symbols in the head, thinking happens with and through learners' bodies and objects in the world. Perception and action unfold together, and cognitive structures emerge through repeated patterns supporting perceptually-guided action (Varela *et al.*, 1991). Growing evidence supports such embodied accounts of cognitive activity (Fincher-Kiefer, 2019).

This emerging perspective on the mind in turn affects how teaching and learning are conceptualized; the body becomes a central participant in learning even in disciplines usually considered abstract, such as mathematics. Embodied views of cognition have already begun to influence education, from literacy (Glenberg *et al.*, 2004) to science (Scherr *et al.*, 2013). In mathematics, they have inspired a range of innovative educational approaches and designs, from novel technologies (e.g., Nemirovsky *et al.*, 1998; Ottmar *et al.*, 2015; Sinclair and Heyd-Metzuyanim, 2014) to whole-body collaborative activities (Kelton and Ma, 2018, Vogelstein *et al.*, 2019).

Embodied design is a design framework that aims to crystalize the implications of embodied cognition for teaching and learning, with an emphasis on the field of mathematics (Abrahamson *et al.*, 2020; Abrahamson, 2009, 2014). Embodied designs create the conditions for learners to learn to move in new ways that ground the concepts they are intended to learn. Embodied design starts from what learners can already do and perceive and sets things up so that learners can explore target concepts using these resources. Once students have learned to move in a new way, disciplinary forms like numbers and measurement are brought in to serve the students as useful tools that help them control, evaluate, and explain what they are doing. A classic example of embodied design is the Mathematics Imagery Trainer for Proportion (MIT-P) (Abrahamson and Trninic, 2015), a digital interface for math instruction. The learner holds two sensors that manipulate the heights of dots on a screen in front of them (Fig. 1). The screen turns green when the heights of the two dots are in a secret ratio with each other: here, when the left dot is half the height of the right dot. Through this activity, the student learns to move in a new way that keeps the screen green, such that the gap between her hands gets larger as she moves them up the screen. This design shows how learners' capacity to learn new movement patterns can become the basis for learning mathematical

concepts like proportional reasoning. Embodied design is the practical arm of embodied models of cognition, such as *enactivism*, that is, the philosophical theory that all thinking is embodied doing (Hutto *et al.*, 2015). We will revisit this example shortly from the perspective of inclusive design for learners with different sensory experiences.

Fig. 1 - The Mathematics Imagery Trainer for Proportion



1.1. An Embodied View of Accessibility

An embodied perspective doesn't just inspire new ways of approaching educational design; it also changes how we define and design for accessibility. Accessibility is often defined as allowing full and equitable participation in activity. In educational settings, accessibility is often thought of as presenting information in an alternate format. For example, this could look like providing blind students with auditory descriptions of visual images, or Deaf students with sign-language interpreters at a spoken lecture. With the old view of cognition, such experiences might be considered equivalent, that is, the plausible assumption would be that "at the end of the day, all students are actually learning the same math, regardless of *how* they learn it." However, from an enactivist point of view, it becomes clear that because diverse learners' bodily engagements with these different educational resources differ dramatically, their respective engagements engender different qualities of learning. Moreover, embodied views of disability can help highlight learners' existing *capabilities*, as well as barriers imposed on them through instructional environments and practices (de Freitas and Sinclair, 2014; Lambert, 2019; Toro *et al.*, 2020; Yeh *et al.*, 2020).

An embodied view of learning can enrich existing inclusive educational design frameworks like Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL seeks to

accommodate learners' differences through teaching with multiple modes of representation, expression and action, and engagement (CAST, 2018; Meyer *et al.* 2014; Rose and Meyer, 2002). Bringing together UDL and embodied design, Abrahamson *et al.* (2019) reimagine the MIT-P design as a context for blind and visually impaired students to learn together with sighted students by introducing audio and haptic feedback to the design. Learners stand on opposite sides of a board featuring knobs in parallel tracks. Peers on either side of the board slide the knobs together. When the ratio of the left knob's height to the right knob's height fulfills the secret ratio, the knobs vibrate, and a sound is produced. This design designates proportions with visual and haptic-tactile feedback such that blind and sighted learners can achieve equitable independence in their learning together. Both learners' sensorimotor resources are actively and continuously engaged. This version of the MIT-P assures students equal participation in self-guided and coordinated movements, offering an equivalently rich learning experience to all students. This design surpasses common teaching tools like tactile diagrams and text-to-speech that do not give blind learners full and equivalent access to spatial exploration¹.

SpEED (Tancredi *et al.*, in press) – Special Education Embodied Design – takes up the spirit of this project by integrating UDL's commitments to proactive, adaptive education and embodied design's commitment to designing for students' specific embodied resources. SpEED applies embodied-cognition theory to Special Education design. The goal of SpEED is to develop tools that improve accessibility to offer all students equitable access to deep engagement with peers and conceptual learning. To serve every learner in the inclusion classroom, it is necessary to consider how each brings different sensory and motor experiences into learning, and how instructional designs differentially give them opportunities to use that experience.

The principles of SpEED are:

1. **Learning happens through the body's sensorimotor engagement with the world.**
2. **Learning begins from learners' existing embodied resources.** These include prior sensorimotor experiences, practices, processes, and abilities.
3. **Instruction must flexibly adapt to learners' sensorimotor diversities.** This principle calls for an embrace of human variation. Learners' sensorimotor differences can change how they interact with what they are learning.

SpEED uses an iterative approach called design-based research (Cobb *et al.*, 2003). In design-based research, theory informs design, whose evaluation then

¹ For an accessible version of the MIT-P inspired by this design, see <https://phet.colorado.edu/en/simulation/ratio-and-proportion>.

comes back to inform theory, and over again through iterated cycles of development efforts. With this approach, it is possible to study types of learning that do not yet exist (Bakker, 2018).

We share four examples of SpEED design in action to show how this framework can apply to a range of applications. Each of the four projects uses an embodied approach to design learning technologies that are more equitable. Each focuses on a different population: learners with ADHD, learners on the autism spectrum, and Deaf signers². We describe each example project's rationale and design, list their key implications for practice, and conclude with a set of guiding questions for anyone seeking to implement SpEED in teaching or research. Following these guidelines, we include a commentary on applying SpEED in the Italian educational context.

2. SpEED Projects

2.1 *The Magical Musical Mat*³

The Magical Musical Mat (MMM) is a domain-general platform that allows people to interact using the non-speaking modalities of touch and sound by integrating haptic exploration and music with social interaction (Chen *et al.*, 2020). The MMM is motivated by a drive towards surfacing the very core of human connection: co-presence and affective attunement. Although this project centers non-speaking learners on the autism spectrum, it touches something that is fundamentally human to all of us: the ability to connect with another human being. The MMM creates communicative symmetry between diverse communicators – for example those who have verbal speech and those who don't – by embracing communicative modalities accessible to everyone.

In Vygotsky's words (1962), learning is inherently situated in social practice, whether teacher-to-student or peer-to-peer. Social participation also creates a sense of belonging, an important factor in successful classroom learning (Osterman, 2010). Although everyone has the capacity to engage in interaction, participation in typical social communication usually occurs through talk, and is not readily accessible to some populations. How then can

² We are using the terms “blind”, “on the autism spectrum”, and “Deaf” to respect preferences expressed by people with these identities (Gernsbacher, 2017; Liebowitz 2015). In the US, we use Deaf with a capital D to emphasize sociocultural identity.

³ This project is led by Rachel Chen. The Magical Musical Mat was funded by the Barbara White Bequest, and the Jacobs Institute Innovation Catalysts grant, and supported by the Humanities International PhD Scholarship.

we design for inclusive participation of students with diverse interactional modalities?

The very label of Autism is clinically characterized by a difference in social communication. Autistic students, especially those who are minimally-verbal or non-speaking, may realize the desire for social interaction differently than neurotypical individuals, through non-dominant sensory modalities, attunements, and practices. The dominance of referential spoken language in educational practices misses opportunities to identify and thus develop multisensorial means of engaging in social interaction.

Previous solutions for non-speaking students involve *Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC)* systems that serve as an alternative to, or an augmentation of an individual's speech. For example, AAC solutions include speech generating devices or picture cards for the expression of specific requests. Although the implementation of AAC systems has had much success in furthering language development and linguistic production in many populations, there remains some challenges with these devices. AAC solutions are designed around referential linguistic form. As such, because AAC systems focus on indexical language structures geared towards generating speech, AAC user interfaces are constrained to an array of symbols and grids, whose use is predicated on effective sequencing skills, excellent memory, and motoric dexterity, thus imposing high cognitive and motor demand. The AAC user must accommodate their interlocutor's communicative modality (speech), and their bodily movement is recruited for the purpose of linguistic output. But what if the body's significant role in interactional engagement could instead be forefronted? What if both interactants communicated in the same modality?

This design solution draws upon embodied cognition and other theories of embodiment that take the body as a point of departure. Stemming from phenomenology, this project draws from Merleau-Ponty's concept of intercorporeality, where the human body is seen as the active center of cognition, social understanding, and culture making. This work also draws upon research that has microgenetically examined touch in social interaction, such as Marjorie Goodwin's work on haptic sociality (Goodwin, 2017), where touch is empirically demonstrated to communicate close attunement and trust. By designing for touch-based interaction, this project forefronts developmental antecedents of effective communication that are rooted in the body.

The MMM is an embodied-design platform (Abrahamson, 2014) that positions students' dynamic bodies as the nexus of social interaction. This platform is designed to foster collaborative interaction as a dyad's emergent solution to the situated problem of enacting musical improvisation. When two people stand on the mat and touch hands, they close a circuit (Fig. 2). The

fluctuations in resistance levels between both bodies are mapped onto musical sounds, such that different touch-based gestures produce different sounds.

Fig. 2 - *The Magical Musical Mat* (Images adapted from Chen *et al.*, 2020)



We introduced the MMM to an autism clinic that runs Integrated Play Groups (IPG), an interventional form that facilitates students' play-based interactions (Wolfberg *et al.*, 2016). The practitioners presented the MMM in two different classes with different age groups (5-8 y/o and 9-12 y/o) comprising of both autistic and neurotypical students. With little guidance, the students interacted with one another in various ways. They played rhythmic hand-games, explored a variety of sounds by touching hands and feet, and took turns pretending to be musical instruments. The clinic's directors, teachers, and therapists expressed surprise at the creativity of the games the students played and the sounds they explored. They also observed a behavioral change in some students, who were at first hyperactive in interacting with each other but had calmed down through using the mat in ways that facilitated other learning activities. Lastly, they stated that the students thereafter continued to express interest in using MMM: they asked the teachers to play with it and mentioned it in later clinic sessions.

In our current work, we are using this platform as a musical improvisation tool for children on the autism spectrum. We are examining repetitive movement – rocking, tapping, flapping – of autistic children, and how this can emerge into social interaction through musical interventions.

Implications for practice:

1. Beyond the dominant modality of speech, modalities such as tactility can allow diverse communicators to connect with one another.
2. Interacting with modalities other than speech allows for communicative symmetry, especially with minimally-speaking / non-speaking children.

3. Facets of social interaction such as rhythmicity and musicality can encourage creative and inventive play.

2.2 Balance Board Math⁴

Balance Board Math is a new way of interacting with mathematical concepts using a rocking balance board. This project is motivated by improving instructional accessibility for learners who crave movement stimulation. This tends to include many children with ADHD (Shimizu *et al.*, 2014) as well as children on the autism spectrum (Tomchek and Dunn, 2007). Balance Board Math introduces a range of mathematical concepts including functions, angles, and ratio using embodied design activities on a balance board. We'll focus here on one Balance Board Math configuration, the *Balance Number Line (BNL)*, a balance-based way of interacting with the number line to experience absolute value and negative numbers.

A key feature of Balance Board Math is that it reconciles two ways of thinking about movement in learning: sensory regulation and embodied cognition. Theories of *sensory regulation* in the psychology and occupational therapy literature (e.g., Dunn, 1997) posit that movement operates as a means to maintain optimal levels of alertness through sensory stimuli that are of an adaptive intensity for one's sensory profile. This project focuses on a particular kind of sensory input: the vestibular system in the inner ear. The vestibular system supports balance and coordination. It includes three semicircular canals in different orientations that detect movement. Sitting in class provides minimal stimulation to the vestibular system. Students who need more vestibular stimulation might seek it through movements such as rocking in their chair or walking around, which may look to their teacher like they are distracted. There is evidence for the impact of sensory experience on academic learning: sensory differences have been found to explain 47% of variance in academic performance for children on the autism spectrum (Ashburner *et al.*, 2008), and self-directed movement like fidgeting is positively correlated with performance for children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Sarver *et al.*, 2015). This project sets forth from the perspective that having a learning task and environment that meets one's sensory regulation needs is a question of accessibility. In parallel, embodied cognition dictates that movement plays a central role in cognition. The vestibular system plays a central role in movement. Not surprisingly then, the vestibular system has been implicated in cognitive development, and even abstract conceptual reasoning (Hitier *et al.*, 2014; Antle *et al.*, 2013).

⁴ This project is led by Sofia Tancredi. The Balance Board Math project is supported by the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program under Grant No. 1938055.

Existing solutions in the United States for supporting sensory regulation typically meet sensory needs separately from academic learning, either by providing sensory accommodations to students in the classroom such as specialized seating, or through therapeutic sensory programs conducted outside of the classroom. But according to embodied cognition, sensory activity is part of cognition, not separate from it. This project differs from previous solutions by treating sensory regulation as *part of* mathematical activity. The design conjecture of this project is that directly incorporating vestibular stimulation into learning activities will improve their efficacy. The aim is to combine the sensory regulation tool of a balance board with number line tools from math instruction. The resulting design makes rocking on a balance board central to a series of mathematics learning tasks. Students sit on the board and rock by moving their hands along a number line. Hand positions affect the board's balance (Fig. 3), providing stimulation to the vestibular system that serves as feedback about the number line movements. The design builds upon learners' natural engagement with vestibular stimulatory behavior. Rocking becomes a resource for conceptual learning. The BNL is designed not only to support sensory regulation, but also to use vestibular stimulation to enhance the perceptual salience of learning-relevant stimuli.

Fig. 3 - The Balance Number Line



An example BNL activity is to find a way to move both hands along the number line while staying in balance. The solution consists of moving both hands apart at the same rate, keeping them equidistant from the origin (for

example, at -2 and 2, -4 and 4, etc.). If and only if the hands move in this way, the board will remain in balance. Solving this problem develops a sense of number-line symmetry. Negative numbers are defined as the counterbalancing point to their positive counterparts. The number line becomes a tool to be able to refine, control, and talk about movements. In BNL activities, magnetic arrows of different lengths are also used to document, plan, and discuss movements on the board.

When tested with a 13-year-old male on the autism spectrum, the pilot participant effectively identified mathematical properties through experiences on the board. He also rocked on the board beyond the formal tasks themselves during tasks such as waiting or visual comparison, suggesting that the board provided an opportunity for sensory regulation. The student's parents shared in a debrief interview that the student's sustained focus for much longer than typical in this context. This supports the hypothesis that meeting students' sensory regulation needs through the activity design can expand their capacity for sustained mathematical investigation.

Current work in Balance Board Math includes testing the activity with a range of participants and building out other configurations that explore other mathematical concepts, each with an eye towards allowing students who are sensory seeking to collaborate with peers who are less sensory seeking and even sensory avoidant.

Implications for Practice:

1. Different learners within the same classrooms will need different levels of sensory stimulation to do their best learning.
2. Students who are moving in non-prescribed ways such as fidgeting or tilting in their chair might be meeting their sensory needs in order to work. Recognizing their sensory regulation needs can help to offer alternatives that are not disruptive to peers.
3. Foundational sensory systems like balance, tactility, and proprioception (body-in-space) provide untapped opportunities for presenting concepts in new and engaging ways.

2.3. SignEd|Math⁵

The aim of SignEd|Math is to develop instructional approaches and methods that make use of the potential of sign language as a special practice and communicational preference of Deaf students. This project builds on the

⁵ This project is led by Christina Krause. The project SignEd|Math receives funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska Curie Grant Agreement No 842487.

assumption that learning math in the medium of sign language changes how learning content is approached and structured, from both an individual-embodied and a social-constructivist perspective.

Sign languages are not mere word to word translations of spoken languages into gestural signs; they are languages with their own syntactic rules, steadily and naturally growing in the Deaf communities in which they are used. Signs are more or less conventionalized and vary in handshape, performance location, trajectory, direction, speed, orientation, and facial expression (Stokoe, 1963).

The use of a sign language seems to influence Deaf signers' ways of thinking universally, leading to differences in cognitive processing and conceptual organization (Grote, 2013 for an overview). For example, the visual-spatial format and simultaneous articulation afford concept organizations differently than the auditory-sequential articulation of spoken languages. This is considered to influence the ability for serial recall of information to be less distinctive in Deaf signers. This makes it more difficult for them to follow information presented linearly, and simultaneously presented information becomes more accessible for cognitive processing (Hall and Bavelier, 2010). Additionally, sign languages generally show a higher degree of iconicity than spoken languages. Signs often reflect a concept by representing actions or objects. The whole concept cannot be represented, so a certain aspect is chosen to stand for the concept. Research in psycholinguistics found that these foregrounded aspects are more strongly associated with the whole concept than those that are not represented (Grote, 2013).

Instead of acknowledging these differences in cognitive processing and conceptual organization, Deaf students are still mainly treated as "hearing students that cannot hear" (Marschark *et al.*, 2011, p. 4) That is, the main concern addressed in Deaf students' education, especially in mainstream schools, is the access to information and instruction, problems supposedly solved through easier written language and sign language interpreters. While these approaches lower the barrier for learning, they underestimate the role of language in learning mathematics and miss out on using sign language as a medium and a resource for learning mathematics (Krause and Wille, to appear).

Conventionalized mathematical signs do often not exist, especially for higher mathematical concepts. This can be seen as an obstacle, but it also bears a unique opportunity for making mathematical language meaningful (Kurz and Pagliaro, 2020) through actively establishing iconic meaning in the sign as grounded in the activity through which the mathematical concept is introduced (Krause, 2019).

Mathematical signed language hence bears the potential of capturing enactive or depictive features of source sensorimotor forms as schematized enacted experience of the learner (Krause, 2019). As this encompasses the

manual action, idiosyncratic gestures as proto-signs arising from this action, and eventually signed mathematical discourse integrating such gestural expression, we refer to this as *modal-continuity* (Krause and Abrahamson, 2020). Iconicity thus becomes part of the modal hybrid of gestures and signs in signed discourse and thereby shapes the development of socially negotiated mathematical meaning.

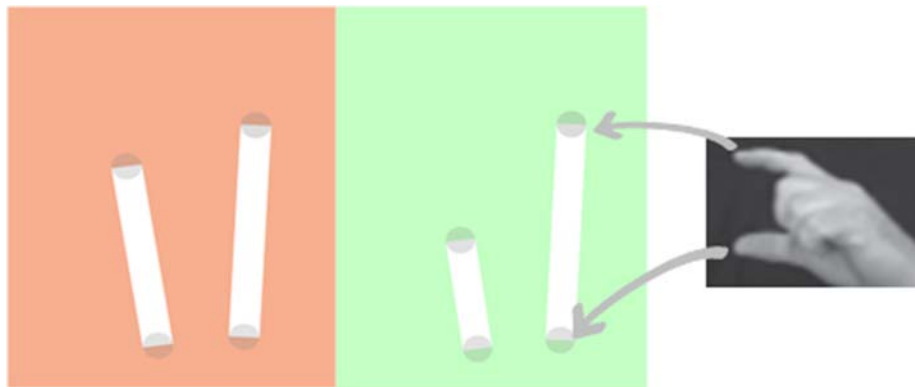
The SignEd|Math design takes advantage of the potential of sign languages to allow for modal continuity to model embodied experience that fosters the emergence of conceptually and linguistically fruitful signed mathematics discourse about a specific topic (Krause and Abrahamson, 2020). It accordingly involves two phases: one designed to establish individual embodied experience through solving a dynamic interaction problem, and a second fostering the negotiation of mathematical meaning through signed discourse.

We focus here on the first phase: an adaptation of the MIT-P design (Abrahamson and Trninc, 2015) implemented on a multi-touch interface to allow for bridging from action to signed mathematical discourse in a conceptually meaningful way. Instead of using the height of two reference points on a vertically oriented screen, learners manipulate the lengths of two bars on a touchscreen, each spanned by the thumb and index finger of one hand (Fig. 4). Just as in the original design, the screen turns green when the lengths of the two bars stand in a certain ratio. Manipulation with the thumb and index finger mimics a handshape called ‘bent L’, in American Sign Language used as a classifier to refer to the idea of number or quantity. The classifier is not the actual sign for the idea itself but rather a representation of the idea in context and can be varied depending on the context. For example, Kurz and Pagliaro (2020) use it to stand in for the numerator and the denominator in a conceptually meaningful sign for improper fraction in which the numerator is indicated as larger in quantity as in the denominator. The SignEd|Math MIT-P redesign integrates the classifier handshape as a feature in the tablet action attempting to link action, concept, and language in a meaningful way.

The main objective of the second phase is to allow for an occasion to negotiate mathematical meaning through collaborative problem solving on a transfer problem. For this, pairs of students are invited to collaboratively solve a problem that elaborates on the idea of proportion as encountered when working with the digital interface. Following socio-constructivist theories, shared mathematical meaning might then develop as constructed among peers, together with shared gestural signs as a pre-conventional means to address the new mathematical knowledge in development. This transfer problem can deepen the engagement with the proportion concept as encountered when working with the digital interface. For example, the students can be asked to solve a similar problem that uses another ratio as an underlying rule with each

student controlling one bar such that the students need to negotiate the coordination of their movement. The transfer problem can also go beyond the original interaction problem and widen the conceptual involvement by linking to related concepts like fractions.

Fig. 4 - SignEd/Math App



Note. The two bars move dynamically and change their length. The screen turns green when the right bar is twice as long as the left bar.

Implications for practice:

1. In lesson design, we can plan approaches and activities in ways that facilitate links between language, gestural expression, and other visual representations to foster meaning making in and through the social interaction.
2. More specifically, we can plan embodied activities with the idea in mind that they match the corresponding mathematical signs to also build a representational bridge to facilitate communication between hearing and Deaf students.

3. Getting Up to SpEED: A Starter Kit

These ongoing projects illustrate the traction of embodied cognition on design problems across different populations and learning goals. Although each population's needs are distinct, embodied cognition sheds useful light on learning for all of them. As these designs are tested and iterated, they can also help to develop and refine theories of embodied learning.

We conclude with lessons learned across these diverse projects for prospective SpEED designers. SpEED relies upon careful differentiation of the

factors affecting learners' interactions with peers, objects, themselves, and their environment. Three parameters can help to specify and reimagine these relations: modality, semiotic mode, and media. *Modality* refers to the sensory and motor systems recruited by a task. Examples include visual, auditory, tactile, proprioceptive (body-in-space), and vestibular (balance) systems, as well manual (hands), oral (speech), or whole-body motor systems (Edwards and Robutti, 2014). *Media* are materials, like pen-and-paper, a tablet interface, or the body (Kress, 2001). *Semiotic modes* are systems of meaning-making involving any kinds of signs (Kress, 2001). These include, for example, spoken or signed language, gesture, and mathematical symbols. The interactions among these three parameters – modality, media and semiotic modes – create the conditions for what kinds of learning can take place. For example, SignEd|Math resists replicating the semiotic modes of spoken language in sign language, appreciating that the practice of signing changes the way Deaf learners structure their experiences and their knowledge. The media is designed to give learners access through manual action ground conceptual learning through the modality of manual kinesthesia and encourage collaborative meaning making through the semiotic mode of signed language.

Special education populations frequently engage the world in ways that differ from neuromajority individuals, through modalities that are not traditionally privileged as ways of learning. Just because vision and hearing are common modalities does not mean they deserve to be the only ways that concepts are represented for students. A SpEED approach combats what we call *modalism*: the over-reliance on dominant modalities like vision and hearing. Greater learning opportunities might be found through engaging other modalities like touch and movement to explore concepts. Using shared modalities means that learners can work together and talk about what they are doing; this creates rich opportunities for inclusive learning.

To teachers and researchers seeking to undertake SpEED, we offer the following guiding questions:

1. **Embodied resources:** What kinds of sensorimotor activities, strengths, and practices do these learners already have in their repertoire? How might these be related to focal content?
2. **Modalities:** What modalities are traditionally used to teach this content? How does this shape the way the concept is thought about? How might this content be presented and experienced through modalities accessible to this learner? What other modalities could be engaged?
3. **Media:** What media is traditionally used to teach this content? What modalities are used to engage with this media? What kind of media could give students opportunities to interact *dynamically* through other modalities?

4. **Semiotic modes:** What semiotic modes are traditionally used to teach this content? Are these modes accessible to the learner? Are these modes necessary for the content, or incidental? Could these modes be replaced or transformed so that this student might fully access them?
5. **Interaction loop:** What kind of interaction do I want to enable in this design? How will the learner get ongoing feedback from their activity?
6. **Peer interaction and discourse:** How are learners interacting with peers during this activity? Can we create shared sensorimotor experiences that allow peers to collaborate and discuss? Can we embrace social interaction beyond the dominant modalities of speech and the linguistic system?

The SpEED framework can bring a fresh perspective to longstanding challenges in education and help imagine ways to deepen disciplinary and peer engagement for diverse learners. We offer these questions as an invitation to teachers and researchers to join us in SpEEDing towards a more equitable classroom.

4. Commentary by Filippo Gomez Paloma: SpEED in an Italian Context

This commentary reflects upon the potential application of SpEED in the Italian context. A brief excursus about legislative history and pedagogical inclusion is necessary to understand how fertile and ready the Italian educational system is to welcome this new inclusive approach.

The Italian regulations, starting with the Falcucci document (1977), highlight the evolution of the inclusive pedagogical model of schooling. In recent decades, there have been numerous legislative interventions (Legge 5 febbraio 1992, n. 104 sulla disabilità; Legge 8 ottobre 2010, n. 170 sui Disturbi Specifici di Apprendimento, DSA; D.M. del 27 dicembre 2012 e la C.M. n.8 del 6 marzo 2013 sui Bisogni Educativi Speciali, BES; D. Lgs. 13 aprile 2017, n. 66; D. Lgs. 7 agosto 2019, n. 96; D.I. 29 dicembre 2020 n. 182) that went from the mere insertion of disabled people into normal classrooms to inclusion of people with Special Educational Needs (*Bisogni Educativi Speciali*: disabilities, specific learning disabilities, specific developmental disabilities, as well as socio-environmental, linguistic and cultural disadvantages).

This evolution has led the school system to pursue full inclusion of Special Educational Needs students, offering equal opportunity and dignity to all the students in the class, regardless of disability. Inclusion is an objective that the school autonomously pursues through intense and organized planning, valuing internal professionalism as well as local resources. Furthermore, the current national and international legislative framework with the issuing of the ICF, *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (WHO,

2001; 2007), and of the New Individual Educational Plans promoted by the Interministerial decree n. 182 and by the related Guidelines (2020), has shifted the attention from the clinical problem of the single individual to the bio-psycho-social variables that affect a subject's growth of their potential in life.

So far, it would seem that the legislative framework and the current and innovative pedagogical pathways offer high hope for implementing SpEED in Italy; yet the scientific approach that spearheads the Embodiment paradigm (Glenberg, 2008; Barsalou, 2010; Paas and Sweller 2012; Wilson and Golonka, 2013; Gallese, 2003; 2005; 2014) has been slow to take off. The scientific principles recommended by the Italian pedagogic community, although well aligned with the legislative norms (MIUR, 2012; 2018), run into difficulty due to an educational culture that does not yet widely value differences and consider learning as a situated not standardized process, that is directly connected to the subjective potential of each student and strongly dependent on the sensorimotor system, hence embodied (Gomez Paloma, 2020).

In my brief reflection, I will attempt to suggest some aspects and requirements to take into consideration for the SpEED model in the context of the Italian educational system.

The first requirement is the cultural transformation of the teachers' mindset. To this day, considering how the entry and service training courses for teaching professionals are organized and proposed, it is understandable, as well as reliable, that the mentality of educators actually limits the development potential of the Embodiment phenomenon in all forms of schools including inclusive ones. It is indispensable, therefore, to build a formative system, scientifically supported and conducted methodically with the same *Embodied* approach, which aims to raise awareness of educators as people, beyond the job description, as well as to favor the acquisition of integrated, Embodied-Centred (Gomez Paloma and Damiani, 2015) theoretical, practical, and experiential skills. This system, albeit ideal, is challenging because it clashes with the deep roots of Italian culture that tends to orient the population (legislators, directors, educators, families and students), both cognitively and socially to give more weight to words than actions, to external appearance than internal substance. The advancement of the book *Manuale delle Scuole ECS. The Neuroeducational Approach* (Gomez Paloma and Damiani, 2021) shows how much work is still necessary, but also proves that initial steps have already been taken and that a preliminary experimentation of the Embodied approach has been realized in several schools in Italy.

The second requirement is tied to the partial, if not nonexistent, compliance with the rules on inclusion which, as mentioned above, offer teachers maximal opportunity to enjoy SpEED's inclusive approach. The presence of disabled people in normal classrooms, despite being implemented for decades, does not

result in the fullest and most significant concept of inclusion. This concept is understood as a phenomenon in which the context (educators, classmates, resources, and supports) adapts to facilitate the learning pathways of the student and yields a double positive effect: catering to the subject's potentials, emphasizing and recognizing them in their unique complexities, and teaching classmates to accept their peers' differences, taking on the human value of sharing for the future, and to avoid operating socially in a discriminatory manner. Too often, instead, the resources provided by the Italian school system – to special needs teachers – go towards an approach of assistance (to fill the gaps) and of pity, risking offending the student's dignity; this approach not only limits full participation in group activities but also deprives the subject of the active protagonism so emphasized in the Embodied approach.

As stated by Abrahamson (2014), embodied design – and with that also SpEED – focuses on what the students can already do and perceive and promotes activities that allow them to explore the target concepts, using their own resources. This allows the introduction of active disciplinary forms that help students understand and explain concepts through participation that is active and processed by the body.

Therefore, in Italy, the application of SpEED meets a second obstacle; here too, there is work to be done academically and institutionally to train teachers to value differences, and to improve and focus on the challenged subject's strengths.

The third requirement is the schools' institutional setup and their architectural limitations and affordances. For many years, Italy has been trying to promote an innovative form of urban planning (whether new construction, renovation, or retraining) that allows for more open spaces, and less physical and spatial restraint. This aims to shift didactics towards a more embodied approach, as to allow students to be more involved, in a collaborative way, in the planning of their school activities. The legislation itself (Legge 13 luglio, 2015, n. 107), with the Scuole Innovative del MIUR project, created the possibility of a dialogue between Pedagogy and Architecture, aware of the strong necessity to implement a structural change of the educational space (Gomez Paloma *et al.*, 2019; Vanacore and Gomez Paloma, 2020). This structural revolution is directly connected to SpEED, since many of the propositions here described include the use of specific spaces and supports, surpassing the traditional desk and chair classroom configuration, and opening the way for new forms of accessibility and use of space and objects in order to make learning sustainable and supportive of the students' well-being.

In conclusion, without repeating the validity of the propositions promoted by the SpEED working group established in the lab of my colleague Abrahamson – taking for granted the value of the constructs now known and

evident to the entire international pedagogic community – it would be quite functional to apply this model to the demands and needs of disabled students.

Blind children who through vibration and sound can perceive the rules of mathematical proportions (Mathematics Imagery Trainer for Proportion) (Abrahamson *et al.*, 2014), fostering Deaf students' mathematical meaning making by grounding individual concept learning and signed mathematical discourse in manual action (Signed Math) (Krause and Abrahamson, in press), integrating sensory regulation and embodied cognition to benefit students with ADHD in the study of number lines (Balance Board Math), the exploration through touch and sound of music integrated with social interaction for autistic students (Magical Musical Mat), are four excellent ideas that, as stated by my colleagues, aim to surpass the common use of what Gardner called the canonical channels (sight and hearing), opening new horizons and sensors (touch, movement), as recognized by Berthoz (1998). Thus, the concepts for students with special education needs will actually be explored, and not decoded with often-compromised abstract cognitive processes.

We are aware, however, that, as previously mentioned, in order for SpEED to take shape and become applicable in the Italian educational system, we must take the responsibility of setting in motion regulatory and planning actions, both academically and institutionally, to face the consolidated barriers (structural and mental) that do not allow the above-mentioned requirements to be satisfied.

These steps matter because SpEED applies the theory of Embodied Cognition to the design of Special Pedagogy, which we support as, we are convinced, it will leave a deep mark on education of the next generations.

References

- Abrahamson D. (2014). Building educational activities for understanding: An elaboration on the embodied design framework and its epistemic grounds. *International Journal of Child-Computer Interaction*, 2(1): 1-16. Doi: 10.1016/j.ijcci.2014.07.002.
- Abrahamson D., & Trninic D. (2015). Bringing forth mathematical concepts: Signifying sensorimotor enactment in fields of promoted action. *ZDM Mathematics Education*, 47(2): 295-306. Doi: 10.1007/s11858-014-0620-0.
- Abrahamson D., Flood V. J., Miele J. A., & Siu Y.-T. (2019). Enactivism and ethnomethodological conversation analysis as tools for expanding Universal Design for Learning: The case of visually impaired mathematics students. *ZDM Mathematics Education*, 51(2): 291-303. Doi: 10.1007/s11858-018-0998-1.
- Abrahamson D., Nathan M. J., Williams-Pierce C., Walkington C., Ottmar E. R., Soto H., & Alibali M. W. (2020). The future of embodied design for mathematics

- teaching and learning [Original Research]. *Frontiers in Education*, 5(147). Doi: 10.3389/feduc.2020.00147.
- Antle A. N., Corness G., & Bevans A. (2013). Balancing justice: Comparing whole body and controller-based interaction for an abstract domain. *International Journal of Arts and Technology*, 6(4): 388-409. Doi: 10.1504/IJART.2013.058285.
- Ashburner J., Ziviani J., & Rodger S. (2008). Sensory processing and classroom emotional, behavioral, and educational outcomes in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 62(5): 564-573.
- Bakker A. (2018). *Design research in education: A practical guide for early career researchers*. London: Routledge. Doi: 10.4324/9780203701010.
- Barsalou L.W. (2010). Grounded cognition: Past, present, and future. *Cognitive Science*, 2(4). Doi: 10.1111/j.1756-8765.2010.01115.x.
- Berthoz A. (1998). *Il senso del movimento*. Milano: McGraw-Hill Companies.
- CAST (2018). *Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2*. <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>.
- Chen R. S. Y., Ninh A., Yu B., & Abrahamson D. (2020). Being in touch with the core of social interaction: Embodied design for the nonverbal. In M. Gresalfi & I. S. Horn (Eds.). *The Interdisciplinarity of the Learning Sciences, Proceedings of the 14th meeting of the International Society of the Learning Sciences (ICLS 2020)* (Vol. 3, pp. 1681-1684). International Society of the Learning Sciences.
- Circolare Ministeriale n. 8, *Indicazioni operative sulla Direttiva ministeriale "Strumenti d'intervento per alunni con bisogni educativi speciali e organizzazione territoriale per l'inclusione scolastica"*. prot. 561/6.3.2013, Roma, marzo 2013.
- Cobb P., Confrey J., diSessa A., Lehrer R., & Schauble L. (2003). Design experiments in educational research. *Educational Researcher*, 32(1): 9-13. Doi: 10.3102/0013189X032001009.
- D. Lgs 13 aprile 2017, n. 66, Norme per la promozione dell'inclusione scolastica degli studenti con disabilità, a norma dell'articolo 1, commi 180 e 181, lettera c), della legge 13 luglio 2015, n. 107, *Gazzetta Ufficiale* n.112 del 16-5-2017 - Suppl. Ordinario n. 23.
- de Freitas E., & Sinclair N. (2014). *Mathematics and the body: Material entanglements in the classroom*. Cambridge University Press. Doi: 10.1017/CBO9781139600378.
- Decreto Legislativo 7 agosto 2019, n. 96 Disposizioni integrative e correttive al decreto legislativo 13 aprile 2017, n. 66, recante: «Norme per la promozione dell'inclusione scolastica degli studenti con disabilità, a norma dell'articolo 1, commi 180 e 181, lettera c), della legge 13 luglio 2015, n. 107». *Gazzetta Ufficiale* n.201 del 28-8-2019.
- Decreto Interministeriale 29 dicembre 2020, n.182, *Adozione del modello nazionale di piano educativo individualizzato e delle correlate linee guida, nonché modalità di assegnazione delle misure di sostegno agli alunni con disabilità, ai sensi dell'articolo 7, comma 2-ter del decreto legislativo 13 aprile 2017, n. 66*.
- Direttiva Ministeriale 27 dicembre 2012, *Strumenti d'intervento per alunni con bisogni educativi speciali e organizzazione territoriale per l'inclusione scolastica*.

- Dunn W. (1997). The impact of sensory processing abilities on the daily lives of young children and their families: A conceptual model. *Infants and Young Children*, 9(4), 23-35. Doi: 10.1097/00001163-199704000-00005.
- Fincher-Kiefer R. (2019). *How the body shapes knowledge: Empirical support for embodied cognition*. American Psychological Association. Doi: 10.1037/0000136-000.
- Gallese V. (2003). The manifold nature of interpersonal relations: The quest for a common mechanism. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London B*, 358 (1431): 517-528. Doi: 10.1098/rstb.2002.1234.
- Gallese V. (2005). Embodied simulation: From neurons to phenomenal experience. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 4: 23-48. Doi: 10.1007/s11097-005-4737-z.
- Gallese V. (2014) Bodily selves in relation: embodied simulation as second person perspective on intersubjectivity. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London B*, 369: 20130177. Doi: 10.1098/rstb.2013.0177.
- Gernsbacher M.A. (2017). Editorial perspective: The use of person-first language in scholarly writing may accentuate stigma. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 58(7): 859-861. Doi: 10.1111/jcpp.12706.
- Glenberg A.M. (2008). Embodiment for education. In: Calvo P. & Gomila A. (Eds.). *Handbook of Cognitive Science: An Embodied Approach*. San Diego: Elsevier.
- Glenberg A. M., Gutierrez T., Levin J. R., Japuntich S., & Kaschak M. P. (2004). Activity and imagined activity can enhance young children's reading comprehension. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 96(3): 424-436. Doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.96.3.424.
- Grote K. (2013). 'Modality Relativity?' *The Influence of Sign Language and Spoken Language on Semantic Categorization*. Dissertation. Retrieved 01/15/2017 from: <http://publications.rwth-aachen.de/record/211239/files/4546.pdf>.
- Goldsmith S. (1997). *Designing for the disabled: The new paradigm*. London: Routledge.
- Gomez Paloma F., Damiani P. (2015). *Cognizione corporea, competenze integrate e formazione dei docenti. I tre volti dell'Embodied Cognitive Science per una scuola inclusiva*. Trento: Erickson.
- Gomez Paloma F., Borrelli M., Buondonno E. (2019). *Scuole innovative. L'Embodied Cognition Design come paradigma dei nuovi spazi scolastici*. Roma: Nuova cultura.
- Gomez Paloma F. (a cura di) (2020). *Embodiment & School*. Lecce: Pensa Multimedia.
- Gomez Paloma F., & Damiani P. (2021). *Manuale delle Scuole ECS. The Neuroeducational Approach*. Brescia: Scholè.
- Goodwin M. H. (2017). Haptic sociality. *Intercorporeality: Emerging socialities in interaction*, 73-102. Doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190210465.003.0004.
- Hall M. L., & Bavelier D. (2010). Working memory, Deafness, and sign language. In: M. Marschark, P. E. Spencer (Eds.). *The Oxford handbook of Deaf Studies, language, and education*, Vol. 2. (pp. 457-472). Oxford University Press. Doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9450.2009.00744.x.
- Hitier M., Besnard S., & Smith P. (2014). Vestibular pathways involved in cognition. *Frontiers in Integrative Neuroscience*, 8(59). Doi: 10.3389/fnint.2014.00059.

- Hutto D. D., Kirchhoff M. D., & Abrahamson D. (2015). The enactive roots of STEM: Rethinking educational design in mathematics. In: P. Chandler & A. Tricot (Eds.). Human movement, physical and mental health, and learning [Special issue]. *Educational Psychology Review*, 27(3): 371-389. Doi: 10.1007/s10648-015-9326-2.
- Hutto D. D., & Myin E. (2012). *Radicalizing enactivism: Basic minds without content*. Cambridge: M.I.T Press.
- Kelton M. L., & Ma J. Y. (2018). Reconfiguring mathematical settings and activity through multi-party, whole-body collaboration. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, 98(2): 177-196. Doi: 10.1007/s10649-018-9805-8.
- Krause C.M. (2019). What you see is what you get? – Sign language in the mathematics classroom. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 50(1): 84-97. Doi: 10.5951/jresmetheduc.50.1.0084.
- Krause C. M., & Abrahamson D. (2020). Modal continuity in Deaf students' signed mathematical discourse. In: A. Isabel Sacristán & J. Carlos Cortés (Eds.). "Entre Culturas / Across Cultures" – Proceedings of the 42nd annual meeting of the North-American chapter of the International Group for the Psychology of Mathematics Education (PME-NA) (pp. 1448-1449). PME-NA.
- Krause C.M. & Wille A. M. (to appear). Sign language in light of mathematics education: an exploration within semiotic and embodiment theories of learning mathematics. *American Annals of the Deaf - Special Issue on 'Critical Topics in Mathematics Education: Research to Practice with Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing Students'*.
- Kurz C. & Pagliaro C.M. (2020). Using L1 sign language to teach mathematics. In: R. S. Rosen (Ed.). *The Routledge handbook of sign language pedagogy* (pp. 85-99). Routledge. Doi: 10.1093/deafed/enp015.
- Lambert R. (2019). Political, relational, and complexly embodied; experiencing disability in the mathematics classroom. *ZDM Mathematics Education*. Doi: 10.1007/s11858-019-01031-1.
- Legge 5 febbraio 1992, n. 104, Legge-quadro per l'assistenza, l'integrazione sociale e i diritti delle persone handicappate, *Gazzetta Ufficiale Serie Generale* n.39 del 17-02-1992 - Suppl. Ordinario n. 30.
- Legge 8 ottobre 2010, n. 170, Nuove norme in materia di disturbi specifici di apprendimento in ambito scolastico, *Gazzetta Ufficiale* N. 244 del 18 Ottobre 2010.
- Legge 13 luglio 2015, n. 107, Riforma del sistema nazionale di istruzione e formazione e delega per il riordino delle disposizioni legislative vigenti, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, Serie Generale n.162 del 15-07-2015.
- Liebowitz C. (2015, March 2015). *I am disabled: on identity-first versus people-first language*. The body is not an apology. <https://thebodyisnotanapology.com/magazine/i-am-disabled-on-identity-first-versus-people-first-language/>.
- Marschark M., Spencer P. E., Adams J., & Sapere P. (2011). Evidence-based practice in educating deaf and hard-of-hearing children: Teaching to their cognitive strengths and needs. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 26(1): 3-16. Doi: 10.1080/08856257.2011.543540.

- Meyer A., Rose D.H., & Gordon D. (2014). *Universal design for learning: Theory and practice*. CAST.
- Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione (1975). *Relazione conclusiva della commissione Falcucci concernente i problemi scolastici degli alunni handicappati*. Consultato il 12.01.2011 su <http://www.edscuola.it/archivio/didattica/falcucci.html>.
- Ministero dell'Istruzione dell'Università e della Ricerca (2012). *Indicazioni Nazionali per il Curricolo della Scuola dell'Infanzia e del Primo Ciclo d'Istruzione*.
- Ministero dell'Istruzione dell'Università e della Ricerca (2018). *Indicazioni Nazionali e nuovi scenari*.
- Nathan M. (2014). Grounded mathematical reasoning. In L. Shapiro (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of embodied cognition* (pp. 171-183). Routledge.
- Nemirovsky R., Tierney C., & Wright T. (1998). Body motion and graphing. *Cognition and Instruction*, 16(2): 119-172. Doi: 10.1207/s1532690xci1602_1.
- Newen A., Bruin L.D., & Gallagher S. (Eds.). (2018). *The Oxford handbook of 4e cognition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ottmar E. R., Landy D., Weitnauer E., and Goldstone R. (2015). Grasable mathematics: using perceptual learning technology to discover algebraic notation. In: M. Meletiou-Mavrotheris, K. Mavrou, and E. Papanastasiou (Eds.). *Integrating Touch-enabled and Mobile Devices into Contemporary Mathematics Education* (pp. 24-28). IGI Global.
- Paas F., & Sweller J. (2012). An evolutionary upgrade of cognitive load theory: Using the human motor system and collaboration to support the learning of complex cognitive tasks. *Educ Psychol Rev*, 24: 27-45. Doi: 10.1007/s10648-011-9179-2.
- Rose D. H., & Meyer A. (2002). *Teaching every student in the digital age: Universal design for learning*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Sarver D. E., Rapport M. D., Kofler M. J., Raiker J. S., & Friedman L. M. (2015). Hyperactivity in attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): impairing deficit or compensatory behavior?. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 43(7): 1219-1232. Doi: 10.1007/s10802-015-0011-1.
- Scherr R. E., Close H. G., Close E. W., Flood V. J., McKagan S. B., Robertson A. D., et al. (2013). Negotiating energy dynamics through embodied action in a materially structured environment. *Phys. Rev. Special Topics Phys. Educ. Res.*, 52: 291-294. Doi: 10.1119/1.4872412.
- Shapiro L. (Ed.). (2014). *The Routledge handbook of embodied cognition*. London: Routledge.
- Shimizu V. T., Bueno O. F. A., & Miranda M. C. (2014). Sensory processing abilities of children with ADHD. *Brazilian Journal of Physical Therapy*, 18(4): 343-352. Epub July 25. Doi: 10.1590/bjpt-rbf.2014.0043.
- Sinclair N., & Heyd-Metzuyanim E. (2014). Learning number with TouchCounts: The role of emotions and the body in mathematical communication. *Technology, Knowledge and Learning*, 19(1-2): 81-99. Doi: 10.1007/s10758-014-9212-x.
- Stokoe W. C. (1963). Sign Language structure. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 9: 365-390. Doi: 10.1146/annurev.an.09.100180.002053.
- Tancredi S., Chen R. S. Y., Krause C., & Siu Y. T. (in press). The need for SpEED: Reimagining accessibility through Special Education Embodied Design. In: S. L.

- Macrine, & J. M. Fugate (Eds.). *Movement matters: How embodied cognition informs teaching and learning*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Tomchek S. D., & Dunn W. (2007). Sensory processing in children with and without autism: a comparative study using the short sensory profile. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 61(2): 190-200. Doi: 10.5014/ajot.61.2.190.
- Toro J., Kiverstein J., & Rietveld E. (2020). The Ecological-Enactive model of disability: Why disability does not entail pathological embodiment [Hypothesis and Theory]. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11(1162). Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01162.
- Varela F. J., Thompson E., & Rosch E. (1991). *The embodied mind: Cognitive science and human experience*. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press.
- Vanacore R., Gomez Paloma F. (2020). *Progettare gli spazi educativi. Un approccio interdisciplinare tra architettura e pedagogia*. Anicia.
- Vogelstein L., Brady C., & Hall R. (2019). Reenacting mathematical concepts found in large-scale dance performance can provide both material and method for ensemble learning. *ZDM Mathematics Education*, 51(2): 331-346. Doi: 10.1007/s11858-019-01030-2.
- Wilson A.D., Golonka S. (2013). Embodied cognition is not what you think it is. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 4(58): 1-13. Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00058.
- World Health Organization (2001). *The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)*. WHO.
- World Health Organization (2007). *The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, Children and Youth version (ICF-CY)*. Geneva: WHO.
- Vygotsky L.S. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge: MIT Press (original work published 1934).
- Yeh C., Ellis M., & Mahmood D. (2020). From the margin to the center: A framework for rehumanizing mathematics education for students with dis/abilities. *The Journal of Mathematical Behavior*, 58, 100758. Doi: 10.1016/j.jmathb.2020.100758.

Preterm Infants: Parenting Implications and Perspectives in Early Childhood Special Education

Gianluca Amatori*

Abstract

Preterm birth is an event that affects about 30,000 children a year, only in Italy. The great progress carried out in the context of neonatology (especially in recent decades) drastically reduced the risk of mortality. However, it should be reminded that these children may have a high risk of developing such serious complications which could potentially lead to permanent pathologies or disabilities, especially for those born to lower gestational ages (WHO, 2015). This contribution intends to analyze the phenomenon of prematurity according to the parenting and educational-teaching dimension. Premature parents, in fact, are immersed in a situation to which they were not prepared and which could interrupt or threaten the harmonious relationship with the newborn. For this reason, interdisciplinary synergistic actions should also be promoted in a way which calls Special Education both in direct support to families and in the preparation of generative welfare actions affecting educators and teachers, as valuable allies in early intervention and in the implementation of fully inclusive and efficient educational services for early childhood.

Keywords: Preterm birth; Parenting; Special Education, Quality of Life.

First submission: 30/04/2021, accepted: 18/05/2021

Available online: 28/06/2021

1. Special Education view on preterm births

The World Health Organization (2015) defines preterm births as those events in which delivery occurs before the 37th week of gestational age.

* Associate Professor, Università Europea di Roma. E-mail: gianluca.amatori@uniroma2.it.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa11793

Moreover, newborns can be classified according to their birth weight in low (< 2500 grams), very low (< 1500 grams) and extremely low (< 1000 grams). Those born between the 23rd and 33rd week of gestation and weighing less than 1000 grams are defined as “extremely preterm” and have the most difficulties and complications related to the event of prematurity.

The reasons behind a preterm birth are not fully known. Nevertheless, pathological conditions could interest either the mother (chronic diseases, infections, smoking, alcohol and drugs abuse, hypo/hypertension, etc.) or the foetus (multiple pregnancies, placental or uterine causes, foetal distress), increasing the risk of a preterm birth.

Neonatological science has made undoubted progress over the last few decades which has, in fact, dramatically reduced the risk of mortality from over 70% in the 1970s to less than 15% in the 2000s (Amatori, 2021). We have, in particular, been witnessing a process of “humanisation” of neonatal intensive care, which has also involved the restructuring of dedicated wards from an increasingly family-centred perspective. In order to fully understand the scientific progress underpinning the processes of care and attention to a preterm infant, it is enough to remind that up to thirty years ago small newborns were considered not able to feel pain (or rather this pain was not localised and, therefore, not “conscious” and not to be remembered in the future). For this reason, surgical operations were performed without anaesthesia on newborns, particularly on preterm ones (Aite, 2017).

However, it has later been proved that newborns not only feel the painful stimulus, but also retain a memory of it and that their pain threshold is similar or even lower compared to older children. Moreover, it has been shown that repeated painful stimuli, but also simple *discomfort*, and, more generally *stress*, can lead to harmful repercussions (physical and psychological) which can be demonstrated at a later stage and can worsen the disease state and/or hinder the healing process. (Aite, 2017, p. 14)

In Italy, preterm infants account for about 7% of annual births (Cedap/ISTAT, 2016). The extensive scientific literature and, particularly, the studies carried out by Bowlby (1999), Winnicott (1987) and Stern (1998) have proven the need of contact between the newborn baby and its mother in the first hours and days of life, in order to enable the bonding and attachment processes, which are needed for good maternal containment and care and the normal development of the child.

The preterm infant must be regarded in respect of its abilities: it is not a term newborn with a deficit, but rather an individual whose functioning is suitable for the uterine environment and unsuitable for the extra-uterine environment.

Newborns depend on adults' decisions, from which the thread of their existence will unravel. The very event of birth itself represents in an unmistakable and blatant way the start of a planning and educational process, which is, however, not likely to be perceived in terms of awareness, expression and sharing by parents. Particularly in the case of a preterm birth, the parental couple may be strongly affected by the situation experienced beforehand, with implications that may concern both their perceptions of themselves and their role (also in terms of self-efficacy), and their relationship with the baby. In other contexts (Amatori, 2021), we have defined the mothers and fathers of preterm infants as "glass parents", precisely to emphasise the emotional and identity vulnerability characterising the family ecosystem in its intra- and inter-systemic relationships, which can affect all protagonists' quality of life.

Therefore, a preterm birth does not itself embody a direct link to the development of any form of disability or deficit, but it is undoubtedly a condition of vulnerability involving all protagonists for a shorter or longer period of time, affecting their quality of life. In this dimension, Special Education fits rightfully the role of *care* science, in the deepest meaning of a competent guidance (Gaspari, 2021) gradually leading to new points of view on the world, of rediscovered planning skills, whose endless variety is not only related to the mutability of personal stories, but also to the diverseness of past experiences and representational alternatives, originating from the encounter with the self and with the other.

2. Relationship parent-child in preterm birth: attachment and emotional interactions as protective factors

Literature of various sciences, such as pedagogy, developmental psychology, clinical and social psychology and psychoanalysis, uses the term "parenthood" in relation to a broad construct of growth and care skills towards children, which has taken on different dimensions over time, depending on the theoretical frame of reference considered.

The parenthood process undoubtedly involves the process of generativity, but not necessarily in a unidirectional way. Generativity usually evolves towards parenthood, but in other circumstances the parenthood project itself triggers the individual's and the couple's generativity (Cena, Imbasciati, 2010). However, it may be impossible for generativity to be supported or to evolve towards parenthood due to complex, inner, intra-psychic, interpersonal or social adversities. What specifically defines this transition, in fact, is the dimension of planning allowing an evolution from the physiological aspects of procreation to the educational, social and role aspects, typical of the maternal

and paternal conditions. The very event of birth itself must be indeed considered inside a multidimensional and procedural logic which entails the restructuring of the couple at different levels: first of all, in terms of functioning, which from dyadic becomes triadic, but also representational in terms of interpretations and past experiences, as well as social, considering the transition from couple to family and from family to society (Amatori, 2021).

The gestational path involves a specific time in which the dream of generativity is idealised and then materialised at birth. During the nine months, the future parents are required to manage with balance the complex interaction between the child's narcissistic dimensions and object investments, as well as to "fill" this time with planning and projective perspectives regarding the care responsibility towards the child. In fact, it is the child being the parent.

Motherhood and fatherhood are, however, specific dimensions, complementary to each other but not similar, within which parenthood takes place. Women become mothers according to a "natural" order, which is part of a biological process. Men, on the other hand, become fathers through a symbolic system belonging mainly to the order of culture (Cena, Imbasciati, 2010). What the two paths have undoubtedly in common is the waiting time, during which the man and the woman face a series of changes related to the transition from the title of son/daughter and husband/wife to that of mother and father. Those transitions require the deconstruction of the previous balance and a long process of readjusting and reorganisation.

It can happen, however, that the physiological time of gestation is interrupted beforehand by a preterm birth. Prematurity is a vulnerable condition of the newborn, which carries also a premature couple of parents becoming mother and father before being ready, in a delicate stage in which the psychopedagogical processes of pregnancy have not yet been completed. Instead of a happy event, the parental couple is forced to face a reality which is very different from what they might have envisaged during the pregnancy. As pointed out by Cena and Imbasciati (2010), «preterm birth is an abrupt breach of the hopes and expectations also towards the families of origin: the "life debt" to one's own family cannot be fully discharged, and there may also be a certain difficulty in placing and welcoming the newborn child within one's own family history» (p. 156).

In such a delicate condition, the two dimensions of educational care on which the event of a preterm birth might place considerable strain, are those involving relationships and planning. As a matter of fact, parents have lost the space needed to process the experience ahead of time (Stefana, Lavelli, 2016). In particular, mothers and fathers feel deprived of the possibility to provide their children with medical and basic care (such as breastfeeding, cuddling, changing their nappies...), thus creating a separating space which might put

couple's resilience, their planning capacity and the process of identification with the parental function and attachment to test (Stefana, Lavelli, 2016). A great deal of studies has shown, in this regard, that the emotional impact of a preterm birth on the parent and the way the parent copes with it, are crucial in influencing the child's behaviour and emotional development (Macey et al., 1987; Latva et al., 2008).

The painful emotions experienced by the mother and the father during the hospitalisation in the neonatal intensive care unit can jeopardise the stability of an early and harmonious relationship with the baby. In this sense, the path seems to be rather diversified between mother and father.

Specifically for the mother, the experience of prematurity can be experienced in three substantial moments. The first can be found in the moment immediately after the delivery, when the vulnerable condition of the newborn leads the mother to live an oscillating experience between optimistic and hopeful urges and discouragement, fear, anxiety. At a second stage, guilt induces the mother to interpret the experience as feeling responsible for not having been able to regularly carry the pregnancy to term. These interpretations, accompanied by feelings of incompleteness, can even be generalised to the point of developing the idea of not being a good mother, affecting the sense of self-efficacy and identification in the new role. The third stage, which is undoubtedly more resilient, reignites affection and it is strongly determined by the actual possibility for the mother to play a more active role in the child care. The rediscovered sensorial contact with the baby, experienced, for example, through the increasingly widespread practice of kangaroo-care, allows the restoration of the physical relationship between mother and baby, thus fostering a rediscovery of the experience.

In preterm birth situations, the father's role is particularly important, as mothers are often bedridden due to their postnatal conditions. These men often experience 'stress without rest' (Fava Vizziello, 2010) in the difficult attempt to support their partners – often filtering the information received from the medical team or accompanying them to meet the newborn for the first time once physically recovered – but burdened by work duties from which they cannot escape.

Both changes in the emotional structure of parents and relational difficulties may be overlooked by common observation with the risk of being underestimated. This is the fundamental reason why parents and children already need interventions aimed at promoting greater relationship intimacy as well as specific attention from professionals, during the hospitalisation in the neonatal intensive care unit.

The process of humanisation of neonatal intensive care and the attention which has been paid to family-centered approaches and to the early

reconnection of the family to the newborn (Bollini et al., 2009; Aite, 2011; 2017; Amatori, 2021) have undoubtedly and gradually brought to a deep transformation of spaces and contexts of neonatal care, transitioning from a kind of care oriented towards the “task” to another oriented towards the individual, from a vision of the parent as a “visitor” to parents considered partners in the whole care process. As a result, such approach is mainly oriented towards the person and takes the quality of life of the child and its family into consideration.

3. Prematurity and its educational and didactic implications

Studies in the field of neuroscience have shown how brain maturation, which was until recently considered an exclusive result of the genetic code, actually depends on the learning process of messages conveyed by the sensoriality of maternal and paternal contact, carried out by the neural networks of the foetus and the newborn (Cena, Imbasciati, 2010). A preterm infant must spend considerable time in the intensive care unit, which means, as mentioned above, that it is impossible for it to benefit from such sensoriality, which is instead the case for a term newborn. Moreover, studies in this direction have had the merit of bringing back to light the importance of the educational relationship, conceived as a practice «allowing each person to transcend a condition of incompleteness to transform and steer their own existence» (Maggiolini, 2021, p. 109), disconnecting it from a dimension of obviousness or innatism. The increasingly striking fact is that the quality of the parent-child relationship is responsible for each subsequent psychic and psychosomatic development of the child.

The separation from their own child, which parents have to undergo, can entail an emotional upheaval that research has shown to be essential to ensure that the child can optimally benefit from those silent learnings, essential for the functional maturation of the neural networks (Cena, Imbasciati, 2010).

International research data seems to be rather unanimous in considering preterm birth as a factor of greater vulnerability with respect to the potential outbreak of certain emotional, socio-affective, behavioural and/or learning difficulties.

In the United States, in particular, the preterm birth incidence accounts for 12%, which is why it is possible to estimate that there may be up to four children prematurely born in a class of a medium-sized US primary school (Hornby, Woodward, 2009).

Baron and colleagues (2012), in a review of late preterm birth neuropsychological and medical outcome literature, reports lower intelligence scores, more attention and internalizing problems, and poor academic achievement at age 5 years, with higher socioeconomic status and maternal education being protective. Baron and colleagues (2012) further identified risk of developmental delay even in children identified as “healthy latepreterm”. (Kelly, 2015)

According to the scientific literature review proposed by Battge and colleagues (2014), children born only a few weeks before their physiological term also seem to be at risk of having difficulties at school. This aspect increases in the case of male preterm infants, who have an extremely low birth weight (less than 1000g) and require on average an additional year of school before entering employment or higher education, and whose adult income is 25% lower compared to that of those born with a standard birth weight.

As a result, it would seem that low birth weight and low gestational age may be, in every respect, potential predictors of future special educational needs. The above-mentioned study carried out by Bettge et al. (2014) in Germany has, as a matter of fact, underlined the value of early childhood educational services (nurseries and pre-primary schools) in terms of early intervention, which is strongly able to limit the risk of developing learning difficulties in preterm children.

The work conducted by Michelle Kelly (2015) at Villanova University points out how preterm children are present in studies concerning children affected by learning difficulties, behavioural difficulties or medical conditions (for ex. asthma), without being indeed recognised as being preterm. This “omission” is not of minor importance, as it underlines how the experience of prematurity, after the event itself, is hardly taken into account, thus risking of not taking prompt and timely actions of prevention and of plans development to optimise the achievements of these children.

The learning difficulties experienced by preterm children by the time they enter school are associated with the fact that many of them, especially in pre-primary school, do not receive specific interventions, whereas teachers' assessments of learning progress can be particularly promising as a simple and effective means to identify these problems in a timely manner and, therefore, intervening in a targeted manner (Taylor et al., 2011).

The association between low birth weight and/or prematurity and the onset of Specific Learning Disorder has been recently object of investigation. The outcome associated with the occurrence of this risk factor is a below-average performance in reading, writing and calculation. However, this is not always sufficient to reach a relevant diagnosis of SLD. Yet, the Consensus Conference (2011) highlights that delays in reading, writing and calculation skills are

anyway associated with preterm births. These are difficulties particularly arising in the first years of school and persisting through adolescence. Reading difficulties are particularly noticeable and are characterised by the production of about twice as many mistakes. Difficulties in reading skills at school age may increase if medical complications are also associated with the preterm birth. For example, those affected by a bronchopulmonary dysplasia obtain lower results in reading skills (Kelly, 2016; Taylor et al., 2011). The studies conducted with preterm children have reported the occurrence of clear difficulties with the writing process. It has been shown that preterm children have lower performance in handwriting legibility and writing speed. This could be related to difficulties in sensorimotor skills, particularly fine coordination, skills of manipulation and of visual-motor integration.

Very few studies have, however, been carried out on calculation difficulties. General numerical and mathematical skills were examined using standardised tests. Once again, difficulties in mathematics are particularly noticeable when a medical complication is associated with the preterm birth.

Lastly, Farooqi and colleagues (2013) focused on the potential correlation between a preterm birth and difficulties involving executive functions. The Swedish researchers examined about 80 children, born very prematurely (before the 26th gestational week) at the age of 11 years old, with the aim of assessing the potential occurrence, frequency, characteristics and severity of behavioural problems related to executive functions and learning abilities. These children have been compared to a group of the same age, using a diagnostic tool of proven reliability.

The results revealed that children with a history of prematurity faced significantly more problems in behaviours related to executive functions (attention, hyperactivity/ipoactivity, impulsivity, planning and organisation, working memory) and a deficit in learning abilities compared to the control subjects. It should be emphasised that only a small portion of preterm infants (between 10 and 30% depending on the investigation modality) had a clinically relevant impairment.

The authors conclude by underlining that prematurity can be considered an 'overall' condition (without, therefore, alarmism or preconceptions), but they recall that it may be associated with certain "fragilities", of which it is necessary to be aware and which need to be addressed with an accurate diagnosis and appropriate, targeted and timely support interventions.

4. Critical issues and research perspectives in Special Education

As far as the topic addressed in this contribution is concerned, we would

like, without any claim of exhaustiveness, to identify the problems and highlight possible solutions in terms of educational responses, which can be tested at a theoretical-practical level (Amatori, 2021).

First of all, we would like to draw the attention of Special Education to preterm births, together with the general dimension of birth and the perinatal period, which are still poorly investigated in our disciplinary framework. With regard to prematurity, it should be noted that, according to data from the Italian Society of Neonatology (SIN) the current global situation linked to the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a surge in preterm births, especially during the lockdown of March 2020. During the first wave (with an analysis ending on the 27th of July 2020) preterm births to Covid-positive mothers accounted for 19.7%. However, looking at the data up to the 15th of September the percentage dropped to 14%. According to the National Covid-19 Registry, this is more than double compared to the usual average (ANSA, 2020).

In the light of these data, the educational interest towards prematurity certainly deserves further attention in relation to ethical, as well as educational and didactic dynamics.

The coexistence of personal and family histories and care services implies, in fact, a moral competence that is first and foremost ethical, since it recalls basic values to be shared. It is precisely pedagogical ethics pushing us towards the virtuous reconciliation of protective and, at the same time, emancipatory drives with regard to fragility situations. In fact, this direction is the basis of any proper life project.

Educational issues primarily involve the family dimension also according to the logics of prevention and targeted intervention, which are triggered by awareness-raising practices in different, but always multidisciplinary, contexts and spaces (Giacconi, 2019). In that behalf, the role of Special Education is valuable and indispensable in a purely epistemological sense, as it is oriented towards foresight and feasibility of planning and methodologies.

From an educational point of view, several open questions remain, which are worth analysing firstly at the level of possibilities, then at that of implementation.

Ensuring quality social inclusion means promoting goals and results identified with children's belonging, engagement and learning. Participation is, therefore, a key process to reach those results and emphasises the crucial role played by early childhood education services. The predominant approach is indeed still focused on performance rather than services, as shown by 2019 ISTAT data concerning the mismatch between supply and demand fulfilment. The crisis endured by families with regard to the complex attempt to reconcile care tasks and work needs is exacerbated by the potential occurrence of difficulties connected to the weak health of their child. Moreover, it finds no

place in a social welfare system which is unable to enhance (in political, economic, structural and educational terms) the significance of nurseries and pre-primary schools. These are, in fact, safe and welcoming spaces, ensuring the quality of children growth and education and able to support social, emotional, physical and intellectual learning and to promote the development of new skills in a way that positively affects children development and quality of life.

In this framework, the preparation of educators and teachers is undoubtedly a relevant and particularly important aspect, as they are the first having the opportunity to observe children in their very first social interactions with their peers outside the domestic environment. Their contribution is key in providing appropriate, timely and inclusive intervention with regard to the development and growth of children.

In conclusion, despite progress in neonatological care, preterm birth continues to represent a risk factor for the child's development and a potentially stressful event for parents. It is, therefore, essential to more systematically implement interdisciplinary actions of prevention and intervention, in which the role of Special Education is valuable and crucial for the wellbeing of the child, its family and care professionals.

References

- Aite L., a cura di (2017). *Il dolore alle soglie della vita. Dilemmi etici e necessità del dialogo in Terapia Intensiva Neonatale*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.
- Aite L. (2011). La relazione come strumento di cura nelle terapie intensive neonatali. *Quaderni ACP*, 6: 267-269.
- Amatori G. (2021). Genitori di vetro. Pedagogia speciale e sostegno alla genitorialità nella nascita pretermine. In: Amatori G., Maggiolini S., a cura di, *Pedagogia speciale per la prima infanzia. Politiche, famiglie, servizi*. Milano: Pearson.
- Amatori G., Maggiolini S., a cura di (2021). *Pedagogia speciale per la prima infanzia. Politiche, famiglie, servizi*. Milano: Pearson.
- ANSA (2020). Covid-19 ha causato un picco di nascite premature, Pubblicazione online, https://www.ansa.it/canale_saluteebenessere/notizie/salute_bambini/medicina/2020/11/16/covid-19-ha-causato-un-picco-di-nascite-premature_16d67ace-15b8-4231-8edc-61e192462b41.html [ultimo accesso 26/04/2021].
- Ardito R.B., Vicino B., Adenzato M. (2014). Nascita pretermine e attaccamento: Stili di interazione e profili psicologici. *Attaccamento e sistemi complessi*, 1(2): 43-56.
- Beolchini E., Coletti M.F., Dall'Oglio A.M., Sergo M., Guadagni A.M., Seganti G., Orzalesi M. (2006), Il sostegno alla genitorialità in Terapia Intensiva Neonatale: proposta di uno strumento di lavoro per la formazione degli operatori. *Psicologia clinica dello sviluppo*, 1: 175-182.

- Besio S., Caldin R., a cura di (2019). *La pedagogia speciale in dialogo con altre discipline*. Milano: Guerini Scientifica.
- Bettge S., Oberwöhrmann S., Brockstedt M., Bühner C (2014). Birth Weight and Special Educational Needs. *Deutsches Ärzteblatt International*, 111: 337-344.
- Bollini G., Bottani D., Lolli A., Carabelli L., Coscia P. (2009). Il riavvicinamento precoce della famiglia al neonato nella Terapia Intensiva Neonatale. *QA*, 19(3): 112-114.
- Bowlby J. (1999), *Attaccamento e perdita (3 voll.)*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.
- Brazelton R.B. (1973), *Neonatal behavioral assessment scale*. London: Spastics International Medical Publications.
- Candelori C., Trumello C., Babore A. (2013). Un'esperienza di ricerca-intervento nel Reparto di Terapia Intensiva Neonatale. L'incontro con i genitori. In: *Richard e Piggie*, 21(3): 238-262.
- Candelori C., Trumello C., Babore A., Keren M., Romanelli R. (2015), The experience of premature birth for fathers: the application of the Clinical Interview for Parents of High-Risk Infants (CLIP) to an Italian sample. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6: 1444.
- CeDAP – Certificato di Assistenza al Parto, *Analisi dell'evento nascita – Anno 2016*, Roma, http://www.salute.gov.it/imgs/C_17_pubblicazioni_2881_allegato.pdf.
- Cena L., Imbasciati A. (2010), Parenting nella nascita a termine e pretermine: fattori di protezione e rischio. In: Cena L., Imbasciati A., Baldoni F., *La relazione genitore-bambino*. Milano: Springer-Verlag.
- Consensus Conference (2011). *Disturbi specifici di apprendimento*. Milano.
- Farooqi A., Hägglöf B., Serenius F. (2013). Behaviours related to executive functions and learning skills at 11 years of age after extremely preterm birth: a Swedish national prospective follow-up study. *Acta Paediatrica*, 102: 625-634.
- Fava Vizziello G. (2010), Quando nasce un bambino prematuro. In: Righetti P.L., a cura di, *Gravidanza e contesti psicopatologici*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Fisher D., Khashu, M., Adama, E.A., Feeley, N., Garfield, C.F., Ireland, J., Koliouli, F., Lindberg, B., Nørgaard, B., Provenzi, L., Thomson-Salo, F., van Teijlingen, E. (2018), Fathers in neonatal units: Improving infant health by supporting the baby-father bond and mother-father coparenting. *Journal of Neonatal Nursing*, 24: 306-312.
- Garfield C.F., Simon C.D., Rutsohn J., Lee Y.S. (2017), Stress from the neonatal intensive care unit to home: paternal and maternal cortisol rhythms in parents of premature infants. *Journal of Perinatal & Neonatal Nursing*, 3: 257-265.
- Gaspari P. (2021). *Cura educativa, relazione d'aiuto e inclusione. Categorie fondative della Pedagogia speciale nelle professionalità educative*. Roma: Anicia.
- Gerstein E.D., Poehlmann-Tynan J. (2015). Transactional Processes in Children Born Preterm: Influences of Mother-Child Interactions and Parenting Stress. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 29(5): 777-787.
- Giaconi C. (2019). La prevenzione come core category del dialogo tra medicina e Pedagogia Speciale. In: Besio S., Caldin R, a cura di, *La pedagogia speciale in dialogo con altre discipline*. Milano: Guerini Scientifica.
- Hornby G., Woodward L.J. (2009). Educational needs of schooled children born very and extremely prematurely: A review. *Educational Psychology Review*, 21: 247-266.

- Ionio C., Colombo C., Brazzoduro V., Mascheroni E., Confalonieri E., Castoldi F., Lista G. (2016). Mothers and Fathers in NICU: The Impact of Preterm Birth on Parental Distress. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 12(4): 604-621.
- ISTAT (2019), *Le statistiche dell'ISTAT sulla povertà. Anno 2018*, Roma: ISTAT.
- Kelly M.M. (2015). Educational Implications of Preterm Birth: A National Sample of 8- to 11-Year-Old Children Born Prematurely and Their Full-Term Peers. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, 30(5): 464-470.
- Latva R., Korja R., Salmelin R.K. et al (2008). How is maternal recollection of the birth experience related to the behavioral and emotional outcome of preterm infants?. *Early Hum Dev*, 84: 587-594.
- Macey T.J., Harmon R.J., Easterbooks M.A. (1987). Impact of premature birth on the development of the infant in the family. *J Consulting Clin Psychol*, 55: 846-852.
- Maggiolini S. (2021). Ricalcolo il percorso. Mappe e navigator per orientarsi nel "viaggio inatteso". In: Amatori G., Maggiolini S., a cura di, *Pedagogia speciale per la prima infanzia. Politiche, famiglie, servizi*. Milano: Pearson.
- Mercer Young J., Hauser-Cram P. (2006). Mother-Child Interaction as a Predictor of Mastery Motivation in Children with Disabilities Born Preterm. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 24(4): 252-263.
- Negri R. (2012). *Il neonato in terapia intensiva. Un modello neuropsicoanalitico di prevenzione*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina.
- Padovani F.H., Duarte G., Martinez F.E., Linhares M.B. (2011). Perceptions of breastfeeding in mothers of babies born preterm in comparison to mothers of full-term babies. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 14(2): 884-898.
- Simeone S., Guillari A., Perrone M., Pucciarelli G., Dell'Angelo G., Gargiulo G., Comentale G., Palma G., Rea T. (2017). Studio fenomenologico sul vissuto esperienziale dei genitori di bambini ricoverati in una Terapia Intensiva di cardiocirurgia: comprendere per aiutare. *NSC Nursing*, 2: 15-23.
- Stefana A., Lavelli M. (2016). I genitori dei bambini premature. Una prospettiva psicodinamica. *Medico e bambino*, 5: 327-332.
- Stern D.N. (1998). *Le interazioni madre-bambino nello sviluppo e nella clinica*. Milano: Cortina.
- Taylor G.H., Klein N., Anselmo M.G. et al. (2011). Learning Problems in Kindergarten Students with Extremely Preterm Birth. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med*, 165(9): 819-825.
- Tooten A., Hall R.A., Hoffenkamp H.N., Braeken J., Vingerhoets A.J.J.M., van Bakel H.J. (2014). Maternal and paternal infant representations: A comparison between parents of term and preterm infants. *Infant Behav Dev.*, 37(3): 366-379.
- UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2009), *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Ure A.M., Treyvaud K., Thompson D.K. (2016). Neonatal brain abnormalities associated with autism spectrum disorder in children born very preterm. *Autism Research*, 9(5): 543-552.
- WHO (2015). *Recommendations on interventions to improve preterm birth outcomes*. Geneva: WHO Press.
- Winnicott D.W. (1987). *I bambini e le loro madri*. Milano: Cortina.

Trauma Informed Care During a Global Pandemic: Synergies and multidisciplinary boundaries for working with childhood, adolescence, senility and disability

Francesca Salis*, Britt Rhodes**,

Abstract

This article addresses the issue of a trauma informed approach from a multidisciplinary perspective and global and systemic taking charge. The work is defined in the current pandemic background, with particular reference to the most fragile persons, in every phase of existence, especially when the fragility is due to deficit and disability. The guiding principles of trauma-informed organisations consist in creating a safe and reliable environment, allowing peer support and self-help, implementing personal empowerment, voice and choice. The TI approach aims to reduce exposure to adversity by implementing collective capacities for support, assistance, education and guidance.

Trauma informed approach is a border territory to Special Pedagogy: the second part of the work outlines the role of Special Pedagogy in trauma and the issues highlighted by the COVID 19 pandemic, with the possible collective traumatic effect it can cause. The importance of recognizing, evaluating and dealing with stress due to trauma is highlighted in promoting collaboration with families and social networking, shaping policies and cultures to manage emergencies in relation to everyone's needs, especially the most exposed people such as people with disabilities.

Key words: trauma informed, disability, life cycle, systemic approach, special pedagogy

First submission: 01/05/2021, accepted: 19/05/2021

Available online: 28/06/2021

* Researcher of Pedagogy and Special Education at the University of Macerata, Italy. E-mail: francesca.salis@unimc.it.

** Professor at Luther College Decorah, Iowa, USA. E-mail: rhodbr01@luther.edu.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa11822

1. Introduction

Over the last year, during a global pandemic, social workers have been on the frontlines providing essential services as individuals, families, and communities deal with rapidly changing environments. The COVID19 pandemic has created unique pressures on each of these systems especially as we experience the effects of stay at home orders, social distancing, and economic shutdowns. The primary mission of the social work profession is to “enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (NASW, 2017, p.2). Driven by the core professional values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, self- determination, importance of human relationships, integrity and competence (NASW, 2017), social workers provide essential services especially to those most marginalized populations including those with physical and mental health barriers, children and those who are low income. Furthermore, we know that communities can play a supportive role particularly for those most marginalized.

2. Defining trauma in an ecological perspective

While there are many definitions of trauma, including clinical definitions found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the conceptual definition developed by a panel of professionals in partnership with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services of America (SAMHSA) defines trauma as, “an event, series of events or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being” (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 7).

There are three parts of this definition that are important to underscore: *events, experiences and effects* (SAMHSA, 2014). This definition allows us to better understand how two people or groups of people can experience the same event but have very different experiences of that event which results in varying psychological and social effects. The COVID 19 pandemic is undoubtedly an example of a shared event for which individuals, families and communities experience differently that impact the lasting effects. Although globally we are all experiencing the spread of this fatal virus, experiences of this are largely dependent on a number of personal, material, social and environmental variables.

In the discipline of social work, the ecological model undergirds assessment and intervention with individuals, groups and families. Emerging from the central aims of addressing both social factors and psychological functioning, the ecological model has two core assumptions: 1) transactions take place between people and their physical and social environments and 2) Human development occurs through interaction with the environment (Gitterman and Germain, 2008). As a result, social workers are interested in questions of adaptation and methods for working with not only individuals to help them adapt to the environment but how we, as community members, address environmental barriers as targets of change for inclusion. Humans have an innate ability to adapt but need proper environmental conditions based on individual and group needs (Gitterman and Germain, 2008; Van Wormer, 2007). Rapid shifts in society and community can positively or negatively impact an individual's functioning and development (VanWormer, 2007; Gitterman and Germain, 2008). We are collectively responsible for supporting and promoting environmental conditions that are conducive to a diverse range of abilities.

The ecological perspective situates the individual experience within the larger social and political context. As a result, individual experience is situated in the context of interpersonal trauma and collective trauma in other words, the cumulative toll of trauma at the micro, mezzo and macro levels. A range of ecological variables impact the individual experience reminding us that although events may be the same across populations there is tremendous diversity in the experience and effects of those events based on social identities, structural inequalities, and social and political variables. As we think about the global pandemic it serves us well to think about the unique ways in which vulnerable populations' individual trauma is magnified by stay at home orders and economic shutdowns that that can have devastating effects for children and adults who rely on essential services, and safety, from places like schools and community organizations.

Ellis and Dietz (2017) propose a tree as a useful illustration of the ways in which early childhood adversity are magnified by variables of social location. Some of these variables include: poverty, discrimination, community disruption, violence, poor housing and lack of opportunity, economic mobility and social capital (Ellis and Dietz, 2017). Although developed by scholars well before COVID19, the global pandemic has amplified conditions such as social isolation, economic opportunity, community disruption, poverty, implications of inadequate housing and, in some cases, violence both in home and in community. COVID19 has made us acutely aware that social location and community-based resources impact one's experience of trauma. As a result, it is important that we transform and enhance our community-based systems to

acknowledge the ways in which vulnerable populations are experiencing not only individual and interpersonal trauma but also collective trauma in community. While individual trauma should be addressed through specific clinical interventions, we can all work within our communities and organizations to better understand, respond and deliver services to those who have experienced events that have lasting effects.

1.1. Trauma Informed Care

For over two decades, scholars and practitioners in both social science and public health have examined the relationship between early childhood experiences and risky behaviors that can contribute to disease and disability in adulthood (www.aces360.org). A decade after the first Adverse Childhood Experiences study was conducted in California (Felitti and Anda, 2009), Fallot and Harris (2009) coined the phrase “trauma informed care” to prompt a paradigm shift in clinical practice. Carello and Butler define “trauma informed” as a service context that operates from an understanding of “the ways in which violence, victimization, and other traumatic experiences may have impacted the lives of the individuals involved and to apply that understanding to the design of systems and provision of services so they can accommodate trauma survivors’ needs and are consonant with health and recovery” (2015, p.264). Trauma-informed organizations demonstrate their commitment by adhering to five foundational principles of trauma informed care: safety, trustworthiness, collaboration, empowerment, and choice (Wolf et al., 2014; Bath, 2008). These principles are infused into the organization and experienced by both clients and staff. The result of this paradigm shift is that rather than asking, “*What is wrong with you?*” practitioners in trauma informed environments ask “*What happened to you?*” (Wolf et al., 2014).

Trauma-informed care is defined as a service context that operates from an understanding of “the ways in which violence, victimization, and other traumatic experiences may have impacted the lives of the individuals involved and to apply that understanding to the design of systems and provision of services so they can accommodate trauma survivors’ needs and are consonant with health and recovery” (2015, p. 264). The result of this paradigm shift is that rather than asking, “*What is wrong with you?*” practitioners in trauma informed environments ask “*What happened to you?*”. Furthermore, trauma informed practitioners look beyond the individual pathologies and diagnoses and consider ways in which the environment is the target of change in order to provide a more adaptive context for individuals. Considering environmental adaptation is core to inclusion as it asks societies, communities and institutions to adapt to better meet the needs of and diversity of the population.

3. Special Pedagogy and Informed Trauma Approach. Territories, borders and plots for an effective helping relationship.

In this section of the contribution, we want to focus attention on the effects of trauma on the most vulnerable groups of the population and on the importance of the role of pedagogy and specifically of the special one, in dealing with emergencies and collective traumas, with their inevitable and painful individual relapses. Stressful and traumatic events are not only exceptional ones such as massacres or earthquakes, albeit sadly recurring, which can concern aspects of everyday life to which everyone is exposed and which have even more disruptive effects on more fragile social groups, such as people with disabilities, the elderly and children (Vaccarelli, 2016; Ardino, 2020). Existential situations that involve accidents, death, violence, generate stress or trauma that pedagogical care professionals are generally not trained to deal with immediately, although it is shown that timely management and early intervention are predictors of better and better faster processing (Carello and Butler, 2014). The intervention of second level figures, such as the pedagogist; as basic as teachers and educators, it represents an act of constant and fundamental care, implemented in the places of everyday life. B. Rhodes (2019) refers to the causes of trauma, such as abuse, violence, neglect and the data tell how the disabled, the elderly and children are more exposed to the risk of trauma. In this perspective, it is also useful to highlight the construct of witnessing violence which refers to acts of physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence, activated by affective figures of reference and which, perpetrated in the home, lend themselves to a more effective care by figures active at home, such as educators.

The traumatic consequences to which the victims are exposed cannot be considered only as side effects but also as pervasive and persistent relapses into the fragile experiences of people often lacking the capacity for defense.

International acts such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, the UN Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development recall a commitment by States and organizations to these aspects.

In the Diagnostic Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association (2014) it is reported that the psychological suffering following exposure to a traumatic or stressful event is highly variable and many people who have been exposed show a phenotype in which anhedonic and dysphoric symptoms, externalized anger and aggression or dissociative symptoms occur, instead of anxiety and fear. Due to the variability of these manifestations, the disorders resulting from emotional trauma have been grouped into a separate category: Disorders related to traumatic and stressful events.

Not all negative events are traumatic and not all traumatic events generate post-traumatic symptoms and intense psychological suffering. It is relevant to underline how stress represents a physiological response to stimuli perceived as unusual and of extraordinary impact on the organism which in the dimension of the eustress predisposes the response to adaptation, while in distress an adaptive response is not implemented, but an accumulation of potentially traumatic stressful tension, especially in the case of prolonged exposure to specific stressors (Cyrulnik and Malaguti, 2005). Within the clinical therapeutic setting there are precise and targeted intervention conditions, but in the educational and pedagogical field, taking charge must face behaviors and attitudes concerning the environments and practices of everyday life: in the family, at school, in the contexts of social life. Bereavement, separation, an episode of violence and/or bullying, can cause an anomalous activation of behaviors (Giordano, 2013), that are often verbally unexpressed in people with disabilities but that must be recognized and taken care of, reshaping the modalities of emotional regulation functional to subjective well-being and to the relationship with the environment. A traumatic situation can generate an identity fracture and the interruption of one's autobiographical narration (Salis, 2019b), suspended in a distressing present, which cannot look to the past either as a secure basis or to a future full of uncertainties. Clinical treatment is certainly the answer in these cases, although not the only one: pedagogical knowledge can provide a complementary treatment to every therapeutic path (Vaccarelli, 2016) through the authentic care relationship: it is a matter of considering care in its real value, distinct from *care* or *cure* through the implementation and dissemination of the inputs proposed by the professionals of the helping relationship that promote self-care and accompany the person in his path to conquer well-being (Mortari, 2006). The pedagogical treatment can transform itself from implicit latency to a recognized presence of a knowledge in the making, empirical, situational, individual, profound, dialogic, hermeneutic, entropathic, complex. Deeply incisive in the most fragile existential experiences.

4. Exposure to trauma in people with disabilities: Covid 19 pandemic and possible collective traumatization

It is important to draw a synthetic picture of the scenario where we analyze the phenomena of traumatic stress in people with disabilities and/or special educational needs in the various age groups, emphasized by the terrible global experience of the Covid 19 pandemic which has accentuated the already previous marginalization. Social status of people with disabilities, a significant

number of citizens estimated over four million. The problems relating to school and social inclusion do not arise from the social distancing imposed due to health restrictions: the families of people with disabilities often live in conditions of loneliness and isolation and schools, or day residential centers, constitute, especially in the most complex cases, the only way of socializing outside the family context. For a family with a disabled member (approximately 94% of the 275,000 Italian students who benefit from school support or certified under law 104/'92 have a complex cognitive disability), the ordinary activities necessary for everyday life or leisure are often hindered, or precluded, so we can speak of a problematic condition extended to the entire family unit. By complex disability we mean the conditions of extreme fragility concerning the sphere of autonomy and self-management in the presence of various sensory, motor, cognitive and mental deficits. It is more correct to use the phrase "complex disabilities" instead of the "serious" label (Goussot, 2014; Salis, 2016) to highlight the person as the protagonist of an evolutionary path, of humanization and citizenship that goes beyond the condition of the deficit and that challenges systems to change according to an inclusive perspective. This is all more true in adulthood, as often the attention is oriented to early childhood forgetting that people with disabilities, since 18 years of age, have to travel a long existential path through adulthood and senility (Goussot, 2014). Although Italy is the European country that first legislated, over 40 years ago, the abolition of differential classes in schools, prefiguring ever wider inclusive scenarios, and despite the fact that Law 328/2000 recognized the value of the construct "project of life", the process of inclusion is still not accepted and spread throughout the territory and the ethical and scientific values that support it have not fully established themselves. The reality data describe a school with classes that are always crowded and difficult to manage, the presence of several disabled pupils per class group, insufficient support teachers, sometimes without training or specialization. Can we talk about the traumatic effects of the pandemic and the related lockdowns? Only over time it will be possible to make a real assessment of the impact that social distancing has produced on the balance and mental and social health of children and adolescents, with and without disabilities. However, some considerations are already possible. The first international data on the impact of the lockdown on children and adolescents come from China, the first country to have experimented with extreme containment measures, in a quantitatively significant measure so as to affect the daily lives of millions of people. The most salient behavioral manifestations concerned irritability, aggression, sleep and eating disorders, emotional dysregulation, attention and concentration difficulties with repercussions on cognitive performance (Gitterman and Germain, 2008). The lockdown, among other effects, has imposed a forced and prolonged

coexistence, often in small and inadequate spaces, without interruptions, putting a strain on the parental competence managed in the ordinary in different physical and relational times and spaces. The forced and sudden change has created disorientation and confusion, not only in children and adolescents but also in the adults of reference, triggering tensions and causing a tense and nervous family climate.

Due to their structure and organization, which responds to economic and work logics as well as social and cultural ones, families tend to delegate various responsibilities, especially the educational one: to school, to grandparents, to sports and social centers. All this suddenly became unavailable, forcing parents to govern situations further complicated by the stress and collective fear that the virus caused, while having to cope with work needs from home. Certainly, all this indicates the need to regain proper exercise of parental responsibility, reconstructing a physical structure as well as relational spaces and modifying attitudes of dysfunctional attachment, authoritarianism, overprotection, entanglement and sometimes of inverted parenthood.

The Covid 19 pandemic and the consequent social confinement have undoubtedly put parents in crisis and a use of media communication deliberately aimed at creating and feeding fear and anguish in adults has produced the pouring of these emotions on the smallest and most fragile (Halladay *et al.*, 2020). The anguish of adults is also rooted in concerns about work and the outcomes of the economic crisis, so the impact of lockdown and confinement has different effects depending on the social and economic context of the family unit. The syndrome of the nest, intended as a shelter, of the house as a protected and safe space is one of the declinations of this data, but there are others: violence, discomfort, tensions that before the pandemic were interrupted by moments of distance are dramatically aggravated. The phase following closure, still full of uncertainties and fears, generates a sense of bewilderment and difficulty in re-insertion, which affects everyone, from childhood to adulthood (Isidori and Vaccarelli, 2013). The lack of physicality in relationships and the sudden breaking of routines particularly affected little ones, children and people with cognitive and/or behavioral disabilities. The narrations of some parents are reported, significant in their eloquence:

S, mother of P. 12, Down syndrome (Tuscany).

Not being able to go to school anymore, not being able to attend the rehabilitation center and the education center has completely destabilized him. He, once quiet and sociable, has become irritable, grumpy, sometimes aggressive even if only towards objects. Despite our explanations he hasn't understood why he isn't allowed to go out and lead his life. He cannot sleep, he wants to eat all the time and obsessively repeats that he wants to go out. Nobody has contacted us for distance learning. I think he was

feeling desperate because he thought that everything outside our house no longer existed.

R. Father of S. autism spectrum syndrome with cognitive disability, 8 years old (Marche).

Keeping him at home was not possible. Crises followed each other continuously and we fell into the abyss. Nothing calmed him. So, before we could walk within 200 meters from the house, I took him out. We were stopped by diligent police forces and despite the evidence of my son's condition we were fined. Yes, not understanding what was happening, he had a violent crisis with acts of self-harm. No understanding, indeed, they told me that I was lucky that the period did not allow it, otherwise they would have asked for a TSO (compulsory psychiatric hold). I believe, with great bitterness, that there is a lot of ignorance around disability and I see inclusion as a mirage.

MR, mother of V, Angelman syndrome, 9 years old (Emilia Romagna).

The setbacks of this lockdown are devastating. I have the feeling that in two months I have lost all the work done over the years. She has lost her sphincter control, she wants to be fed, she cries to express needs that we often don't understand, and then crises break out violently.

L. mother of F., Down syndrome, 10 years (Sardinia).

Despite an attentive and present online support teacher, we were unable to make him concentrate in front of the video except for a few minutes. He has difficulty concentrating and is always tense and afraid, he constantly asks if he, us, his friends are going to die. He does not understand what happens but he is afraid of it.

I., mother of Y. 5 years old, cognitive impairment (Abruzzo).

The lockdown produced a sense of estrangement in all of us. She doesn't sleep, she always wants to be close to me, and I sometimes lose patience because I have a brother to take care of and work to do in smart mode. I fear that the trauma is something hard to deal with in the long run, not just the near future.

All the witnesses tell of the changed relational climate, of the emphasized emotions, of the lack of physicality in relationships. But there are also other types of psychological trauma: those of children with a sick and isolated parent at home. Those who have lost their grandparents, or those of the children of health workers on the front line in the hospital, forced to stay away from their parents, deprived of any contact. Certainly, difficult situations to explain, to understand and accept for the little ones and for those with a deficit. Children

often register changes on an empathic level by absorbing parental anxieties without understanding them. It is therefore very important to always tell them the truth, with a language suitable for their age and cognitive level. Not telling children the truth creates frustration, distrust and a feeling of being betrayed by their parents, it can generate real feelings of guilt (“it’s my fault if I don’t deserve the trust of my parents, it’s my fault if mom and dad are angry”). Lies prevent the child from processing pain and fear (illness, bereavement).

Thus, what is implicit becomes an inner persecutory ghost. The same approach affects the elderly, often far from the reality outside their home and alien to technology, therefore lacking the tools for decoding reality that must be assisted by reference operators capable of assuming a role of accompaniment to understanding and event processing. It is very important, in these cases, for adults and children, to recreate new reassuring routines, to establish spatial and temporal boundaries, not to leave the child or the elderly alone in front of the television and carefully sift the contents to which they are exposed. Paradoxically, a form of interaction has been reached, called DAD (distance learning), which has forced children and young people to excessive exposure to screens while the importance of limiting the use of smartphones, tablets, PCs and TVs has been so far upheld. It will be difficult to return to the limitations of these tools especially for children with disabilities.

Distance learning resulted for many in an excessive burden of homework and many children expressed rejection reactions. Parents were called to an unusual helping and supervisory role, often without having the necessary skills to cope with the school burden. In many families, problems have arisen related to the need to use IT tools at the same time by several children for distance learning and by parents for smartworking. Online education has widened the social divide and those who have found themselves without tools and supports have been cut off. In cases where the family is exposed to physical or verbal violence, the chances of requesting help and support have been more difficult, making the situation even more traumatic. Even in situations of separated parents, children have been forced to live a long period with one parent, deprived of a habit often built with great difficulty: even in these situations it is difficult to explain and understand. It is necessary to change the paradigm passing from the logic of distance to that of proximity. Readjusting to normality is neither simple nor taken for granted. Impossible to think of resuming everything from the point where it was abruptly interrupted.

The effects of distancing and fear have caused anxiety-depressive syndromes and traumas of various kinds that will need to be recognized and managed. We will have to get used to living with demanding means of protection, especially children and people with disabilities, and phobias and

mild traumas may be generated, such as resistance to accepting reality, which manifest themselves with headaches, eating disorders, tachycardia, anxiety, depression, sleep disorders.

In these cases, it will be important to deal with the change that will be endured in order to accept a reality that can no longer be the same as before, but will require a commitment to re-adapt. In many ways, the pandemic has produced a disruption of the care organization and now more than ever it is necessary to resist a pervasive medicalizing approach. It is necessary to reiterate how in the detection of individual needs (Maslow, 1943; 1987) we find at the base the need to be safe and be protected, founding principles of the informed trauma approach.

In families where there is a person with disabilities, the home educator, under the supervision of the pedagogist and psychologist, could resume the ranks of the informed trauma educational relationship, starting to work on emotions that should not be removed but addressed and processed (Salis, 2019b).

The more complex traumatic forms, on the other hand, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, must be faced with specialized multidisciplinary support, with particular attention to people with disabilities, who find it difficult to understand and respect the rules; to people with autism spectrum disorder and to those with psychiatric pathologies, in which panic attacks, anxiety and irritability are more likely to appear, which often results in crisis behaviors. How to deal with all this correctly? First of all, by recognizing the problem and creating a climate of acceptance and availability, of proximity to the precautions imposed. It is essential to create physical and temporal spaces to elaborate the new reality and weave the plots of new routines, without indulging in shame or a sense of perceived ineffectiveness. The narrative approach, sharing, mutual help groups can be a valid reference, with the support of experienced specialists. Upon resuming face-to-face teaching activities, teachers will have to consider the emotional baggage that has burdened the children, activating educational pathways of global care without teaching exclusively focused on disciplines and contents.

In the perspective of future research on trauma, the interdisciplinary dimension is central, which alongside neuroscience and psychology sees the role of special pedagogy increasingly valued, specifically in its narrative dimension. The trauma creates a dysregulation of the most ancient defense systems causing a dysfunctional activation of the alarm mechanisms that can be correlated to the environmental realities (figures of hearing and care) perceived as a source of danger and threat instead of safety and well-being. Such traumatic interpersonal experiences, often early and constant in individual history, can be supported with metacognitive educational interventions aimed

at identifying and managing emotions. The traumatized brain, first engaged in primary neurovegetative and behavioral responses (attack, flight, freezing, fainting) subsequently activates autobiographical resources on the basis of the need to build a sense and a meaning to integrate traumatic memories.

Trauma can hinder the balanced definition of the self, generating a perception of negative value, emptiness and shame that can be repaired through a personal narrative genesis aimed at seeking balance between the various parts of the self, in the remodeling of the relationship with the environment. The narration allows the emergence of the form and the care of the Self (Demetrio, 1995,1996) the narrative recognition could be extremely important in identifying the insidious trauma, that is the one referable to an apparent normality that in reality conceals exclusion, dehumanization and harassment (psycho-physical) experienced by people exposed to discrimination, specifically in this article, of disability. In insidious trauma, various forms of discomfort occur often erroneously attributed to subjective conditions. Very often the insidious trauma is not recognized and therefore not expressed and taken in charge with pervasive and creeping, even if invisible, effects. Also in these cases, the educational pedagogical work, carried out in everyday places and outside the clinical context, can bring considerable resources in the phase of identification and integrated management.

5. Conclusions

As we think about the implications of the global pandemic, we can see the ways in which our services have had to evolve and adapt to meet the needs of those in the community, especially vulnerable populations. The pandemic has also raised serious questions about children experiencing adversity: how do we identify, assess and respond to child maltreatment when those most likely to report to abuse are not interacting with the child? How is intimate partner violence magnified by the social isolation caused by stay at home orders? How are seniors and those with disabilities who rely on community based services accessing resources to support daily living when friends, family and service providers are not able to support them? The National Child Traumatic Stress Network provides extensive guidance for schools including educators, staff and administrators dealing in response to COVID 19. Included among their recommendations are to provide individual services to address traumatic stress, create trauma-informed learning environments and established community based interventions that raise awareness about trauma and establish cross-system collaboration and community partnerships (Halladay *et al.*, 2020).

As we work collectively to reduce personal and collective trauma, we must work to both reduce exposure to adversity and increase the capacity of communities and caregivers to be buffers for vulnerable populations. COVID19 requires to consider the intersecting individual, interpersonal and community variables. An individual's individual experience with abuse, neglect, household dysfunction, poverty, disability, mental health, substance abuse and other individual barriers will undoubtedly shape their experience during and following the global pandemic and requires intervention at the community, not just individual, level.

In the new post-pandemic world, it will be important to build relationships of closeness, empathy, recognition. Replacing the old ways of contact, such as hugs, gaze, facial expressions, smiles, warm tones and words suitable for a different way of communicating (Halladay, Goldman, Danna et al., 2020). However, it is urgent that politics and the system become aware of the need to plan dedicated objectives and actions and that the different disciplinary knowledge find complementary positions for a global, person-focused and informed trauma. The time is ripe for pedagogical skills to be adequately recognized and valued and to be able to constructively work alongside other professionals in the helping relationship, in compliance with the specific roles valued by the shared network action.

One of the general objectives is to really ensure that people with disabilities have full access to all social activities, with the right of active citizenship. Purposes that should already be guaranteed by the Constitution and by our legislative system. As far as school is concerned, we hope that the processes and tools for the inclusion of students with disabilities will be strengthened, with immediate solutions to ensure the accessibility of communication platforms and their contents, educational support in presence, and free instrumental equipment for families. On the issue of inclusion, it is necessary to strengthen inclusive projects and independent living, to respond to the needs of care and emancipation especially for the most marginalized. All organizations, scholastic and social, should be trauma-oriented, in order to guarantee each and every one safety, a sense of belonging and the serenity to face every existential path in its uniqueness and difference.

References

ACEs 360 (n.d). *Adverse childhood experiences in Iowa: A new way of understanding lifelong health*. Commissioned by the Central Iowa ACEs Steering Committee. Retrieved from http://www.iowaaces360.org/uploads/1/0/9/2/10925571/iowa_aces_360_pdf_web_new.pdf.

- American Psychiatric Association (2014). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013. Edizione italiana: *Manuale diagnostico e statistico dei disturbi mentali*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina.
- American Psychiatric Association (2014). *DSM-5 Manuale Diagnostico e Statistico dei Disturbi Mentali*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- Carello J. and Butler L.D. (2015). Practicing what we teach: Trauma-informed educational practice. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 35: 262-278.
- Carello J., Butler L.D. (2014). Potentially Perilous Pedagogies: Teaching Trauma Is Not the Same as Trauma-Informed Teaching. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, 15(2): 153-168. DOI: 10.1080/15299732.2014.867571.
- Cyrułnik B., Malaguti E. (2005). *Costruire la resilienza. La riorganizzazione positiva della vita e la creazione di legami significativi*. Trento: Erickson.
- Demetrio D. (1995). *Raccontarsi. L'autobiografia come cura di sé*. Milano: Cortina.
- Demetrio D. (1996). *Il metodo autobiografico*. Milano: Guerini.
- Fallot R. D. and Harris, M. (2009). *Creating Cultures of Trauma-Informed Care (CCTIC): A self-assessment and planning protocol*. Washington, DC: Community Connections. Retrieved from <http://www.healthcare.uiowa.edu/icmh/documents/CCTICSelfAssessmentandPlanningProtocol0709.pdf>.
- Felitti V.J. and Anda R.F. (2009). The relationship of adverse childhood experience to adult medical disease, psychiatric disorders, and sexual behaviors: Implications for healthcare. In R. Lanius. and E. Vermetten (Eds.), *The Hidden Epidemic: The Impact of Early Life Trauma on Health and Disease*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Gitterman A. and Germain C.S. (2008). *The life model of social work practice: Advances in theory and practice*, 3rd. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Goussot A. (2011). *Le disabilità complesse. Sofferenza psichica, presa in carico e relazione di cura*. Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli Editore.
- Halladay Goldman J., Danna L., Maze J. W., Pickens I. B., and Ake III G. S. (2020). *Trauma Informed School Strategies during COVID-19*. Los Angeles, CA, and Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.
- Heller L. and LaPierre A. (2018). *Guarire i traumi dell'età evolutiva. L'influenza del trauma precoce sull'autoregolazione, l'immagine di sé e la capacità di relazione*. Roma: Astrolabio Ubaldini editore.
- Isidori M.V., Vaccarelli A. (2012). *Formazione e apprendimento in situazioni di emergenza e post-emergenza*. Roma: Armando.
- Isidori M.V., Vaccarelli A. (2013). *Pedagogia dell'emergenza/Didattica nell'emergenza. I processi formativi nelle situazioni di criticità individuali e collettive*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Lewis-O'Connor A., Warren A., Lee J V, Levy-Clark N., Grossman S., Chadwick M. Stoklosa H. and Rittenberg E. (2019). *The state of the science on trauma inquiry*. *Women's Health*, 15, p. 1-17. DOI: 10.1177/1745506519861234.
- Maslow A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4): 370-396. Doi: 10.1037/h0054346.

- Maslow A. H. (1987). *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Mortari L. (2006). *La pratica dell'aver cura*. Torino: Bruno Mondadori.
- Mortari L. (2021). *La politica della cura. Prendere a cuore la vita*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- National Association of Social Workers (2017). *Code of Ethics*. Washington, DC.
- Rhodes B.E. (2019). Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy: Implications for Undergraduate Course Revision. *Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work*, 24(1): 139-152. Doi: 10.18084/1084-7219.24.1.139.
- Salis F. (2019 b). *La relazione di cura e l'approccio narrativo. Possibili sinergie tra pedagogia speciale e medicina*. Nuova Secondaria Ricerca. Roma: Edizioni Studium.
- Salis F. (2019 a). Il ruolo del pedagogo nella complessità dell'agire educativo. In: P. Gaspari, a cura di, *L'educatore socio-pedagogico: un professionista della relazione di cura educativa e di aiuto nella Pedagogia Speciale*. Roma: Anicia.
- Salis F. (2016). *Disabilità cognitiva e narrazione. Il contributo in Pedagogia speciale*. Roma: Anicia.
- Vaccarelli A. (2016). *Le prove della vita. Promuovere la resilienza nella relazione educativa*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Wolf M.R., Green S.A., Nochajski T.H., Mendel W.E., Kusmaul N.S. (2014). We're civil servants: The status of trauma informed care in the community. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 40: 111-120.
- Zizioli E. (2014). *Essere di più: quando il tempo della pena diventa il tempo dell'apprendere*. Roma: Le Lettere.

Insegnare e apprendere nella scuola secondaria: paradigmi teorici e declinazioni operative per una scuola inclusiva

Teaching and learning in secondary school: Theoretical paradigms and operational declinations for an inclusive school

Donatella Fantozzi*

Riassunto

La necessità di pensare ad un percorso formativo che permetta al futuro insegnante di sperimentare il proprio apprendimento teorico attraverso modalità operative quali il tirocinio, le attività laboratoriali, l'affiancamento di colleghi esperti durante il primo periodo di servizio, la formazione continua per tutto l'arco temporale dello svolgimento della professione, emerge a chiare note sia dalla ricerca scientifica che dai monitoraggi internazionali OCSE sullo status della scuola e sulle competenze dei docenti; emerge del resto anche dalle risposte dagli aspiranti insegnanti che esprimono, nelle risposte all'indagine presentata, l'esigenza di acquisire competenze specifiche circa la didattica inclusiva, la collegialità e l'interdisciplinarietà, dispositivi ritenuti irrinunciabili per poter e saper declinare l'insegnamento in apprendimento. Il contributo presenta i risultati di un'indagine esplorativa svolta tra gli iscritti presso l'Università di Pisa, negli aa.aa. 2018/2019 e 2019/2020, al Percorso Formativo per l'acquisizione dei 24 Crediti Formativi Universitari necessari per accedere all'insegnamento, indagine volta a misurare la soddisfazione e i desiderata dei partecipanti.

Parole chiave: Scuola secondaria; Formazione insegnanti; competenze; teoria pratica.

Abstract

The need to think of a training path that allows the future teacher to experience his own theoretical learning through operational methods such as internships, laboratory activities, the support of expert colleagues during the first period of service, continuous training throughout the time frame of the profession, clearly emerges from both scientific research and OECD international monitoring on the status of the school and on the skills of teachers; the rest also emerges from the answers from the aspiring teachers who express, in the responses to the survey presented, the need to acquire specific skills regarding inclusive

* Ricercatrice in Didattica e Pedagogia speciale presso l'Università degli Studi di Pisa. E-mail: donatella.fantozzi@unipi.it.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa11861

teaching, collegiality and interdisciplinarity, devices considered indispensable in order to be able to and know how to decline teaching in learning. The contribution presents the results of an exploratory survey carried out among students enrolled at the University of Pisa, in the academic year. 2018/2019 and 2019/2020, to the Training Path for the acquisition of the 24 University Training Credits necessary to access the teaching, a survey aimed at measuring the satisfaction and wishes of the participants.

Keywords: Secondary school; Teacher training; skills; theory and practice.

Sottomesso: 01/05/2021; accettato: 20/05/2021

Pubblicato online: 28/6/2021

1. Imparare ad insegnare: nuove risposte per antiche emergenze

L'eccellenza nell'insegnamento dipende, in larga parte, da ciò che gli insegnanti conoscono e sono in grado di fare. Le conoscenze e le competenze acquisite durante la formazione iniziale degli insegnanti sono soltanto il punto di partenza. I programmi di avvio alla professione e di mentoring nelle prime fasi della carriera consentono agli insegnanti di sviluppare le loro competenze professionali e di instaurare utili legami con l'ambiente scolastico. Lo sviluppo professionale continuo fornisce ai docenti l'opportunità di migliorare le loro competenze e di adattare all'ambiente odierno in rapido cambiamento. Anche il sostegno degli altri colleghi e di professionisti specializzati può aiutarli ad affrontare questioni complesse e a svolgere meglio compiti impegnativi (Eurydice, 2018, p. 71).

La necessità di intervenire sulla formazione iniziale e in servizio del corpo docente è una questione percepita come urgente sia a livello normativo che a livello accademico; prova ne sono le ricerche scientifiche (Corsi, Ascenzi, 2013; Domenici, 2017; Perla, Martini, 2019; Baldacci, Nigris, Riva, 2020), nonché le circolari, i decreti legislativi e i documenti, anche di respiro internazionale, che nel tempo sono stati emanati sulla questione, nel drammatico continuo tentativo di modificare la struttura all'interno della quale progettare una trasformazione radicale che però, nel corso degli anni, pare non aver ancora trovato una dimensione in grado di soddisfare tutti gli *stakeholders* coinvolti, né di dare organicità e sistematicità ai bisogni dell'utenza, dei docenti, del contesto socio-economico (Dewey, 1915; Perrenaud, 2016).

La qualificazione della funzione docente in maniera che essa si presenti come bagaglio di competenze trasferibili, quindi che non si esaurisca nella sola competenza disciplinare ma sappia soprattutto declinare i saperi e i contenuti in

modalità tale che essi diventino comprensibili, fruibili e quindi spendibili dagli studenti, è un problema ancora da risolvere (Corsi, Ascenzi, 2013; Domenici, 2017; Perla, Martini, 2019; Marzano, 2019; Baldacci, Nigris, Riva, 2020).

Se focalizziamo la nostra attenzione sulla scuola secondaria il problema si acuisce in ragione della constatazione che per molto tempo la convinzione che conoscere a fondo la disciplina fosse sufficiente ad insegnare, mentre è stato profondamente trascurato l'aspetto pedagogico e metodologico.

Tale limite ha pesato in maniera specifica proprio sulla scuola secondaria sia di primo che di secondo grado, settore formativo che ancora mantiene una fragilità all'interno del proprio impianto, debolezza determinata dalla pressoché assenza di progettualità sulle dimensioni trasversali del processo di insegnamento-apprendimento. Prova ne è, per esempio, il fatto che nella scuola secondaria non sono previste ore dedicate alla programmazione didattica nonostante il D.P.R. 275/99 – conosciuto come Legge sull'autonomia scolastica – preveda lo sviluppo sui quattro assi portanti della progettualità, dell'autonomia didattica, dell'autonomia organizzativa e dell'autonomia di ricerca, sperimentazione e sviluppo, per tutti i gradi di scuola.

Dopo l'esperienza delle Scuole di specializzazione per l'Insegnamento Secondario, definite con l'acronimo SSIS, dedicate ad affiancare le competenze disciplinari con quelle pedagogiche e metodologico-didattiche in modo da fornire alla professionalità dei docenti strumenti in grado di renderli capaci di declinare il disciplinare sulle traiettorie dell'insegnamento-apprendimento, gli interventi successivi hanno assunto la fisionomia della fugacità e del condensato, e si è di fatto rinunciato ai tempi che una adeguata formazione richiede.

La Legge 107/2015, ultima emanazione legislativa italiana riguardante la scuola, rinnova la volontà dello Stato di configurare il percorso formativo come un processo in grado di favorire lo sviluppo di pensiero critico, consapevolezza e creatività negli studenti di ogni età.

Una visione siffatta ci interroga tutti in ordine a un *approccio multiprospettico* della scuola che le consenta di farsi ambiente rigoroso di costruzione della personalità, di equilibrio della conversazione, di padronanza delle conoscenze e delle esperienze che concorrono alla edificazione e alla regolazione del bene comune. Lo sviluppo, infatti, del sistema scolastico garantisce alla società il governo delle risorse e delle opportunità di apprendimento, all'interno di un progetto, non solo formativo e educativo, ma sociale (ovvero regolato dalla volontà generale, come stabilito dalla Costituzione) in grado di equipaggiare lo studente di *valori culturali, civili ed etico-sociali* che sono alla base del suo potenziale agenziale (Margiotta, 2018, p. 15).

Se, dunque, il profilo ideale del docente coincide con una figura che, oltre ad avere conoscenze specifiche e approfondite *sulla materia*, deve avere competenze che lo pongono in grado di dimostrare realmente l'efficacia e rendere

quindi interiorizzate – ovvero trasferibili in altre situazioni – le strutture teoriche disciplinari, l’insegnante dovrà possedere un bagaglio professionale in grado di sviluppare in maniera reticolare e transdisciplinare il processo di insegnamento-apprendimento (Morin, 2000); dovrà essere capace di aprire la cornice epistemologica per creare legami consistenti con le altre forme di conoscenza, per agganciare i sistemi in maniera da destabilizzare la parcellizzazione dei saperi e trasformarla in un’aggregazione coerente e produttiva, spendibile in un mondo plurale, quindi in un modo di vivere e di conoscere che, da sempre del resto, utilizza l’apprendimento miscelando i saperi differenti e realizzando soluzioni che determinano il saper essere.

Tutto ciò implica anche l’urgenza di una formazione estesa a tutti i docenti riguardante le competenze necessarie per una scuola inclusiva: personalizzare, individualizzare, ma soprattutto mettere a regime l’*Universal Design for Learning* e quell’*accomodamento ragionevole* raccomandato dalla Convenzione ONU per i diritti della persone con disabilità (N.U., 2006; Rose and Meyer, 2002; Mangiatori, 2017), concetti divenuti assiomatici nella stesura del Piano Educativo Individualizzato con il D.lgs., 66/17; sono, queste, esigenze che non possono più essere disattese neanche nel segmento formativo secondario, laddove si esplicita con precisione l’azione della scuola per quanto riguarda l’orientamento e l’inserimento lavorativo anche delle persone con disabilità (Fantozzi 2019); è questo un aspetto che deve interessare *in primis* la scuola nel suo ruolo prioritario di istituzione competente nell’individuare eventuali barriere ma soprattutto nel focalizzare la migliore prospettiva di vita possibile per ciascun suo studente (Galanti, 2020; Giaconi, 2020; Zappaterra, 2020).

Per ottenere docenti in grado di affrontare la complessità (e non la complicazione) che contraddistingue gli esseri umani (Morin, 2000) nel loro costante processo di apprendimento, vanno quindi aperti cantieri operativi, sia durante la formazione iniziale che durante il servizio, che prevedano l’organizzazione dell’accompagnamento e dell’orientamento sotto forma di azioni laboratoriali e di tutoraggio durante le quali insegnanti esperti non impartiscono ma sperimentano, guidano, monitorano, condividono. La collegialità non può continuare a riguardare solo la burocrazia strumentale, deve coinvolgere, e oserei dire sconvolgere, pedagogicamente parlando, le scelte e le azioni conseguenti.

La condizione fondamentale affinché l’insegnamento possa definirsi efficace è data dalla capacità del docente di instaurare una comunicazione performativa con i propri allievi proponendosi come modello, trasformando ogni lezione in un laboratorio in cui decostruire e ricostruire sia idee che artefatti (Schön, 1983). Queste azioni possono essere realizzate soltanto se si sono sperimentate su se stessi, per questo la valenza di una formazione che preveda l’affiancamento e l’accompagnamento da parte di colleghi mentori (Damiano 2007), dove è davvero riconosciuta pari dignità di teoria e pratica, è l’unico

viatico verso una scuola che sviluppa la formazione a saper interpretare l'informazione e che permette all'informazione di farsi realtà trasformatrice e generatrice di apprendimenti costruttivi.

2. Presentazione della ricerca

L'intenzione dalla quale nasce l'indagine esplorativa trova le sue ragioni nel bisogno diffuso di dare organicità alla formazione degli insegnanti, con particolare riguardo nei confronti di quelli che operano nel grado secondario.

Tale necessità non rappresenta soltanto un desiderio puramente speculativo e teorico, essa è un'espressione dei docenti stessi che spesso dichiarano di trovarsi a fronteggiare complessità didattiche che le sole competenze disciplinari non consentono di risolvere.

Attualmente coloro che intendono intraprendere la carriera scolastica, nella fattispecie nel primo e secondo grado di istruzione, successivamente al conseguimento della laurea, devono acquisire (a meno che non li abbiano ottenuti durante l'ordinaria carriera universitaria) 24 crediti formativi universitari negli ambiti pedagogico, metodologico e didattico, antropologico e psicologico.

La scelta di somministrare un questionario di indagine fra coloro che hanno frequentato il Percorso Formativo per l'acquisizione dei 24 Crediti Formativi Universitari per ottenere la possibilità di accesso all'insegnamento nei gradi secondari della scuola italiana è nata dall'esperienza pluriennale come docente di Pedagogia, Pedagogia speciale e didattica dell'inclusione e di Tecnologie e Metodologie didattiche presso l'Ateneo nel quale chi scrive svolge la professione.

A fronte di 1833 iscrizioni nell'a.a. 2018/19 e di 2092 nel 2019/20, alle quali va sottratta una percentuale di ritiri o di non conferme pari all'incirca al 10%, le risposte al questionario sono state 1183 distribuite per il 58,5% tra coloro che hanno frequentato nell'a.a. 2019/20 e per il 41,5% nell'a.a. 2018/19.

Fondamentalmente, l'intento è stato quello di raccogliere riflessioni circa il gradimento dell'offerta formativa ricevuta, verificando quali punti di forza e quali debolezze i corsisti stessi avevano individuato nel percorso.

Inoltre, sono state proposte alcune domande riguardanti la valenza del tirocinio formativo, delle esperienze laboratoriali, l'importanza della formazione in servizio, del valore attribuito dagli stessi alle competenze di didattica inclusiva, di personalizzazione e individualizzazione delle metodologie e degli obiettivi didattici, quanto questi dispositivi rappresentino e siano percepiti come un patrimonio culturale e professionale che deve essere rintracciato anche nella cassetta degli attrezzi dei docenti curricolari, e quanto le esigenze dei futuri insegnanti coincidano con quelle emergenti dalla ricerca accademica.

Il campione si presenta molto interessante proprio grazie alla varietà della formazione pregressa di ciascuno di loro: la possibilità di aggregare le risposte risulta quasi impossibile a causa delle molte differenze determinate dagli indirizzi specifici dei percorsi di formazione e dei titoli conseguiti; certo è che sono presenti tutti gli ambiti: umanistici, scientifici, informatici, sociali, sanitari, più o meno in egual misura. Inoltre, nella stragrande maggioranza dei casi i corsisti si sono iscritti al percorso dopo un periodo di attività in altri settori, senza avere nessun tipo di conoscenza né competenza riguardante la scuola, l'insegnamento e l'apprendimento, se non le loro esperienze come allievi. La 'miscela' tra questi due aspetti rende la platea molto originale e complessa anche per il formatore che deve approcciarsi ai fondamenti disciplinari di pertinenza con modalità diverse rispetto ad un corso universitario ordinario; in questo caso è importante tenere presente che gli studenti non sono matricole poiché hanno già esperienza di percorsi universitari, taluni anche di corsi postlaurea, specializzazioni di settore o dottorati; ciò li pone talvolta, inizialmente, in una posizione ambigua nei confronti dell'interesse verso i contenuti: se da un lato la loro esperienza accademica permette di poter fare affidamento su capacità metacognitive già 'addestrate' nella rielaborazione delle informazioni, dall'altra questo stesso aspetto fa sì che, almeno nella fase iniziale, ci sia una sorta di diffidenza da parte di alcuni di loro, quando non addirittura una chiara ostilità poiché l'esperienza viene vissuta come una sorta di ingiustizia che li costringe a studiare ulteriormente, per di più discipline come la pedagogia, la didattica, l'antropologia e la psicologia, spesso ritenute non necessarie e quindi snobbate da chi non le ha scelte con una personale motivazione.

L'idea che le competenze disciplinari esauriscano di per sé la preparazione necessaria per poter svolgere la professione di insegnante è purtroppo molto diffusa nell'opinione pubblica ma anche negli esperti dei vari ambiti e anche in chi tra questi intraprende la carriera di docente, salvo poi rendersi conto, strada facendo, che l'insegnamento di per sé è una professione molto complessa che si nutre, prima ancora che dei contenuti disciplinari, delle metodologie didattiche che poggiano contestualmente sulle competenze psicopedagogiche e metodologiche (European Commission, 2017; Rapporto Eurydice, 2018; OECD, 2018).

Tutte le domande proposte prevedevano la possibilità di assegnare un punteggio da 1 a 5 con valore positivo crescente.

Entrando nel dettaglio, come si evince dal grafico 1, ben il 75,4 % dei partecipanti è rappresentato da docenti (precari o aspiranti) della scuola secondaria di secondo grado, mentre il 22,5 % è dato dai corsisti rivolti verso la scuola secondaria di primo grado; una esigua percentuale, solo il 2 %, riguarda la scuola dell'infanzia e primaria, ma come ben sappiamo ciò dipende dal fatto

che per questi segmenti scolastici l'accesso al mondo del lavoro si attiva attraverso un altro canale formativo di per sé già abilitante.

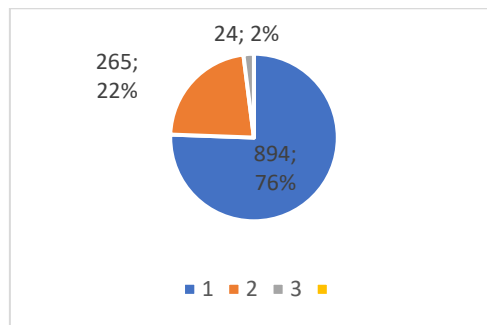


Grafico 1 - Grado di scuola di riferimento

La prima domanda proposta (grafico 2) riguarda la percezione che i corsisti hanno della propria formazione disciplinare. È un dato certamente positivo che il 79,4 % dei corsisti ritenga di poter contare su ottime competenze disciplinari, avvalorando in questo modo la formazione ricevuta dal percorso formativo affrontato.

Quale punteggio attribuisce alle sue competenze disciplinari?

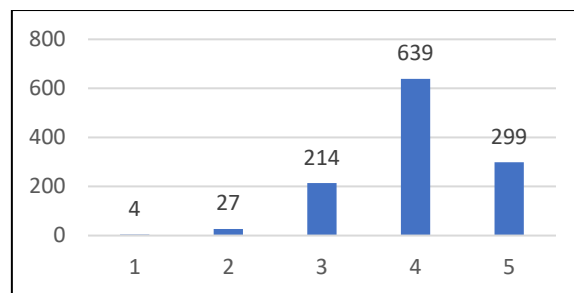


Grafico 2 - Percezione delle proprie competenze disciplinari

Entrando nello specifico dell'indagine, le domande successive chiedono ai partecipanti di esprimersi circa l'importanza che danno ad alcuni aspetti della formazione, utilizzando anche in questo caso un punteggio da uno a cinque con valore crescente; queste le domande e i risultati che saranno analizzati nel dettaglio successivamente:

Ai fini dell'insegnamento, quale valore attribuisce alle competenze pedagogico-didattiche?

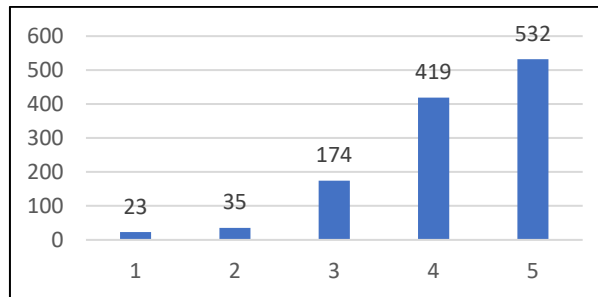


Grafico 3 - Valenza delle competenze pedagogico-didattiche

Ai fini dell'acquisizione delle competenze necessarie per insegnare, quale valore attribuisce ad una possibile esperienza di tirocinio formativo?

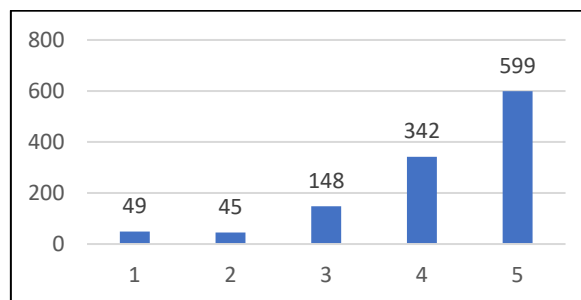


Grafico 4 - Importanza del tirocinio formativo

Ai fini dell'acquisizione delle competenze necessarie per insegnare, quale valore attribuisce al valore formativo di possibili esperienze laboratoriali condotte da docenti già esperti?

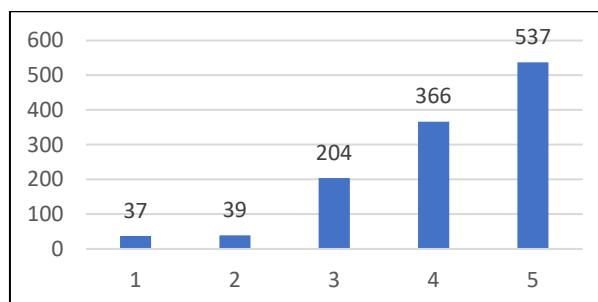


Grafico 5 - Importanza delle esperienze di tipo laboratoriale

Ritiene che la possibilità di essere affiancato, durante il primo anno di servizio, da un collega esperto (docente tutor) sia un'azione formativa?

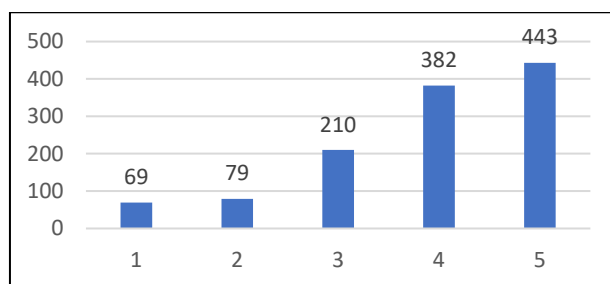


Grafico 6 - Valenza del docente tutor

Quale valore attribuisce alla formazione in servizio?

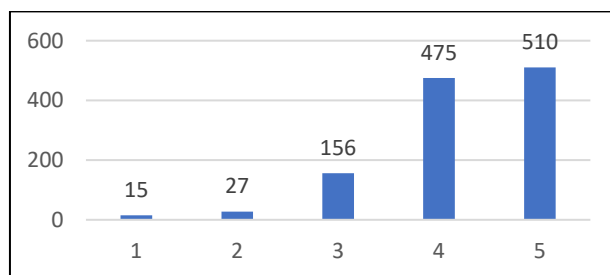


Grafico 7 - Valenza della formazione in servizio

Quale valore attribuisce al lavoro collegiale/interdisciplinare ai fini dei risultati didattici?

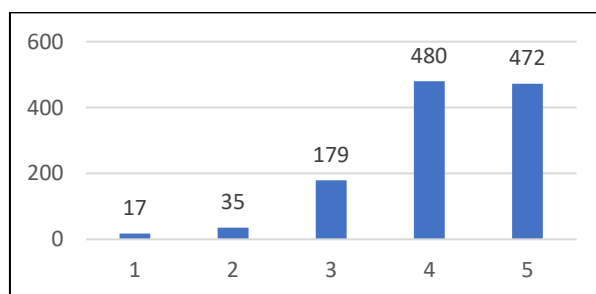


Grafico 8 - Importanza dell'interdisciplinarietà

Riguardo alle competenze di didattica inclusiva, quanto ritiene debbano essere possedute anche dai docenti curricolari?

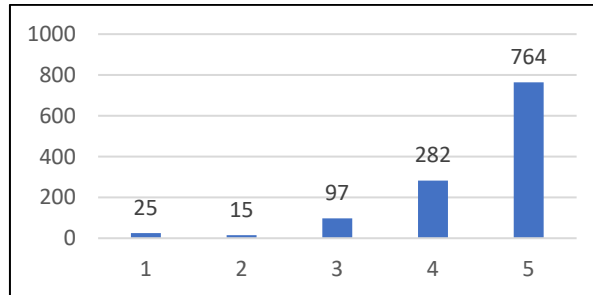


Grafico 9 - Competenze di didattica inclusiva nei docenti curricolari

Personalizzare e/o individualizzare le attività didattiche è una competenza che devono possedere anche i docenti curricolari?

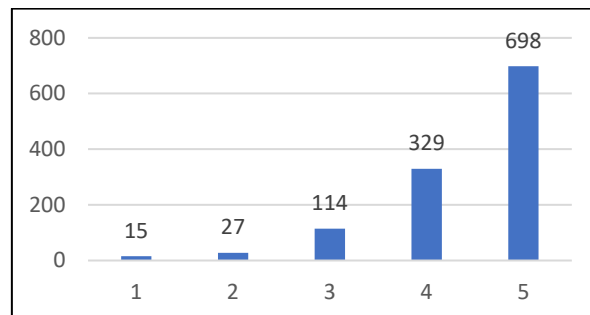


Grafico 10 - Docenti curricolari e competenze di personalizzazione/individualizzazione didattica

Ritiene che personalizzare e/o individualizzare le azioni didattiche possa rappresentare una risorsa per l'intera classe?

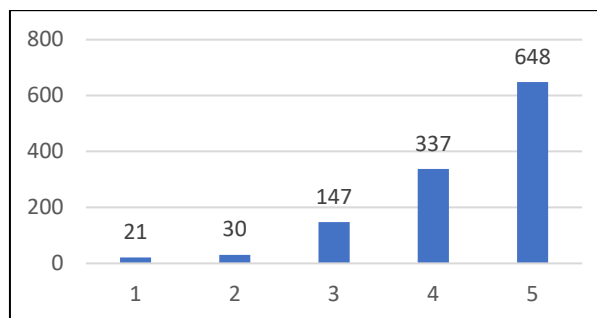


Grafico 11 - Didattica inclusiva e gestione della classe

3. Analisi dei risultati

I risultati ottenuti danno uno spaccato molto significativo del percepito da parte dei corsisti-futuri docenti circa ciò che già ritengono di possedere, in termini di formazione, e ciò di cui ritengono di aver bisogno in termini di caratterizzazione della loro professionalità.

Rispetto all'importanza che viene attribuita alle competenze di natura pedagogico-didattica (grafico 3), appare con evidente chiarezza il quasi totale riconoscimento che la costruzione di una professionalità docente adeguata non possa prescindere da una formazione che poggi su un impianto metodologico senza il quale le sole competenze disciplinari rischiano di ridursi a mero nozionismo contenutistico. Tale struttura può essere garantita soltanto dall'essere posti in grado di mettere in campo i dispositivi pedagogico-didattici che forniscono al docente le coordinate trasversali, organizzative e metodologiche per attivare un processo di insegnamento-apprendimento efficace.

Anche rispetto alle richieste concernenti il valore delle esperienze di tirocinio e delle attività laboratoriali, entrambe sotto la supervisione di docenti già esperti, quindi in una modalità basata sull'importanza di un tutoraggio fornito da colleghi competenti, i partecipanti all'indagine ne dichiarano la necessità, come si evince dai dati riportati nei grafici 4 e 5 e 6.

Risulta leggermente meno marcata l'esigenza di essere seguiti da un docente tutor durante il primo anno di servizio (grafico 6), mentre resta molto alto il valore attribuito alla formazione in servizio (grafico 7) e all'approfondimento di metodologie che si avvalgono dell'interdisciplinarietà e della collegialità delle scelte (grafico 8).

Infine, si ritiene rappresentino un grosso valore sui cui riflettere sia per la formazione da erogare ai futuri insegnanti che a coloro che già sono in servizio, i risultati presentati nei grafici 9, 10, 11: le competenze circa la pedagogia e la didattica inclusiva debbono essere un patrimonio culturale e professionale di ciascun professionista della scuola e della formazione in generale; gli studenti con disabilità, disturbi, fragilità in genere, non sono un problema che riguarda soltanto i docenti specializzati per il sostegno; lo afferma la legge e lo sostiene da sempre, in ragione delle evidenze che emergono dalla ricerca e dalle sperimentazioni, la comunità scientifica internazionale.

La formazione dei futuri docenti, e soprattutto della scuola del futuro, non può essere relegata all'erogazione in un tempo ristretto di soli contenuti teorici che oltretutto molto spesso non trovano appigli nella loro precedente formazione. C'è bisogno di strutturare un percorso che preveda l'opportunità per il docente *in pectore* di mettersi alla prova, di avere il tempo e i contesti per appropriarsi di quanto studiato diventandone il proprietario; deve essere messo

nelle condizioni di sviluppare destrezza e autonomia nell'esercitare la professione, di poter monitorare *in itinere* le proprie azioni e di poter contare sullo sguardo attento e collaborativo di colleghi esperti.

Riguardo ai risultati ottenuti rispetto alla responsabilità collegiale nei confronti degli studenti con Bisogni Educativi Speciali, se la posizione di coloro che ancora non insegnano è quella di ritenerla necessaria, dobbiamo chiederci quali azioni mettere in campo affinché chi già esercita quotidianamente e da anni nella scuola possa finalmente cambiare idea e soprattutto modo di insegnare; ancora troppo spesso invece, si agisce sullo studente pensando, quasi assurdamente, che si possa modificare il modo di apprendere anziché il modo di insegnare, trascurando totalmente tutte le teorie che affermano l'essenzialità dell'uso di una didattica flessibile, personalizzata, basata su linguaggi e metodologie plurali e ragionevolmente accomodate.

4. Riflessioni conclusive

Ripensare la struttura del reclutamento dei docenti significa, prima di tutto, chiedersi quali docenti per quale scuola, significa quindi porsi le domande circa quale futuro vogliamo intravedere, quali obiettivi vogliamo offrire agli studenti e con quali metodologie intendiamo proporli.

I dati dell'indagine esplorativa presentata danno risultati che coincidono perfettamente con le esigenze sentite come urgenti dalla comunità scientifica internazionale: chi sta per salire in cattedra chiede di avere competenze metodologiche, vuole che gli sia insegnato come si fa ad insegnare. Contemporaneamente il *feedback* che ci arriva da chi ancora siede nei banchi di scuola è inequivocabile: la dispersione è in aumento, l'interesse per lo studio è superficiale e se c'è spesso si risolve in un meccanismo di opportunità privato della passione e della curiosità. Rivisitare la professione docente è un'emergenza non più procrastinabile, nella consapevolezza del fatto che imparare significa saper e poter mettere a reddito, per chi insegna e per coloro a cui si insegna, i palinsesti teorici concettuali.

Costruire una formazione degli insegnanti che ricalchi esattamente il processo che viene richiesto, successivamente, agli studenti di ogni età, rappresenta la migliore progettualità per garantire alla scuola un bilancio in attivo.

Per questo è fondamentale mettere a sistema attività laboratoriali e di tirocinio poiché con tali dispositivi ciò che risalta non è il che cosa ma il come si affronta il che cosa, permettendo al docente di attivare la possibilità di guardarsi mentre agisce e di sviluppare quell'atteggiamento metariflessivo indispensabile per potersi poi presentare agli studenti, atteggiamento che non si genera solo

nel docente tutorato ma anche nel docente *tutee*, grazie alla possibilità di assumere il ruolo di colui che guarda l'altro mentre guarda se stesso, determinante per procedere verso l'autovalutazione e la percezione dell'efficacia del proprio intervento.

Riferimenti bibliografici

- Baldacci M., Nigris E., Riva M.G. (2020). *Idee per la formazione degli insegnanti*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Damiano E. (2007). *Il Mentore. Manuale di tirocinio per insegnanti in formazione*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Dewey J. (1915). *The School and the Society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago.
- Domenici, G. (ed). (2017). *La formazione iniziale e in servizio degli insegnanti*. Roma: Armando.
- European Commission (2017). *Preparing teachers for diversity: The Role of Initial Teacher Education*. Final Report (<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b347bf7d-1db1-11e7-aeb3-01aa75ed71a1>) - ultima consultazione: 28/04/21.
- Eurydice Italia (2018). *La carriera degli insegnanti in Europa: accesso, progressione e sostegno*. Firenze: INDIRE - Unità italiana di Eurydice.
- Fantozzi D. (2019). Scuola e lavoro tra formazione e orientamento delle persone con disabilità intellettiva. *Nuova secondaria ricerca*, 7: 62-67.
- Galanti M. A., Pavone M. (eds) (2020). *Didattiche da scoprire. Linguaggi, diversità, inclusione* Milano: Mondadori-Università.
- Giaconi C. (2020). La difficile integrazione degli alunni con disabilità nella scuola italiana dagli anni Settanta del Novecento ad oggi: una riflessione di pedagogia e didattica speciale. In A. Ascenzi, R. Sani (eds). *Inclusione e promozione sociale nel sistema formativo italiano dall'Unità ad oggi*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Mangiatordi A. (2017). *Didattica senza barriere. Universal Design, tecnologie e risorse sostenibili*, Pisa: ETS.
- Margiotta U. (2018). *Teacher education agenda. Linee guida per la formazione iniziale dei docenti della scuola secondaria*, Trento: Erickson .
- Marzano A. (2019). Formazione per il cambiamento della scuola. Piani di miglioramento, azione e riflessione: un circolo teorico-pratico da ricomporre. In A. Calvani & L. Chiappetta Cajola (eds.). *Strategie efficaci per la comprensione del testo. Il Reciprocal Teaching* (pp. 127-151). Firenze: S.Ap.I.E.
- Morin E. (2000). *La testa ben fatta. Riforma dell'insegnamento e riforma del pensiero*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina (or. 1999).
- OECD *Multilingual Summaries, TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I). Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/talis-2018-results-volume-i_1d0bc92a-en, ultima consultazione: 28/04/21.
- Pellerey M. (2014). Oltre il costruttivismo? Verso una progettazione didattica sensibile

- alle caratteristiche degli studenti e alle esigenze dei contenuti da apprendere, secondo un approccio costruttivista cognitivo - Rassegna CNOS. *Problemi esperienze prospettive per l'istruzione e la formazione professionale*, 30(2), Maggio-Agosto.
- Perla L., Martini B. (2019) (eds). *Professione insegnante. Idee e modelli di formazione*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Perrenaud P. (2016). *Quando la scuola ritiene di preparare alla vita. Sviluppare competenze o insegnare diversi saperi?*. Roma: Anicia.
- Rivoltella P.C., Rossi P.G. (2012). *L'agire didattico. Manuale per l'insegnante*. Brescia: La Scuola.
- Rose D., Meyer A. (2002). *Teaching every student in the digital age: Universal design for learning*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Corsi, M., Ascenzi, A. (2013). *Il futuro della ricerca pedagogica e la sua valutazione*. Roma: Armando.
- Schön D.A. (1983). *Il professionista riflessivo*. Trad. it. Bari: Edizioni Dedalo, 1993.
- U.N. (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, N.Y.
- U.N. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, New York. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>, ultima consultazione: 28/04/21.
- Zappaterra T. (2020). Disabilità e partecipazione sociale. Dal diritto all'istruzione a quello all'informazione e alla comunicazione. In E. A. Emili, V. Macchia (eds). *Leggere l'inclusione. Albi illustrati e libri per tutti e per ciascuno*. Pisa: ETS.

Normativa di riferimento

- D.P.R. 275/99, *Regolamento recante norme in materia di autonomia delle istituzioni scolastiche, ai sensi dell'art. 21 della legge 15 marzo 1997*.
- Legge 107/2015, *Riforma del sistema nazionale di istruzione e formazione e delega per il riordino delle disposizioni legislative vigenti*.
- D.Lgs. 66/2017, *Norme per la promozione dell'inclusione scolastica degli studenti con disabilità, a norma dell'articolo 1, commi 180 e 181, lettera c), della legge 13 luglio 2015, n. 107*.

Children with Hearing Disabilities during the Pandemic: Challenges and Perspectives of Inclusion[°]

Arianna Taddei*, Esmeralda Azahar López**, Rebeca Abigail Recinos Reyes***

Abstract

The COVID-19 has dramatically increased the inequalities of the opportunities to education and health services of the children with disabilities. The data collected from international agencies between 2020 and 2021 demonstrate the danger of further rising the risk of exclusion of children with disabilities especially in developing countries. The marginalization of people with sensory disabilities during the Pandemic have further expanded compared to the pre-COVID situation. The article aims to investigate the barriers that children with hearing disabilities have encountered in accessing socio-educational and rehabilitation services and reflect on the importance of social support flexibly from different local actors. In this perspective, the Center of Attention for Communication, Hearing and Language of the Central American University José Simeón Cañas of El Salvador provides educational and rehabilitation service aimed to children with hearing disabilities transforming their methodologies and practices. Based on this analysis, perspectives of action and research will be envisaged to plan the future starting from the lessons learned.

Key-words: Hearing Disabilities, Inclusive Education and Therapy, Pandemic

First submission: 01/05/2021, accepted: 20/05/2021

Available online: 28/06/2021

[°] The article was jointly designed by the three authors. Arianna Taddei is the author of paragraphs 1, 2, 4. Esmeralda Azahar López and Rebeca Abigail Recinos Reyes are the authors of paragraphs 3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4.

* Researcher in Pedagogy and Special Didactics, Department of Sciences of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, University of Macerata.

** Coordinator of the Centro de Atención para la Comunicación, la Audición y el Lenguaje del Departamento de Ciencias de la Educación de la Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas de San Salvador, El Salvador.

*** Rebeca Abigail Recinos Reyes. Speech Therapist of the Centro de Atención para la Comunicación, la Audición y el Lenguaje del Departamento de Ciencias de la Educación de la Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas de San Salvador, El Salvador.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa11871

1. Introduction

The crisis caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic has dramatically increased the inequalities that differentiate the quality of access to education and health services of the children with disabilities between rich countries and with those with poor economic resources. Since the start of the crisis, governments have fought to respond to the unprecedented needs and emergency situations. Unfortunately, the effects of the pandemic have led to the interruption of several services – from child educational services to child protection services, these interruptions have enormously aggravated the living conditions of the most vulnerable families and children¹ (Aishworiya and Kang, 2020; UN, 2020). Measures have been implemented to combat the pandemic sometimes seen by high creativity, but unfortunately have not proved sufficient in the poorest contexts to ensure the psychophysical well-being of childhood². During this last year, institutional and socio-educational actors have engaged in the defense of childhood rights and have learned a great deal about the impact of the pandemic, but it remains to be designed to prevent the gap of inequality and marginalization from continuing to expand in crisis and post-crisis situations. Unfortunately, children with disabilities are likely to remain invisible under the dark cloud of the pandemic unless concrete efforts are made to implement measures dedicated to their inclusion, irrespective of emergency situations³. As noted by international data, even in the absence of global threat, children and adults with disabilities tend to be under-identified, under-represented or even excluded from official statistics and monitoring processes. The evidence-based data that international agencies collected between 2020 and 2021 (UN, 2020; UNICEF, 2020; Caarls *et al.*, 2021; UNESCO, 2021) demonstrate the imminent danger of further rising the risk of exclusion of children with disabilities. Understanding of these risks and the assessment of the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic are essential for developing responses that take account of all children. Some questions UNICEF proposes within its report (2020) are extremely relevant to guide political choices today regarding the barriers that need to be broken down, in order to guarantee intervention measures in favor of social and educational inclusion in the imminent future of children with disabilities:

¹ «An estimated 40 per cent of the poorest countries failed to support learners at risk during the COVID-19 crisis, and past experiences show that both education and gender inequalities tend to be neglected in responses to disease outbreaks» (UN, 2020, p.8).

² <https://www.covideducationrecovery.global/maps/>, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/data/interactive/2020/03/24/world-bank-education-and-covid-19>.

³ «Children with disabilities who were already marginalized before the outbreak are not always included in strategies of distance learning» (UN, 2020, p.8).

- *How are children with disabilities faring during the COVID-19 pandemic?*
- *What added challenges are children with disabilities facing in the current crisis?*
- *Are children with disabilities accessing online learning?*
- *How are families of children with disabilities coping with the socioeconomic fallout?*

However, many of these questions are still awaiting answers that can be expected to develop inclusive future scenarios.

The population of children with disabilities has both greater health care needs and significant dependence on community-based services. Both of these elements often appear absent from the Pandemic response plans. Where these services have been interrupted, social inequalities, in the case of people with disabilities, have imploded uncontrollably. They have often been victims of discrimination in the dynamics of triage by suffering a serious deterioration in their psycho-physical conditions. The widespread situation of lockdown has, in turn, created states of anxiety and depression and deterioration of mental health conditions, not only of children with disabilities, but also of their families who have been suddenly “abandoned” in social solitude and lack of support for community networks. The data collected show significant gaps of accessibility to services between children with and without disabilities, both socio-health and educational, taking into account that most countries have replaced school activities in the presence with distance learning. Statistics show that children with disabilities are 57% less likely to be able to benefit from books within the family, 23% less likely to be involved in early stimulation activities, 32% less likely to participate in direct or assisted reading activities. There is therefore a significant reduction in access to resources and opportunities from an educational point of view. Overall, it was estimated that in at least half of the investigated countries (UNICEF, 2020) during the pandemic no measures were taken to facilitate learning for children with disabilities. Worst situations are found in West and Central Asia (67%), South Asia (63%) Middle East and North Africa (67%). In most countries involved in the research, organizations for people with disabilities have not been consulted in the formulation of action plans relating to their needs and rights. From an educational point of view, the main barriers encountered by children with disabilities during distance teaching consist of:

- lack of personalized educational plans;
- inaccessibility of resources available at school (such as specialized educational figures and structured educational environments);
- lack of assistive technologies at home.

What has happened and is still happening requires intersectoral responses interdisciplinary cooperation of the different sectors of society. The pandemic has “pushed” institutions to exercise their social function flexibly and according to actual priorities. In this perspective, presented below will be the service that the Central American University José Simeón Cañas (UCA) of El Salvador guaranteed during the pandemic throughout the Center of Attention for Communication, Hearing and Language. In fact, the Centre has not only continued to provide its assistance to children with hearing disabilities and cochlear implant, but it has succeeded through the team of professionals which it relies on to redesign educational and rehabilitation intervention trying to accommodate their support strategies according to the different phases of the pandemic itself, taking into account the needs of families of children coming from the most vulnerable contexts of El Salvador, where schools have been closed for 49 weeks since the start of the pandemic⁴.

2. Students with Hearing Disabilities at Risk of Exclusion: Pedagogical Foundations for Planning the Future

The conditions for the marginalization of people with sensory disabilities during the Pandemic have further expanded compared to the pre-COVID situation. Unquestionably the social distance caused by preventive measures to spread contagion has helped to isolate and increase the discomfort of people with sensory disabilities for whom physical proximity and body use are essential elements of communication, socialization and learning processes.

Children with disabilities today in many countries are at risk of exclusion because of the lack of structural accessibility and infrastructure of school environments and adequate skills by teachers (Mantzicos, Lappa, 2020). In fact, hearing disability is likely to be underestimated because it is mostly invisible (Leigh, 2009). Special Education Studies provided strategic indications for the inclusion of students with hearing disabilities, taking into account the complexity of this specific impairment (Conti and Cappellini, 2016; Conti *et al.*, 2019). It is known how important the lighting of the rooms and the organization of the school setting are with the arrangement of the desks in a semicircle where the child with hearing disabilities can follow the activities carried out. Strategic positioning of teachers or educators who must always be visible, and never turn their back on the class or the deaf child during play or rehabilitation activities. The environments should also be as quiet as possible,

⁴ <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse#schoolclosures>. The highest average number of days when classroom instruction was disrupted was seen in the Latin America and the Caribbean Region.

so that listening to the speaker is facilitated, who in turn should communicate at a regular pace, rephrasing messages if unclear or ambiguous and explaining everything that is happening in the classroom.

The teacher or educator also plays an important role in enforcing conversational shifts, always pointing out who is talking to promote visual contact, and summarizing or translating whenever necessary. Other major tasks of the teaching body are to program and design lessons, which indicates the need for intensive cooperation between curricular teachers and support and communication assistants or other people within the context. It is, for example, useful to anticipate, where possible, the topics that will be dealt with in class.

It is of fundamental importance to take into account the specific situation of the child with hearing disabilities, in relation to cognitive, cultural and linguistic skills (Marschark and Hauser, 2008; Marschark *et al.*, 2014). To encourage the feasibility of lessons, from the educational point of view it is functional to integrate explanations using vision and touch (real objects, maps, photos, images, etc.), by adapting texts to the understanding capabilities of the pupil, by supplementing them with images and schematic information and using multimedia, hypertextual and hypermedia technologies to adapt teaching units to support the potential of each student and use subtitles when available (Toofaninejad *et al.*, 2017; Sciarretta and Greco, 2020). With regard to the social dimension of the lives of children with hearing disabilities, to combat the risk of isolation and to invest in the development of metacognitive skills, it is strategic to promote a cooperative approach to promote activities in small groups and involvement of all of the class with specific projects on sign language if the student is a signer.

The didactic strategies described highlight how even in an ordinary situation it is complex to always ensure a favorable environment for the learning and socialization processes of children with hearing disabilities. It is evident that the educational challenges have become considerably more difficult during the pandemic, where the *physical distance* and the *social isolation* have become the main slogans. The consequences of the current pandemic crisis have assumed variable proportions depending on the country and context within the country itself on the basis of economic conditions and opportunities that individual governments have managed to guarantee (UN, 2020). From research carried out in Greece (Mantzicos, Lappa, 2020), India (Umashankar and Prabhu, 2020) and Malaysia (Krishnan *et al.*, 2020) on school access and rehabilitation services for students with hearing disabilities of different degrees, it was possible to identify in a cross-sectional way of these different contexts, following difficulties that take on progressively accentuated levels of severity based on the socio-economic condition of the country:

- the physical distance required between persons reduces the potential for listening and understanding of the minutes and non-verbal language;
- the use of masks may prevent the reading of lips and make the voices of speakers, including educators, professionals and/or family members, less clear for those using acoustic implants;
- the reduction and transformation of collegial work between teachers and other professional figures has made it more difficult to personalize materials of distance learning, inclusive educational methodologies;
- the increased relative distance between parents and educational figures and/or rehabilitation has increased the anxiety of many families experiencing their fragility in dealing with the day-to-day management of educational and rehabilitative activities;
- health facilities engaged to respond to the pandemic emergency have been forced to suspend other types of services: for example, audio visits and treatment were not considered a priority and therefore suspended. In this situation, the families concerned were unable to take prevention, early diagnosis and to purchase hearing apparatus, with the inevitable consequences on the worsening of the overall welfare of children. In particular, the lack of hearing inputs sent at the appropriate time in relation to the stage of evolution of the deficit and psychophysical development of the individual may cause hearing deprivations;
- the limited availability of remote rehabilitation services has led to a slowdown in education pathways to listen to children with auditory disabilities;
- during distance lessons, through videoconferencing, technical problems may arise, and, in most cases, there is no real-time transcript and subtitling of what the teacher is saying (Mantzicos and Lappa, 2020). This is an important obstacle for people who are not able to hear and who are suffering from serious hearing problems who have to rely on lip reading. In the circumstances described, loneliness and isolation feelings may increase even further. The same applies to educational programmes conducted by television that hardly consider the heterogeneity of students with different learning situations (Viner *et al*, 2020; Edmunds, 2020).

The pandemic is still holding many countries within its grips. As shown by UNESCO mapping, many South-World schools have not yet reopened and rehabilitation services are not active. Beyond the objective difficulties that vary from country to country, it is important in the light of the past year and the lessons learned to adopt a planning perspective to find possible solutions. International scientific literature on the subject of inclusive education provides theoretical and methodological guidelines also useful in this crisis situation in order to formulate sustainable actions, generated from a thorough analysis of

reality, to be effective in the psychophysical well-being of people with disabilities.

The ICF-Bio-Psycho-Social Model (WHO, 2001), the intersectional and the Rights-Based Approach of persons with disabilities represent fundamental compasses. In fact, the ICF allows the assessment of the level of psychophysical well-being of the person through the identification of barriers in the social context and which restrict the participation of the entity by stimulating the search for facilitators who can guarantee inclusion depending on circumstances. This analysis also includes the ability to recognize the resources in its context and to activate them for the purpose of the bio-psycho-social welfare of individuals. Of course during the pandemic, as we will see below in the case proposed by the UCA, the domestic environment has been subject to functional revisitations for educational and remote rehabilitation in the case of children with cochlear implants. In this respect, the role of parents has changed, as well as the use of daily spaces that often assumed the pedagogical function of “home laboratories” capable of providing useful stimulus for educational and “enabling” processes⁵. From the point of view of personalized educational design, a high ability to read contexts is required and to avoid a standardized educational approach. Based on what has happened, the pandemic has helped to discover the most recent cracks of the educational and social systems, and highlighted how it is not useful to offer generalized, homologated and standardized strategic responses. The solutions that have proved to be more effective are those that arise within individual communities starting from the particulars of the specific context of life and that are assumed in solidarity by the network of different social actors.

It is also important to remember that the obstacles that people with disabilities encounter are not only architectural, but often are represented by attitudes, policies, dysfunctional intervention systems (Taddei, 2020).

Recognizing the specific needs of students and students with disabilities means that we must identify the barriers in the social context of the school but also those outside the school at the same time. In turn, facilitators do not consist exclusively of special devices, such as compensatory and/or dispensatory aids and instruments, but are represented by people, such as curricular and support teachers, extra-school teachers, classmates, siblings, and parents who can support learning (Ainscow, 2005; Barton and Armstrong, 2007; Barnes and Sheldon, 2010). The co-responsibility of the various figures mentioned in

⁵ Griffo states that with the term “rehabilitation” we recover a lost function of the body, but when “enable” we develop new skills, starting from the psychophysical conditions of the person. Griffo adds that “functional diversity is one of the characteristics of a person, which together with all the other characteristics contribute to define the set of their abilities, opportunities and potential» (Griffo, 2018, p.34).

implementing inclusive processes implies recognition of the affective, cognitive and social needs which have been particularly complex during the pandemic because of social isolation.

The Bio-Psycho-Social approach responds to an intersectional interpretation (Crenshaw, 1991; Garland Thomson, 2002) of the condition of discomfort that children and people with disabilities generally live. The intersectional approach strongly highlights the concept of social justice in the process of developing inclusive education based on respect for differences and the right to diversity.

The intertwining *pandemic, disability, identity, poverty* – in relation not only to the countries of the southern world but also to all the suburbs impoverished by the relentless effect of the crisis – strongly affects the quality of people's well-being and the educational and social opportunities they can access. It is therefore necessary to interconnect the social, cultural, identity factors to understand all of the dynamics of marginalization and at the same time the opportunities for emancipation in specific contexts (Taddei, 2017; Bernardini, 2018). This requires an analysis logic which tends to take separately the different identity conditions of people with disabilities (Dainese, 2020). In order to ensure effective matching between the identification of real needs and the design of interventions, an analysis and design approach should be adopted which can interpret overall the various conditions under which people and children live with disabilities for a fair distribution of resources and support.

Surely, the child population of low-income households has been more disadvantaged than those with more favorable economic conditions. The complexity of the general framework requires every country's political and social actors to play a decisive role in creating exit strategies effectively. Not finding or creating solutions that can remove barriers to inclusion and self-determination of people with disabilities from childhood means in fact violating the rights of at least 15% of the world's population (UN, 2006, 2015).

3. Speech Therapy to Children with Hearing Disabilities at CCAL-UCA during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Center of Attention for Communication, Hearing and Language, (CCAL-UCA, hereinafter) is a dependency of the Department of Education Sciences of the Central American University José Simeón Cañas (UCA), El Salvador. Since 2007 to date, it has provided speech therapy to children with hearing disabilities, this being a child with a cochlear implant, with hearing aid or without technical aids. The CCAL-UCA works in the speech therapy area for different levels of hearing disability, developing intervention programs

according to the needs of children, as well as establishing short-term goals that allow the acquisition of language skills.

During the face-to-face therapeutic process, game-based learning methods are used, based on theories of auditory-verbal therapy. In addition, all the components of language are worked on by developing recreational and educational activities with various logopedic methodologies. This combination of practices favors a comprehensive development in the acquisition of oral language, which can be generalized in different contexts.

To achieve this process, the participation of the family and the teachers is also required, this to guarantee that the agents commit to favoring the acquisition and learning of language in this population (Cruz *et al.*, 2013; Vanormelingen, De Maeyer and Gillis, 2015). For this, the CCAL-UCA therapists offer follow-up and guidance to parents and caregivers of childhood in order to promote their learning.

However, the national and global context has been a challenge for the development of CCAL-UCA activities. The global COVID-19 pandemic caused changes in the modality of the therapeutic work, since everything had to be moved to the remote or virtual modality. This became a major challenge for the users of the Center due to the existing digital gap that is associated with the difficulties of connection, accessibility and the use of technological resources, added to the barriers that digitization imposes on people with hearing disabilities, therefore, access to education in general is violated, including access to therapeutic processes (CEPAL and UNESCO, 2020).

Achieving virtual learning in people with hearing disabilities emerges as a significant challenge in times of COVID-19. Therefore, the new strategy consisted of planning an intervention proposal which could be implemented with the pedagogical mediation of families, taking into account that the majority of children with hearing disabilities are of limited economic resources who live in vulnerable and social risk areas (López *et al.*, 2020).

The pedagogical mediation from the family during the lockdown period had several achievements, including the use of verbal communication modalities based on intervention plans and activities proposed from everyday life, an increase in the use of everyday vocabulary and greater understanding of instructions and verbal fluency, specifically in childhood with a cochlear implant (López *et al.*, 2020). However, the families have expressed the need to return to the face-to-face modality in order to promote speech therapy work from the direct intervention of the professionals.

3.1. Return to the Face-to-face Modality

After the time of mandatory confinement, the university endorsed the

progressive attention to the users of the CCAL-UCA, in order to resume face-to-face therapeutic processes. For this to happen, it was important to have resources and protection measures to avoid contracting the COVID-19 virus.

In the CCAL-UCA, a health security protocol was created to establish an orderly and safe process for patients, families and the center's staff. The protocol was divided into three stages: the first stage was focused on identifying the epidemiological profile of relatives and users of therapeutic services prior to presenting themselves at the facilities, for which an online survey or family consultations via telephone was formed; the second stage was based on the entrance guidelines to the campus established by the university, which explain the control and registration of visitors (name of the person, body temperature measurement and length of stay inside the Center).

In addition, considering that the CCAL-UCA serves children with hearing disabilities at different levels and with different technical aids, it was necessary to have transparent masks to facilitate lipreading and visual cues, referring to gestures and signs. The center's protocol was put to the test in October 2020 when face-to-face activities were resumed, which allowed to assess its functionality. At the beginning, difficulties were observed in users to respect the indications and safety protocols. However, by January 2021, both patients and families have been aware of the risks that still exist in regards to the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompts them to respect health instructions to a greater extent.

3.2. Process, Resources and Methodology of Face-to-face Speech Therapy

For the teaching of oral language in children with hearing disabilities, the use of different learning resources is important, including material with high visual content, descriptive pictures, manipulative material, stories, sound games and sensory material. On the other hand, the acquisition of language can be from monolingualism, that is from the use of sign language; or bilingualism, using sign and oral language. Both options imply the incorporation of supports related to auditory stimulation, technical aids (hearing implants or hearing aids), lipreading and complementary communication systems.

The therapeutic processes used in the CCAL-UCA includes the technique of lipreading, which is a rehabilitation method where visual communication is established through lip movements. This technique is used from the first therapy sessions with childhood. In addition, bilingualism is used to lower the barrier understanding oral language in children with sensory hearing disabilities.

In the case of children who use technical aids, auditory training is carried out (López and Guillen, 2008). This takes up to five important steps: detection

(distinguishing the moment when a sound is produced); discrimination (distinguishing if two sounds are the same or different); identification (identifying noises, sounds, syllables and words); recognition (recognizing, memorizing and ordering sounds presented sequentially; and comprehension (oral comprehension through different communicative situations). As a result of the confinement due to the pandemic, it was necessary to retake these five steps in face-to-face speech therapy work, thus making it possible to identify those areas in which it was necessary to work urgently so that the verbal development of childhood continued optimally.

Although it is true that the CCAL-UCA as a therapeutic center from its beginnings took into account a variety of measures when working with children with hearing disabilities, due to the health security protocol, these measures were taken up with greater emphasis with changes in certain aspects; among them, work on the table has been limited by a dividing screen and work on the auditory part was affected by the use of masks. One solution that the CCAL-UCA therapists implemented was the use of transparent masks during therapy sessions with children with hearing disabilities, in order to reduce the communication barrier with this population. Also, speaking from the front and not neglecting the way of vocalizing has helped childhood to maintain the understanding of language.

On the other hand, adaptation has been carried out in the implementation of some methodologies, in order to respect health security measures. In this sense, physical contact has been withdrawn, which has been a challenge in therapeutic development since many activities, especially those related to phonetic and prosodic work, required such an approach. However, the family has been given greater prominence; thus, some techniques have been explained to be implemented at home. In this way, the stimulation of both language components continues (Wang *et al.*, 2008).

3.3. Virtual Therapy Process, Resources and Methodology

The therapeutic processes in virtual modality have been offered to families who wish to receive the sessions from home and who have access to the required digital tools. In order to implement speech therapy in this modality, it was necessary to do some research and create virtual activities, prioritizing all that visually attractive material. In addition, suitable materials have been developed for the therapeutic goals, which are functional in stimulating oral language and easy to use for children and families.

Digital teaching materials are a fundamental resource for the learning process of childhood, which must be used in a timely manner according to the context. During the virtual sessions offered by the CCAL-UCA, the family and

the speech therapists use various interactive materials that have contributed to the therapeutic process. The impact produced by the images, the interactivity, the possibility of developing activities tailored to the needs and the particular attractiveness of all these elements, become complementary instruments that enrich and favor the processes of appropriation of the language of children with hearing disabilities.

During the virtual sessions the therapist makes use of PowerPoint presentations, interactive whiteboards, visual digital games and subtitles, among others. These materials are attractive and motivate the oral participation of children with hearing disabilities. Some activities have the objective of working on the image-word relationship, the recognition of word meanings and the creation of descriptive comics for the identification of vocabulary and syntactic structuring. The variety of resources and short activities favor the optimal development of therapy sessions.

On some occasions, when implementing the therapy sessions through digital means, the attention of children tends to be dispersed, especially when the child is alone receiving the therapy. In this sense, constant family support is requested and activities are suggested where parents or caregivers are active agents during therapy. In this way, the family is involved in the language development processes (Blanco and Montañez-Torres, 2017).

3.4. Motivation of Children with Hearing Disabilities and Care for Families

During the confinement experience, the families expressed the need to return to the face-to-face modality, assessing the importance of speech therapy directly with the therapist, since they perceive greater advances in the development of the language of children with hearing disabilities. In this sense, the families recognized the quality of therapeutic work and the limitations that they may have at home. Although the professionals have provided guidance to develop activities in the household, the families identified that it is necessary to combine work in both environments.

In addition, families have expressed the importance of the bond on the part of childhood with the therapist, emphasizing the socio-affective element of the speech therapy process. It is in this aspect that childhood manifested longing for the return to the face-to-face modality, considering the time without seeing the therapist and the execution of game-based activities throughout the therapy sessions. In addition to the above, the confinement process has also impacted children in the social area (CEPAL and UNESCO, 2020). Therefore, attending face-to-face therapies allows them to get out of the home routine and maintain contact with other people outside their family circle.

The socio-affective links in the therapeutic processes are fundamental, especially when the implementation of the different activities allows children to have fun and promote self-confidence and autonomy. In this sense, upon returning to the face-to-face modality, children have been motivated to resume the therapeutic processes, expressing joy when returning to the CCAL-UCA and maintaining contact with their therapist, despite the physical distancing implemented as a result of the health crisis. This aspect has favored the development of therapy sessions, since childhood shows willingness to work in the speech therapy, influencing the motivation of families to make the effort to attend face-to-face sessions, despite the current health and social circumstances.

In regards to family orientation, the CCAL-UCA has required greater monitoring of the processes of care for children with hearing disabilities. In turn, families are more willing to make inquiries. The families have been able to identify the need to resolve doubts about the rehabilitation processes, work-at-home strategies and difficulties with hearing aids. From this point on, a constant follow-up is being offered, assigning more activities to implement at home, in order to enhance family involvement in childhood language learning processes.

3.5. Lessons Learned based the CCAL-UCA Experience

Based on the experiences in the educational and therapeutic work at the CCAL-UCA with children with hearing disabilities. during the COVID-19 pandemic, implementing the virtual, distance and face-to-face modality, it has been concluded that:

1. Despite the follow-up offered during the confinement period as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, using pedagogical mediation from the families for the implementation of intervention plans from home, it is necessary to resume speech therapy sessions directly with children, recognizing the importance of articulating work in both environments in order to favor the process of language habilitation and rehabilitation of people with hearing disabilities.
2. Virtuality is a modality that can be used with people with hearing disabilities, however, it is necessary to adapt it, making it accessible to this population and allowing speech therapy work, reducing the communication barriers.
3. Although the virtual modality offers a variety of tools for speech therapy work, as long as the resources are adapted to the context and needs of children with hearing disabilities, it cannot replace the therapeutic process in face-to-face modality, since the former favors the implementation of

logopedic techniques such as auditory training, instructional follow-up and modeling. It also fosters the attention and socio-affective development of children.

4. Motivation and the socio-affective component are essential in the language rehabilitation and habilitation processes of children with hearing disabilities, since it influences the disposition for learning that enhances language development.
5. The role of families as mediators from home is fundamental. However, this mediation must be carried out in a guided way and from daily activities, since there are different factors that add to the responsibilities of family members. In this way, the combination of speech therapy with the support from home greatly favors the linguistic development of children with sensory hearing disabilities.
6. The use of a diversity of visual resources, auditory training and lipreading have been fundamental for the development of linguistic competences in children with hearing disabilities, taking into account that these elements can be used from different attention modalities and considering the characteristics of each case.
7. The didactic resources, especially those that are visually attractive, are tools that can be used in speech therapy work in both face-to-face and virtual modalities. This facilitates the learning of children with hearing disabilities, allowing the acquisition of new knowledge and development of language skills.

4. Research and Action Perspectives

Looking critically at what happened during the pandemic crisis, it is undeniable that the difficulties have been and continue to prevail with respect to the strengths that this situation has presented. Nevertheless, as educators we cannot exempt from adopting a constructive gaze that allows us to also highlight the potential and positive learning that have been hidden among the fragile cracks of this humanitarian tragedy. In fact, the Pandemic required the creation and immediate introduction of innovations in welfare and socio-educational practices that “shook the torpor” into which many sectors had fallen by renouncing investment in terms of human resources and economic. The unpredictability and speed with which the crisis has undermined life contexts around the planet has forced the quick implementation of the solutions adopted.

The period that awaits us would require the systematization of positive and sustainable practices, adapting them to the post-pandemic context. The vulnerability that has affected school systems all over the world has highlighted

once again that the school, in addition to being the place par excellence dedicated to guaranteeing learning, is also the one that supports and promotes socialization processes and represents the context of central importance for all children, especially for those who come from the poorest families and who belong to more fragile categories such as boys and girls with disabilities in contexts poor of opportunities.

Social isolation weighed on the scales of social justice very differently from family to family and from country to country. As demonstrated by the experience of the UCA, the alliance between different actors of society has been revealed as a great resource that often has managed to compensate for the difficulties and shortcomings that have overwhelmed the formal education systems and institutional health services. In the specific case of the CCAL-UCA, the university, through the service offered, has assumed and exercised its social function by responding to the needs of the poorest families.

Looking towards the future, therefore trying to imagine a COVID-free world, from the pedagogical research point of view of in the field of inclusive education (Amor *et al.*, 2018) it will be useful and interesting to pursue some lines of research to avoid wasting the wealth of learning offered by what happened:

- study how the modalities of educational support and rehabilitation services aimed at the population with sensory disabilities have changed during the pandemic;
- investigate what difficulties and what practices the families of children with sensory disabilities have experienced, who in particular have suffered the deleterious effects of social isolation;
- identify which new forms of alliances to ensure social and educational inclusion have been experienced during the pandemic and which of these can be maintained;
- reflect on what new skills it is necessary to invest with regard to educational figures and educational and rehabilitation services in the light of the cracks in the system that the situation has brought out;
- Investigate and design didactic and educational strategies that can accompany the return to school, the transition from an emergency situation to an ordinary one, knowing that the post-pandemic will present new challenges in terms of teaching-learning, educational and rehabilitative processes.

If the world of formal and informal educational services does not prepare for the “reopening” with the necessary investments, once again the most vulnerable groups, including the people with disabilities, will risk being

forgotten and severely suffer the inequality gap in the face of rights that the pandemic has revealed and strengthened with extreme harshness.

References

- Ainscow M. (2005). Developing inclusive education systems: what are the levers for change?. *Journal of Educational Change*, 6(2): 109-124. DOI: 10.1007/s10833-005-1298-4.
- Aishworiya R. and Kang Y.K. (2020). Including Children with Developmental Disabilities in the Equation during this COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 2: 1-4. DOI: 10.1007/s10803-020-04670-6.
- Amor A.M., Hagiwara M., Shogren K.A., Thompson J.R., Verdugo M.A., Burke K.M., Aguayo V. (2018). International perspectives and trends in research on inclusive education: A systematic review. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23: 1277-1295. DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2018.1445304.
- Barnes C. and Sheldon A. (2010). Disability, Politics and Poverty in a majority World Context. *Disability and Society*, 25(7): 771-782. DOI: 10.1080/09687599.2010.520889.
- Barton L. and Armstrong F. (2007). *Policy, Experience and Change: Cross-Cultural Reflections on Inclusive Education*. New York: Springer.
- Bernardini M.G. (2018). Soggettività mancanti e disabilità. Per una critica intersezionale all'immagine del soggetto di diritto. *Rivista di Filosofia del diritto* 7(2): 281-300. DOI: 10.4477/91676.
- Blanco Montañez G. and Moreno-Torres Sánchez I. (2017). Influencia de la educación familiar en el desarrollo lingüístico de niños con implante coclear. In Rodríguez-Martín A. (Ed). *Prácticas innovadoras inclusivas: retos y oportunidades*. Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo.
- Caarls K., Cebotari V., Karamperidou D., Alban Conto M. C., Zapata J. and Zhou R. Y. (2021). *Lifting Barriers to Education During and After COVID-19: Improving education outcomes for migrant and refugee children in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research. Text available at the website https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/Lifting-Barriers-to-Education-During-and-After-COVID-19-Improving-education-outcomes-for-migrant-and-refugee-children-in_LAC.pdf (3/05/2021).
- Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe and Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (2020). La educación en tiempos de la pandemia de COVID-19. Paris: CEPAL-UNESCO. Text available at the website: https://repositorio.cepal.-org/bitstream/handle/11362/45904/1/S2000510_es.pdf, 30/04/2021.
- Conti A. and Cappellini V. (2016). From Logogenia to extensive reading: reflections and proposals for the deaf students and the whole class. *Italian Journal of Special Education for Inclusion*, 4(1): 137-151. Text available at the website <https://ojs.pensamultimedia.it/index.php/sipes/article/view/1796> (24/04/2021).

- Conti A., Maggiolini S., Pollice S. and d'Alonzo L. (2019). Bilingual inclusive education program for deaf students at the Barozzi Institute of Milan: findings of the research on socio-emotional condition for native signer students. *Italian Journal of Special Education for Inclusion*, 7(2): 294-308. DOI: 10.7346/sipes-02-2019-22.
- Crenshaw K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6): 1241-1299. DOI: 10.2307/1229039.
- Cruz I., Quittner A. L., Marker C., DesJardin J. L. and CDaCI Investigative Team (2013). Identification of Effective Strategies to Promote Language in Deaf Children with cochlear implants. *Child Development*, 84(2): 543-559. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2012.01863.x.
- Dainese R. (2020). *La rete di relazioni a sostegno della didattica per l'inclusione*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Edmunds W. J. (2020). Finding a path to reopen schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 4: 807-817. DOI: 10.1016/S2352-4642(20)30249-2.
- Garland-Thomson R. (2002). Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory. *NWSA Journal*, 14(3): 1-32. Text available at the website <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4316922> (20/04/2021).
- Griffo G. (2018). Il nuovo welfare per la promozione della cittadinanza e dell'inclusione: l'applicazione della Convenzione sui Diritti delle Persone con Disabilità delle Nazioni Unite. In Griffo G., a cura di, *Il Nuovo Welfare coerente con i principi della CRPD. L'empowerment e l'inclusione delle persone con disabilità*. Lamezia Terme: Comunità Edizioni.
- Krishnan I.A., De Mello G., Kok S.A., Sabapathy S.K., Munian S., Ching H.S., Kandasamy P., Ramalingam S., Baskaran S. and Kanan V.N (2020). *Challenges Faced by Hearing Impairment Students During COVID-19*. Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 5(8): 106-116. DOI: 10.47405/mjssh.v5i8.472.
- Leigh I. V. (2009). *A Lens of Deaf Identity*. New York: Oxford University Press
- López V. T. and Guillén Gosálbez, C. (2008). *Intervención educativa en el alumnado con discapacidad auditiva*. Equipo Específico de deficiencia auditiva. Sede de Murcia. Text available at the website: <http://diversidad.murciaeduca.es/orientamur2/gestion/documentos/unidad16.pdf> (27/04/2021).
- López E. A., Escalante K. Y. E., Reyes R. A. R., Bustamante M. T. C. and Taddei A. (2020). Mediación pedagógica de la familia a la niñez con implante coclear en situación de pandemia. *Italian Journal Of Special Education For Inclusion*, 8(2): 82-96. DOI: 10.7346/sipes-02-2020-06.
- Mantzikos C.N. and Lappa C.S. (2020). Difficulties and Barriers in the Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals in the Era of COVID-19. The Case of Greece. A Viewpoint Article. *European Journal of Special Education Research*, 6(3): 75-95. DOI: 10.46827/ejse.v6i3.3357.
- Marschark M., Hauser P. C. (2008). *Deaf cognition: Foundations and Outcomes*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Marschark M., Tang G., Knoors H. (Eds) (2014). *Bilingualism and Bilingual Deaf Education*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sciarretta E. and Greco E. (2020). Promoting educational inclusion through accessible technology and Universal Design for Learning. *QTimes, Journal of Education, Technology and Social Studies*, XII(4): 192-203. Text available at the website: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345677181_Promoting_educational_inclusion_through_accessible_technologyand_Universal_Design_for_Learning (29/04/2021).
- Taddei A. (2020). *Come fenici. Donne con disabilità e vie per l'emancipazione*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Taddei A. (2020). *Educazione inclusiva e cooperazione internazionale. Un intervento in El Salvador*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Toofaninejad E., Zaraii Zavaraki E., Dawson S., Poquet O. and Sharifi Daramadi P. (2017). Social Media Use for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students in Educational Settings: a Systematic Review of Literature. *Deafness & Education International*, 19(3- 4): 144-161. DOI: 10.1080/14643154.2017.1411874.
- Umashankar A. and Prabhu P.(2020). Effect of Covid-19 on Individuals with Hearing Impairment in India. *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research*, 14(8): 1-4. DOI: 10.7860/JCDR/2020/45054.13892.
- United Nations (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability*. New York: UN. Text available at the website: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html> (2/05/2021).
- United Nations (2015). *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals*. New York: UN. Text available at the website: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda> (2/05/2021).
- United Nations (2020). *Policy Brief: Education during the COVID-19 and beyond*. New York: UNICEF. Text available at the website https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/08/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_education_august_2020.pdf (1/05/2021).
- United Nations Children's Fund (2020). *Children with Disabilities. Ensuring their Inclusion in COVID-19 Response Strategies and Evidence Generation*. New York, UNICEF. Text available at the website <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/children-disabilities-ensuring-their-inclusion-covid-19-response-strategies-and>, 2/05/2021.
- United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2021). *Supporting Learning Recovery*. Paris: UNESCO. *One Year into the COVID-19*. Text available at the website <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000376061>
- Viner R. M., Russell S. J., Croker H., Packer J., Ward J., Stansfield C. and Booy R. (2020). School closure and management practices during coronavirus outbreaks including COVID-19: a rapid systematic review. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 4(5): 397-404. DOI: 10.1016/S2352-4642(20)30095-X.
- Vanormelingen L., De Maeyer S. y Gillis S. (2015). Interaction patterns of mothers of children with different degrees of hearing: Normally hearing children and congenitally hearing-impaired children with a cochlear implant. *International*

Journal of Pediatric Otorhinolaryngology, 79(4): 520-526. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijporl.2015.01.020.

Wang N. Y., Eisenberg L. S., Johnson K. C., Fink N. E., Tobey E. A., Quittner A. L. and CDaCI Investigative Team (2008). Tracking development of speech recognition: longitudinal data from hierarchical assessments in the Childhood Development after Cochlear Implantation Study. *Otology & neurotology: official publication of the American Otological Society, American Neurotology Society [and] European Academy of Otology and Neurotology*, 29(2): 240-245. DOI: 10.1097/MAO.0b013e3181627a37.

World Health Organization (2001). *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health*. Geneva: WHO.

Inclusion in university contexts and the role of internships in the education of students with disabilities: Critical issues, perspectives and good practices

Gigliola Paviotti*, Ilaria D'Angelo**, Simone Aparecida Capellini***, Catia Giaconi****

Abstract

The topic of university inclusion is today at the centre of the international and national debate. The reasons are related to a significant increase in the number of students with disabilities enrolled in university, as shown by the first report "Disability, Dsa and access to university education", presented these days by ANVUR (Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of the University system and Research) and CNUDD (National Conference of University Delegates for Disability). From this report, several steps forward for the inclusion of university students emerge, but also several critical dimensions that still require the attention of research and academic policies. This article will examine this issue and focus on exploring one of the critical nodes of university inclusion, namely the role of internships in the educational experience of students with disabilities and in their life project.

A growing literature has explored their academic experience; on the contrary, there is little research to date that explores the issues and challenges of a central aspect of the higher education and training pathway, namely internships.

Completing the study pathway in higher education is identified as a factor that can impact increasing the social and employment inclusion of people with disabilities (Union of Equality Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) and consequent improvement of levels of Quality of Life (Giaconi, 2015). However, one of the main obstacles to obtaining a qualification is the accessibility of internships.

This article addresses the meaning and implications of internships for competences' building and insertion into the labour market of disabled graduates. Therefore, it explores the state of play of research, identifies the most critical issues, and reports about the running debate in the field.

Key words: Work-based learning; internship; employability; higher education students with disabilities; university inclusion; life design.

First submission: 01/05/2021, accepted: 20/05/2021

Available online: 28/06/2021

* Post-doc research fellow, University of Macerata. E-mail: gigliola.paviotti@unimc.it.

** Phd, University of Macerata. E-mail: ilariadng3@gmail.com.

*** Full Professor, at the Speech and Hearing Sciences Department, at São Paulo State University, UNESP, Brazil. E-mail: sacap@uol.com.br.

**** Full Professor of Didactics and Special Pedagogy at the University of Macerata. E-mail: catia.giaconi@unimc.it.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa11912

1. Introduction

Talking today about inclusion in university contexts is possible thanks to the abundant studies that can be found in the scientific literature (Giaconi *et al.*, 2019; D'Angelo and Del Bianco, 2019; Pace, Pavone and Petrini, 2018; Caldin, 2017; Pavone, 2015), and to the attention that bodies in charge of ensuring inclusion for university students with disabilities have dedicated to this issue. The recent report “Disability, Dsa and access to university education”¹, presented these days by the ANVUR (Italian Agency for the Evaluation of the University System and Research) and the CNUDD (National Conference of University Delegates for Disability) highlights the light and the shade of university inclusion. Specifically, the ANVUR- CNUDD report 2021 snapshots an advanced Italian reality regarding specific orientation services before, during and after studies and support services such as specialised tutoring or digital teaching materials. On the other hand, transport and home services, platforms accessible also on sign language, textbooks accessible to all are still critical aspects to be improved. As we have demonstrated in previous studies (D'Angelo and Del Bianco, 2019; Giaconi *et al.*, 2019, Giaconi and Del Bianco, 2018; Giaconi *et al.*, 2018), there are international excellences that also allow Italian contexts to express models of good practice for supporting university students with sensory disabilities (Buckley, 2019) or with Specific Learning Disorders (dos Santos *et al.*, 2019; Demetriou, *et al.*, 2019). From these studies, several junctures remain for international and national research to address to promote not only university inclusion but the very opportunity for growth that the university can represent in the life project of students with disabilities. For this reason, we tackle with this article one of the most delicate issues for the university education of all students and in particular, as we shall see, of students with disabilities: the internship.

The normative and sequential relationship between education and work has dramatically changed over time (Müller and Gangl, 2003). The acquisition of skills for graduate employability became central in university teaching and learning since the Bologna Declaration (1999). Internships, previously more common in medicine and healthcare degrees and vocational education and training, became spread across university study curricula and educational policies to speed the insertion of graduates in the labour market.

Work-based learning (WBL) represents the pedagogical approach on which the internship experiences are built on. WBL, typical of vocational education and training, has been defined as “learning that occurs in a work environment through participation in work practices and process”; the joint concept of Work

¹ <https://www.anvur.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Risultati-indagine-ANVUR-disabilita-e-DSA.pdf>.

Integrated Learning (WIL), refers instead «learning that comprises a range of programs and activities in which the theory of the learning is intentionally integrated with the practice of work through specifically designed curriculum, pedagogic practices and student engagement» (Atkinson, 2016, p. 2). Both approaches are based on the principles of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984): reflective, self-directed and self-managed individuals can learn from practice and work (Kolb, 1984; Brookfield, 1995). According to Raelin (1997), WBL has both an individual and collective propriety, able to link theory and action and to make tacit knowledge explicit in a «form of knowing that is context-dependent» (p. 572).

WBL processes are formalised in the internship experience; however, the word can refer to different stages and types of learning at work, depending on countries (ILO, 2018). In Europe, internship and traineeship are often used interchangeably, and translations in national languages often make understanding even more unclear. For the purpose of this paper, we keep the EURES definitions: an internship is a work experience carried out while studying, and it is often curricular (needed to complete the study course); traineeship is a work practice, which is usually carried out after the end of the studies to gain some work experience. A traineeship can be paid or unpaid and always has a learning component (EURES, 2015).

On this background, there is a need to understand how WBL can be valuable for inclusion in university contexts and the professional formation of students with disabilities in higher education.

2. The internship process: players' perspectives

A typical internship process includes three players: the employer, the educational provider and the student/intern; they agree on a learning programme performed through a series of tasks, mentoring, monitoring and evaluation from both academic and company tutor, and reflection and evaluation from the student (ongoing and final). The administration part, including insurance, agreements and official documents to record the internship, is usually managed by the educational provider in agreement with the company. However, according to business culture, national rules, and contextual needs of any of the involved players, the main process can have much different management and implementation features.

1.1. *The employer perspective*

By taking a collective perspective, employers seem to be the first

condemning the missing work-readiness of graduates: several studies stress the lack of skills, in particular soft skills, financial skills and business skills among newly graduates, in the frame of the skills mismatch analysis (CEDEFOP, 2018; McGuinness *et al.*, 2018; Brunello and Wruuck, 2019, among others). On the other hand, employers recognise the added value of experience when looking for staff (Thompson, 2014). When analysing internship, and to a greater extent traineeship, the globalisation and the competition of the labour market should be considered. The supervising of an intern requires time, time is constrained, and 'time is money': therefore, often, costs are more valued than benefits in hosting an intern. The first advantage recognised by industry is in fact related to costs (CABS, 2014; Rowe *et al.*, 2018): even if this is applicable in particular for the traineeship, internships are often considered a form of low-cost labour without long-term commitment (Galloway *et al.*, 2014), or additional resources for projects that would not be implemented with regular resources (Maertz *et al.*, 2014). However, the cost issue is not always the reason for hosting interns: the internship can be seen as a form of recruiting process (Divine *et al.*, 2007) or as a trial period in the company (Elarde and Chong, 2012; Maertz *et al.*, 2014).

The intern can be beneficial also to the working group by contributing with a different perspective that can support change in methods and approaches (Fleming, 1999).

Finally, the contribution to the community by companies should be stressed: many internship programmes, in particular in large companies, are linked to corporate social responsibility strategies (Gould *et al.*, 2020; Cordero *et al.*, 2014). In smaller companies, where comprehensive corporate social responsibility strategies are not common, still, the relationship with the community is strong, based on trust and reputation: in this sense, hosting interns represents a way of contributing to common societal good and well-being (Jenkins, 2006; Spence, 2007).

1.2. The University perspective

Internships in curricular courses were among the significant novelties following the establishment of the European Higher Education Area.

The internship is a part of the students' learning and career development process (Holyoak, 2013). In this sense, the university takes advantage of WBL to increase the acquisition of skills useful for preparation for the world of work, and, above all, life design.

Further, internship programmes enhance institutions' reputation and, consequently, their attractiveness for prospective students (Vélez and Giner, 2015).

Finally, internship programmes strengthen ties with the corporate world (Gerken *et al.*, 2012), which is beneficial to several aims, e.g., funding support (Cook *et al.*, 2004); participation in job fairs (Divine *et al.*, 2007); consulting opportunities and joint curricular activities (Toncar and Cudmore, 2000); increased understanding of industry needs (Tovey, 2001); etc.

1.3. The student/intern perspective

The internship is a widely recognised learning experience that enables students to acquire skills that cannot be developed through classroom learning (Ismail, 2018), improve employment outcomes (Saniter and Siedler, 2014; Rigsby *et al.*, 2013), and reflect on career prospects (Vélez and Giner, 2015).

Among skills acquired through the internship's experiential learning experience, students gain a wide range of transversal skills, such as e.g. interpersonal skills (Zeher and Korte, 2019), teamwork skills (Andrew and Highson, 2008), and business culture (Korte, 2009) skills. The internship supports the acquisition of a pre-professionalism attitude (Jackson, 2018) and the formation of professional network building (Stanton, 1992). Concerning requests from the labour market, internships increase the marketability of graduates (Gault *et al.*, 2010).

3. University internship and disability

As for all young people, work is important for youths with disabilities. However, their employment outcomes have persistently lagged behind (Simonsen *et al.*, 2015): in 2011, Eurostat (2018) observed that the employment rate of people with basic activity difficulties was 47.3 % (almost 20 percentage points below that of people without disabilities). Therefore, it is even more crucial to establish 'bridges' between education and work for students with disabilities, including those at the university. By saying 'disability', we refer to a wide range of different special needs and impairments: the following paragraphs refer to the most frequent topics found in literature, pointing out, however, the reference to the type of disability when available.

3.1. The employer perspective

Previous research explored the perspective of employers, particularly from an employment point of view. At the same time, university internships are more studied from the point of observation of the institution and the student.

However, interesting inputs can be drawn from work-based learning for specific sub-groups and research on the transition from education to work of people with disability. Literature suggests that people with psychiatric disability face more difficulties in finding employment and more significant discrimination than physical disability (Bricout and Bently, 2000; Chi and Qu, 2005; Kocman *et al.*, 2017). Greenwood and Johnson (1987) also confirmed the preference for employers to hire people with a physical disability and less favour for those with intellectual disability. In addition, they identified among variables in hiring people with disability the size of the company (larger companies vs small companies, the first reporting more positive attitudes) and the level of academic attainment of recruiters (higher attainment corresponding to positive attitude).

Additional perceived barriers include:

- Lack of adequate jobs, often linked to stereotypes about possessed competencies, therefore able to perform the job (Louvet *et al.*, 2009).
- Resources-related issues: belief that to accommodate people with disability at the workplace is too complicated and requires additional efforts (Kocman *et al.*, 2017).
- Teamwork and human resources issues: fear of difficult management of the employee or difficulties for co-workers in dealing with people with disability (Bonaccio *et al.*, 2020).
- Legal issues: fear that law-related constraints would hinder the process of hiring or dismissal (Kocman *et al.*, 2017), which depends on national legal frameworks.
- Lack of candidates (Kocman *et al.*, 2017; Domzal *et al.*, 2008).

Organisation and implementation of work-based learning experiences for students with disabilities face similar difficulties: according to Riesen and Oertle (2019), besides problems, three crucial factors favour the hosting/hiring people with disability, namely (a) desire to diversify the workforce, (b) desire to expand job opportunities for youth, and (c) commitment to give back to the community (p. 15). These factors are related to general factors supporting the hosting of interns, particularly concerning the community's contribution. Instead, diversification of the workforce and diversity management seems to be a distinguishing factor related to hosting interns or hiring young people with disabilities. Managing diversity in the workplace has become increasingly popular in organisations, both for corporate social responsibility reasons and for reputation/branding reasons. Especially for large companies, managing diversity means enlarging the pool of potential (talented) candidates, benefiting from different thinking/creative ideas in the workforce, and be able to deal and interact with diverse consumer groups. However, it should be stressed that

when referring to ‘diversity’, both literature and policies include several segments of the population, such as minority ethnic groups, or sexual orientation, gender and, of course, also disability, which is itself composed of people with very different needs, as previously said. Therefore, even if it is common to believe that hiring people with disability is a benefit for the company in terms of diversity, it should be recalled that the traditional management diversity approach could be challenged by the reality of disabled individuals, who «necessitate both different types of equality initiatives and significantly more individualised equality measures» (Woodhams and Danieli, 2000, p. 414).

3.2. The University perspective

Among support services, usually, the internships in universities are managed by the career services: those should be ideally designed, like all other services, according to the principles of Universal Design, therefore ensuring physical access, but also access to printed and digital resources, and trained staff (Chartered, N/A; Optiz and Block, 2008).

Aune (2000) described four models of career services delivery for students with disabilities: 1) career and disability offices operate independently; 2) the disability office also takes care of career development, as a part of the overall learning experience; 3) career and disability offices operate in an integrated way; 4) the two concerned offices are integrated, according to the Universal Design principles, and the student does not need additional or ‘special’ services, since the regular services are accessible from anyone. The latter is the ‘ideal’ situation, but is still challenging implement.

Being the reality is often far from the ideal situation, usually, work-based learning is managed by both services: a part managed by the career service (typically job search and admin procedures), and another part is governed by the disability service (for example, accommodation and special staff support, or tutoring). Depending on the university’s organisation, tasks can be differently divided. However, usually, accommodation, including special tools (e.g., assisting technologies), is managed by the disability service and special support during the internship experience, if needed. As this type of support is not very different from regular learning support, also in the classroom or generally in academic life, the challenge in the internships’ organisation of students with disability is more finding work-based learning opportunities than in managing the WBL process.

3.3. The student/intern perspective

As for all students, the internship experience is crucial in the educational

journey of students with disability. However, students with disabilities have to face additional challenges.

Literature, both on work-based learning and job insertion, identify as most common difficulties the following ones:

- Perception of being employed/hosted as disabled student/worker, not as a student/worker (Nolan and Gleeson, 2016).
- Fear of discrimination can lead to refusal of disability disclosure for those who are affected by invisible disabilities (e.g., mental illness) (Nolan and Gleeson, 2016; Bonaccio *et al.*, 2020).
- Low self-efficacy perception, linked to disability (Nolan and Gleeson, 2016).

In the background, yet it should be recalled that the perception of disability varies across cultures and may also be influenced by the labour market status (Kreider and Pepper, 2007).

4. University internship in Italy

Focusing on the Italian context, curricular training has become an integral part of university education since 2004. Ministerial Decree no. 270 of October 22, 2004, established that, in addition to the educational activities qualifying the courses of study, the curricula must include educational activities relating to internships and training periods in companies, public administrations, public or private bodies, etc. As indicated by the same Decree, curricular internships are work-based experiences promoted by the University and are carried out on the basis of special agreements governing the relations between the bodies involved in the interns' activities. In addition to curricular internships, Italian universities can also set up and manage "training and guidance traineeships", i.e., traineeships undertaken within 12 months of obtaining a degree or professional training aimed at facilitating professional choices and employability in the transition phase from school to work through training in a productive environment and direct knowledge of the world of work.

Internships involve three players: the promoter, i.e., the University, the host (company, business, etc.) and the intern, i.e., the student. To start an internship, it is necessary to draw up a training and guidance project containing the objectives and methods of carrying out the internship (ensuring, for students, the link with their training courses), the names of the academic and company tutor and the duration and period of the internship.

Regarding university students with disabilities, their right to access higher education is historically ascribed to the principle of educational continuity (de Anna, 2016) as established by the Italian Constitutional Court (sentence 215,

1987); the same rules and implementation procedures apply to curricular internships. To guarantee the right to study and the provision of the same educational opportunities, including the orientation of the internship, the *National University Conference of the Delegates for the Disability* (CNUDD) elaborated guidelines to ensure the right to study and to contextually promote inclusion, autonomy and active citizenship of all students (CNUDD, 2014, p.5).

In particular, the CNUDD's commitment is to promote and support access to university, training and lifelong learning, in the belief that knowledge, higher culture and participation in research foster full human development, entry into the world of work and the realisation of freedoms, understood as opportunities to realise personal aspirations (CNUDD, 2014, p.5).

In this direction, to support the educational success during the entire university course, Italian universities have established specific professional figures, such as the Rector's Delegate for Disability and Specific Learning Disorders (SLDs), and administrative support structures. The latter, named in the CNUDD guidelines with the term University Disability/SLDs Services (SDDA), is the first point of contact for students with disabilities at university and play a strategic role in the reception and management of the various services set up in the universities themselves to protect their right to study. The SDDAs, in collaboration with the Rector's Delegate for Disability and SLDs, are called upon to play the role of interface between the university system and students, as well as, if necessary, with families and local and health services; they are responsible for liaising with the university services and, in particular, with tutoring and with entry and exit orientation; they prepare personalised support services ongoing as well as having organisational and administrative management responsibility for the provision of services and the monitoring of their effectiveness (CNUDD, 2014, p.7). Within these responsibilities, the SDDAs are therefore involved in supporting the preparation and management of the practices necessary for the start of curricular internships for students who request them.

The structuring of actions aimed at favouring orientation and tutoring during the curricular internship, also through personalised methods able to ensure the connection with the pathway undertaken, is undoubtedly essential in the creation of opportunities for a concrete opening to the labour market. The recently issued Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 sets among its objectives that people with disabilities in Europe have equal opportunities and have equal access to participate in society and the economy. Specifically, it stresses that equal access to education and labour market-oriented learning at all levels should be ensured through the adaptation of

education and training policies to the needs of persons with disabilities in a manner consistent with the UNCRPD².

The Union of Equality Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities³ highlights as today: «The employment gap between persons with and without disabilities remains high: persons with disabilities have a lower employment rate, are disproportionately affected by unemployment, and leave labour markets earlier. A large number of persons with severe disabilities do not work in the open labour market, but in facilities offering so-called sheltered employment» (Union of Equality - Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, p. 13).

Also, the Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience⁴ invites the Member States to design vocational programmes to be inclusive and accessible for persons with disabilities.

In this framework, the role played by internships in higher education as an opportunity to prepare for the demands of real labour market contexts is central. However, as we will elaborate in the next paragraph, there are still several critical issues concerning university placements of students with disabilities.

4.1. The debate on internship and disability

Access to university studies is a natural aspiration and a chance for self-fulfilment for many people with disabilities or SLDs (CNUDD, 2014, p. 11).

As stressed by previous research (Del Bianco *et al.*, 2020; D'Angelo and Del Bianco, 2019; Giaconi *et al.*, 2019; Giaconi *et al.*, 2018), universities should provide the right to study: they should pursue accessibility in teaching and promote inclusive processes within the academic community.

Educational guidance is a fundamental step in building a continuum between high school and university. Support for the choice of study pathway represents, in fact, the first real and concrete opportunity to plan a future career. A realistic and sustainable academic planning, more than the mere aspiration to a degree, is predictive of the permanence of young people in the university context and is the bridge to the world of work (CNUDD, 2014), an important goal for the project of independent living (Giaconi *et al.*, 2020; Pace, Pavone, Petrini, 2018; Caldin and Scollo, 2018). To this end, the CNUDD guidelines emphasise the importance of structuring orientation methods, even after leaving university, to provide adequate support to students with disabilities or SLDs in the transition

² <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>.

³ See: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1484>.

⁴ Council Recommendation (2020/C 417/01).

to the world of work. In this direction, universities are called upon to organise interventions to enable students to acquire specific skills in the drafting of the Curriculum Vitae; to promote the relationship between the student and the world of work; to achieve an effective match between job supply and demand, based on the profile and aspirations of the individual student (CNUDD, 2014, p. 11).

National (Bocci, Cajola and Zucca, 2020; Pace, Pavone and Petrini, 2018; Pavone, 2017; D'Alonzo and Carruba, 2016; Caldin, 2017; CNUDD, 2014) and international studies (Espada-Chavarria, Moreno-Rodriguez, and Jenaro, 2020; Buckley, 2019; Briel and Getzel, 2001) however highlight some critical issues related to the conduct of curricular and extracurricular internships by students with disabilities and SLDs at university.

Regarding critical issues, the Italian context reports similar difficulties as other countries, as highlighted in paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3. While there is a wide consensus on how the internship of students with disability should be designed and developed, implementation still suffers from internal and external misalignments between theory and practice. Recently, the Conference of Italian Rectors (CRUI) pointed out the need of addressing the issue according to the paradigm of complexity, i.e., through coordinated use of actions that fall under the general concept of “reasonable accommodation” (UN Convention, 2006⁵). Therefore, the specific contexts and needs of each student should be taken into account, adhering as possible to the guiding principle of personalisation. Furthermore, the participants to the CRUI conference (Disability Delegates of Italian Universities), by recognising the need of leveraging on the students’ capacities and not on their constraints, stressed the need of applying at least four conditions, as follows:

- Being transparent toward students and their families on potential future difficulties, both along with the study degree and employability potential.
- Managing hopes and expectations, avoiding illusion and consequent disappointment and discouragement.
- Strengthening awareness and sense of self-responsibility in students and families.
- Respecting freedom of choice and putting in place appropriate measures during the study course to avoid academic failure.

Some authors have also identified these points: while leaving the broadest possible set of opportunities to the subject, thus, all the actors involved in the orientation process must make very clear the characteristics of the future course of study and any constraints related to workshops, internships and professional

⁵ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>.

outlets (EADHE, 2014; CRUI, 2018). In other terms, the student should be supported in gaining self-reflection, self-awareness and self-responsibility in designing her/his life project. On this consideration, also the design of the support system should be prepared: however, the complexity of relations concerned – e.g., support offices, tutors, but also medical doctors, and the involved dimensions from legal to technical and pedagogical, make difficult the realisation of such a university eco-system.

Whilst the described conclusions of the CRUI conference could apply to any student, the conference was specifically addressed at a specific segment of the students' body, namely those enrolled in the *qualifying degrees*. Qualifying degrees lead to the automatic authorisation to the professional practice, which in Italy usually requires a State examination to be passed after the degree attainment. Today, the available qualifying degrees are health degrees (such as Medicine), one education degree (for primary school teachers), and one restoration degree. In particular, the first two, these specific degrees add complexity to the organisation of work-based learning: both professions, Medicine professions and primary school teachers cannot be carried out outside field-specific environments and settings that could not be appropriately arranged to the needs of the student. The conclusion of the conference, by acknowledging that at present there is no shared solution, which is found and implemented case-by-case, recognises that there is a need of harmonisation on the internship of qualifying degrees, and a wider need also to harmonise approaches, methods, and organisational structures across the country.

5. Internships within the Inclusion 3.0 Project

As highlighted in previous studies (Giaconi *et al.*, 2019; D'Angelo and Del Bianco, 2019; Giaconi *et al.*, 2018), the University of Macerata, consistently with the CNUDD guidelines and in addition to regular disability services, has implemented the project Inclusion 3.0, to support projects addressed at the University inclusion.

Inclusion 3.0 is a project launched by the University of Macerata in July 2017 and designed to implement design actions in university inclusion of students with disabilities or Specific Learning Disorders.

The project's intervention strategy focuses on the enhancement of university services and awareness-raising events at the national and international level aimed at strengthening policy and scientific guidelines as well as the development of support processes both for educational planning, didactic mediation and evaluation, and for the inclusion of students with disabilities or DSA in the various aspects of university life. Therefore, the Inclusion 3.0

project was created to provide innovative and sustainable perspectives following the increase in enrollment of students with disabilities and SLDs at the University of Macerata (Giaconi and Del Bianco, 2018). Policies to enhance internships and apprenticeships, both curricular and extracurricular, are included in the various micro and macro planning actions⁶.

As for other support, the Inclusion 3.0 initiative also includes the design and implementation of internships, both curricular and extracurricular, therefore additional work-based learning experiences carried out during the study years. The adopted approach seeks to adhere to the CNUDD guidelines, thus focusing on the personalisation of the learning path as possible.

Within the standard path provided in universities for the activation of the internship⁷ and the host institution and the educational tutor, a “special tutor” is part of the team. This tutor has a specific task: to mediate between the intern with disabilities and the company. Specifically, s/he operates to build a “bridge” between the functioning profile of the student with disabilities and the specific requests formulated by the working context of the company. S/he detects through an interview with the company tutor and observation in-context (Bortolotti and Sorzio, 2014) the variables characterising the company system to build customised facilitators based on the functioning profile of the intern. By identifying the tasks required by the intern, the physical and relational characteristics of the business context and the knowledge of the student's skills, the tutor designs specific supports to favour adequate development of

⁶ The project is structured along different operational areas, and so far has implemented: Reception services for students with disability and Specific Learning Disorders; The purchase and deployment of technological devices and software; A tailored organisation of teaching, and mediation in education; Support for study, exams and internships with specialised professionals and peer tutoring activities; Activation of interaction, University life and campaigns to raise awareness across the geographical area in which the University is located; Design and implementation of personalised paths for the internship. (<https://www.unimc.it/it/servizi-agli-studenti/unimc-for-inclusion/progetto-inclusione-3-0.pdf>).

⁷ There are six main steps required in the activation and completion of the curricular internship. 1 step: The intern reviews the educational provisions of his/her course of study to understand the access requirements and identify the educational/academic tutor; 2 step: The intern contacts the academic tutor, to define the objectives of the training project; 3 step: The intern contacts the host institution that first generates in the internship portal the training project with the student, initiating the internship procedure; Step 4: The intern, within the same portal, indicates the name of the academic tutor; subsequently, the system transmits the data of the learning project to the academic tutor, via email, so that s/he can check the project and possibly approve it; Step 5: The internship office makes the internship active and valid within 15 days from the receipt of the acceptance email from the academic tutor. During the internship the student must: compulsorily record the daily activity carried out in the internship, completed with signatures, to certify the attendance, by the intern and the company tutor. At the end of the internship, the company tutor and the intern are required to complete the final evaluation questionnaire and the student must submit the final documentation required by his/her course of study.

professional and social skills. Hence, the tutor's task is to facilitate the recognition by the company system of the student as a real intern, and that s/he should work to internalise the professional and social role. The mediation competence of the specialised tutor is not only concerned by the relationship with the company but also with the university system and the family and/or friendship network of the intern. In this sense, the tutor works alongside the Offices of Orientation and Disability and SLDs, activates all available resources and further resources of other university's offices (e.g., the IT office), to ensure the completion of the training project agreed with the academic and business tutor. Finally, the specialised tutor works to mediate the expectations of all subjects involved in the internship pathway, including those of the family and the student. Therefore, the specialised tutor supports the student all over the work-based learning process, from the activation to the completion. Thanks to the work of specialised tutors, the working group of Inclusion 3.0 has created over time a rather wide local network of private and public organisations and companies hosting interns with disabilities.

Today, at least 50 internships of students with disabilities were organised, including online internships during the lockdown period due to pandemic (Del Bianco *et al.*, 2020). By analysing previous experiences, it could be noted that some features are recurrent during the process.

A critical step is related to the mismatch of expectations between the intern and the company. As we will deepen in the last paragraph, the alignment of expectations of all subjects involved in the internship (Giaconi, 2015) remains fundamental in constructing meaningful and sustainable training courses.

Furthermore, a common need for almost all internships is the breadth of relationships required by both design and implementation: the organisation's network needs to be extended to additional material and personal resources that are typically present in the construction of an internship path not formalised. Finally, among the major critical issues found, we find the disclosure of students with disabilities and the simultaneous need to work to increase their vocational maturity.

6. Conclusions and implications for further work

In the light of the literature and the ongoing debate, and the Inclusion 3.0 experience with internships, we conclude by focusing on the key issues that we deem crucial in organisation, activation, implementation and evaluation of internships of students with disabilities in higher education.

Firstly, the internship, as for all students, but even more so for those with disabilities, is an educational experience of considerable importance for the life

project. The university, in this case, represents the privileged place for people with disabilities, who, with targeted support, can learn in action (Giacconi and Del Bianco, 2019) and start to build professional skills that are fundamental for working contexts.

Several aspects should be considered to design a protocol for internships of people with disability to operationalise this principle. Crucial is transparency and the need to manage the expectations of students with disabilities and their families (CRUI, 2018⁸) concerning the practical experience and the learning experience for which the internship is activated. The alignment of expectations (Giacconi, 2015) remains a central issue in constructing meaningful life paths centred on the person's Quality of Life.

Secondly, it is essential to define the learning project together with the individual with disabilities: for this reason, it is mandatory to provide proposals that are accessible and produced in an easy-to-read format.

The third aspect is the training of the specialised tutor, who should be an expert and a mediator of the "internship system", i.e., s/he should take into account both the expectations and the functioning profile of the young person with disabilities and the requirements of the working context (accessibility of the location, type of service required, presence or absence of facilitators, etc.). Moreover, in addition to the learning proposal, attention should be paid to the construction and internalisation of both the social and the professional roles to be played in the company.

The fourth aspect focuses on enhancing vocational maturity levels in students with disabilities (Dowrick, Getzel and Briel, 2004), starting from the conclusions of in-depth studies carried out on the skills required for searching and getting an internship or a job (Espada-Chavarria, Moreno-Rodriguez and Jenaro, 2020). In this sense, we consider it essential to work on self-empowerment, activating specific support for acquiring a higher awareness of one's abilities and needs, strategies for decision-making and problem-solving. These actions significantly contribute to the students' opportunities for self-determination (Del Bianco, 2019) and an increased perception of the capability to build their own professional future. In that direction, the structuring of spaces for collaboration and reflection on practices, under the supervision of the specialised tutor, can constitute a strategy in assessing achievements and evaluating difficulties (Espada-Chavarria, Moreno-Rodriguez and Jenaro, 2020).

⁸ Report from the CRUI conference 'Students with disabilities and SLDs in degrees and qualifying pathways'. Retrieved April 30, 2021: <https://www.crui.it/studenti-con-disabilit%C3%A0-e-dsa-nelle-lauree-e-nei-percorsi-abilitanti.html>.

Regarding the above, our reflection shifts to the need to strengthen the educational strategies to support the evaluation of competences acquired during practice. The European Higher Education Area⁹ emphasises that academic experiences concerning practice should refer to a competence-based learning plan since practices in real working environments allow the assessment of competences, besides knowledge and skills. We agree with Espada-Chavarria, and collaborator that such an educational design would allow «the students themselves to be aware of their level of competence in a real situation, that is, to evaluate themselves and, consequently, to improve their self-learning» (Espada-Chavarria, Moreno-Rodriguez and Jenaro, 2020, p.3). The self-evaluation capacity is even more crucial in the structuring of personalised learning programmes for students with disabilities: those programmes aim to develop competences, abilities, and social skills that depend on the capacity for self-assessment and, consequently, self-advocacy, both of their rights and the need for accommodation.

Finally, as a fifth aspect, we believe that it is important to invest in new integrated systems of support for internships (Del Bianco *et al.*, 2020; Zappaterra, 2012; Giaconi *et al.*, in press), favouring forms of co-planning and coordination between universities, companies and services in the territory supporting people with disabilities. This collaborative research is mandatory for developing new strategies and practices that contribute to improved employment outcomes; it is also essential for enhancing career opportunities and quality of life outcomes for people with disabilities. Greater dissemination of inclusive culture and strategies to support its mainstreaming in the labour market can be fostered within the dialogue among the academic institution, the business world, and the territorial support services. In addition, this dialogue could stimulate the building of a more coordinated and effective network between professional figures that revolve around the activation of curricular and extracurricular internships (Bocci, Cajola and Zucca, 2020; Pace, Pavone and Petrini, 2018; Caldin, 2017).

By taking in due account those five key aspects, universities would ensure internships intended not as a step needed to attain a degree but as a concrete opportunity to build personal and professional skills capable of increasing the probability of success, both when facing the recruitment process, and staying in work.

⁹ Report from the European Higher Education Area: <https://www.ehea.info/>. Retrieved April 30, 2021.

References

- Andrews J. and Higson H. (2008). Graduate Employability, ‘Soft Skills’ Versus ‘Hard’ Business Knowledge: A European Study. *Higher Education in Europe*, 33(4): 411-422. DOI: 10.1080/03797720802522627.
- Atkinson G. (2016). *Work-based learning and work-integrated learning: Fostering engagement with employers*, Adelaide: NCVER
- Aune B. (2000). Career and academic advising. In H. Belch (Ed.). *Serving students with disabilities. New Directions in Student Services*, No. 91, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. doi: 10.1002/ss.9105.
- Bocci F., Cajola L. C., and Zucca S. (2020). Gli studenti con disabilità e con DSA presso l’Università Roma Tre. Questioni e considerazioni a margine di una indagine esplorativa. *ITALIAN JOURNAL OF SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR INCLUSION*, 8(2): 126-146.
- Bonaccio S., Connelly C.E., Gellatly I.R., Jetha A. and Martin Ginis K.A. (2020). The Participation of People with Disabilities in the Workplace Across the Employment Cycle: Employer Concerns and Research Evidence. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 35: 135-158. Doi: 10.1007/s10869-018-9602-5.
- Bortolotti E., Sorzio P. (2014). *Osservare per includere. Metodi di intervento nei contesti socio-educativi*. Roma: Carocci.
- Bricout J. C., and Bentley K. J. (2000). Disability status and perceptions of employability by employers. *Social Work Research*, 24(2): 87-95. doi: 10.1093/swr/24.2.87.
- Briel L. and Getzel E. (2001). Internships in higher education: Promoting success for students with disabilities. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 21(1).
- Brookfield S. (1995). Adult learning: an overview. In: Tuinjmans, A. (Ed.). *International Encyclopedia of Adult Education and Training*. Tarrytown, NY: Elsevier Science, 375-380.
- Brunello G. and Wruuck P. (2019). Skill Shortages and Skill Mismatch in Europe: A Review of the Literature. *IZA Discussion Papers* No. 12346, Bonn, DE: IZA Institute of Labor Economics.
- Buckley G. (2019). Inclusive Perspective and Inclusion Practices. The National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTDI): A model of Inclusive Practices for Deaf Students. In: Del Bianco N., D’Angelo I., a cura di. *Inclusion in the University. Studies and Practices*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, pp. 117-124.
- Burgstahler S. (N/A). *Equal Access: Universal Design of Career Services*, DO-IT programme, University of Washington.
- Caldin R. (2017). Gli studenti universitari tra formazione e ricerca. Il contributo della didattica alle professioni educative, nei processi inclusivi. *Pedagogia Oggi*, 2: 187-197.
- Caldin R., and Scollo S. (2018). Inclusione lavorativa, disabilità e identità. Riflessioni e rappresentazioni. *STUDIUM EDUCATIONIS-Rivista quadrimestrale per le professioni educative*, (3): 49-60.
- Chartered Association of Business Schools (2014). *21st century leaders building practice into the curriculum to boost employability*. Retrieved May 22, 2017, from

[http://www.associationofbusinessschools.org/sites/default/files/21st_century_leaders_june2014 - final_report.pdf](http://www.associationofbusinessschools.org/sites/default/files/21st_century_leaders_june2014_-_final_report.pdf).

- Chi C. G., and Qu H. (2005). A Study of Differential Employers' Attitude Towards Hiring People with Physical, Mental, and Sensory Disabilities in Restaurant Industry. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality and Tourism*, 3(2): 1-31. doi: 10.1300/j171v03n0201.
- CNUDD (2014). Conferenza Nazionale Universitaria Delegati per la Disabilità. Linee guida. <https://www.cruir.it/cnudd.html>.
- Cook S. J., Parker R. S., and Pettjohn C. E. (2004). The perceptions of interns: A longitudinal case study. *Journal of Education for Business*, 79(3): 179-185.
- Cordero J., Ortiz de Zúñiga T., and Rueda M. (2014). *Disability and corporate social responsibility reporting: An analysis comparing reporting practices of 40 selected multinational enterprises*. International Labour Office, Bureau of Employers' Activities, Conditions of Work and Equality Department. – Geneva: ILO, 2014 (Working paper; No. 8).
- d'Alonzo L., and Carruba M. C. (2016). *Il docente inclusivo in Università: fra presenza, spazi e comunicazione*.
- D'Angelo I. and Del Bianco N. (a cura di) (2019). *Inclusion at the University. Studies and Practices*. Milano: FrancoAngeli
- Del Bianco N. (2019). *Autodeterminazione nelle persone con disabilità intellettive. Studi, ricerche e questioni di pedagogia speciale*. Milano: FrancoAngeli
- Del Bianco N., Paviotti G., Perry V., Giaconi C. (2020). *Inclusive processes at the University during Covid-19 time: strategic guidelines and case studies from the Inclusion Project 3.0*. Nuova secondaria, 2: 511-529.
- Demetriou C., Miller G. E., Mason L.G., Salvesen C. L. (2019). A Model Program for the Success of College Students with Attention and Learning Disorders. In: D'Angelo I., Del Bianco N., a cura di. *Inclusion in the University. Studies and Practices*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, pp. 87-106.
- Divine Richard L., JoAnn K. Linrud, Robert H. Miller, and J. Holton Wilson (2007). Required Internship Programs in Marketing: Benefits, Challenges and Determinants of Fit. *Marketing Education Review*, 17(2): 45-52.
- Domzal C., Houtenville A., and Sharma R. (2008). Survey of employer perspectives on the employment of people with disabilities: Technical report. In: *Prepared under contract to the Office of Disability and Employment Policy*. U.S. Department of Labor. McLean, VA: CESSI.
- dos Santos B., Portes de Cerqueira César, Capellini S.A., Del Bianco N. (2019). Survey of complaints and behaviors of students with learning problems. Investigation Learning Disabilities Laboratory. In: D'Angelo I., Del Bianco N., a cura di. *Inclusion in the University. Studies and Practices*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, pp.107-116.
- Dowrick P. W., Getzel E. E., and Briel L. W. (2004). Case studies that illustrate achieving career success in postsecondary education through self-determination and problem-solving skills. *Review of Disability Studies: An International Journal*, 1(2): 195-202.

- Elarde J. V., and Chong F.-F. (2012). The pedagogical value of “eduployment.” *Proceedings of the 13th Annual Conference on Information Technology Education - SIGITE '12*. doi: 10.1145/2380552.2380607.
- Espada-Chavarria R., Moreno-Rodriguez R. and Jenaro C. (2020). Development of Vocational Maturity in University Students with Disabilities to Access, Obtain an Internship and Complete University Studies. *Education in Sciences*, 10(12): 386.
- EURES (2015). *Traineeship, internship, apprenticeship: which one is for you?* https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/newsarticles//asset_publisher/L2ZVYxNxK11W/content/traineeship-internship-apprenticeship-which-one-is-for-you?_101_INSTANCE_L2ZVYxNxK11W_backLabelKey=news.articles.back.to_istand_101_INSTANCE_L2ZVYxNxK11W_showAssetFooter=true (Accessed on 11.04.2021).
- Eurostat (2018). *Disability statistics - labour market access*. Last update 31/10/2018. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=Archive:Disability_statistics_-_labour_market_access&oldid=411116 Retrieved 20/04/2021.
- Fleming R. (1999). A fresh perspective on old problems. *IEEE Software*, January-February.
- Galloway L., Marks A., and Chillas S. (2014). The use of internships to foster employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship in the IT sector. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 21(4): 653-667. Doi: 10.1108/JSBED-09-2014-0150.
- Gault J., Leach E. and Duey M. (2010). Effects of business internships on job marketability: the employers’ perspective. *Education + Training*, 52(1): 76-88. Doi: 10.1108/00400911011017690.
- Gerken M., Rienties B., Giesbers B. and Köning K.D. (2012). Enhancing the Academic Internship Learning Experience for Business Education – A Critical Review and Future Directions. In P. Van den Bossche et al. (eds.). *Learning at the Crossroads of Theory and Practice*, 7, Advances in Business Education and Training 4. DOI: 10.1007/978-94-007-2846-2_2.
- Giaconi C., Capellini S. A., Del Bianco N., D’Angelo I. (in press). La pedagogia speciale “incontra” le famiglie con figli con disabilità complesse. In: Caldin R., Giaconi C. a cura di, *Disabilità e cicli di vita. Le famiglie tra seduttivi immaginari e plausibili realtà*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Giaconi C. (2015). *Qualità della Vita e adulti con disabilità. Percorsi di ricerca e prospettive inclusive*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Giaconi C., Del Bianco N. (2018). Didattica universitaria e dispositivi tecnologici inclusivi: il progetto Inclusione 3.0. In C. Giaconi, N. Del Bianco, a cura di. *In Azione: prove di Inclusione*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Giaconi C., Del Bianco N., Taddei A., Capellini S. A. (2018). Inclusive University didactics and technological devices: a case study. *Education Science and Society*, 9(1): 191-217
- Giaconi C., Capellini S. A., Del Bianco N., Taddei A. and D’Angelo I. (2019). Study Empowerment for inclusion. *Education Sciences and Society-Open Access*, 9(2): 166-183.

- Giaconi C., Socci C., Fidanza B., Del Bianco N., D'Angelo I., and Capellini S. A. (2020). Il Dopo di Noi: nuove alleanze tra pedagogia speciale ed economia per nuovi spazi di Qualità di Vita. *MeTis-Mondi educativi. Temi indagati suggestioni*, 10(2): 274-291.
- Giaconi C., Taddei A., Del Bianco N., and Capellini S. A. (2018). Inclusive University didactics and technological devices: a case study. *Education Sciences and Society-Open Access*, 9(1): 191-217.
- Gould R., Parker Harris S., Mullin C. and Jones R. (2020). Disability, diversity, and corporate social responsibility: Learning from recognised leaders in inclusion. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 52: 29-42. DOI:10.3233/JVR-191058.
- Greenwood R. and Johnson V.A. (1987). Employer perspectives on workers with disabilities. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 53: 37-45.
- Holyoak L. (2013). Are all internships beneficial learning experiences? An exploratory study. *Education + Training*, 55(6): 573-583. DOI: 10.1108/ET-02-2012-0024.
- ILO – International Labour Office (2018). The regulation of internships: A comparative study. *EMPLOYMENT Working Paper No. 240*, Geneva - International Labour Organization.
- Ismail Z. (2018). *Benefits of Internships for Interns and Host Organisations*. K4D Helpdesk Report. Birmingham UK: University of Birmingham.
- Jackson D. and Bridgstock, R. (2020). What actually works to enhance graduate employability? The relative value of curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular learning and paid work. *Higher Education*, 6. DOI: 10.1007/s10734-020-00570-x.
- Jackson D. (2018). Developing pre-professional identity in undergraduates through work-integrated learning. *Higher Education*, 74: 833-853. Doi: 10.1007/s10734-016-0080-2.
- Jenkins H. (2006). Small business champions for corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 67(3): 241-256.
- Kocman A., Fischer L. and Weber G. (2017). The Employers' perspective on barriers and facilitators to employment of people with intellectual disability: A differential mixed-method approach. *Journal of Applied Research on Intellectual Disability*, 31: 120-131
- Kolb D.A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Korte R.F. (2009). How newcomers learn the social norms of an organisation: a case study of the socialisation of newly hired engineers. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 20(3): 285-306.
- Kreider B. and Pepper, J.V. (2007). Disability and Employment, *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 102: 432-441. DOI: 10.1198/016214506000000997.
- Louvet E., Rohmer O. and Dubois N. (2009). Social Judgment of people with a disability in the workplace: how to make a good impression on Employers. *Swiss Journal of psychology*, 68:153-159.
- Maertz C., Stoeberl P., and Marks J. (2014). Building successful internships: lessons from the research for interns, schools, and employers. *Career Development International*, 19(1): 123-142. Doi: 10.1108/CDI-03-2013-0025.

- McGuinness S., Pouliakas K., and Redmond P. (2018). Skills mismatch: concepts, measurement and policy approaches. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 32(4): 985-1015. doi: 10.1111/joes.12254.
- Müller W. and Gangl M. (2003). *Transitions from Education to Work in Europe: The Integration of Youth into EU Labour Markets*. Oxford Scholarship Online. Oxford, UK: OUP. DOI: 10.1093/0199252475.001.0001.
- Nolan C., Gleeson C., Treanor D., and Madigan S. (2015). Higher education students registered with disability services and practice educators: issues and concerns for professional placements. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 19(5): 487-502.
- Nolan C. and Gleeson C.I. (2016). The transition to employment: the perspectives of students and graduates with disabilities. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 19(3): 230-244. DOI: 10.1080/15017419.2016.1240102.
- Optiz D.L. and Block L.S (2008). Universal Learning support design: Maximizing Learning Beyond the Classroom. In: Higbee J.L. and Goff E. (Eds.). *Pedagogy and Student Services for Institutional Transformation*. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN: Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy, College of Education and Human Development.
- Pace S., Pavone M. and Petrini D. (2018). Universal inclusion. *Rights and Opportunities for Students with Disabilities in the Academic Context*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Pavone M. (2015). Tecnologie e disabilità in università. Accessibilità, personalizzazione, inclusione. *L'integrazione scolastica e sociale*, 14(4): 336-338.
- Pavone, M. (2017). Diritto allo studio e inclusione di studenti con disabilità e con DSA in Università. In: R. Sante Di Pol & C. Coggi (Eds.). *La Scuola e l'Università tra passato e presente*. Milano: FrancoAngeli: 241-255.
- Raelin J. A. (1997). A Model of Work-Based Learning. *Organization Science*, 8(6): 563-578. doi: 10.1287/orsc.8.6.563.
- Riesen T., and Oertle K. M. (2019). Developing Work-based Learning Experiences for Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: A Preliminary Study of Employers' Perspectives. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 85(2).
- Rigsby J.T., Addy N., Herring C. and Polledo D. (2013). An examination of internship and job opportunities. *The Journal of Applied Business Research*, 29(4): 1131-1144.
- Rowe L., Moss D. and Moore N. (2018). Effective Management of the Tripartite Relationship of Educational Providers, Participants and Employers in Work Based Learning. In: D. A. Morley (ed.). *Enhancing Employability in Higher Education through Work Based Learning*. Charm, Switzerland: Palgrave McMillan.
- Saniter N., and Siedler T. (2014). Door Opener or Waste of Time? The Effects of Student Internships on Labor Market Outcomes. *IZA Discussion Papers 8141*, Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA). <http://ftp.iza.org/dp8141.pdf> (retrieved April 17, 2021).
- Simonsen M., Fabian E. and Luecking R.G. (2015). Employer Preferences in Hiring Youth with Disabilities. *Journal of Rehabilitation*; 81(1): 9-18.

- Spence L.J. (2007). CSR and small business in a European policy context: the five ‘C’s of CSR and small business research agenda 2007. *Business and Society Review*, 112(4): 533-552.
- Swanson S. R., and Tomkovick C. (2011). Perspectives from Marketing Internship Providers. *Marketing Education Review*, 21(2): 163-176. doi: 10.2753/mer1052-8008210206.
- Thompson, D. (2014). *The thing employers look for when hiring recent graduates*. The Atlantic, Retrieved from: <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/08/the-thing-employers-lookfor-when-hiring-recent-graduates/378693/>, (accessed April 30, 2021).
- Toncar M. F. and Cudmore B. V. (2000). The Overseas Internship Experience. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 22 (1): 54-63.
- Tovey J. (2001). Building Connections between Industry and University: Implementing an Internship Program at a Regional University. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 10(2): 225-239. DOI: 10.1207/s15427625tcq1002_7.
- Vélez G. S., and Giner G. R. (2015). Effects of Business Internships on Students, Employers, and Higher Education Institutions: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 52(3): 121-130. DOI: 10.1002/joec.12010.
- Woodhams C. and Danieli A. (2000). Disability and diversity – a difference too far? *Personnel Review*, 29(3): 402-417.
- Zappaterra T. (2012). Disabilità e lavoro. Costruzione identitaria ed esercizio di cittadinanza. In: Boffo V., Falconi S., Zappaterra T., a cura di. *Per una formazione al lavoro. Le sfide della disabilità adulta*. Firenze University Press, Firenze, 17-43.
- Zehr S.M. and Korte R. (2020). Student internship experiences: learning about the workplace. *Education + Training*, 62 (3): 311-324.

Specific Learning Disorders in Higher Education: The University of Arizona case study

Noemi Del Bianco*, Laurel Grigg Mason**

Abstract

Over the past decade the growing number of students with Attention and Learning Disorders in universities has been documented all over the world. Difficulties experienced by students during their academic career have led to an increase in the support services offered by Universities to meet their needs. This development has taken place as a result of changing attitudes and instructional practices across many countries. In this paper, we highlight an example from the United States where one university provides multiple services to increase optimal outcomes for this specific population.

Keywords: Specific Learning Disorders; University students; Inclusion in Higher Education

First submission: 01/05/2021, accepted: 20/05/2021

Available online: 28/06/2021

1. Introduction

Anthropological and socio-cultural models have transformed the conceptualization of disability in society across the globe. These models have in turn contributed to the implementation of inclusive practices in higher educational contexts. Underlying this paradigm shift there are several epistemological frameworks. The International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health (ICF) model, developed by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2001) provides a sharable language worldwide regarding inclusion of all people, and the

* Phd., University of Macerata. E-mail: noemi.delbianco@gmail.com.

** Director Bartlett Labs, SALT Center, University of Arizona. E-mail: lgrigg@arizona.edu.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa11930

UN Convention (2004) represents the internationally agreed upon regulatory framework about the inclusion of everyone.

The World Health Organization, through the ICF, aims to remove the emphasis of disabilities based on the causes or etiology, implementing a change from the biomedical to the biopsychosocial approach. From a biopsychosocial perspective, the functioning of the person is considered a complex interaction of multiple dynamics existing between biological, individual, and environmental factors (Ianes and Cramerotti, 2007; Lascioli and Pasqualotto, 2011; Chiappetta Cajola, 2019; Pinnelli and Fiorucci, 2021). The ICF provides opportunity to implement educational practices across the lifespan encouraging during the Quality of Life for everyone (Giaconi, 2015; Ianes, Cramerotti and Scapin, 2019).

The evolution of this perspective is also confirmed by the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2004). The assumptions that were established within it bring out conceptual elements of high cultural and pedagogical depth with regard to disabilities, such as the participation and active citizenship of all, the inviolable rights of every man, and respect for the dignity and autonomy of all of all people. The Convention, while not adding new rights to the documents that preceded it, reaffirms them, with the aim of promptly responding to the needs and varied situations experienced by people with disabilities, thus introducing measures that require implementation (Terzi, 2013). Medeghini and collaborators (2015) in reiterating the crucial nature of the principles enshrined in the Convention argue that: «if a convention has been stipulated, it is because there is a violable and violated right that must be defended, also by building a common and shared language among nations» (Medeghini *et al.*, 2015, p. 108).

Considering the aforementioned principles, the educational contexts, including higher education, have oriented their practices towards the implementation of support methods capable of promoting the inclusion of all. Starting from these assumptions, this contribution takes shape with the aim to provide paths that can foster significant learning and educational successes even for students with Specific Learning Disorders (SpLDs).

Specifically, we are going to present how the University of Arizona, in Tucson Arizona has built support paths for all students, making it possible to achieve academic success for those who have SpLDs.

2. Students with Specific Learning Disorders attending University

The reference literature shows that University students with SpLDs are rising in number (Del Bianco, 2019; Rivera *et al.*, 2019; Jacques and Abel,

2020; Schwartz, Hopkins and Stiefel, 2021). Despite this trend, the difficulties that students with SpLDs encounter during their academic career, compromise their performance and their growth in terms of educational success: only 41% of students with SpLDs ultimately obtain a college degree as compared with 52% of those without Learning Disabilities (DuPaul *et al.*, 2017). Given this difference, we focus our attention on the main reasons that contribute to the lack of academic success.

Features of SpLDs vary from person to person, with different characteristics related to the age of the person, the intensity and the nature of the Disorder. In general, Specific Learning Disorders are identified as «organic-based neurological disorders with an evolutionary trend» (Zappaterra, 2016, p. 121) and the most common types «are those that impact the areas of reading, math and written expression» (Cortiella and Horowitz, 2014, p. 3).

Specifically, Dyslexia is the term associated with specific learning disabilities in reading, and the profile of a person with this disorder can be characterized, for example, by difficulty with phonemic awareness, phonological processing, difficulties with word decoding, fluency, rate of reading, rhyming, spelling, vocabulary, comprehension, etc. (Cortiella and Horowitz, 2014; Giaconi and Capellini, 2015).

The Specific Learning Disorder in math is called Dyscalculia. Although features of this disorder vary from person to person, common characteristics could include: «difficulty with counting, learning number facts and doing math calculations; difficulty with measurement, telling time, counting money and estimating number quantities; trouble with mental math and problem-solving strategies» (Cortiella and Horowitz, 2014, p. 4).

Learning difficulties associated with writing are identified as Dysgraphia and Dysorthography (Capellini and Souza, 2008; Giaconi and Capellini, 2015). In short, Dysgraphia appears as sloppy or illegible handwriting, the inability to copy or to realize the sequence of the letters in common words (Capellini and Souza, 2008), while the Dysorthography concerns the component of writing linked to correctness in terms of spelling and syntactic rules (Giaconi and Capellini, 2015).

The characteristics described above increase the likelihood that college students with Specific Learning Disorders experience a range of challenges in their academic careers that affect their educational performance (Heiman, 2006; Parker and Boutelle, 2009; Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh, 2012; Giaconi *et al.*, 2018; Rivera *et al.*, 2019; Del Bianco, 2019).

The difficulties faced by this student population can be narrowed down to two main areas: one closely related to school performance, related to difficulties in coping with academic skills; and another concerning the

different aspects of the subject's emotional life, within the social and psychological domains.

Concerning academic performance, research (Heiman, 2006; Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh, 2012; Giaconi *et al.*, 2018) highlights how students with Specific Learning Disorders experience a broad range of learning challenges. In addition to the specific difficulties in the areas of reading, math, and written expression listed in the previous section, significant deficiencies in short or long range memory, spatial orientation, and time organization and management tasks are also observed. For this reason, students with SpLDs often need to develop a specific study method, as a first compensatory tool (Cornoldi, Tressoldi, Tretti and Vio, 2010; Friso Amadio, Paiano, Russo and Cornoldi, 2011; Giaconi and Capellini, 2015), which usually requires extra time and increases fatigue, as it is 'built' with reference to one's own personal learning process. As such, this population of students has to deal with their difficulties and/or with their ineffective learning strategies to adjust to heightened academic requirements in higher education (Wintre and Yaffe, 2000; Brinckerhoff, McGuire and Shaw, 2002; Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh, 2012).

With regard to the second macro area, the emotional sphere, studies (Cummings, Maddux and Casey, 2000; Hatcher *et al.*, 2002; Angelini, Ghidoni and Stella, 2011; Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh, 2012; Giaconi and Capellini, 2015) reveal that in students with SpLDs in university courses, there is the presence of low self-esteem and poor tolerance to frustration with the presence of problems related to school adaptation. In particular, these students are at increased risk of vulnerability and isolation, low self-esteem, and difficulty in responding to daily demands (Roer-Strier, 2002); they often exhibit anxious and depressive states (Mugnaini *et al.*, 2009); and they report higher levels of emotional distress and social concerns compared to non-SpLDs students (Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh, 2012). These difficulties are due to the inability to self-regulate and engage in independent, purposeful, self-serving behaviors affecting their learning (Rivera *et al.*, 2019).

As the research states (Cortiella and Horowitz, 2014; Zappaterra, 2016; D'Angelo and Del Bianco, 2019) SpLDs fuel difficulties in academic achievement and related areas of learning, and for these reasons «such issues become even more urgent in the university context» (Zappaterra, 2016, p. 122).

3. Supports and strategy: how the University of Arizona supports with students with SpLDs

In the academic contexts, there are several ways to prevent discrimination,

removing barriers and implementing adjustments that are aimed to support students with critical issues (Kirkland, 2009).

Focusing our attention in the U.S. context, two laws govern disability in Higher Education. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504) applies to colleges and universities that received federal funding. This law prohibits discrimination and requires that colleges and universities provide reasonable accommodations to remove barriers to full participation for people with disabilities. The protections afforded by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and its 2008 amendment are similar. However, this law extends these protections to all educational institutions, including private colleges that do not receive federal funding.

Considering legislative pillars and taking into account difficulties experienced by students with SpLDs, we present how the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona, shares responsibility across several campus centers to support the inclusion of these students legally, culturally, and academically.

With regard to the legal and cultural aspects, the Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides accommodations to all students, employees, and visitors to campus who experience barriers to their full participation in campus activities. The DRC recognizes that 504 and ADA are reactive in nature rather than proactive. They are operationalized on an individual basis when a disabled person makes a request for accommodations, framing disability in the Individual/Medical Model (Linton, 1997). The legislation provides little in the way of guidance to make environments more inclusive and accessible. In response to this, the DRC proactively works with the campus community to shift the narrative around disability to a social justice perspective, encouraging the implementation of Universal Design (DO-IT, 2021) and Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2018) principles in physical spaces, social programming, technology, and curricular matters (Disability Resource Center brochure). The Disability Cultural Center (DCC) provides a physical space for the disability community and organizes events and programs for students, faculty and staff where disability identity and culture are explored and celebrated, with a specific focus on the intersection of disability with other identities. From a broader perspective, Disability Cultural Centers advance inclusive practices and advocate that disability be included diversity initiatives (Elmore, Saia, and Thomson, 2018). One of just a few in the United States, the DCC serves as a hub for community, advocacy, and activism to promote positive disability identity and to develop a community rooted in pride and equity. In addition, the DCC coordinates educational programming for non-disabled people.

For students with learning disabilities, finding adequate learning support is important. The Strategic Alternative Learning Techniques (SALT) Center provides comprehensive services to support students' academic success. Students who enroll with the center can receive academic coaching, tutoring in their individual courses, educational technology support, and psychological services. In combination, these services provide robust assistance. The SALT Center utilizes a Learning Partnerships Model (Magolda and King, 2004) when working with students. This model validates students as knowers, situates learning in the student's experiences, and defines learning as a mutually constructed. As a result, the student and the educator share authority and work as a pair, putting the student at the center of the learning experience. Academic coaching is provided by Student Support Specialists in weekly meetings with students. Specialists assist with executive functioning, helping students develop strategies to plan, initiate, and complete academic tasks. They teach students learning strategies related to the different subject areas and help students navigate the physical and virtual spaces on campus. Specialists also assist students in refining their self-advocacy skills and choosing their area of study and possible careers. The learning partnership that is established between student and Specialist is instrumental in building students' self-confidence. Tutoring services utilize the frameworks of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) (Boekaerts, 1999) and multi-modal learning. SRL encourages students to monitor their motivation, comprehension, and use of strategies. Students are encouraged to use tutoring as a form of co-regulation to initiate tasks and complete academic work. Tutors review course content with students while also demonstrating learning strategies they can use during independent study. These strategies are multi-modal, involving auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning techniques, which have been shown to improve comprehension and memory (Clark and Paivio, 1991). Tutoring is available as one-on-one appointments for specific courses or drop-in support for writing and math support as needed. Lastly, the SALT Center promotes the use of educational technology and provides clinical psychology services. Students can meet with peer tutors to learn how to use various applications and computer programs for reading, writing, time management, and organization. These technologies can improve fluency, comprehension, and memory with learning tasks. Additionally, students with learning disabilities experience mental health issues at higher rates than the general population (Smiley, 2005). Psychological counseling is available to all students enrolled in the SALT Center as an additional layer of support beyond academics.

4. Conclusions

The organizational structures, theoretical frameworks, and student services implemented at the University of Arizona, outlined in this paper as an example of reference, allows us to reflect on some of the strategic actions capable of promoting greater accessibility and inclusion in University contexts.

Inclusive education requires more than a shared physical space. It requires that communities share common values and institute policies and practices that are truly inclusive, affecting the day-to-day course of students' lives (Mogharreban and Bruns, 2009; Cologon, 2014; Bellacicco, 2018). Learning supports and structures must not be separate from, but embedded within, everyday educational activities and student experiences (Anderson and Boyle, 2015). For students with Learning Differences, it is essential that educators create supportive learning environments that serve as safe spaces where students feel welcomed and valued, and are comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas (Mitchell, 2014). These environments must also focus on providing educational practices of the highest quality that lead to full educational participation (Ainscow, 2015; Messiou *et al.*, 2016; Baumeister and Leary, 2017; Scorgie and Forlin, 2019). Consequently, one of the most important elements of support for students with SpLDs in the university context is emotional or psychological counselling to help lower the level of anxiety and stress. Students with SpLDs are not always at ease in new, different situations and far from their 'comfort zone'. This is especially important in the transition period between secondary and postsecondary educational settings, when greater demand for students' self-reliance is required (Mellard, 2005). A shift in responsibility from special educators and parents to the students themselves is required in the academic context, with regard to obtaining information and advocating for services.

For these reasons, in order to ensure quality University experiences, it becomes necessary to carry out actions that contribute to achieving greater autonomy and awareness of the personal aspirations for those who attend (Mura, 2011, 2018), ensuring active participation in the training path (Rainone *et al.*, 2010). Emancipatory research could therefore represent an effective approach to detect the indicators that determine the quality of inclusion, highlighting, for example, the need to introduce any changes and measures to improve and optimize human, material, educational, and technological resources. By adopting the paradigm of inclusion, in the transformation of students with disabilities from passive users of services to protagonists, an improvement in the services themselves would be achieved (Giaconi *et al.*, 2020). As already specified in other works (Giaconi *et al.*,

2018; D'Angelo *et al.*, 2020; Del Bianco *et al.*, 2020) success factors in promoting student participation and organizational development trajectories can be identified in the dimensions of self-determination (Del Bianco, 2019, 2019a) and self-representation (Del Bianco *et al.*, 2020) of the student population with SpLDs. Moments of co-planning can help to organize proposals that respond effectively to their needs, proceeding from the perspective of a collaborative design for all. In this direction, inclusive education can enhance the students' experiences, satisfaction, and even more, their Quality of Life (Mitchell, 2014; Giaconi, 2015; D'Angelo *et al.*, 2020; Del Bianco *et al.*, 2020).

References

- Ainscow M. (2015). *Towards self-improving school systems: Lessons from a city challenge*. London: Routledge.
- Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) (1990). 42 U.S.C. P.L. No. 101-336.
- Anderson J., Boyle C. (2015). Inclusive education in Australia: rhetoric, reality and the road ahead. *Support for Learning*, 30(1): 4-22.
- Angelini D., Ghidoni E., and Stella G. (2011). L'affaticamento dei dislessici adulti nella lettura: uno studio pilota. In: Genovese E., Ghidoni E., Guaraldi G. and Stella G., a cura di, *Dislessia nei giovani adulti. Strumenti Compensativi e strategie per il successo*. Trento: Centro Studi Erickson.
- Baumeister R. F., Leary M. R. (2017). The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation. *Interpersonal Development*, 117(3): 57-89.
- Bellacicco R. (2018). *Verso una università inclusiva. La voce degli studenti con disabilità*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Boekaerts M. (1999). Self-regulated learning: Where we are today. *International journal of educational research*, 31(6): 445-457.
- Brinckerhoff L.C., McGuire J.M. and Shaw S.F. (2002). *Postsecondary education and transition for students with learning disabilities*. Austin: PRO-ED.
- Capellini S.A. and Souza A.V. (2008). Avaliação da função motora fina, sensorial e perceptiva em escolares com dislexia do desenvolvimento. In: Sennyey A.L., Capovilla F.C. and Montiel J.M. editor, *Transtornos de aprendizagem: da avaliação à reabilitação*. São Paulo: Artes Médicas.
- CAST (2018). *Universal design for learning guidelines version 2.2*. CAST-The UDL Guidelines. <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>.
- Chiappetta Cajola L. (2019). *Il PEI con l'ICF: ruolo e influenza dei fattori ambientali. Processi, strumenti e strategie per la didattica inclusiva*. Roma: Anicia.
- Clark J.M. and Paivio A. (1991). Dual coding theory and education. *Educational psychology review*, 3(3): 149-210.

- Cologon K. (2014). *Inclusive education in the early years: Right from the start*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cornoldi C., Tressoldi P.E., Tretti M.L. and Vio C. (2010). Il primo strumento compensativo per un alunno con dislessia: un efficiente metodo di studio. *Giornale Italiano di ricerca e clinica applicativa: Dislessia*, 7(1): 77-87.
- Cortiella C. and Horowitz S. H. (2014). *The State of Learning Disabilities: Facts, Trends and Emerging Issues*. New York: National Center for Learning Disabilities.
- Cummings R., Maddux C.D. and Casey J. (2000). Individualized transition planning for students with learning disabilities. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 49(1): 60-72.
- D'Angelo I., Giaconi C., Del Bianco N. and Perry V. (2020). Students' Voice and Disability: Ethical and methodological reflections for Special Pedagogy research. *Education Sciences & Society*, 11(1): 112-123.
- D'Angelo I. and Del Bianco N., a cura di (2019). *Inclusion in the University. Studies and practices*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Del Bianco N. (2019a). *Autodeterminazione nelle persone con disabilità intellettive. Studi, ricerche e questioni di pedagogia speciale*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Del Bianco N. (2019). Technological tools used by University Students with Specific Learning Disorders: an analysis proposal through rankings. In: D'Angelo I., Del Bianco N., a cura di, *Inclusion in the University. Studies and practices*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Del Bianco N., Paviotti G., Giaconi C. and Perry V. (2020), Inclusive processes at the University during the Covid-19 time: strategic guidelines and case studies from the Inclusion Project 3.0. *Nuova Secondaria*, 2: 511-529.
- Disability Cultural Center (n.d.). *Disability cultural center; The university of Arizona*. Retrieved April 29, 2021 from <https://drc.arizona.edu/cultural-center>.
- DO-IT (2021, April 9). *What is universal design? Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology*. <https://www.washington.edu/doit/what-universal-design-0>.
- DuPaul G.J., Pinho T.D., Pollack B.L., Gormley M.J. and Laracy S.D. (2017). First-year college students with ADHD and/or LD: Differences in engagement, positive core self-evaluation, school preparation, and college expectations. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 50: 238-251.
- Elmore K., Saia T. and Thomson E.A. (2018) *Special Feature: An introduction to disability cultural centers in US higher education, part I*. <https://www.ahead.org/professional-resources/publications/hub/hub-nov-2018/hub-nov-2018-special-feature-disability-cultural-centers>.
- Friso G., Cornoldi C., Russo M.R., Paiano A. and Amadio V. (2011). *Studio efficace per ragazzi con DSA: Un metodo in dieci incontri*. Trento: Edizioni Erickson.
- Giaconi C. (2015). *Qualità della vita e adulti con disabilità*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Giaconi C., Capellini S.A., Del Bianco N., Taddei A. and D'Angelo I. (2018). Study Empowerment for inclusion. *Education Sciences and Society*, 9(2): 166-183.

- Giaconi C, Del Bianco N., D'Angelo I. and Kraus A. (2020). New perspectives for Inclusive University Teaching: EduPlan4Inclusion. *Education Sciences & Society*, 11(1): 159-168.
- Giaconi C. and Capellini S.A. (2015). *Conoscere per includere. Riflessioni e linee operative*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Hatcher J., Snowling M.J. and Griffiths Y.M. (2002). Cognitive assessment of dyslexic students in higher education. *British journal of educational psychology*, 72(1): 119-133.
- Heiman T. (2006). Social support networks, stress, sense of coherence and academic success of university students with learning disabilities. *Social psychology of education*, 9(4): 461-478.
- Heiman T. and Olenik-Shemesh D. (2012). Students with learning disabilities in higher education: Use and accessibility of assistive technology, website courses and their correlation to students' hope and wellbeing. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 45: 308-318.
- Ianes D. and Cramerotti S. (eds.) (2007). *Il piano educativo individualizzato. Progetto di vita*. Trento: Erickson.
- Ianes D., Cramerotti S. and Scapin C. (2019). *Profilo di funzionamento su base ICF-CY e Piano educativo individualizzato*. Trento: Erickson
- Jacques J.G. and Abel N.R. (2020). Using the stepped care model to empower university students with learning disabilities. *Journal of College Counseling*, 23(1): 85-96.
- Kirkland J. (2009). The development of protocols for assessment and intervention at university for students with dyslexia. In Reid G. (ed.), *The Routledge companion to dyslexia*, New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Lascioli A. and Pasqualotto L. (2011). *Il piano educativo individualizzato su base ICF. Strumenti e prospettive per la scuola*. Roma: Carrocci Faber.
- Linton S. (1997). Reassigning meaning. In: Davis L.J. (ed.) *The disability studies reader*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Magolda M.B.B. and King P.M. (2004). *Learning partnerships: Theory and models of practice to educate for self-authorship*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.
- Medeghini R., Valdalà G., Fornasa W. and Nuzzo A. (2015). *Inclusione sociale e disabilità*, Trento: Erickson.
- Mellard D. (2005). Strategies for transition to postsecondary educational settings. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 37(9): 1-19.
- Messiou K., Ainscow M. Echeita G., Goldrick S., Hope M. Paes I., Sandoval M., Simon C. and Vitorino T. (2016). Learning from differences: A strategy for teacher development in respect to student diversity. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 27(1): 45-61.
- Mitchell D. (2014). *What really works in special and inclusive education: Using evidence-based teaching strategies*. London: Routledge.
- Mogharreban C.C., Bruns D.A. (2009). Moving to inclusive pre-kindergarten classrooms: Lessons from the field. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 36(5): 407-414.

- Mugnaini D., Lassi S., La Malfa G. and Albertini G. (2009). Internalizing correlates of dyslexia. *World Journal of Pediatrics*, 5(4): 255-264.
- Mura A. (2011). *Pedagogia speciale oltre la scuola. Dimensioni emergenti nel processo di integrazione*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Mura A. (2018). Prefazione. In: Bellacicco R., *Verso una università inclusiva. La voce degli studenti con disabilità*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Parker D.R. and Boutelle K. (2009). Executive function coaching for college students with learning disabilities and ADHD: A new approach for fostering self-determination. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 24: 204-215.
- Pinnelli S. and Fiorucci A. (2021). Individualized educational planning ICF based. Testing and monitoring of the IEP-ICF UniSalento model. *Form@ re-Open Journal per la formazione in rete*, 21(1): 204-218.
- Rainone N., Freda M.F. and Valerio P. (2010). Inclusione e partecipazione attiva all'università. *Psicologia Scolastica*, 9(1): 81-98.
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, 29 U.S.C. (1973).
- Rivera C.J., Wood C.L., James M. and Williams S. (2019). Improving Study Outcomes for College Students With Executive Functioning Challenges. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 42(3): 139-147.
- Roer-Strier D. (2002). University students with learning disabilities advocating for change. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 24(17): 914-924.
- Schwartz A.E., Hopkins B.G. and Stiefel L. (2021). The effects of special education on the academic performance of students with learning disabilities. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 0: 1-41.
- Scorgie K. and Forlin C. (2019). Social inclusion and belonging: Affirming validation, agency and voice. In: Forlorn C., editor, *International perspectives on inclusive education, Vol. 13*. West Yorkshire, United Kingdom: Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Smiley E. (2005). Epidemiology of mental health problems in adults with learning disability: an update. *Advances in psychiatric treatment*, 11(3): 214-222.
- Terzi L. (2013). Disabilità e Uguaglianza Civica; la prospettiva del Capability Approach. *Italian Journal of Disability Studies*, 1(1): 41-58.
- The University of Arizona Disability Resource Center. (n.d.). *Disability Resource Center Brochure*. Retrieved April 29, 2021 from https://drc.arizona.edu/sites/drc.arizona.edu/files/documents/DRC_Brochure_3.pdf.
- UN (2004). <https://www.un.org/>.
- Wintre M.G., Yaffe M. (2000). First-year students' adjustment to university life as a function of relationships with parents. *Journal of adolescent research*, 15(1): 9-37.
- World Health Organization (2001). *International classification of functioning, disability and health: ICF*. World Health Organization.
- Zappaterra T. (2016), Dyslexia in the University. Guidelines for inclusion and teaching of the University of Florence, *Education Sciences & Society*, 7(1): 121-137.

Filoso-fare nell'epoca della pandemia: attualità e nuove sfide per la Philosophy for Children

Philosophizing in the age of pandemic: Topicality and new challenges for Philosophy for Children

Lucia Dinacci*

Riassunto

A partire dalle sfide e dalle criticità di fronte alle quali ci ha posto la situazione pandemica da Covid-19, in quest'articolo si esplorano le possibilità che il Curriculum della Philosophy for Children, attraverso lo specifico dispositivo educativo della Comunità di Ricerca Filosofica, potrebbe offrire non solo a livello didattico, ma anche a livello comunitario. La proposta della Philosophy for Children, che si esplicita nella pratica dialogica del filoso-fare, potrebbe permettere di riorganizzare l'esperienza pandemica in un nuovo orizzonte di senso e significato, recuperando, nel contesto di questa "nuova normalità" in cui alla riflessività si è sostituita un'azione di tipo emergenziale, una prospettiva orientata al valore e alla cura dell'altro. Inoltre si sottolinea l'importanza della dimensione latente della *communitas*, in quanto condizione originaria e presupposto trascendentale della nostra esistenza, facendola "dialogare" con la Comunità di Ricerca Filosofica, considerata come modello ideale verso cui tutte le comunità dovrebbero tendere.

Parole chiave: Philosophy for Children, comunità, Comunità di Ricerca Filosofica, significato, riflessività

Abstract

Starting from the challenges and critical issues that the pandemic situation from Covid-19 has placed before us, in this article we explore the possibilities that the Philosophy for Children Curriculum, through the specific educational device of the Community of Philosophical Inquiry, could offer not only at the didactic level, but also at the community level. The proposal of Philosophy for Children, which is expressed in the dialogical practice of philosophizing, could allow us to reorganize the pandemic experience in a new horizon of meaning and significance, recovering, in the context of this "new normality" in which reflexivity has been replaced by an emergency type of action, a perspective oriented to the value and care of the other. In addition, we emphasize the

* Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II. E-mail: dinacci.lucia@gmail.com.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa11803

importance of the latent dimension of *communitas*, as an original condition and transcendental presupposition of our existence, making it “dialogue” with the Community of Philosophical Inquiry, considered as an ideal model towards which all communities should strive.

Key words: Philosophy for Children, community, Community of Philosophical Inquiry, meaning, reflexivity

Sottomesso: 01/05/2021; accettato: 20/05/2021

Pubblicato online: 28/06/2021

1. Introduzione

Quali sono le sfide che ci sottopone la nuova “normalità” in cui siamo calati, da quando la pandemia da Covid-19 ci ha travolti tutti, a più livelli e in molti aspetti della nostra esistenza? Ci siamo ritrovati improvvisamente separati dai luoghi che frequentavamo nella quotidianità, dovendoci rapidamente abituare ad un nuovo modo di abitare il mondo (Galimberti, 1983), che ha profondamente modificato la conoscenza che abbiamo di questo e di noi stessi, se consideriamo che ciò che sappiamo su di noi e sull’ambiente che abitiamo dipende in larga parte dalle nostre possibilità di agire nella realtà. Il nostro senso di sicurezza personale è stato minato nelle fondamenta, i nostri spazi si sono svuotati, il nostro corpo è stato oggetto di osservazione e di discussione in tutte le sue manifestazioni, dal tossire al respirare (Greenhalgh *et al.*, 2020). Nei giorni dell’emergenza, il focus di tutta l’attenzione è stato spostato sul servizio sanitario nazionale, nel difficile tentativo di voler definire in modo univoco che cosa renda sicuri, in un’escalation che ci ha visti sempre più lontani ed incerti, anche in ragione de fatto che il senso di (in)sicurezza è un elemento sempre insito nell’esperienza individuale e della relazione fra il soggetto e il suo ambiente, ed ha radicamenti profondi nella cultura, nelle contingenze del cotesto, nella storia (González Díez e Vargas, 2014). L’utilizzo delle ICT, in quanto strumenti di condivisione e di apprendimento collaborativo online, se da un lato ha il vantaggio di rendere possibile il liberarsi dai vincoli di luogo e di tempo insiti nella didattica “in presenza” (Bonaiuti, Calvani & Ranieri, 2017), dall’altro rappresenta un cambiamento profondo della relazionalità che deriva dal condividere lo stesso spazio/tempo e la stessa “trama” in cui la comunicazione si fa luogo (Arsena, 2020), facendo paventare il rischio di rendere l’apprendimento sempre meno incarnato e del tutto virtualizzato, laddove la DaD, come

già sottolineato altrove (Sarsini, 2020), provocherebbe un senso di isolamento, un maggiore affaticamento cognitivo, passività e dipendenza digitale. Interrogarsi, prima ancora che sulle possibilità della didattica a distanza, su cosa *significhi* educare e fare scuola a distanza, richiama e rivitalizza la complessità del fare scuola (Guerra, 2020), spingendo, forse anche un po' provocatoriamente, ad interrogarsi e problematizzare cosa renda autentica ogni esperienza scolastica. Probabilmente, la problematicità e le molte criticità che sono emerse durante e dopo un anno di didattica a distanza (cfr SIRD, 2020) sono insite nella natura emergenziale che la situazione pandemica di Covid-19 ha imposto, avendo notevoli ripercussioni, non solo a livello sanitario ed economico ma anche sul piano sociale e con un inevitabile e significativo impatto sul sistema d'istruzione e formazione. I sistemi educativi sono stati chiamati a trovare una soluzione senza poter praticare alcun tipo di riflessività, necessitati dall'esigenza di agire, e di farlo subito, senza interrogarsi sulla complessità e sulla densità di significati che caratterizza la qualità dell'esperienza educativa, nella sua irriducibilità a un fatto, a mera esperienza o cosa (Demetrio, 1994) avendo invece i caratteri di "astrazione e rappresentazione di tante cose insieme" (*ibidem*), che trova il suo fondamento sul pensare per costellazioni e correlazioni di concetti (Morin, 1993). In questo quadro, vedremo come il Curriculum della Philosophy for Children (P4C), ideato da Matthew Lipman e sviluppato con alcuni collaboratori (prima tra tutte, Ann Margaret Sharp) negli Stati Uniti degli anni '70, possa rappresentare, nella situazione d'emergenza da Covid-19 che ci ha visto tutti coinvolti, una delle risorse con cui poter non solo continuare ad agire esercitando una professionalità riflessiva (Schön, 1983), ma anche poter riprendere a guardare il mondo con una prospettiva orientata al valore.

2. Perché abbiamo (ancora) bisogno della Philosophy for Children

*«(...) ma soprattutto la meraviglia di fronte al mondo
ed il pensare quotidiano informale
sono gli ingredienti che servono
per realizzare questo intervento educativo,
finalizzato alla formazione di esseri ragionevoli,
ancor più che sapienti»
(Santi, 2006, pp.85-86)*

L'attualità della proposta educativa di Lipman risiede innanzitutto nei presupposti epistemologici che videro l'allora Professore di logica della Columbia University interrogarsi sull'efficacia insita nella metodologia didattica con cui venivano proposti gli insegnamenti ai suoi studenti. Aveva riscontrato che per

la maggioranza di questi, la logica appariva come una materia per lo più complicata e ostica. Nella maggioranza dei casi, ciò dipendeva non soltanto dalla scarsità del livello dei prerequisiti essenziali per l'approccio agli studi filosofici accademici, come capacità argomentative, critiche o euristiche, ma anche e soprattutto dalla mancanza di quelle capacità trasversali, fondamentali per la buona riuscita di ogni processo di formazione individuale. La cura per lo sviluppo e l'apprendimento di un tipo di pensiero critico e riflessivo aveva trovato poco spazio nei curricula di quegli studenti; nessuno di loro aveva avuto precedenti occasioni di contatto con una disciplina complessa come la filosofia, prima di intraprendere il percorso di studi universitario, poiché in America nemmeno i programmi di scuola superiore ne prevedevano l'insegnamento. Dunque, sembrava necessario ripartire dalle basi, sviluppando un curriculum che stimolasse il prima possibile, già dal livello della scuola elementare, la ricerca della conoscenza, il pensiero critico e creativo, il confronto con visioni del mondo differenti. Bisognava quindi costruire degli strumenti e dei materiali che stimolassero all'apertura filosofica dell'esperienza, inducendo al dubbio, alla domanda e alla ricerca dei presupposti di ciò che di solito era assunto per scontato, entrando in una dimensione euristica. Da qui, l'idea di costruire dei racconti dialogici, privilegiando la forma narrativa, per costruire le basi di un'esperienza educativa che coinvolgesse il pensiero di tutti, attraverso un contesto comunicativo basato sulla discussione, il pensiero argomentativo, il dialogo. Contestualmente, era necessario ripensare la classe, come contesto di apprendimento privilegiato, trasformandola in comunità riflessiva – una Comunità di Ricerca Filosofica, laddove per ricerca Lipman intendeva «perseveranza nell'esplorazione auto-correttiva di questioni ritenute importanti e problematiche» (Lipman, 1988, p. 19). In questo approccio, di chiara matrice pragmatista, riecheggia la considerazione deweyana dell'educazione come un processo di ricostruzione e ri-organizzazione dell'esperienza che aggiunge nuovo significato all'esperienza (Dewey, 1944), traducendosi nell'impegno a evitare l'incrostamento delle abitudini in virtù di una coltivazione del pensiero riflessivo, che ha nell'indagine il suo modello e la sua ragione (Dewey, 1933). Nell'epoca della digitalizzazione e della didattica a distanza, in cui la riflessività ha lasciato il posto all'agire emergenziale, la Comunità di Ricerca Filosofica, in quanto specifico dispositivo educativo proposto dal Curriculum della Philosophy for Children, può rappresentare l'occasione per dirigerci, di nuovo, verso uno sforzo di pensiero e di riflessione, non come esorcismo delle paure che ci pervadono dallo scorso marzo 2020, né tantomeno come sterile speculazione fine a sé stessa, ma come rinnovata opportunità di inserire in una cornice di senso l'evento da cui siamo stati travolti, ri-visitando al contempo il senso delle nostre esistenze, re-incorniciandole in una dimensione non solo biologico-organica, ma nella loro qualità esistenziale (Galimberti, 1983). Questo intervento

educativo si propone di riconsiderare i presupposti con cui viviamo e agiamo nella realtà, risignificando e risvegliando «la meraviglia di fronte al mondo ed il pensare quotidiano informale» (Santi, 2006, p. 85), potendo rappresentare, per la situazione pandemica in cui sostiamo, un'auspicabile ri-apertura delle coscienze, delle relazioni e dei valori, che sembra stino andando nella direzione di una prevaricante medicalizzazione delle nostre esistenze.

3 Alla Ricerca del Significato

*«Quando sentiamo la parola “filosofia”, ci vengono in mente diverse cose:
l'amore per la saggezza, oppure dovremmo dire la saggezza dell'amore, della
critica, della riflessione, dell'analisi, della ricerca di significati, del dialogo
ed una maggior capacità di giudizio.
Dovremmo chiederci però di quale tipo di saggezza
si occupa la filosofia.
È unicamente la saggezza presente in noi quando ragioniamo,
oppure è anche il processo di indagine che mettiamo in atto
con il corpo, il cuore e l'anima?»
(Sharp, 2005, p. 29)*

Interrogarsi sì, ma su quali questioni? Abbiamo già accennato alla natura non teoretica né dogmatica dell'indagine proposta all'interno del dispositivo della Comunità di Ricerca Filosofica. Far filosofia, o filoso-fare, non è una tecnica logico-formale con cui si cerca di spiegare il mondo indagando ciò che ha già in principio una risposta, ma è, piuttosto, una metodologia che interpella ciò che ci riguarda nella forma del domandare, ossia ciò che ci pone o ci fa porre profondamente in questione.

Potremmo dire dunque, riprendendo e facendo nostra la definizione che Lipman e Sharp fornirono di filosofia come «thinking well about things that matter» (Lipman, Sharp e Oscanyan, 1980, p. 25), che l'indagine filosofica si rivolge e ci rivolge verso la sfera del significato, interrogando le *cose che per noi contano*, non problematiche che presuppongono delle soluzioni, ma problemi che interrogano e siano rilevanti per il soggetto, che lo implicano personalmente mettendo in discussione le sue credenze, le narrazioni, i valori, che costituiscono le impalcature su cui si sorregge la trama dell'esistenza individuale e collettiva. In questo lungo periodo circoscritto dalla pandemia, i molti mutamenti e le restrizioni che hanno coinvolto le nostre abitudini non possono non aver avuto degli effetti anche sulla natura dell'intreccio che lega l'esperienza corporea ai processi cognitivi e ai contesti di vita (Striano, 2015), che risulta essere ciò che guida anche i processi educativi, sociali e relazionali (Contini,

1992) e che risponde al variare della qualità del nostro legame con l'ambiente circostante. Parimenti, il venir meno della nostra presenza e delle nostre possibilità di movimento nello spazio modifica la nostra rappresentazione della realtà, che a sua volta si riflette nel modo in cui agiamo e ci muoviamo nell'ambiente attraverso azioni esplorative (Neisser, 1976). Queste, e molte altre questioni, su cui forse ancora non stiamo riflettendo, dovranno trovare spazi e luoghi dove poter, almeno, essere poste in essere. Come anche: quali potrebbero essere i risvolti identitari della "nuova normalità", se consideriamo la natura *incarnata* della mente (Damasio, 2003), in ragione del fatto che essa non è separabile dal pensare, dal sentire e dall'agire del corpo, e che a sua volta il corpo risulta essere il punto di partenza nel processo di sviluppo della cognizione e dell'identità di ciascun soggetto?

La Comunità di Ricerca Filosofica, come dispositivo educativo specifico della Philosophy for Children, potrebbe rappresentare lo strumento per ritornare ad esercitare un pensiero che riflette su se stesso, costituendo un setting in cui il *pensar bene* trova dei presupposti strutturalmente garantiti dalla pratica del pensiero riflessivo, dal rigore argomentativo, dalla cogenza logica, dalla strutturazione del dialogo che non deve mai scadere in conversazione, senza al contempo diventare un esercizio del pensiero che alleni meramente abilità critiche, poiché vengono interrogate "le cose che contano", cioè ciò che è cruciale e che costituisce la vera sostanza dell'esistenza. L'indagine che Lipman e Sharp avevano in mente, e che qui riproponiamo, ritrova le sue radici epistemologiche, potremmo dire la sua paternità, nell'esame della vita al modo inteso da Socrate, che egli stesso praticava nelle vie di Atene, intrattenendosi in dialoghi con dei veri e propri gruppi di proseliti, che oggi potremmo considerare come i precursori della Comunità di Ricerca Filosofica. La figura di Socrate, per il quale « la filosofia non era né un'acquisizione, né una professione, ma un modo di vivere» (Lipman, 1988, p. 12) costituisce il nostro esempio e modello di riferimento nel far filosofia, partendo e focalizzandoci soprattutto sull'infanzia, considerata non come una fase di errore epistemologico e di mancanza (Piaget, 1964), ma come una fase di costruzione attiva in continuo dialogo con il contesto di apprendimento, in cui non ci sono distanze da colmare per raggiungere un pensiero di tipo "adulto" o adeguato. Se, come abbiamo precedentemente detto, l'indagine filosofica si rivolge alla sfera del significato, i bambini, che come notano Lipman ed i suoi collaboratori, sono "affamati" di significato (Lipman, Sharp e Oscanyan, 1980), sono i principali protagonisti di questa proposta educativa, soprattutto nelle particolari condizioni storico-sociali in cui ci siamo improvvisamente trovati dallo scorso marzo, paralizzati di fronte ad un evento che appare fuori dall'orizzonte di senso quotidiano, negli adulti quanto nei bambini. Spesso gli adulti, sia nelle famiglie che nei contesti formativi, non parlano con i bambini di esperienze dolorose, come seguendo un dogma pedagogico del

nostro tempo che impone il silenzio (Gramigna, Poletti, 2020), pensando in questo modo di preservarne l'innocenza e la felicità, senza considerare invece che questo oscuramento del "male" possa essere una delle cause del disorientamento emotivo di cui molti giovani sembrano soffrire oggi. Un malessere emotivo che spesso, come riscontrato da Goleman (1996) si traduce in difficoltà di autocontrollo, nei disturbi del comportamento, nell'aumento del bullismo, ed anche in un notevole aumento dei problemi relazionali (Buenasayag, Shmit, 2004). Perseverare in questa negazione potrebbe rappresentare, sia per i bambini che per gli adulti, un'ulteriore difficoltà nel processo di comprensione, descrizione e verbalizzazione del sentimento di paura generato dalla pandemia in corso. Poter sperimentare i sentimenti, di paura o di altro genere, all'interno della conversazione e del dialogo generato nel contesto relazionalmente protetto e non giudicante che la Comunità di Ricerca Filosofica rappresenta, potrebbe essere un'occasione per favorire il riconoscimento delle emozioni, imparando a controllare le proprie e a riconoscere quelle degli altri, costruendo la base "empatica" per lo sviluppo di una buona competenza relazionale (Schaffer, 1998).

4. Perché abbiamo (ancora) bisogno della Comunità

*«C'è il noto effetto di onde concentriche che si allargano,
come quando si getta una pietra nello stagno:
comunità sempre più ampie,
sempre più comprensive vengono formandosi,
e ciascuna comunità consiste di individui
impegnati nell'esplorazione auto correttiva e nella creatività.»*
(Lipman, 1988, p. 19)

Da quando la pandemia ha travolto il nostro modo di abitare il mondo (Galimberti, 1983), il distanziamento sociale è diventato la nuova struttura che regola, gestisce e ordina la nostra dimensione relazionale, con tutti gli impoverimenti che ne derivano e che ciascuno di noi personalmente ha sperimentato. Il tessuto connettivo della nostra dimensione comunitaria sta subendo delle rapide ridefinizioni secondo i valori di una nuova narrazione, quella che ci vede proiettati nella direzione di una prevaricante medicalizzazione, tracciando dei perimetri inediti per qualità e dimensioni e rafforzando l'idea che conoscenza biomedica coincida con il sapere "ufficiale" sul corpo, "isolato" dal suo contesto culturale, (Farmer, 2003; Pizza, 2015; Quaranta, 2006; Taussig, 1980). Il risultato di questo processo si è configurato come un'espulsione dell'uomo dalla sua intelaiatura relazionale e simbolica (Orefice, 2017), che ha generato un "buco

antropologico” a causa del quale facciamo fatica a comprendere l’Altro, perché abbiamo perso il senso delle rappresentazioni sociali e culturali attraverso cui ciascun soggetto agisce sul mondo, e viceversa. La comunità, sempre esistente pur in maniera latente, si è dovuta confrontare con la nuova retorica dell’*immunità* (Barberis, 2020), che pur essendo una dimensione necessaria per la conservazione della vita, può rivelarsi una struttura inviolabile che si impone e muta il senso stesso della nostra esistenza, ravvisabile in quell’apertura originaria, che è rappresentata dal nostro corpo a livello individuale (Galimberti, 1983), dalla *communitas* a livello sociale. La comunità, come scrive Esposito (2008), ci è necessaria perché «è il luogo stesso – o, meglio, il presupposto trascendentale – della nostra esistenza, visto che da sempre esistiamo in comune» (Esposito, 2018, p. 31), rappresentando quindi la nostra condizione originaria che non possiamo permetterci di perdere, e che comprende tutte le varie forme di gruppi sociali che hanno un legame dato dalla prossimità geografica o relazionale. Le comunità sono i luoghi dove si generano e si ridiscutono i contenuti simbolici e le narrazioni, e dove si trovano delle strategie per abitare il cambiamento, sviluppando quella che Lanzara (1993) definiva “capacità negativa”, ovvero quell’attitudine di sostare nell’incertezza senza farsi sopraffare dall’assenza o dalla perdita di senso. La dimensione della comunità ci riporta al Curriculum della Philosophy for Children, non per un salto associativo, ma per una contiguità semantica, di logica e di senso. La Comunità di Ricerca Filosofica, quanto forma di vita democratica basata sull’esercizio consapevole dell’ascolto attivo ed empatico, del decentramento cognitivo, della negoziazione delle credenze, del dialogare con il pensiero altrui, dell’analizzare le conseguenze dei propri ragionamenti e delle proprie azioni, potrebbe essere vista sia come un invito a praticare un ritorno alla dimensione comunitaria, sia come un auspicabile *prototipo* a cui potrebbero riferirsi tutte le comunità, facendo della pratica filosofica un modo di vivere democratico e riflessivo. Ciò che viene esercitato, e che contemporaneamente rappresenta il presupposto fondativo perché si sviluppi una Comunità di Ricerca Filosofica, è il pensiero complesso, in cui coesistono e si corrispondono tre dimensioni, quella critica, quella creativa e quella definita *caring o pensiero orientato al valore*, che in questo contesto risulta particolarmente rilevante. Infatti, aver cura significa «focalizzarsi su ciò che rispettiamo, apprezzarne il pregio e dar valore al suo valore» (Lipman, 2003, p. 262) ma anche dar valore agli altri, pre-occuparsi per loro e della loro possibilità di esprimersi. Il pensiero *caring* ci spinge a rivolgere il nostro sguardo verso l’altro, ed è parte essenziale del nostro essere, di ciò che ci rende umani (Morehouse, 2018). Perdere la nostra dimensione comunitaria, smettere di curarsi degli altri equivale, secondo il pensiero di Margaret Sharp (Sharp, 2004), a perdere il proprio senso di sé, ed è per questo che, all’interno della Comunità di Ricerca Filosofica, coltivare il pensiero *caring* rappresenta

sia uno scopo che un metodo (*ibidem*). La pratica dell'indagine comune aiuta nella creazione di *persone caring*, persone orientate al valore, di sé e dell'altro. Per questo, e per molti altri motivi, è auspicabile tornare a guardare alla realtà recuperando la sua dimensione di *communitas* che, se pur invisibile, risulta fondata del senso della nostra esistenza.

Riferimenti bibliografici

- Arsena A. (2020). Didattica a distanza e simulazioni di relazionalità nelle emergenze contemporanee. *Formazione e Insegnamento*, 3: 12-23. DOI: 10.7346/-fei-XVIII-03-20_01.
- Barberis D. (2020). Comunità e Immunità al tempo del Covid-19. Riflessioni tra antropologia e scienze dell'educazione. *Illuminazioni*, 54: 25-47.
- Benasayag M., Shmit G. (2004). *L'epoca delle passioni tristi*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
- Bonaiuti G., Calvani G. & Ranieri M. (2017). *Fondamenti di didattica. Teoria e prassi dei di-positivi formativi*. Roma: Carocci.
- Contini M.G. (1992). *Per una pedagogia delle emozioni*. Firenze: La Nuova Italia.
- Esposito R. (2018). *Termini della politica*. Milano/Udine: Mimesis.
- De Martino E. (2019). *La fine del mondo: contributo all'analisi delle apocalissi culturali*. Torino: Einaudi.
- Demetrio D. (1996). *Educatori di professione. Pedagogia e didattiche del cambiamento nei servizi extra-scolastici*. Scandicci: La Nuova Italia.
- Dewey J. (1933). *How We Think*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Dewey J. (1940). *Democracy and Education*. New York: Free Press.
- Farmer P. (2003). *Pathologies of Power. Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Galimberti U. (1987). *Il corpo*. Milano: Feltrinelli Ed.
- González Díez J., Vargas A.C. (2014). (In)sicurezze. Un percorso fra antropologia, sociologia e studi politici. In: González Díez J., Pratesi S., Vargas A.C., a cura di, *(In)sicurezze: sguardi sul mondo neo-liberale fra antropologia, sociologia e studi politici*, pp. 11-38, Aprilia: Novalogos
- Goleman D. (1996). *Intelligenza emotiva: che cos'è e perché può renderci felici*. Milano: Rizzoli.
- Greenhalgh T, Koh GCH and Car J (2020). Covid-19: A remote assessment in primary care. *British Medical Journal*, 368: 1-5. DOI: 10.1136/bmj.m1182.
- Guerra M., (2020). Una scuola autentica in un mondo virtuale. *MeTis*, 10(1): 197-209. DOI: 10.30557/MT00119.
- Lanzara G.F. (1993). *Capacità negativa. Competenza progettuale e modelli d'intervento nelle organizzazioni*. Bologna: il Mulino.
- Lipman M., Sharp A. M., Oscanyan F.S. (1980). *Philosophy in the Classroom*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

- Lipman M. (1988). Pratica filosofica e riforma dell'educazione. La filosofia con i bambini. In: Cosentino A., a cura di, *Filosofia e formazione. 10 anni di Philosophy for children in Italia (1991-2001)*, pp. 11-27, Napoli: Liguori.
- Lipman M. (2003). *Thinking in Education*. New Jersey: Cambridge University Press.
- Morehouse R. (2018). Caring Thinking, Education of the Emotions, and the Community of Inquiry: A Psychological Perspective. In: Laverty M., Gregory M., a cura di, *In Community of Inquiry with Ann Margaret Sharp: Philosophy, Childhood and Education*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Morin E. (1993). *Introduzione al pensiero complesso*. Milano: Sperling & Kupfer.
- Neisser U. (1976). *Cognition and Reality. Principles and Implications of Cognitive and Psychology*. San Francisco. WH: Freeman & Co (trad. it.: *Conoscenza e realtà*, Bologna: il Mulino, 1981).
- Orefice C. (2017). Unicità e pluralità dell'essere corporeo. Educare alle differenze. In: Cunti A., a cura di, *Sfide dei corpi. Identità Corporeità Educazione*, pp. 59-70, Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Piaget J., (1964). *Lo sviluppo mentale del bambino e altri studi di psicologia*. Torino: Einaudi.
- Pizza G. (2015). *Antropologia medica. Saperi, pratiche e politiche del corpo*. Roma: Carrocci.
- Quaranta I., a cura di (2006). *Antropologia medica. I testi fondamentali*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina.
- Santi M. (2006). *Ragionare con il discorso*. Napoli: Liguori.
- Sarsini D. (2020). Alcune riflessioni sulla didattica a distanza. *Studi sulla Formazione/OpenJournal of Education*, 23(1): 9-12. DOI: 10.13128/ssf-11826.
- Schaffer H. R. (1988). *Lo sviluppo sociale*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina.
- Schön D., A. (1983). *Il professionista riflessivo*. Roma: Dedalo.
- Sharp A.M. (2004). The Other Dimension of Caring Thinking. *Journal of Philosophy in Schools*. 12(1): 15-21.
- Sharp A. M. (2005). Filosofia per i bambini: educare un giudizio migliore. In: Santi M., a cura di, *Philosophy for Children: un curriculum per imparare a pensare*, pp. 29-42, Napoli: Liguori.
- SIRD (2020). Conferenza stampa SIRD del 22 luglio 2020: presentazione della ricerca nazionale SIRD. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnH4-q1bih0> (vers. 22.07.2020).
- Striano M. (2015). Embodiment. In: Cunti A., a cura di, *Corpi in formazione. Voci pedagogiche*, pp. 91-95. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Taussig M.T. (1980). Reification and the Consciousness of the Patient. *Social Science and Medicine*, 14b(1): 3-13. DOI: 10.1016/0160-7987(80)90035-6.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on physical activity practice of people with disabilities

Márcia Greguol^{}, Cristiana Conti^{**}, Bruno Marson Malagodi[†], Bruna Barboza Seron^{***}, Elaine Cappellazzo Souto^{****}, Attilio Carraro^{**}*

Abstract

The global pandemic caused by the COVID-19 has profoundly changed the daily life of most of the world population. People with disabilities have been particularly affected by these changes, which often have accentuated their isolation and marginalization also due to greater difficulties in accessing healthcare services. People with disabilities have also been impacted in relation to their ability to participate in physical activity with even more adverse consequences for their quality of life and health. The aim of this study was to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on physical activity practice of people with disabilities and to understand the changes that caregivers have perceived for the participation in physical activity of this specific population. It emerged that, regardless of the type of disability, people with this condition experienced drastic reductions in their physical activity levels during the pandemic and in most cases did not have access to any type of remote guidance. Furthermore, a higher prevalence of sedentary behavior and negative changes in eating habits have been reported by the caregivers, highlighting the need for specific strategies and initiatives for people with disabilities to maintain healthy habits and a physically active lifestyle.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic; caregivers; health behaviors; people with disabilities; physical activity; sedentary behaviors.

First submission: 01/05/2021; accepted 20/05/2021

Available online: 28/06/2021

^{*} Department of Sports Sciences, State University of Londrina, Rodovia Celso Garcia Cid, PR 445 Km 380, Campus Universitário, 86.057-970 Londrina (PR) Brazil, Phone (55 43) 3371-4258.

^{**} Faculty of Education, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, viale Ratisbona 16, 39042 Brixen-Bressanone (BZ), Italy, Phone: +39 0472 014390.

[†] Physical Education Department, Federal University of Santa Catarina, R. Eng. Agrônomo Andrei Cristian Ferreira, s/n - Trindade, 88040-900 Florianópolis (SC), Brazil, Phone: (55 48) 3721-9462.

^{***} Physical Education Department, Federal University of Paraíba, Jd Universitário, s/n, Castelo Branco, 58051-900 João Pessoa (PB), Brazil, Phone: (55 83) 3216-7030.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa11886

Introduction

The importance of physical activity for health and wellbeing is widely recognized and it is strongly recommended that people at all ages and with all abilities and disabilities practice regularly (Warburton and Bredin, 2017; World Health Organization, 2010; 2020). This importance has been clearly stated by several Organizations and authors also during the COVID-19 emergency. Since the beginning of the pandemic, for example, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) encouraged people of all ages to “be active and stay healthy at home”, so to counteract the detrimental consequences of the restrictions imposed for controlling the spread of the virus. Research reports that meeting physical activity guidelines is related to a reduced risk for severe COVID-19 outcomes among infected adults and that physical inactivity is associated with a higher risk for severe outcomes (Sallis *et al.*, 2021).

Unfortunately, for many people being regularly physically active is really complicated, and it has been resulted particularly challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic. The year 2020 marked the beginning of a very critical period of life for most people worldwide, permeated by uncertainty, anxiety and fear caused by the pandemic itself and by the health measures adopted. For many people, physical distancing, social isolation and the difficulties generated by mobility restrictions and the economic crisis were particularly painful, bringing consequences on both their physical and mental health (United Nations, 2020). Specifically, for people with disabilities, who have historically experienced more barriers and difficulties in their social participation, this period has brought additional challenges, triggering changes in their routines and, in many cases, further reducing the opportunities to carry out important activities for the maintenance of their quality of life and health (Turk and McDermott, 2020).

Due to the extent of the pandemic and the lack of a short-term perspective to end the situation, the difficulties experienced in this period by people with disabilities have become a major issue for public health, given the impacts they are bringing and still will bring into the lives of this group of population (Tsibidaki, 2021). As an aggravating factor, in many cases people with disabilities experience more chronic diseases and conditions in comparison to the general population and are most at risk of severe illness for the COVID-19 (Embregts *et al.*, 2020).

Among the changes imposed during the pandemic period, the restrictions for physical activity practice deserve to be highlighted. For people with disabilities, the difficulty to access physical exercise and sport programs is not a recent issue (Kamyuka *et al.*, 2020). Although some progress can be observed in recent years, professional and volunteers training, facilities accessibility,

lack of programs and material resources continue to represent significant barriers, which hinder the adherence of people with disabilities to a physically active lifestyle (Bossink, van der Putten and Vlaskamp, 2017; Rimmer *et al.*, 2004).

The obstacles caused by the COVID-19 pandemic made participation even more complicated. In addition to the barriers experienced directly by people with disabilities, the increased burden on caregivers should also be emphasized. Due to the imposed physical distancing and social isolation, many parents or legal guardians have been faced grueling routines, often without any external support (Reilly, Muggeridge, and Cross, 2021).

The aim of this study was to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on physical activity practice of people with disabilities. In particular, the perspective of caregivers on perceived changes in relation to the physical activity practice of the people they are caring for will be presented and discussed.

The COVID-19 pandemic and people with disabilities

It is estimated that 15% of the world population has some kind of disability and that 80% of them live in developing countries. With regarding to the age distribution, data indicate that among children around 10% have some type of disability, while among the elderly the occurrence would be much higher, close to 45% (United Nations, 2020). Given the high prevalence, especially among the elderly, and the greater concentration of this population in poorer countries, the situation of people with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic has become a prominent public health issue.

Over the years, the concepts and paradigms related to disability have undergone several changes which have directly impacted on how health services turned their attention to this audience. Initially, the medical model considered disability as the condition responsible for the non-full social participation of people who have it. In this model, disability was conceived as a condition to be prevented, treated and, preferably, cured (Mello and Nuernberg, 2012). More recently, the social model has been gaining recognition, understanding that improving the lives of people with disabilities would require both the removal of the social barriers that oppress them and the development of social policies which can facilitate full social inclusion and citizenship (Smith and Bundon, 2018). In this perspective and considering how people with disabilities for various reasons have suffered the consequences of the pandemic more intensely, the need to direct public health actions and

policies that privilege this segment of the population has emerged more strongly.

Due to the lack of official data, assessing the situation of people with disabilities during the pandemic and understanding the impact of the COVID-19 on this population is particularly difficult. Indeed, many countries do not have accurate data on the number of people with each type of disability and there is no specific count of the number of disabled people who have been infected or died from this virus. Existing data have primarily come from specific institutions assisting this population, which perpetuates the exclusion of people with disabilities from health policy discussions and also reduces the possibility of having an accurate overview of the current situation (Reed, Meeks and Swenor, 2020).

People with disabilities belong to a segment of the population that has a higher prevalence of multiple chronic conditions, many have low socioeconomic status and poor access to health services, and some still live in therapeutic institutes or homes. Moreover, many of these people have difficulty accessing and/or understanding the available materials on the COVID-19 prevention, symptoms and treatment. Overall, these factors make the disability community more vulnerable to viral infections and disease worsening (Turk and McDermott, 2020).

Landes *et al.* (2020) conducted a study in the State of New York founding that people with intellectual disabilities had many more occurrences of the COVID-19 infection and also higher mortality when compared to the general population (7.8/100000 versus 1.9/100000 and 15% versus 7.9%, respectively). According to the authors, some conditions associated with intellectual disability (e.g. Down syndrome) may predispose to a greater worsening of respiratory and other infectious conditions, placing this group in the high-risk category for the disease. Especially those living in therapeutic homes present a greater risk of contagion due to both the difficulties in achieving social isolation and the daily contacts with various supporting professionals.

As pointed out by Senjam (2020), the COVID-19 presents a greater risk also for people living with visual disabilities/impairment. This finding is particularly worrying considering that this population corresponds to more than 250 million people in the world, predominantly at older ages and living in poorer countries. This greater vulnerability would be due to many factors, namely the lack of adequate information material suitable on the disease, the frequent need for support to carry out daily activities (e.g. crossing the street and shopping), the difficulty in maintaining adequate hygiene and prevention habits (e.g. washing hands correctly, wearing masks) and the increased reliance on touch for position. Furthermore, people with visual impairments are more susceptible to falls, thus becoming even more exposed to health problems.

In addition to the greater vulnerability to the COVID-19, people with disabilities have also been experiencing particularly difficult situations during the pandemic. The restrictions caused by social isolation and the blockade imposed in several countries have affected the worldwide population, with even more pronounced effects on people with this condition. For instance, some studies reported that it is more difficult for people with disabilities to maintain an adequate diet, a good sleep routine and sufficient physical activity during this period (Turk and McDermott, 2020; Embregts *et al.*, 2020). Especially among those with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorders, changes in routines and restriction of treatment have been a further problem, causing drastic changes in behavior and placing an even greater burden and stress on their caregivers. What is more, the anxiety caused by home isolation led these individuals to seek comfort in overeating, which, together with sedentary behavior, caused an increase in the prevalence of overweight and obesity (Bailey, Hastings and Totsika, 2021; Pronvenzi *et al.*, 2021; Reilly *et al.*, 2021; Tsibidaki, 2021).

For people with disabilities who historically suffer from exclusion and marginalization, the impact of social isolation could be particularly severe and profound. Considering the generally limited opportunities for social interaction for these people, there is growing concern in many governments that the ongoing pandemic may further exacerbate and aggravate situations of segregation. Exploring the experiences of people with a mild intellectual disability during the COVID-19 lockdown in the Netherlands, Embregts *et al.*, (2020) reported that the major difficulties raised were related to changes in routine, loneliness, loss of social contacts and the impossibility of having people around. It is worth noting that during this period the feeling of loneliness also extends to caregivers and that this situation can worsen their physical and mental health (Kamyryra *et al.*, 2020; Reilly *et al.*, 2021).

To address these considerable issues, some governmental and non-governmental agencies have developed support materials for people with disabilities, their families and other caregivers about strategies to prevent the COVID-19 infection and how to maintain a healthier life during the pandemic period (Pan American Health Organization, 2020; United Nations, 2020). In a manual published in May 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) has already focused attention on the most vulnerable situation highlighting, for instance, the greater discrimination that these people may suffer when seeking medical care or to obtain priority for highly complex care (e.g. intensive care, ventilators). WHO also highlights the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic for this specific population, with serious impacts on professional and school life, on health support services and on the growing risk of domestic violence.

The challenges of maintaining a healthy lifestyle in people with disabilities during the Covid-19 pandemic

«The COVID-19 pandemic is strongly impacting all domains of (...) healthcare systems» (Leocani *et al.*, 2021, p.e50). In particular, regarding health-related behaviors, both people with disabilities and their caregivers reported lack of access to medicines, routine medical consultations, health care and prevention services (Pronvenzi *et al.*, 2021; Reilly *et al.*, 2021). Indeed, with the worsening of the pandemic, a number of services, including therapeutic ones, have been interrupted and many health workers and facilities have been relocated. The interruption or postponement of several scheduled medical procedures along with factors such as home isolation and reduced physical activity, pose an imminent risk for the onset of a range of health problems for disabled people with a potentially dramatic impact at the end of the pandemic.

Leocani *et al.* (2021) reported some concerns regarding health behaviors by people with disabilities. For instance, despite in some case remote technologies can alleviate the situation, the lack of access to these technologies and the difficulties in understanding the instructions transmitted reduced their widespread use. Additionally, authors pointed out the relevance of personal contact in the process of healing, highlighting how the impossibility of attending stimulating and social environments could bring irreparable consequences, especially for children and adolescents.

Physical activity is a crucial element for health and wellbeing promotion (Marquez *et al.*, 2020), but people with disabilities have always faced several barriers to the practice of physical activity, such as the lack of accessibility, transportation, trained professionals and social support (Bossink, Van Der Putten, and Vlaskamp, 2017). There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities in opportunities for practicing physical and sports activities. Reduced physical activity, in addition to predisposing to a greater risk of comorbidity, is a cause for concern due to increased problems of social loneliness, social isolation and mental stress in people with disabilities. These factors, in turn, can make it difficult their return to participation after the pandemic ends, creating a vicious circle (Hall *et al.*, 2020).

Aiming to understand how disabled people have been impacted by the pandemic with regard to their participation in sport or physical activity, Kamyuka *et al.* (2020) interviewed people with disabilities who practiced recreational physical activity and parathletes, comparing the conditions of practice before and during the pandemic. Interestingly, some participants reported the use of creativity to find new and innovative ways to adapt physical activities in their lives. However, the overall finding revealed a drastic

reduction in the practice of physical activities among people with disabilities. A similar trend has been observed also among parathletes, who lost sponsorships compromising their sporting future. Respondents emphasized how their disability was more exacerbated, as they felt more limited and restricted in their activities. They indicated an increase in feelings of loneliness and noted a lack of alternatives for remote care for physical activity at home.

In order to obtain information about the changes occurred during the pandemic, Ahulló *et al.* (2021) assessed the practice of activity of 20 men with thoracic spinal cord injury before and during the lockdown in Spain. Comparing the two periods, only housework activities did not change. Conversely, participants showed a significant reduction in recreational, occupational and total physical activities especially in moderate and vigorous ones. According to the authors, people with spinal cord injuries usually face several barriers and demotivating factors for the practice of physical activity, such as lack of accessibility, transportation and adequate materials. Considering the greater adverse health consequences of the low level of physical activity among this population and the risk of comorbidity, it is particularly important to monitor the situation and plan specific strategies (e.g. implementation of new technologies) to counteract the decreased levels of physical activity observed during the pandemic. A major concern raised in the study remains how to bring these people back to physical activity after the end of the pandemic.

Despite the pessimistic scenario, some alternatives emerged during the pandemic in order to mitigate the situation and maintain an adequate level of physical activity by people with disabilities. Kowk (2020) pointed out that, at the same time as the restrictions occurred, new technologies were developed so that people could keep in touch and perform a series of activities. In fact, during the period of the pandemic, the number of online channels to encourage physical activity at home has grown worldwide. Although most of these channels have not focused on people with disabilities, some initiatives in this regard can be highlighted, such as remote synchronous and asynchronous classes promoted by institutions providing assistance to people with disabilities. For instance, the Brazilian Paralympic Committee released videos with suggestions for physical activity sessions to be held at home, planned according to each type of disability (CPB, 2021). However, it should be noted that, especially in asynchronous classes, the lack of feedback and interaction with the instructor could be highly demotivating. Moreover, the feasibility of remote sessions depends on adequate access to technology, which is not always a reality for many people with disabilities.

Undoubtedly the pandemic unleashed by the Coronavirus has led to changes in the life of the worldwide population. People with disabilities has been particularly affected by restrictions and isolation imposed with damaging

consequences, some of which will certainly extend even after the pandemic is over. Therefore, the behavioral health needs of this population should be carefully analyzed by developing strategies and planning initiatives to maintain, as far as possible, healthy habits and a physically active lifestyle.

The perspective of caregivers

Caregivers' perspective is important to have a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 on the physical activity practice of people with disabilities during the pandemic. Such perspective has been investigated through structured interviews with 30 mothers of children and adolescents with disabilities in southern Brazil.

Brazil is one of the countries most severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of effective prevention policies has led to a very high number of cases and deaths from the disease. The situation of people with disabilities in Brazil is particularly critical. Although a strict lockdown has not been imposed in any region of the country, during the pandemic all support services were interrupted and most people with disabilities opted for home isolation because of the fear of contracting the virus. Especially among children and adolescents with disabilities the situation is even more problematic, since regular and special schools have been closed since March 2020, offering exclusively online activities.

The structured interviews with the mothers consisted of a set of questions about their children's practice of physical activity during the pandemic, the changes occurred in the practice and whether any form of remote supervision was being offered. Mothers who agreed to participate were interviewed after receiving and signing informed consent. The average age of the mothers was 42.8 + 5.4, 13.7 + 3.3 years the one of their children. Twenty-two mothers were married, 8 were divorced. The disabilities presented by their sons were severe cerebral palsy ($n = 11$), autism spectrum disorder ($n = 9$), Down syndrome ($n = 7$) and intellectual disability ($n = 3$).

All participants reported that their children were isolated at home, leaving only in case of urgency, since their conditions and / or comorbidities put them at a greater risk for the COVID-19. The first question concerned possible changes in children's physical activity patterns during the pandemic. All mothers stated that their children drastically reduced the practice of daily physical activity. Some highlights:

«Despite the difficulties, before we were able to walk in the park, she participated in physical education classes at school. Now she just stays at home, on television ...».

«Since last year, he has practically only stayed at home, on his cell phone or on TV. It has been very difficult to maintain motivation ...».

«M ... gained a lot of weight. He is super anxious and just wants to eat and stay in front of the TV. He is always nervous and agitated. Some days he eats without stopping and do not want to do anything else ...».

In general, mothers reported that their sons started to show much more sedentary behaviors with the pandemic and that, in many cases, they use food to cope with anxiety. With the exception of children with cerebral palsy, all others children gained a large amount of body weight, in some cases reaching obesity levels. As previously mentioned, especially for those with intellectual disabilities or autism spectrum disorder, changes in routine and restrictions imposed by home isolation have led to increased anxiety and stress levels, leading in many cases to overeating (Tsibidaki, 2021).

People with disabilities in general exhibit a greater tendency towards a sedentary lifestyle, in general presenting an insufficient level of physical activity (Rimmer *et al.*, 2004). It is possible that this trend started even in childhood, especially due to the few opportunities for social interaction and leisure activities experiences. Thus, this prolonged reduction in physical activity levels among children and adolescents is potentially harmful with possible long-term impacts on their lives and an increased risk of comorbidities related to physical inactivity.

The second question addressed whether and how the children were practicing physical activity and whether any remote guidance was being offered in this regard. Eighteen mothers (60%) reported that their children had not been practicing any regular physical activity since the beginning of the pandemic, 8 (26.7%) stated that their children received online guidelines for physical therapy sessions at home twice per week, the remaining 4 (13.3%) said that, as they had a leisure area in the building where they lived, they visited the swimming pool with their children at least once a week.

With regard to online supervision for activities, only the 8 mothers whose children were being guided to physiotherapy stated that they received some specific instruction. All the others reported not receiving any support or remote supervision for physical activities. When asked about the possibility of carrying out activities under remote supervision, 16 mothers (53.3%) stated that they did not have access to adequate technology (e.g. equipment, internet connection) and 4 of them (13.3%) reported that they would not have adequate time conditions and/or space to carry out the activities. Among the 8 mothers who received online support for their children's physiotherapy (all with sequelae of severe cerebral palsy and wheelchair users), the major difficulties pointed out were in relation to the insecurity to perform the exercises and doubts about the most appropriate way to help children with activities. Some highlights:

«I have three children and only one cell phone with an internet connection. I am unable to follow D... 's remote activities».

«In physical therapy, the therapist says what we have to do, but I don't know if I'm doing it right. I'm afraid to hold my daughter in the wrong way and hurt her ...».

«I tried to find videos about physical activity to get ideas of what to do. But I never have time and he has no desire to do anything. Only television ...».

From the mothers' interview it emerged that there are no online monitoring initiatives with guidance on physical activity for their children. The few activities available are related to physical therapy, specifically for children with cerebral palsy. In general, even if this service was offered, the challenges would be related to the lack of technology, lack of time and insecurity to carry out the activities without the instructor's feedback. Furthermore, the increased burden of caregivers during the pandemic, as well as the presence of other children in the same family following remote school activities, has led to even fewer opportunities for children with disabilities to maintain an inactive life during this pandemic period.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed a number of restrictions and drastic behavior change on the worldwide population. Even as the vaccination progresses, it is not yet possible to determine when the emergency situation will be alleviated, and perhaps many of the consequences of this period will be felt in the long term.

People with disabilities are considered to be particularly vulnerable to the COVID-19 infection and worsening of the disease. For this population, the impact of social isolation and lockdown policies has been particularly damaging, undermining a number of essential activities. Despite there are few reports available, it is possible to estimate that there was a significant reduction in the levels of physical activity of this population, which several physical, psychological and social consequences. In addition, their families and caregivers also have reported a significant increase in overload and stress levels, especially for people with intellectual disabilities or autism spectrum disorder.

Therefore, it is urgent that health services and policies turn their attention to people with disabilities and their caregivers during this atypical period. Even if a full return to normal activities is not yet possible, it is essential to allow the maintenance of remotely supervised activities and to prevent the consequences of the pandemic from causing permanent damage to people with disabilities' lives.

References

- Ahulló A.M., Montesinos-Magraner L., González L.M., Morales J., Bernabéu-García J.A. and García-Massó X. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on the self-reported physical activity of people with complete thoracic spinal cord injury full-time manual wheelchair users. *The Journal of Spinal Cord Medicine*, 1-5. DOI: 10.1080/10790268.2020.1857490.
- Bailey T., Hastings R.P. and Totsika V. (2021). COVID-19 impact on psychological outcomes of parents, siblings and children with intellectual disability: longitudinal before and during lockdown design. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 65(5): 397-404. DOI: 10.1111/jir.12818.
- Bossink L.W., van der Putten A.A. and Vlaskamp C. (2017). Understanding low levels of physical activity in people with intellectual disabilities: A systematic review to identify barriers and facilitators. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 68: 95-110. DOI: 10.1016/j.ridd.2017.06.008.
- Embregts P.J., van den Bogaard K.J., Frielink N., Voermans M.A., Thalen M. and Jahoda A. (2020). A thematic analysis into the experiences of people with a mild intellectual disability during the COVID-19 lockdown period. *International Journal of Developmental Disabilities*, 1-5. DOI: 10.1080/20473869.2020.1827214.
- Hall G., Laddu D.R., Phillips S.A., Lavie C.J., Arena R. (2020). A tale of two pandemics: How will COVID-19 and global trends in physical inactivity and sedentary behavior affect one another? *Progress in Cardiovascular Diseases*. DOI: 10.1016/j.pcad.2020.04.005.
- Kamyuka D., Carlin L., McPherson G. and Misener L. (2020). Access to Physical Activity and Sport and the Effects of Isolation and Cordon Sanitaire During COVID-19 for People With Disabilities in Scotland and Canada. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, 2: 183. DOI: 10.3389/fspor.2020.594501.
- Kwok N.G. (2020). Adapted physical activity through COVID-19. *European Journal of Adapted Physical Activity*, 13(1). DOI: 10.5507/euj.2020.003.
- Landes S.D., Turk M.A., Formica M.K., McDonald K.E. and Stevens J.D. (2020). COVID-19 outcomes among people with intellectual and developmental disability living in residential group homes in New York State. *Disability and Health Journal*, 13(4): 100969. DOI: 10.1016/j.dhjo.2020.100969.
- Leocani L., Diserens K., Moccia M., Caltagirone C. and Neurorehabilitation Scientific Panel of the European Academy of Neurology-EAN (2020). Disability through COVID-19 pandemic: neurorehabilitation cannot wait. *European journal of neurology*, 27(9): e50-e51. DOI: 10.1111/ene.14320.
- Marquez D.X., Aguiñaga S., Vásquez, P.M., Conroy, D.E., Erickson K.I., Charles Hillman C., Stillman C.M., Ballard R.M., Sheppard B.B. Petruzzello S.J., King A.C., Powell K.E. (2020). A systematic review of physical activity and quality of life and well-being. *Translational Behavioral Medicine*, 10(5): 1098-1109. DOI: 10.1093/tbm/ibz198.
- Mello A.G.D. and Nuernberg A.H. (2012). Gênero e deficiência: interseções e perspectivas. *Revista Estudos Feministas*, 20(3): 635-655. DOI: 10.1590/S0104-026X2012000300003.

- Pan American Health Organization (2020). Considerations about people with disabilities during the outbreak from COVID-19.
- Provenzi L., Grumi S., Gardani A., Aramini V., Dargenio E., Naboni C. and Engaging with Families through On-line Rehabilitation for Children during the Emergency (EnFORCE) Group. (2021). Italian parents welcomed a telehealth family-centred rehabilitation programme for children with disability during COVID-19 lockdown. *Acta Paediatrica*, 110(1): 194-196. DOI: 10.1111/apa.15636.
- Reed N.S., Meeks L.M. and Swenor B.K. (2020). Disability and COVID-19: who counts depends on who is counted. *The Lancet Public Health*, 5(8): e423. DOI: 10.1016/S2468-2667(20)30161-4.
- Reilly C., Muggeridge A. and Cross J.H. (2021). The perceived impact of COVID-19 and associated restrictions on young people with epilepsy in the UK: young people and caregiver survey. *Seizure*, 85: 111-114. DOI: 10.1016/j.seizure.2020.12.024.
- Rimmer J.H., Riley B., Wang E. Rauworth A. and Jurkowski J. (2004). Physical activity participation among persons with disabilities: barriers and facilitators. *American journal of preventive medicine*, 26(5): 419-425. DOI: 10.106/j.amepre.2004.02.002.
- Sallis R., Young D.R., Tartof S.Y., Sallis J.S. Sall J., Li Q., Smith G.N., Cohen D.A. (2021). Physical inactivity is associated with a higher risk for severe COVID-19 outcomes: a study in 48,440 adult patients. *British Journal of Sport Medicine*. DOI: 10.1136/bjsports-2021-104080.
- Senjam S.S. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on people living with visual disability. *Indian journal of ophthalmology*, 68(7): 1367. DOI: 10.4103/ij.o.IJO_1513_20.
- Smith B. and Bundon A. (2018). Disability models: Explaining and understanding disability sport in different ways. In: *The Palgrave handbook of paralympic studies* (15-34). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tsibidaki A. (2021). Anxiety, meaning in life, self-efficacy and resilience in families with one or more members with special educational needs and disability during COVID-19 pandemic in Greece. *Research in developmental disabilities*, 109: 103830. DOI: 10.1016/j.ridd.2020.103830.
- Turk M.A. and McDermott S. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic and people with disability. *Disability and Health Journal*. Editorial. DOI: 10.1016/j.dhjo.2020.100944.
- United Nations. (2020). *Policy brief: a disability-inclusive response to COVID-19*.
- Warburton D.E., & Bredin S.S. (2017). Health benefits of physical activity: a systematic review of current systematic reviews. *Current Opinion in Cardiology*, 32(5): 541-556. DOI: 10.1097/HCO.0000000000000437.
- World Health Organization (2010). *Global recommendations on physical activity for health*. Geneva: World Health Organization.
- World Health Organization (2020). *WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Perceptual-visual-motor measures, reading and properties of eye movements of students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

Simone Aparecida Capellini^{*,} Isabela Pires Metzner^{o,} Noemi Del Bianco^{^,} Ilaria D'Angelo^{^,} Aldo Caldarelli[^] and Catia Giaconi^{**}

Abstract

This study is aimed to compare and relate the performance of students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and with good academic performance in the perceptual-visual-motor and reading processes, and to verify the eye movements' pattern of students with ADHD during reading. Twenty students from primary school, both male and female, and aged between eight and twelve years old, participated in this study. They were divided into two groups: Group I (GI): composed of 20 students with an interdisciplinary diagnosis of ADHD, and Group II (GII): composed of 20 students with an equal good academic performance according to gender, age group and education with GI. All students were submitted to the Reading Processes Assessment protocol (PROLEC), Developmental Test of Visual Perception 3 (DTVP 3). PROLEC text reading test was administered to the students, also through the computer support. During this activity, the Gazepoint GP3 Eye Tracker equipment was used, which records the eye movements and analyses their properties by using the Gazepoint Analysis UX Edition Software for capturing eye movement during reading. These procedures were applied individually with students from both groups. The results were statistically analyzed, and revealed that the difficulties of students with ADHD in the reading processes could be justified by the perceptual-visual-motor deficit, and the shorter fixing time for capturing the information of each word read. This compromises the ability to identify and decode words, leading to difficulty in accessing meaning at the level of words and texts.

Keywords: Learning, Reading, Attention, Eye Movements, Assessment, Didactic Planning, Inclusive Didactic

First submission: 01/05/2021; accepted: 20/05/2021

Available online: 28/06/2021

* Investigation Learning Disabilities Laboratory (LIDA) at Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, São Paulo State University "Júlio de Mesquita Filho" (UNESP), Marília, São Paulo, Brazil, E-mail: sacap@uol.com.br.

^o Investigation Learning Disabilities Laboratory (LIDA) at Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, São Paulo State University "Júlio de Mesquita Filho" (UNESP), Marília, São Paulo, Brazil.

[^] University of Macerata.

^{**} University of Macerata. E-mail: catia.giaconi@unimc.it.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa11927

1. Introduction

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is defined as a behavioral disorder with manifestations of inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity (DSM-5, 2013). ADHD is associated with challenges for functioning in daily life. Studies (Bölte *et al.*, 2018) underline how the functioning profile of a person with ADHD can significantly be distant from the demands of life contexts.

Several critical issues may concern academic success and vocational maturity (Arnold *et al.*, 2020), social inclusion (Shea and Wiener, 2003; Nguyen and Hinshaw, 2020) and overall the levels of Quality of Life experienced by people with ADHD (Quintero *et al.*, 2019). For this reason, an interdisciplinary approach is essential. This type of approach leads us beyond medical reading, and fosters a systemic vision of the contexts and to the design of supports for the person's Quality of Life (Giaconi, 2015).

By accepting a vision of ADHD that goes beyond the mere analysis of the symptoms, and that can give a broader and more complex vision of a functioning profile and its strengths, this study intends to detect specific contextual factors that can influence the school performance of a child with ADHD. The aim is to design new facilitators that can support the school performance of ADHD' students, and generate inclusive cultural contexts.

The studies by Jung (2014) and Huberle (2010) reported that children with ADHD have learning difficulties due to changes in visual skills compromising perception and visual temporal resolution responsible for the ability to copy and read, in addition to impaired balance skills, visual-motor and motor coordination and posture.

Students with ADHD present impairment in executive function, which encompasses all the processes responsible for planning, focusing, guiding, directing and integrating cognitive functions, including alertness, sustained and selective attention. As a result of these changes, students present difficulty in learning the phonological and metaphonological skills of language, thereby compromising future acquisitions, such as reading. Reading skills require: cognitive and perceptual-linguistic skills, which include attention directed to printed symbols and control of eye movements across the page, ability to focus, concentrate and follow instructions; ability to understand and interpret the language spoken in everyday life; auditory memory and ordering; visual memory and ordering; skills in word processing; structural and contextual analysis of the language; logical synthesis and interpretation of language; vocabulary development and expansion; fluency in reading (Oliveira *et al.*, 2017).

However, to better understand the alterations that occur in students with

ADHD when reading, it is necessary to understand that reading is performed via eye movement and that among the main properties of this movement are the fixations and saccadic movements. Fixations are brief periods during which the eye examines a small area of the stimulus. The movement that the eye performs to the fixation area is called a saccade. The primary function of fixation is to analyze the text in detail in the foveal field, where the information is more easily obtainable, in contrast to the parafoveal and peripheral regions (Raney *et al.*, 2014).

In light of the above, this study is based on the hypothesis that the patterns of eye movements and altered visual skills in schoolchildren with ADHD may impair performance in decoding skills at the level of words, phrases and text, thus compromising their reading comprehension skills. The results show how these studies can be important for educational and didactic planning and the programming of the supports necessary for the choice of the visual organization supports, the organization of the reading page and the personalization of activities.

2. Eye tracking: a research with students with ADHD

This study aimed to compare and relate the performance of students with ADHD against those with good academic performance in the perceptual-visual-motor and reading processes and to verify the pattern of eye movements during reading by students with ADHD.

The Research Ethics Committee approved the project of the Faculty of Philosophy and Sciences, São Paulo State University “Júlio de Mesquita Filho” (UNESP), under protocol number 5873.1316.6.00005406.

The study is a prospective observational cross-sectional study with a comparison among groups. The sample was collected between August 2017 and February 2020 at Investigation Learning Disabilities Laboratory (LIDA) at the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, São Paulo State University “Júlio de Mesquita Filho” (UNESP), Marília, São Paulo, Brazil.

The participants were twenty female and male students, aged 9 to 11 years and 11 months, who attended the 4th and 5th grade level of Elementary School I of the public school of Marília City, with a medium socioeconomic level. The children were divided into two groups:

- Group I (GI): composed of 10 students with an interdisciplinary diagnosis of ADHD carried out by an interdisciplinary team from the Learning Deviations Research Laboratory of the Specialized Center for Rehabilitation – CER II/FFC/UNESP – Marília-SP.
- Group II (GII): composed of 10 schoolchildren with good academic

performance paired according to sex, age group and education with GI students.

The students were evaluated in person, following the procedures of this research and following the guidelines described in the Normative Instructions Prope n° 01¹ concerning the spread of the Covid-19 virus, and following with the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO), regarding the correct use of equipment for personal protection (PPE) by the researcher, such as: goggles, face shield, surgical mask, impermeable long-sleeved apron and medical gloves.

All students in this study underwent individual application of the following procedures in a distraction-free, well-ventilated, well-lit, quiet and comfortable environment.

For the purposes of the study, the following tests and technologies were applied:

1. Developmental Test of visual Perception 3 (DTVP-3) (Hammill, Pearson, Voress, 2014);
2. Evaluation of Reading Processes – PROLEC (Capellini, Oliviera, Cuetos, 2010);
3. The capture of eye movements during reading.

The study started with the DTVP-3 test (Hammill, Pearson, Vorres, 2014). This test consists of a battery of five subtests that measure different visual skills. It can be applied for four purposes, namely: (a) identifying children with Visual-Motor Integration or visual perception problems; (b) determining the degree of severity of these problems; (c) verifying the effectiveness of intervention programs designed to correct problems; and (d) serve as a measurement tool in investigations and research. Each test measures a type of visual reception capacity and can be considered as motor-reduced skills subtest (Figure-Ground, Visual Closure and Form Constancy), General Visual Perception (copying, eye-hand coordination, Figure-Ground, Visual Closure, and Form Constancy), Visual-Motor Integration (copying and eye-hand coordination). The subtests composing DTVP-3 applied to the population of this study are shown below in Table 1.

The DTVP 3 Index is divided into: standard score, which is obtained from the gross score and its conversion using tables, and composite score, obtained by adding the standard scores and converting it into a classificatory quotient in relation to the general visual perception of motor-reduced perception skills and visual-motor integration. All evaluated functions allow the calculation of an age equivalent (AE), that is, for each evaluated function; the score obtained allows the calculation of an “age of visual perception”.

¹ <https://www2.unesp.br/portal#!/prope/apoio-ao-pesquisador/orientacoes-covid-19/>.

After the Test of Visual Perception, students attend the Evaluation of Reading Processes – PROLEC (Capellini, Oliviera, Cuetos, 2010). This evaluation consists of four blocks distributed for the evaluation of four reading processes, as described below:

1. Administration of two tests: the letter identification test and the proof of equality and difference in words and pseudowords.
2. Administration of four tests: the lexical decision test, two word reading tests and test for the analysis of the use of phonological and lexical routes for reading.
3. Administration of two test: the grammatical structures test and the test of punctuation marks
4. Administration of two tests: comprehension of sentences and comprehension of texts.

Going inside the first block, the process is composed of two tests: the letter identification test aims to verify the student's ability to name the letters and the sound representing them. The proof of equal and different in words and pseudowords aims to verify the student's ability to identify, discriminate and recognize real and invented words as being equal/different.

The second block concerning the lexical processes is composed of four tests. In the lexical decision test, the student must recognize only real words in a list of both real and invented words. In the word reading tests, reading of pseudowords and reading of words and pseudowords, the student must perform the reading of real words and invented words, with the first test measuring the ability of the student to read real words and in the second, the ability to read invented words of different syllabic complexities, divided into CCV, VC, CVC, CVV, CCVC and CVVC. In the third test, the objective is to analyze the use of phonological and lexical routes for reading. For this, words and pseudowords belonging to six categories were used: short high-frequency words, long high-frequency words, short low-frequency words, long low-frequency words, short pseudowords and long pseudowords.

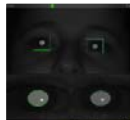
The third block concerning the syntactic processes is composed of two tests. In the grammatical structures test, the student's ability to choose a sentence from different syntactic structures is verified: active voice, passive voice and focused complement. In the test of punctuation marks, the ability of schoolchildren to use punctuation marks in a short text is verified.

The last block refers to the semantic processes and is composed of two tests: comprehension of sentences and comprehension of texts. In these two tests, the student's ability to understand simple orders, phrases and written texts is verified.

The GI students were submitted to the PROLEC text reading procedures presented on the screen of a desktop computer, where the Gazepoint GP3 Eye

Tracker equipment was attached, which recorded the eye movements during the reading of the texts. The GazePoint Analysis UX Edition Software was used to analyze the parameters of eye movements such as: time viewed in seconds, time viewed as a percentage, number of fixations and revisits.

Before data collection, the equipment was calibrated with each student, in order to guarantee the effectiveness of the analysis. The capture fields were selected according to the lines of text that were presented. Each text presented was displayed on the screen for 60 seconds; after that time, another text was shown on the screen. After the presentation of the four texts, the analysis was automatically closed (Figure 1).



Patrícia passou as férias na casa de sua tia. A tia dela mora em uma cidade bem pequena. Uma vez, choveu muito por lá e as ruas ficaram cheias de água. Quando a chuva passou e a água sumiu apareceu uma cobra bem grande passeando no meio da rua.

Fig.1 - Image generated by the Software GazePoint Analysis UX Edition for capturing eye movements during reading

The data obtained were analyzed statistically in order to compare the intragroup and intergroup results. The program IBM SPSS Statistics (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), version 25.0, was used to obtain and analyze the results.

The results were analyzed statistically using the following tests, Mann-Whitney Test, Likelihood Ratio Test, and Spearman's Correlation Analysis aiming to verify the intergroup differences studied for the variables of interest in the DTVP 3.

Spearman's Coefficient was used in the correlation analysis for variables with non-parametric distributions to measure the degree of association between two quantitative variables of interest. In this analysis, the coefficient varies from -1 to +1, and the closer to these two extremes, the greater the association between the variables. Positive direction indicates a linear relationship, that is,

the variables are directly proportional; negative direction indicates that when there is an increase in one variable, there is a decrease in the other, or that is, the variables are inversely proportional (Zou; Tuncali; Silverman, 2003).

The results were analyzed statistically at a significance level of 5% (0.050). The results that showed a statistically significant difference were highlighted with an asterisk (*)

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the data regarding the mean, standard deviation and p-value for comparing the visual-motor perceptual performance of schoolchildren in GI and GII.

Tab. 1 - Comparison of the performance of GI and GII students in the subtests of the Developmental Test of Visual Perception 3 (DTVP-3)

Subtests	Groups	Mean	SD	p Value
EH	I	7.80	3.29	0.057
	II	10.50	1.72	
CO	I	11.20	2.10	0.001*
	II	17.30	3.30	
FG	I	10.60	1.78	0.144
	II	12.20	2.44	
VC	I	8.60	2.76	0.170
	II	10.10	1.60	
FC	I	11.10	3.07	0.156
	II	12.80	1.87	
EH-AE	I	6.80	2.66	0.014*
	II	9.90	1.91	
CO-AE	I	9.90	2.18	0.019*
	II	11.80	0.63	
FGAE	I	9.10	2.81	0.005*
	II	12.00	0.00	
VC-AE	I	7.60	2.99	0.114
	II	9.60	2.32	
FC-AE	I	10.20	2.94	0.031*
	II	12.00	0.00	

EH-GVP	I	7.80	3.29	0.057
	II	10.50	1.72	
CO-GVP	I	12.20	3.08	0.006*
	II	17.30	3.30	
FG-GVP	I	10.60	1.78	0.144
	II	12.20	2.44	
VC-GVP	I	8.60	2.76	0.170
	II	10.10	1.60	
FC-GVP	I	11.10	3.07	0.156
	II	12.80	1.87	
FG-MRP	I	10.60	1.78	0.144
	II	12.20	2.44	
VC-MRP	I	8.60	2.76	0.170
	II	10.10	1.60	
FC-MRP	I	11.10	3.07	0.156
	II	12.80	1.87	
EH-VMI	I	7.80	3.29	0.057
	II	10.50	1.72	
CO-VMI	I	12.20	3.08	0.006*
	II	17.30	3.30	

Key - CMV- Visual motor coordination, EH- Eye-hand coordination, CO- Copying, FG- Figure-ground, VC- Visual closure, FC- Form constancy, GVP- General visual perception, MRP- motor-reduced visual perception, VMI- Visual-motor integration, AE- Age equivalent

With the application of the Mann-Whitney Test, it was possible to verify the inferior performance of GI in comparison to GII in the subtests of Copy, Age Equivalent, General Visual Perception and Visual Motor Integration, in the subtest of Eye-Hand Coordination as part of the Age Equivalent and the Figure-Ground subtest as part of the Age Equivalent

Table 2 presents the data regarding mean, standard deviation and p-value for comparing performance in the reading processes of the schoolchildren in GI and GII.

Tab. 2 - Comparison of the performance of students from GI and GII in the subtests of the Reading Processes – PROLEC

Subtests	Group	Mean	SD	p Value
LNS	I	18.10	2.60	0.030*
	II	20.00	0.00	

ED	I	16.20	5.45	0.005*
	II	20.00	0.00	
LD	I	22.50	8.95	< 0.001*
	II	30.00	0.00	
RW	I	24.80	8.48	0.013*
	II	30.00	0.00	
RPW	I	20.00	10.25	0.001*
	II	30.00	0.00	
RFW	I	16.30	4.60	0.002*
	II	20.00	0.00	
RNFW	I	16.30	4.81	0.002*
	II	20.00	0.00	
RPW2	I	15.40	5.48	0.002*
	II	20.00	0.00	
GS	I	10.20	4.49	< 0.001*
	II	15.00	0.00	
PM	I	11.70	5.85	0.103
	II	10.00	0.00	
SC	I	9.70	3.23	0.013*
	II	12.00	0.00	
TC	I	8.50	4.70	0.001*
	II	14.40	0.70	

Key - LNS- Letter name or sound, E-D- Equal and different, LD- Lexical decision, RW- Reading words, RPW- Reading pseudowords, RFW- Reading frequent words, RNFW- Reading non-frequent words, RPW2- Reading pseudowords 2, GS- Grammatical structure, PM- Punctuation marks, SC- Sentence comprehension, TC- Text comprehension.

With the Likelihood Ratio Test application, it was possible to verify inferior performance of GI in comparison to GII in all PROLEC tests except for the punctuation mark test.

Table 3 shows the data comparing the performance classification in the PROLEC reading processes of students from GI and GII.

Table 3 - Comparison of the performance classification in the PROLEC reading processes of GI and GII

Subtests	Classification	Group				p Value
		I		II		
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
LNS	VD	4	40.00	0	0.00	0.025*
	D	0	0.00	0	0.00	
	N	6	60.00	10	100.00	

ED	VD	5	50.00	0	0.00	0.014*
	D	1	10.00	0	0.00	
	N	4	40.00	10	100.00	
LD	VD	3	30.00	0	0.00	0.014*
	D	3	30.00	0	0.00	
	N	4	40.00	10	100.00	
WR	VD	3	30.00	0	0.00	0.082
	D	1	10.00	0	0.00	
	N	6	60.00	10	100.00	
RPW	VD	5	50.00	0	0.00	0.010*
	D	0	0.00	0	0.00	
	N	5	50.00	10	100.00	
RFW	VD	5	50.00	0	0.00	0.005*
	D	2	20.00	0	0.00	
	N	3	30.00	10	100.00	
RNFw	VD	2	20.00	0	0.00	0.036*
	D	3	30.00	0	0.00	
	N	5	50.00	10	100.00	
RPW2	VD	3	30.00	0	0.00	0.036*
	D	2	20.00	0	0.00	
	N	5	50.00	10	100.00	
GS	VD	3	30.00	0	0.00	0.060
	D	0	0.00	0	0.00	
	N	7	70.00	10	100.00	
PM	VD	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.305
	D	1	10.00	0	0.00	
	N	9	90.00	10	100.00	
SC	VD	3	30.00	0	0.00	0.036*
	D	2	20.00	0	0.00	
	N	5	50.00	10	100.00	
TC	VD	5	50.00	0	0.00	0.005*
	D	2	20.00	0	0.00	
	N	3	30.00	10	100.00	

Key-LNS- Letter name or sound, E-D- Equal and different, LD-Lexical decision, RW- Reading words, RPW- Reading pseudowords, RFW-Reading frequent words, RNFw-Reading non-frequent words, RPW2- Reading pseudowords 2, GS-Grammatical structure, PM-Punctuation marks, SC-Sentence comprehension, TC-Text comprehension, N- Normal, D-Difficult, VD- Very difficult.

With the application of the Likelihood Ratio Test, it was possible to determine the differences between the groups regarding the classification of the

PROLEC reading processes, revealing a statistically significant difference in the comparison between GI and GII. GII presents normal classification in all subtests compared to GI. In contrast, GI presents normal classification in the subtests of Letter name or sound, Lexical decision, Reading non-frequent words, Reading pseudowords 2, and Sentence comprehension.

However, Table 3 also reveals that the GI has a classification of great difficulty in the subtests of Equal and different, Reading frequent words and Text comprehension.

According to the national literature, schoolchildren with ADHD have motor-visual-perceptual alterations. The findings of this research corroborate other studies (Okuda *et al.*, 2011; Pinheiro, Lourenceti, Santos, 2010; Metzner, Santos, Capellini, 2019) that pointed out the motor-visual-perceptual difficulties present in schoolchildren with ADHD when compared with the control group.

Jung and collaborators (2014) reported that children with ADHD have learning problems that may be due to changes in visual skills compromising the perception and visual-temporal resolution responsible for the ability to copy and read, in addition to impairment of visual-motor coordination abilities.

Students with ADHD have reduced inhibitory control and impairments in selective and sustained attention skills, working memory, and concentration to quickly process visual information (Cortez, De Souza, Pinheiro, 2019).

The same occurs when comparing the performance in the reading processes of schoolchildren with ADHD and the one of the control group: these students have inferior performance in comparison to students with good academic performance in tasks that involve the four reading processes (Letter identification, lexical, syntactic and semantic processes) (Oliveira, 2017).

The findings of this study proposed to go beyond a comparative study between groups to relate the motor-visual-perceptual findings and reading processes, in the attempt to seek an explanation for the reading difficulties among students with ADHD.

Tables 4 and 5 present the studies of the relationship between the variables of this research.

Table 4 shows study results of the relationship between the performance of GI students in the subtests of the Developmental Test of Visual Perception 3 and reading processes.

Tab. 4 - Distribution of the correlation between the performance of GI students in the subtests of the Developmental Test of Visual Perception 3 (DTVP-3) and reading processes (PROLEC)

Subtests	Correl. Coef.	EH-GVP	SC-GVP	FG-GVP	VC-GVP	FC-GVP	FG-MRP	VC-MRP	FC-MRP	EH-VMI	CO-VMI
LNS	Correl. Coef. (r)	0.243	-0.061	0.305	0.482	-0.289	0.305	0.482	-0.289	0.243	-0.061
	p Value	0.498	0.867	0.392	0.159	0.418	0.392	0.159	0.418	0.498	0.867

ED	Correl. Coef. (r)	0.184	0.682	0.577	0.524	0.044	0.577	0.524	0.044	0.184	0.682
	p Value	0.611	0.030*	0.081	0.120	0.904	0.081	0.120	0.904	0.611	0.030*
LD	Correl. Coef. (r)	0.576	0.685	0.796	0.498	-0.006	0.796	0.498	-0.006	0.576	0.685
	p Value	0.082	0.029*	0.006*	0.143	0.986	0.006*	0.143	0.986	0.082	0.029*
WR	Correl. Coef. (r)	0.402	0.105	0.275	0.720	< 0.001	0.275	0.720	< 0.001	0.402	0.105
	p Value	0.250	0.773	0.442	0.019*	1.000	0.442	0.019*	1.000	0.250	0.773
RPW	Correl. Coef. (r)	0.400	0.527	0.438	0.527	0.117	0.438	0.527	0.117	0.400	0.527
	p Value	0.253	0.117	0.206	0.118	0.748	0.206	0.118	0.748	0.253	0.117
RFW	Correl. Coef. (r)	0.525	0.585	0.508	0.576	0.006	0.508	0.576	0.006	0.525	0.585
	Valor de p	0.119	0.076	0.134	0.081	0.986	0.134	0.081	0.986	0.119	0.076
RNFW	Correl. Coef. (r)	0.458	0.531	0.487	0.614	0.037	0.487	0.614	0.037	0.458	0.531
	p Value	0.184	0.114	0.153	0.059	0.919	0.153	0.059	0.919	0.184	0.114
RPW2	Correl. Coef. (r)	0.428	0.561	0.461	0.553	0.161	0.461	0.553	0.161	0.428	0.561
	p Value	0.218	0.091	0.180	0.097	0.657	0.180	0.097	0.657	0.218	0.091
GS	Correl. Coef. (r)	0.431	0.671	0.619	0.623	0.120	0.619	0.623	0.120	0.431	0.671
	p Value	0.214	0.034*	0.056	0.054	0.742	0.056	0.054	0.742	0.214	0.034*
PM	Correl. Coef. (r)	0.771	0.553	0.739	0.634	-0.039	0.739	0.634	-0.039	0.771	0.553
	p Value	0.009*	0.098	0.015*	0.049*	0.915	0.015*	0.049*	0.915	0.009*	0.098
SC	Correl. Coef. (r)	0.632	0.492	0.421	0.403	0.150	0.421	0.403	0.150	0.632	0.492
	p Value	0.050	0.149	0.226	0.248	0.680	0.226	0.248	0.680	0.050	0.149
TC	Correl. Coef. (r)	0.539	0.198	0.717	0.922	-0.064	0.717	0.922	-0.064	0.539	0.198
	p Value	0.108	0.584	0.020*	< 0.001*	0.860	0.020*	< 0.001*	0.860	0.108	0.584

Key- LNS- Letter name or sound, E-D- Equal and different, LD- Lexical decision, RW- Reading words, RPW- Reading pseudowords, RFW- Reading frequent words, RNFW- Reading non-frequent words, RPW2-

Reading pseudowords 2, GS- Grammatical structure, PM- Punctuation marks, SC- Sentence comprehension, TC- Text comprehension, VMC- Visual motor coordination, EH- Eye-hand coordination, CO- Copying, FG- Figure-ground, VC- Visual closure, FC- Form constancy, GVP- General visual perception, MRP- motor-reduced visual perception, VMI- Visual-motor integration

With the application of Spearman's Correlation Analysis, it was possible to verify that there was a relationship between the subtests of PROLEC with the visual-motor skills of DTVP-3 in the students of GI.

In Table 4 it was possible to observe that there was a weak positive relationship between the skills of Equal and different and Copying, as part of the general visual perception and visual-motor integration, demonstrating that the ability to identify similarities and differences in words is related, even if weakly, with perception and details, which is a skill present in copying.

In the Lexical decision ability it was possible to verify that there was a weak positive relationship with Copying abilities, as part of the general visual perception and visual-motor integration, revealing, as in the Equal and different task, that the ability to identify similarities and differences between words and, specifically in the Lexical decision task, pseudowords also have a relationship, albeit weak, with perception and details, which is a skill required in copying.

However, between the lexical decision and figure-ground ability, as part of the general visual perception and visual-motor integration, there was a moderate positive relationship showing that the figure-ground skill is necessary to quickly decide whether a word is real or invented, when words are offered simultaneously to the child.

In the ability to Read words it was possible to verify that there was a weak positive relationship with the skills of Visual closure, as part of the general motor-reduced visual perception and skills, demonstrating that to perform the decoding task it is necessary to recognize each part of the letters forming the words.

In the grammatical structures ability it was possible to observe that there was a weak positive relationship with the ability to copy, as part of the general visual perception and visual-motor integration, revealing that the ability to identify sentences grammatically has a relationship, even if weak, with the perception and details, which is a skill present in the copying.

In the Punctuation marks skill, it was possible to verify that there was a weak positive relationship with the Eye-hand coordination skill, as part of the General visual perception and Visual-motor integration, with the Figure-ground ability, as part of the General visual perception and Reduced mobility, and with the ability of Visual closure, as part of the General visual perception, demonstrating that for the child to identify and use punctuation marks during reading, visual-motor coordination, image and parts of image recognition are necessary for insertion of the stimulus, in this case the punctuation, in a visual sensory context.

In the Text comprehension skills it was possible to verify that there was a weak positive relationship with the skills of Figure-ground, as part of General visual perception and motor-reduced skills, with the ability of visual closure as part of motor-reduced skills and general visual perception, showing that, to understand a read text it is necessary to recognize each part of the letters that form the words to perform the decoding, at the same time that it is necessary to select a single image, in this case the word, in a visual sensory context for consecutive extraction of the meaning..

Table 5 shows the results of the study of the relationship between the capture variables and the eye movements of GI.

Tab. 5 – Distribution of the correlation between the variables for capturing of eye movements in GI

Variables	Correlation	Time to 1st View (sec)	Time Viewed (sec)	Time Viewed (%)	Fixations
Time Viewed (sec)	r	-0.012			
	p Value	0.888			
	N	138			
Time Viewed (%)	r	-0.012	1.000		
	p Value	0.886	< 0.001*		
	N	138	138		
Fixations	r	-0.049	0.923	0.923	
	p Value	0.568	< 0.001*	< 0.001*	
	N	138	138	138	
Revisits	r	-0.129	0.830	0.830	0.944
	Sig. (p)	0.132	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001
	N	138	138	138	138

r = Pearson's correlation coefficient

Following the application of Spearman's Correlation Analysis, it was possible to verify that there was a strong negative relationship between the time viewed and the time viewed in seconds; between fixations and time viewed in seconds and the time viewed; and between revisits and time viewed in seconds, the time viewed and fixations.

These findings show that students with ADHD present lower letter capture, shorter fixations and lower number of revisits, demonstrating that the longer the time and the percentage of visualization, the shorter the time of fixing the word during the reading, probably due to changes in inhibitory control.

The data from the study of the relationship between the performance of GII students in the subtests of the Developmental Test of Visual Perception 3 and

reading processes were constant for all variables; therefore, it is not necessary to present them here.

Based on the findings of the relationship studies, it is important to consider that the reading input system is the visual system and, therefore, that there is a relationship between the investigated skills which can offer better foundation and knowledge about the type of educational or clinical intervention that can be performed for schoolchildren with ADHD.

This study reveals that the perceptual-visual-motor deficit can explain the difficulties of students with ADHD in the reading processes, and the shorter fixation time for capturing the information of the word read. That difficulty compromises the ability to identify and decode the words, causing difficulty in accessing meaning at the level of words and texts.

A study carried out by Metzner, Santos, Capellini (2019) demonstrated that students with attention problems have a lower performance in perceptual-visual tasks, due to changes in visual processing that are typical of this diagnosis.

Students with ADHD present changes in the executive function, encompassing all the processes responsible for planning, focusing, guiding, directing and integrating cognitive functions, including alertness, sustained and selective attention. As a result of these changes, these students have difficulty in learning the phonological and metaphonological skills of language, compromising later acquisitions, such as reading. Reading skills require cognitive and perceptual-linguistic skills, which include attention directed to printed stimuli and control of eye movements across the page, ability to focus attention, concentration and following instructions; ability to understand and interpret the language spoken in everyday life; auditory memory and ordering; visual memory and ordering; skill in word processing; structural and contextual analysis of the language; logical synthesis and interpretation of the language; vocabulary development and expansion; fluency in reading (Oliveira, 2011, Capellini. Metzner, 2020).

However, to better understand the changes occurring in the reading of students with ADHD, it is necessary to understand that reading is performed from the eye movement and that among the main properties of this movement are the fixations and saccadic movements. Fixations are brief periods of time during which the eye remains examining a small area of the stimulus. The movement that the eye performs to the fixation area is called a saccade. The main function of fixation is to analyze the text in detail in the foveal field, where information is more easily obtainable, unlike the parafoveal and peripheral regions (Raney *et al.*, 2014; Gräf *et al.*, 2019).

After the analysis of the findings, we can see that the hypothesis of this study was confirmed, as it proved that the patterns of eye movements and altered perceptual-visual-motor skills in schoolchildren with ADHD can compromise

performance in word-level decoding skills of the phrases of the text, thus compromising their reading comprehension skills.

4. Conclusion and reflections for an inclusive planning

The results were statistically analyzed, and revealed that the difficulties of students with ADHD in the reading processes can be explained by the perceptual-visual-motor deficit, and the shorter fixing time for capturing the information of the word read, which compromises the ability to identify and decode words, causing difficulty in accessing meaning at the level of words and texts.

While ADHD is predominantly operationalized in terms of its symptoms, the inter-individual differences in the functioning profiles of people with ADHD and their strengths suggest the importance of proceeding with the detection of the different contextual factors capable of supporting their performance and address the personalization of training programs (Giaconi *et al.*, 2019). The results of the study allow us to conduct interesting pedagogical-didactic reflections. Especially in the Italian context, the attention to the realization of didactic planning aware of the diversity of students [specifically of the personalized didactic plans (PDP), aligned with curricular programming, in case of students with ADHD], allows us to get to the heart of the issue of inclusive education (Giaconi and Capellini, 2015).

The role of eye movements in reading processes and, in particular, the correlation between reading difficulties and the alteration of eye movements are dimensions well illustrated by the literature of the sector (Huettig and Brouwer; Robertson and Gallant, 2019; Prabh and Bhargavi 2020; Rivero-Contreras, Engelhardt and Saldaña, 2021) and in which our studio is also part.

Specifically, these findings are important for both assessment and intervention protocols for children with ADHD (Lev *et al.*, 2020; Levantini *et al.*, 2020; Siqueiros Sanchez *et al.*, 2020), and for the preparation of inclusive educational projects at school.

This last issue, less studied in the literature, enables the inclusion of specific aspects in teachers' training courses and support teachers. In this way, it will be possible to design inclusive teaching paths and personalization paths for students who show these difficulties in eye movements.

In this last direction, the results of our study can also provide useful information on how:

- re-adapt the written text on a reading page;
- re-adapt the combination of the written text and the images present in a reading page;

- choose the organized visual supports used during the lessons;
- provide support indications to the students themselves who are going to personalize their study method and to choose by their own the better visual organization support.

Within the research perspectives, investigation protocols are being designed. These will also allow teachers to acquire information on the eye movements of the pupils in a class in order to act with targeted didactic strategies. After the observation tests, the main areas of intervention concern the aspects of re-adaptation of the written text and its organization; the identification of the visual organization supports (e.g. concept maps) most relevant for the understanding of the concepts; the planning of paths that allow the students themselves to customize, based on their needs, the text to read and to study, as well as the visual organization support to be used to facilitate the elaboration of the different concepts studied.

Finally, particular attention will be placed on the construction of tools for self-assessment in such a way as to favour the self-determination (Del Bianco, 2019) of the students themselves in the personalization process towards an effective and efficient study method (Giacconi *et al.*, 2019) useful along the study path from school to University.

References

- American Psychiatric Association (2013). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V)*. 5th ed. Arlington: American Psychiatric Association.
- Arnold L. E., Hodgkins P., Kahle J., Madhoo M. and Kewley G. (2020). Long-term outcomes of ADHD: academic achievement and performance. *Journal of attention disorders*, 24(1): 73-85.
- Bölte S., Mahdi, S. Coghill, D. Gau, S. S. F, Granlund, M Holtmann and M.Selb (2018). Standardized assessment of functioning in ADHD: consensus on the ICF Core Sets for ADHD. *European child and adolescent psychiatry*, 27(10): 1261-1281.
- Capellini S. A and M. I. Pires (2020). Transtorno do déficit de atenção e hiperatividade e as manifestações em leitura, em escrita ortográfica e em escrita manual: Revisão da literatura. In: Benczik, Edyleine Bellini Peroni. TDAH (Transtorno do Déficit de Atenção Hiperatividade). *Desafios, possibilidades e perspectivas interdisciplinares*. Belo Horizonte: Artesã, pp. 255-265.
- Capellini S. A, Oliveira A. M., Cuentos F.. (2010). *PROLEC: Provas de avaliação dos processos de leitura*. São Paulo (SP): Casa do Psicólogo.
- Cortez M. T., De Souza L. K., Pinheiro Â. M. V. (2019). É mesmo (só) Transtorno de Déficit de Atenção/Hiperatividade (TDAH)? Avaliando TDAH e encontrando dislexia. *Psico*, 50(3): 1-17.

- Del Bianco N. (2019). *Autodeterminazione nelle persone con disabilità intellettive. Studi, ricerche e questioni di pedagogia speciale*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Giaconi C. (2015). *Qualità della Vita e adulti con disabilità. Percorsi di ricerca e prospettive inclusive*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Giaconi C. and Capellini S. A. (2015). *Conoscere per includere. Riflessioni e linee operative*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Giaconi C., Capellini S. A., Del Bianco N., Taddei A. and D'Angelo I. (2019). Study Empowerment for inclusion. *Education Sciences and Society-Open Access*, 9(2): 166-183.
- Gräf C., Hoffmann I., Diefenbach C., König J., Schmidt M. F., Schnick-Vollmer K., and Urschitz M. S. (2019). Mental health problems and school performance in first graders: results of the prospective cohort study ikidS. *European child & adolescent psychiatry*, 28(10): 1341-1352.
- Hammill D., Pearson N., Voress J. (1993). *TPV developmental test of visual perception*. Austin, TX: Pro-ed. Traduzione italiana. *TPV test di percezione visiva*. Trento: Erickson, 1994.
- Huberle E., Driver J., Karnath H.O. (2010). Retinal versus physical stimulus size as determinants of visual perception in simultanagnosia. *Neuropsychologia*, 48(6): 1677-82.
- Huetting F., and Brouwer S. (2015). Delayed anticipatory spoken language processing in adults with dyslexia – evidence from eye-tracking. *Dyslexia*, 21(2): 97-122.
- Jung H., Woo Y. J., Kang J. W., Choi Y. W., and Kim K. M. (2014). Visual perception of ADHD children with sensory processing disorder. *Psychiatry investigation*, 11(2): 119-123.
- Lev A., Braw Y., Elbaum T., Wagner M., and Rassevsky Y. (2020). Eye Tracking During a Continuous Performance Test: Utility for Assessing ADHD Patients. *Journal of Attention Disorders*, doi: 10.1177/1087054720972786.
- Levantini V., Muratori P., Inguaggiato E., Masi G., Milone A., Valente E., and Billeci L. (2020). EYES are the window to the mind: Eye-tracking technology as a novel approach to study clinical characteristics of ADHD. *Psychiatry Research*, 290, 113135.
- Nguyen P. T., and Hinshaw S. P. (2020). Understanding the Stigma Associated with ADHD: Hope for the Future?. *The ADHD Report*, 28(5): 1-10.
- Okuda P. M. M., Lourencetti M. D., Santos L. C. A. D., Padula N. A. D. M. R., and Capellini S. A. (2011). Coordenação motora fina de escolares com dislexia e transtorno do déficit de atenção e hiperatividade. *Revista Cefac*, 13(5): 876-885.
- Oliveira A. M., Cardoso M. H., Pinheiro F.H, Germano G. D., Capellini S. A. (2011). Performance of students with dyslexia and attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity in the reading assessment processes. *Rev Bras Crescimento Desenvolvimento Hum*, 21(2): 344-355.
- Oliveira A. M., Cardoso M. H., Padula N. A. D. M. R., Lourencetti M. D., dos Santos L. C. A., and Capellini S. A. (2017). Processos de leitura em escolares com Transtorno de Déficit de Atenção/Hiperatividade. *Psicologia Argumento*, 31(72): 35-44.
- Oliveira A. M. D., Cardoso M. H., Pinheiro F. H., Germano G. D., and Capellini S. A.

- (2011). Desempenho de escolares com dislexia e transtorno do déficit de atenção e hiperatividade nos processos de leitura. *Revista Brasileira de Crescimento e Desenvolvimento Humano*, 21(2): 344-355.
- Prabha A. J., and Bhargavi R. (2020). Predictive model for dyslexia from fixations and saccadic eye movement events. *Computer Methods and Programs in Biomedicine*, 195, doi: 10.1016/j.cmpb.2020.105538.
- Pinheiro F. H., Lourenceti M. D., Santos L. C. A. (2010). Transtorno do déficit de atenção e hiperatividade: critérios diagnósticos. *Transtornos de aprendizagem e transtornos da atenção (da Avaliação à Intervenção)*. São José dos Campos: Editora Pulso, pp 21-33.
- Quintero J., Morales I., Vera R., Zuluaga P., and Fernández A. (2019). The impact of adult ADHD in the quality of life profile. *Journal of attention disorders*, 23(9): 1007-1016.
- Raney G. E., Campbell Spencer J., Bovee Joanna C. (2014). Using eye movements to evaluate the cognitive processes involved in text comprehension. *Journal of Visualized Experiments*, 83, doi: 10.3791/50780.
- Rayner K. (1998). Eye movements in reading and information processing: 20 years of research. *Psychological bulletin*, 124(3): 372-422.
- Rivero-Contreras M., Engelhardt P. E., and Saldaña D. (2021). An experimental eye-tracking study of text adaptation for readers with dyslexia: effects of visual support and word frequency. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 71: 170-187.
- Robertson E. K., and Gallant J. E. (2019). Eye tracking reveals subtle spoken sentence comprehension problems in children with dyslexia. *Lingua*, 228, 102708.
- Shea B., and Wiener J. (2003). Social exile: The cycle of peer victimization for boys with ADHD. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, 18(1-2): 55-90.
- Siqueiros Sanchez M., Falck-Ytter T., Kennedy D. P., Bölte S., Lichtenstein P., D'Onofrio B. M., and Pettersson E. (2020). Volitional eye movement control and ADHD traits: a twin study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 61(12): 1309-1316.
- Zou Kelly H., Tuncali K., Silverman S. G (2003). Correlation and simple linear regression. *Radiology*, 227(3): 617-628.

La formazione degli insegnanti in era Covid. Descrizione e analisi di una esperienza laboratoriale sui temi della pedagogia e della didattica inclusiva

Teacher training in the Covid era. Description and analysis of a workshop experience on the themes of pedagogy and inclusive didactics

Fabio Bocci*, Ines Guerini**

Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic, as it is now widely known, has forced a rethinking of the social spaces of the relationship, including the educational and training one, highlighting a series of critical issues that were already present in the pre-pandemic era. The forced confinements and the limits imposed by distancing (due to healthy emergency) have amplified these issues. In this sense, a reconfiguration not only of the spaces (presence vs distance) but of the training paradigm itself had to be carried out in the university environment as well. This has represented and still represents an opportunity for those who have positively accepted this challenge, beginning some experiences that – despite their tendency to re-adapt the old into the new – have nevertheless introduced some innovative elements and experimentation with little or no fields of action not fully explored. This also happened to the authors of this paper in which they describe and reflect on some workshop experiences conducted in the context of the initial training of primary school teachers. The background is that of pedagogy and inclusive teaching, which have represented not only the disciplinary content to be conveyed but the horizon of meaning for the methodological-didactic choices adopted and for the choice of the same object of study proposed to the participants.

Keywords: disability; inclusive education; teacher training; remote workshop experiences; pandemic

* Professore Ordinario presso il Dipartimento di Scienze della Formazione dell'Università degli Studi "Roma Tre". E-mail fabio.bocci@uniroma3.it.

** Assegnista di ricerca presso il Dipartimento di Scienze della Formazione dell'Università degli Studi "Roma Tre". E-mail ines.guerini@uniroma3.it.

Il presente contributo è frutto di un lavoro congiunto dei due autori. Al solo fine dell'identificazione delle parti, laddove richiesto, si chiarisce che sono da attribuire a Fabio Bocci l'*Introduzione* e i Paragrafi intitolati: *Descrizione del Laboratorio* e *Qualche altra considerazione per concludere*. Sono invece da attribuire a Ines Guerini i Paragrafi intitolati: *Cosa è merso dai questionari* e *Qualche riflessione a supporto della nostra esperienza*.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa11990

Riassunto

La Pandemia Covid-19, com'è ormai ampiamente noto, ha costretto a un ripensamento degli spazi sociali della relazione anche educativa e formativa, facendo emergere tutta una serie di criticità e di questioni già presenti in era pre-pandemica ma che i confinamenti obbligati e i limiti imposti dal distanziamento hanno amplificato.

In tal senso, anche in ambito universitario si è dovuto operare una riconfigurazione non solo degli spazi (presenza vs distanza) ma del paradigma della formazione stessa. Questo ha rappresentato e sta rappresentando una opportunità per chi ha raccolto positivamente tale sfida, aprendosi a esperienze che – pur nella loro tendenza a ri-adattare il vecchio nel nuovo – hanno comunque introdotto alcuni elementi innovativi e la sperimentazione di campi d'azione poco o non del tutto esplorati.

È quanto accaduto anche agli autori del presente contributo nel quale si descrivono alcune esperienze laboratoriali condotte nell'ambito della formazione iniziale degli insegnanti del ciclo primario. Lo sfondo è dato dall'ambito di riferimento: quello della pedagogia e della didattica inclusiva, che hanno rappresentato non solo il contenuto disciplinare da veicolare ma l'orizzonte di senso per le scelte metodologico-didattiche adottate e per la scelta dello stesso oggetto di studio proposto ai partecipanti.

Parole chiave: disabilità; didattica inclusiva; formazione insegnanti; esperienze laboratoriali a distanza; pandemia

Sottomesso: 01/05/2021; accettato: 20/05/2021

Pubblicato online: 28/06/2021

1. Introduzione

Al pari della didattica scolastica, anche quella universitaria ha dovuto fare i conti con le conseguenze e le implicazioni derivanti dalla Pandemia Covid-19, che ha messo a nudo una serie di nervi scoperti del nostro sistema formativo.

Restando nello specifico dell'ambito scientifico delle Scienze dell'Educazione e della Formazione, ad esempio, è stato gioco-forza necessario ricollocare i corsi di formazione rivolti agli educatori e agli insegnanti – si pensi al *Corso Intensivo per Educatore Professionale Socio-Pedagogico*, al *Percorso Formativo per l'Acquisizione di 24 CFU (PeF24)* e al *Corso di Specializzazione per le attività di sostegno didattico agli alunni con disabilità* – dalla presenza alla distanza. Una esigenza che ha riguardato anche il *Corso di Laurea in Scienze della Formazione Primaria (SFP)*, indirizzato alle future maestre e ai futuri maestri del ciclo primario.

Ovviamente non si è trattato solo di una riconfigurazione degli spazi di svolgimento/fruizione (presenza vs distanza) ma di una situazione che ha richiesto e ha generato un ripensamento – tutt’ora in corso – del paradigma stesso della formazione: dal modo di insegnare (trasmissivo vs dialogico-esperienziale) all’organizzazione dei materiali e dei contenuti; dall’organizzazione dei tempi della “lezione” alle procedure di valutazione.

Per quanto ci riguarda ed entrando nel merito, abbiamo cercato di “approfitare” del perpetuarsi della didattica a distanza anche nell’aa. 2020-2021 per sperimentare alcuni aspetti innovativi nella proposta e nella conduzione dei Laboratori di *Didattica Inclusiva* e di *Pedagogia Inclusiva e Disability Studies* collocati rispettivamente al III e al V anno del CdL in SFP dell’Università Roma Tre. Nell’elaborare la proposta abbiamo fatto riferimento ai risultati di una indagine esplorativa condotta subito dopo il termine delle lezioni del secondo semestre dell’aa. 2019-20, che ha visto coinvolte/i studentesse/i del CdL in SFP di Roma Tre e finalizzata a operare alcune riflessioni preliminari in merito all’utilizzo da parte di docenti e studenti dell’audiovisivo durante il *lockdown* (Bocci, Bonavolontà & Domenici, 2021).

L’analisi dei dati, benché non generalizzabili per via della non significatività statistica del campione, ha messo in evidenza alcuni aspetti interessanti. Tra questi, l’apprezzamento del medium audiovisuale nella didattica ma anche la tendenza ad un suo uso “passivo” (ossia il ricorso di questa modalità come supporto alla spiegazione di contenuti).

Partendo da qui è derivata la scelta di organizzare dei laboratori in cui l’elemento audiovisuale fosse centrale da un lato come medium didattico dalla forte valenza partecipativa (quindi oltre l’utilizzo passivo) e, dall’altro, sul piano dei contenuti oggetto di analisi culturale e scientifica da condividere con gli studenti.

Su quanto appena detto e prima di procedere con la descrizione dell’esperienza, desideriamo fare due brevi considerazioni.

La prima attiene al fatto che la scelta di agire nell’ambito delle attività laboratoriali non è stata casuale. Infatti, durante questo lungo periodo di pandemia, uno dei discorsi che si è venuto a delineare intorno al dibattito (peraltro molto sterile e fuorviante) tra *presenza* e *distanza* è stato quello di suggerire e di preferire (in un’ottica appunto tradizionale della didattica) il ricorso (sempre oborto collo) alla distanza per le “lezioni” e di mantenere (salvaguardare) le attività laboratoriali in presenza, per la loro caratteristica di operatività. Fermo restando che siamo consapevoli che “attività laboratoriale” è un termine ampio che contempla i laboratori scientifici, ad esempio di Fisica, Chimica ecc., che abbisognano di apparecchiature e strumenti fisicamente collocati in spazi precisi, questa visione include anche i laboratori in ambito delle discipline umanistiche. E proprio in tal senso abbiamo voluto verificare se e in che misura si

potesse agire in modo altrettanto operativo anche in un laboratorio svolto a distanza.

La seconda considerazione concerne il fatto che, sul piano dei temi affrontati e dei contenuti proposti come oggetto del laboratorio, abbiamo scelto di focalizzare l'attenzione sul concetto di disabilità come costruzione socioculturale (e politica), ossia, nella prospettiva dei Disability Studies, sulla rappresentazione sociale (mediata dall'audiovisuale) della disabilità, della diversità e dell'alterità.

Quindi l'audiovisuale è, in questa esperienza, sia l'oggetto di studio sia il mediatore, la qual cosa – collocata all'interno di ambiti di studio che attengono alla Pedagogia e alla Didattica inclusiva – rappresenta l'orizzonte di senso che ha orientato le scelte metodologico-didattiche adottate e la scelta dell'oggetto di studio proposto ai partecipanti.

2. Descrizione del Laboratorio

Come anticipato, l'esperienza di laboratorio a cui facciamo qui riferimento riguarda nello specifico quello di *Pedagogia Inclusiva e Disability Studies*, che per ragioni di opportunità didattica è suddiviso in tre canali¹, svolto tra novembre 2020 e gennaio 2021 (e quindi coincidente con il primo semestre dell'a.a. 2020/2021). Si è trattato di una opportunità di formazione-ricerca sulle rappresentazioni sociali della disabilità e della diversità finalizzata a sollecitare studenti e docenti coinvolti (autori del presente contributo) a riflettere insieme sull'oggetto di studio e di analisi del laboratorio stesso, così come di ragionare sulla validità del mediatore audiovisuale.

Il laboratorio, frequentato da un totale di 172 studenti (102 per il canale A e 70 per il canale B), ha previsto lo svolgimento di attività in modalità sincrona e asincrona. Gli incontri in sincrono si sono svolti sulla piattaforma Teams e utilizzando contemporaneamente altri siti internet (quali, ad esempio, Kahoot e Wordart² per agevolare il coinvolgimento dei partecipanti e Youtube per la vi-

¹ Considerato l'elevato numero di studenti che per ogni coorte devono frequentare i diversi laboratori previsti nel CdL, da diversi anni si è stabilito di canalizzarli. Nello specifico, il laboratorio di Pedagogia Inclusiva e Disability Studies è suddiviso in tre canali (A, B e C). Nel presente contributo facciamo riferimento ai laboratori dei canali A e B svolti nel Primo Semestre.

² Nello specifico Kahoot è una piattaforma che consente di creare dei sondaggi (eventualmente accompagnati da immagini e video) e che attraverso un codice pin (fornito in questo caso dai docenti) permette la risposta simultanea di più persone (in questo caso gli studenti). La particolarità di Kahoot è che, utilizzando una musica di intrattenimento e visualizzando le risposte che man mano vengono fornite, riesce a coinvolgere i partecipanti, il cui apprendimento è favorito dall'attività ludica (Vygotskij, 1972; Caillois, 2000; Brown, 2009, tanto per citare alcuni

sione del cortometraggio e degli spot che hanno rappresentato l'oggetto di ricerca-formazione). Le attività in asincrono si sono svolte sulla piattaforma Moodle del Dipartimento – denominata *Formonline* – che è rimasta attiva anche dopo il termine del Laboratorio, al fine di consentire tra gli studenti lo scambio di idee e di suggestioni sulle questioni emerse lungo l'esperienza ben oltre i limiti di svolgimento del laboratorio.

Prima di procedere con l'analisi dei dati di quanto merso, riteniamo sia utile fornire una essenziale descrizione del percorso e delle attività proposte.

La prima attività proposta ha previsto una immediata immersione nel tema, senza che vi fosse una preventiva introduzione teorica³. È stato infatti *proiettato* il cortometraggio *Il Circo della Farfalla* (Joshua Weigel, 2009)⁴ e successivamente è stato chiesto agli/alte studenti/esse di: a) rispondere a un questionario elaborato ad hoc sul cortometraggio; b) inserire, in un argomento di discussione aperto dai docenti sul forum didattico del laboratorio presente sulla piattaforma Formonline, una serie di considerazioni personali derivanti sia dalla visione del Corto sia dalla compilazione del Questionario.

Tale Questionario consta di quattro ambiti. Il primo è relativo alle informazioni socio-demografiche: età, percezione di genere, eventuale possesso di altra laurea, eventuale esperienza con la disabilità (personale, familiare, lavorativa, ecc...). Il secondo ambito intende indagare la frequenza con cui gli studenti vedono film e serie tv durante l'anno (item 4: *Mediamente quanti film – lungometraggi, corti, ecc... – vedi durante l'anno al cinema, in home video, ecc...;* item 5: *Mediamente quante serie TV vedi durante l'anno*). Il terzo ambito entra nel merito del cortometraggio e, in particolare, si chiede agli studenti di:

1. descrivere attraverso cinque parole cosa ha suscitato la visione del cortometraggio;
2. indicare qual è la morale del film;
3. riportare quali sono i tratti caratterizzanti del protagonista che il regista ha voluto evidenziare;
4. elencare le peculiarità del protagonista che li hanno maggiormente colpiti;
5. scrivere le peculiarità con le quali, secondo loro, il regista ha voluto caratterizzare il Direttore del Circo;

studiosi che hanno analizzato il binomio gioco-apprendimento). La piattaforma Wordart permette, invece, di realizzare delle nuvole di parole (scegliendone anche la forma, la dimensione, il colore e il carattere) e pertanto è molto utile, ad esempio, nelle attività di brainstorming.

³ Va precisato che trattandosi di studenti del V anno avevano nella stragrande maggioranza tutti già sostenuto l'esame sia dell'insegnamento di Didattica Inclusiva collocato nella programmazione didattica al II anno (e del relativo laboratorio che è invece al III), sia dell'insegnamento di Pedagogia Inclusiva e Disability Studies che è al IV anno.

⁴ Il Cortometraggio è visibile su YouTube al seguente link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWHUKd-GORM>.

6. riportare quali sono gli aspetti del Direttore del Circo che li hanno maggiormente colpiti;
7. indicare (motivandone la scelta) quali altri personaggi ricordano o li hanno particolarmente colpiti tra quelli che compaiono nel cortometraggio.

Nel quarto e ultimo ambito, infine, si chiede agli/alle studenti/esse se hanno trovato interessanti – e per quale motivo – altri film sulla disabilità che hanno avuto modo di vedere e di aggiungere eventuali loro ulteriori considerazioni.

Come anticipato, successivamente alla compilazione del Questionario, studentesse e studenti hanno ulteriormente approfondito la riflessione inserendo le loro considerazioni nel Forum didattico, le quali sono poi state oggetto di un confronto in aula dove studentesse e studenti, avendo peraltro avuto modo di leggere quanto inserito da ciascuna/o di loro, hanno dato vita a un acceso dibattito. In questa fase i docenti hanno svolto una funzione di mediatori del confronto ma senza intervenire fornendo alcun feedback e limitandosi ad annotare gli elementi emergenti.

La seconda attività ha riguardato la visione dello Spot promosso dall'associazione Cooldown in collaborazione con altre associazioni e enti nel 2016 in occasione della Giornata Mondiale sulla Sindrome di Down (il 21 Aprile). Il video, che ha per titolo *How do you see me*⁵ è stato realizzato da Saatchi & Saatchi, una tra le più importanti agenzie pubblicitarie attualmente esistenti. In questo caso non è stato proposto alcun questionario ma studenti/esse sono state/i invitate/i ad animare sempre all'interno del *Forum Didattico* sulla piattaforma *Formonline* un altro argomento di discussione aperto dai docenti in riferimento allo spot di Cooldown. A seguire, come accaduto per la prima attività, il confronto è proseguito in aula con le medesime modalità.

La terza attività ha riguardato la visione di uno degli spot della campagna di raccolta fondi promossa da Telethon⁶. Nella fattispecie si è riproposta la struttura del primo incontro: compilazione di un questionario; approfondimento delle questioni emergenti per mezzo delle personali riflessioni delle studentesse e degli studenti sul forum di Formonline, confronto e dibattito collegiale in aula.

Per quanto concerne il questionario relativo allo spot della Campagna Telethon, questo è costituito da due ambiti. Il primo fa riferimento alle informazioni socio-demografiche: età, percezione di genere, eventuale possesso di altra laurea, eventuale esperienza professionale, eventuale esperienza con la disabilità (personale, familiare, lavorativa, ecc...). Il secondo ambito (come mostrato in Fig. 1) focalizza l'attenzione e la riflessione sullo scopo dello spot, sul grado

⁵ Lo Spot è reperibile al seguente link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OlUhpWMN9W4>.

⁶ Lo specifico spot utilizzato è fruibile on line al link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z9WWAPr6FhI> e trasmesso in tv a partire dagli ultimi mesi del 2020.

di accordo/disaccordo con la modalità narrativa utilizzata, sulle sensazioni provate durante la visione, sugli eventuali suggerimenti di modifica della narrazione/comunicazione utilizzata dagli autori.

Fig. 1 - Questionario su Ricerca Telethon (Ambito 2)

<p>1. Stante la raccolta fondi che è il fine esplicito della Campagna, a suo avviso qual è lo scopo di questo spot?</p> <p>a) sensibilizzare b) persuadere c) commuovere d) impietosire e) Altro: _____</p>	<p>1. È d'accordo con la modalità narrativa utilizzata nello spot?</p> <p>a) sì, completamente b) sì, ma non del tutto c) no d) assolutamente no e) non saprei f) Altro: _____</p>
<p>2. Vedendo questo spot si è sentita/o:</p> <p>a) invogliata/o a sostenere la campagna Telethon b) coinvolta/o c) indifferente d) incuriosita/o e) sconcertata/o f) infastidita/o g) Altro: _____</p>	<p>3. se le fosse data la possibilità di farlo</p> <p>a) realizzerebbe lo spot in modo completamente differente b) apporterebbe solo qualche piccola modifica c) lo lascerebbe così com'è</p>
<p>4. se alla domanda 4. ha risposto a) o b) potrebbe indicare in cosa e come lo cambierebbe?</p> <p>_____</p>	

Il laboratorio nella parte in sincrono si è concluso con un ulteriore confronto in aula, durante il quale i docenti, avendo raccolto una serie di informazioni interessantissime sia dai questionari (si veda il prossimo paragrafo) sia dagli interventi nei forum, hanno dialogato e discusso con studentesse e studenti introducendo una serie di riflessioni critiche derivanti da una analisi della modalità con la quale questi tre prodotti audiovisivi hanno “messo in scena” la disabilità. In tal senso sono stati messi a disposizione su *Formonline* alcuni contributi (Bocci, 2020b; Bocci & Bonavolontà, 2020a; Bocci, Gueli & Guerini, 2020) nei quali i suddetti temi sono stati affrontati e approfonditi. Questa ulteriore sollecitazione e apertura è stata affiancata da una richiesta finale (da svolgere in asincrono) per il completamento dell'esperienza formativa. È stato infatti chiesto ai/alle partecipanti (mettendo a disposizione una scheda di lavoro) di: 1) ricercare in rete cinque esempi di rappresentazioni della disabilità o della diversità/alterità (video musicali, corti, blog, vlog, interviste...); 2) per ciascuno di essi indicare il link e fornire una breve descrizione del contenuto; 3) scegliere una delle rappresentazioni individuate e approfondire i temi trattati con considerazioni personali.

Questo lavoro è stato quindi inserito nello spazio di *Formonline* con il suggerimento e la proposta di continuare a discuterne anche dopo il termine del laboratorio.

Al fine di entrare nel merito degli aspetti emergenti da questa esperienza, nel prossimo paragrafo forniamo alcuni dati e relative riflessioni in merito a quanto scaturito dall'esperienza di ricerca-formazione, limitandoci per ragioni di spazio, ai due questionari.

3. Cosa è merso dai questionari

Per quanto concerne i dati (e le informazioni) emersi/e dai due questionari utilizzati, abbiamo compiuto un'analisi descrittiva delle frequenze (utilizzando il software *SPSS*) e una prima analisi del contenuto (attraverso la piattaforma *Voyant Tools* e il software *Atlas.ti*).

Relativamente ai 172 studenti che costituiscono il campione dell'esperienza laboratoriale qui presentata, la maggior parte di loro ($n = 160$) dichiara di percepirsi donna, una persona preferisce non rispondere e 11 dichiarano di percepirsi uomini. L'età media dei partecipanti è di 26 anni ($m = 25,97$). Rispetto alla disabilità, 3 studenti/esse dichiarano di essere disabili e 35 di avere in famiglia una persona con disabilità.

Entrando nello specifico del questionario su *Il Circo della Farfalla*, 76 studenti/esse (44,18%) dichiarano di vedere in media più di 20 film l'anno, 52 (30,23%) sostengono di vederne da 10 a 20 e 44 (il 25,58%) di vedere da 1 a 10 film all'anno. In relazione alle serie TV, 106 studenti/esse (60,46%) dichiarano di vederne/seguirne annualmente da 1 a 10, 39 (22,67%) da 10 a 20, 23 (13,37%) oltre 20. Solo 6 studenti/esse (3,48%) dichiarano di non vederne nessuna.

In relazione alle parole maggiormente utilizzate da studenti/esse per descrivere ciò che la visione del corto ha suscitato in loro (*item 1., Ambito 3*), ritroviamo i termini *speranza* (41 occorrenze); *coraggio* (39); *commozione* (38); *forza* (34) ed *emozione* (28).

Riguardo alla morale che il regista ha voluto trasmettere (*item 2., Ambito 3*), come si evince da quanto sintetizzato nella Fig.2, studentesse/i hanno rimarcato la positività/propositività del messaggio, permeato dalla speranza di miglioramento di cui una società inclusiva, qual è ad avviso dei partecipanti quella proposta dal cortometraggio nella struttura e nelle relazioni del Circo della Farfalla e del suo fondatore Mr. Mendez, deve farsi promotrice.

Non a caso, le peculiarità di Will che li hanno maggiormente colpiti sono la forza di volontà e la trasformazione (operata grazie a Mr. Mendez) da persona che ha una bassa autostima a una persona capace di compiere gesti che attirano

ammirazione. Contestualmente e sinergicamente, come già anticipato, Mr. Mendez è l’emblema della società inclusiva, l’agente che con la propria modalità relazionale riesce a consentire al bruco di trasformarsi in crisalide e quindi in farfalla (la metafora che permea l’intero film).

Fig. 2 - Sintesi risposte fornite all’item 2: Qual è la morale del film

1.	“Superare i propri limiti”, è questo il messaggio che il regista vuole comunicare.
2.	La diversità può diventare un punto di forza.
3.	L’idea di guardare oltre, avere la forza e la volontà di raggiungere i propri obiettivi.
4.	Siamo tutti diversi e la nostra forza è la nostra diversità.
5.	L’idea per cui chiunque di noi “può volare” pur non avendo le ali.
6.	Non bisogna mai mollare e superare qualsiasi difficoltà.
7.	Andare oltre (ovvero andare attraverso, attraversare) il limite che poniamo a noi stessi è il primo e necessario passo per realizzare la nostra vera natura.
8.	Ognuno di noi ha le sue potenzialità e bisogna trovare il modo di farle emergere e valorizzarle. Non devono esistere “diversità” da stigmatizzare e deridere.
9.	Ogni persona è ciò che crede di essere. Che è possibile cambiare il proprio punto di vista e trovare un nuovo modo per “risorgere” anche quando tutti ci hanno sempre detto il contrario.
10.	Vedere il mondo con stupore, andare oltre le apparenze; la diversità porta con sé talenti e risorse molto più importanti dei limiti, e tutti siamo straordinari.
11.	Il regista vuole farci arrivare il messaggio che l’inclusione è l’unica strada possibile per qualsiasi disabilità, ed è esattamente ciò che penso anch’io.

Passando ora allo spot della campagna Telethon, 132 studentesse/i dichiarano di trovarsi completamente (39,53%) o parzialmente (37,20%) d’accordo con la modalità narrativa utilizzata, 29 sostengono di non essere d’accordo ($no = 14,53\%$; *assolutamente no* = 2,32%), 8 (4,65%) non rispondono e 3 (1,74%) esprimono alcune interessanti criticità che riportiamo nella Fig. 3.

Relativamente allo scopo dello spot (*item 1.*), il 72,67% degli/delle studenti/esse pensa che il fine ultimo sia quello di *sensibilizzare*, il 12,79% quello di *impietosire*, l’8,72% quello di *commuovere*, il 4,64% quello di *persuadere*. L’1,16% non risponde.

Rispetto al grado di coinvolgimento percepito, le/i partecipanti hanno dichiarato che vedendo lo spot si sono sentite/i: *coinvolte/i* (41,27%), *invogliate/i a sostenere la campagna Telethon* (27,32%), *incuriosite/i* (10,46%), *infastidite/i* (8,72%), *sconcertate/i* (3,48%), *indifferenti* (2,32%). Hanno fornito una risposta più articolata (scegliendo “altro” e fornendo una loro descrizione) 11

studentesse/i (6,39%) che hanno dichiarato di essersi sentite/i: *coinvolti ma infastiditi allo stesso tempo* (1); *coinvolti ma anche impietositi* (1); *sia coinvolti che invogliati a sostenere la campagna Telethon* (1); *coinvolti per e nel sostenere la ricerca* (1); *coinvolti ma a tratti turbati* (1); *dispiaciuti* (1); *sofferenti* (1); *demoralizzati* (1); *solidali con i genitori* (2); *rattristati ma anche un po' manipolati* (1).

Fig. 3 - Alcune criticità emerse circa la modalità narrativa utilizzata dallo spot

1.	Se avessero mostrato dei dati statistici e anche in parte il lavoro svolto dentro ai laboratori, avrebbe fatto più effetto.
2.	Ho guardato più e più volte questo spot in tv e l'ho sempre considerato una montatura, frutto di una brutta sceneggiatura, scritta male e rappresentata altrettanto male.
3.	Nello spot la modalità narrativa si incentra unicamente sulla sfera di vita che riguarda la malattia, come a ridurre tutta la complessità del bambino a quel singolo aspetto. La persona non è narrata nella sua globalità; ai fini di ciò che si vuole ottenere, si tratta di una strategia narrativa tecnicamente corretta, tuttavia, così si rischia una semplificazione, ovvero una riduzione e dunque uno svilimento dell'individualità.

A riguardo della possibilità di modificare lo spot avendone la possibilità, infine, 100 studentesse/i (58,13%) affermano che interverrebbero per cambiare alcuni aspetti. Più precisamente, 56 (32,55%) di questi *apporterebbero solo qualche piccola modifica* mentre 44 (25,58%) *realizzerebbero lo spot in modo completamente differente*. Diversamente 72 (41,86%) ritengono che sia opportuno lasciarlo *così com'è*.

Relativamente alle modifiche che studentesse/i vorrebbero apportare, nella Fig. 4 riportiamo quelle che appaiono particolarmente interessanti ai fini del nostro discorso.

Fig. 4 - Modifiche che i partecipanti apporterebbero allo spot

1.	Mostrerei altri momenti di vita familiare in cui è coinvolto il bambino/la bambina, lasciando spazio più alle immagini che alle testimonianze.
2.	Sottolineerei momenti felici familiari.
3.	Trovo lo spot molto coinvolgente, tuttavia, oltre alle testimonianze dei genitori dei bambini disabili, informerei lo spettatore anche sugli effettivi progressi scientifici raggiunti dalla ricerca Telethon.
4.	Spostare l'attenzione da quanto hanno bisogno di aiuto le persone disabili, a quanto l'aiuto economico possa migliorare il mondo in cui viviamo per tutti.

5.	Riserverei uno spazio nel sentire le testimonianze di come la ricerca ha migliorato le vite dei loro figli e delle famiglie.
6.	Non inserirei video che riprendono i bambini: non hanno scelto loro di apparire in tv e non mi piace questa scelta, anche se approvata dai genitori.
7.	Cercherei di modificare il modo in cui è presentata la disabilità. Di certo tali dinamiche si ripercuotono sui familiari e su chi se ne prende cura, ma non per questo devono essere ritratte in forma tragica o come un problema diventato insostenibile. Credo che si sarebbe potuta portare avanti la campagna anche con una bella immagine metaforica e di speranza, coinvolgendo in modo positivo il pubblico.

4. Qualche riflessione a supporto della nostra esperienza

Dall'analisi dei dati del primo questionario, emerge che le parole maggiormente utilizzate dagli/dalle studenti/esse per descrivere ciò che la visione del cortometraggio *Il Circo della Farfalla* ha suscitato in loro sono *speranza, coraggio, commozione, forza ed emozione*. Risultati che si pongono in linea di continuità con quanto emerso da una ricerca precedente (Bocci & Bonavolontà, 2020a) che ha visto coinvolte/i studentesse/i di corsi universitari (*Scienze della Formazione Primaria e Scienze dell'Educazione*), consiste/i in specializzazione per le attività di sostegno e dottorande/i di ricerca (per un totale di 667 persone).

In relazione alla morale che il regista del cortometraggio ha voluto trasmettere, stante ciò che i/le partecipanti hanno dichiarato, sembrerebbe essere sintetizzabile in due espressioni ricorrenti: “superare i propri limiti” e “ognuno ha delle potenzialità”. Affermazioni che ci ricordano quanto sia ancora prevalente l'idea che per essere accettati/e nella società sia necessario *normalizzarsi*, ossia fare tutto il possibile affinché i propri limiti (disabilità nel caso del protagonista del corto) siano superati e si possano raggiungere gli obiettivi prefissati (la domanda è: da chi?). Non a caso la frase slogan del Corto, ripresa e rilanciata anche nei forum e nella discussione in aula è quella pronunciata da Mr. Mendez e rivolta a Will per spronarlo: “Più grande è la lotta, più glorioso è il trionfo”. Ecco alcuni esempi:

Personalmente non avevo mai visto questo cortometraggio, non nego che mi ha commosso. Tutte le persone presenti in questo film hanno fatto dei loro problemi dei punti di forza, e mi ha particolarmente colpita la frase detta da Mr. Mendez: “Più grande è la lotta e più glorioso sarà il trionfo”, Will nonostante le sue difficoltà non si è arreso, è caduto e si è rialzato, ha creduto in se stesso. Penso che questo cortometraggio sia un insegnamento di vita (CP).

Il circo della farfalla è un cortometraggio che invita a riflettere su quello che è la disabilità, intesa come una “grande lotta per un più grande trionfo”. Trovo che Mr.

Mendez possa essere un esempio per ogni insegnante che deve spingere i suoi alunni ad andare oltre le difficoltà e a credere in sé stessi. Se crediamo nelle possibilità dell'altro il pregiudizio vola via come una farfalla (FE).

Si tratta di aspetti che nella prospettiva dei Disability Studies si connettono alle *retoriche discorsive* (Vadalà, 2013) che il medium audiovisivo/visuale amplifica (Bocci, 2014; Bocci, 2020a; Bocci e Bonavolontà, 2020b; Bocci & Domenici, 2013; 2019). Non a caso, se ciò che ha suscitato il film negli spettatori rispetto a sentimenti legati alla *commozione*, alla *speranza*, alla *tristezza* ecc. rimanda alla retorica della *compassione*, il richiamo al *coraggio*, alla *forza*, al *superamento* dei limiti attengono alla retorica del *supercrip*, ossia del disabile che “nonostante tutto, ce la fa” (si pensi, in proposito, agli atleti con disabilità).

La retorica della *compassione* emerge prepotentemente anche dall'analisi di quanto emerso dal Questionario sulla campagna Telethon, i cui risultati, infatti mostrano come per alcune/i studentesse/i il fine ultimo dello spot sia quello di *impietosire* (22) e di *commuovere* (15). Anche in questo caso il confronto con una nostra precedente esperienza di ricerca (Bocci, Gueli & Guerini, 2020), traccia linee di continuità: in quel caso, infatti, su un campione di 360 persone coinvolte (non solo studentesse/i), 65 hanno indicato *impietosire* e 47 *commuovere* come fine ultimo dello spot.

Quanto emerso, e qui riportato in estrema sintesi, ci pone nella condizione di affermare che il modello interpretativo dominante della disabilità sia ancora quello medico, secondo cui *il disabile* (per usare in maniera provocatoria il lessico etichettante) resta un *oggetto manipolabile di cura* (Caldin, 2005).

In proposito, si pensi a una delle proposte di modifica allo spot Telethon suggerita da una studentessa (*Non inserirei video che riprendono i bambini: non hanno scelto loro di apparire in tv e non mi piace questa scelta, anche se approvata dai genitori*) che ci induce a riflettere su quanto il corpo delle persone con disabilità (in questo caso bambini) rischi (anche inconsapevolmente) di essere strumentalizzato anche per il raggiungimento di un fine nobile.

5. Qualche altra considerazione per concludere

Le riflessioni appena espresse sono state introdotte e condivise in forma molto più articolata – che ha naturalmente riguardato anche lo spot della Coor-down per la Campagna sulla Giornata Mondiale della Sindrome di Down 2016 – con studentesse/i e sono state oggetto del dibattito in aula.

In modo particolare è stato interessante notare come le impressioni e le sensazioni emerse a caldo (ancora in fase di immersione) dopo la visione dei tre video e “messe nero su bianco” da studentesse e studenti nei tre argomenti

aperti ad hoc nel forum didattico di Formonline, alla luce di una serie di sollecitazioni derivanti dal confronto con i docenti abbiano generato non tanto (e per fortuna) una adesione passiva alla nostra proposta/prospettiva di analisi critica, quanto l'acquisizione progressiva di una maggiore coscientizzazione rispetto ad alcuni elementi non del tutto congrui con il proprio sentire al quale si è riusciti a dare una migliore collocazione.

Ad esempio, rispetto allo spot sulla sindrome di Down, che peraltro vede coinvolta come testimonial l'attrice Hollywoodiana Olivia Wilde, è stato interessante rilevare (insieme alle/ai partecipanti) come in realtà rischiasse di emergere in questo video una visione abilista della società, più che una valorizzazione delle differenze (come suggerito nell'articolo proposto come approfondimento: Bocci, 2020b).

Aspetti questi rimarcati dalle riflessioni ex post inserite da studentesse/i nel quarto forum aperto in una fase successiva alla visione e riflessione sui tre video proposti. Ecco alcuni esempi:

Purtroppo è vero che ancora oggi si ritiene che anche le persone disabili debbano condurre una vita "normale", che debbano essere considerati "normali" al fine di essere accettati all'interno della nostra società. Anche all'interno di questo spot viene sottolineato questo concetto. L'elemento che mi ha fatto ragionare di più all'interno dell'articolo [Bocci, 2020b] è la presa di coscienza e consapevolezza che le persone con disabilità devono essere viste e considerate per quello che sono, con le loro difficoltà problematiche e con le loro peculiarità; proprio come tutti.

Gli spot pubblicitari tendono a voler creare un senso di pietà e dispiacere per le persone con disabilità, in questo caso per persone affette da sindrome di down, ma chi lo dice che loro vogliono suscitare questi sentimenti? Perché per sensibilizzare riguardo un tema del genere c'è il bisogno di impietosire? E soprattutto perché la maggior parte delle persone ha bisogno di provare questi sentimenti per rivolgere il proprio pensiero o il proprio supporto a persone con disabilità? Credo che il problema sia alla base: la maggior parte delle persone non pensa minimamente alle "difficoltà" degli altri a meno che non venga suscitato quel sentimento di empatia dolorosa che li porta a dispiacersi per loro, e quindi a considerarli (LG).

Un elemento di analisi, questo, che si interconnette naturalmente anche con quanto emerso nel cortometraggio *Il Circo della Farfalla* e nello spot della *Campagna Telethon*.

I temi affrontati nel laboratorio vengono approfonditi nei tre saggi proposti, i quali mi hanno permesso di portare avanti ulteriori approfondimenti e di riflettere maggiormente su tutto quello che vediamo e ascoltiamo. Mi sono resa conto di quanto lavoro c'è dietro ogni spot, pubblicità, video, interviste e cortometraggi e di come sia difficile far passare il giusto messaggio con i giusti mezzi e le corrette modalità. Inoltre le analisi più approfondite dei saggi con i risultati dei questionari mi hanno permesso di

riflettere sul fatto di prendere ogni cosa con le pinze ovvero analizzare bene quello che vediamo, leggiamo o ascoltiamo. Temi importanti e delicati come quello della disabilità non possono essere trattati né con superficialità né con compassione né utilizzando stereotipi e pregiudizi. Ho dato per scontato, forse sbagliando, che tutto ciò che viene realizzato per questioni come quella in oggetto, venga fatto con la giusta intenzionalità, informazione, studio e coscienza. Quanto fatto nel primo incontro e quanto letto nei saggi, mi ha portato a ragionare meglio su quello che leggo e vedo e sicuramente uno degli aspetti più importanti è la giusta informazione sui temi che si vogliono trattare, il consultare fonti attendibili e affrontare la questione scelta con serietà, motivazione e rispetto. Infine ritengo il confronto con gli altri di notevole crescita culturale, professionale e personale (JC).

Dalla lettura dei saggi proposti ho avuto modo di riflettere in modo compiuto su alcuni aspetti dei video visionati durante il I incontro di Laboratorio. Mi ha colpito molto quanto letto sul saggio dedicato al Circo della farfalla e mi ha fatto ripensare alle impressioni che avevo avuto "a caldo" dopo la visione del cortometraggio. In effetti il Circo della farfalla, a primo acchito, appare come un simbolo di inclusione di soggetti esclusi da altri contesti sociali, colpisce la figura di Mr. Mendez che accoglie Will nel suo circo senza pretendere da lui "fenomeni da baraccone" come nel Carnival Show. Ma in effetti, se questo è vero e non può essere negato, allo stesso modo è interessante la riflessione sul fatto che comunque Will è in una condizione di marginalità e che, finché non riesce ad emergere in una particolare prestazione, non sarà realmente incluso nel gruppo. Questo è un po' quello che succede nella società a chiunque di noi; in una società abilista che fa della prestazione il parametro di valore, chi non è in grado di mostrare qualcosa in termini di prestazione e di efficienza non viene considerato o, nella migliore delle ipotesi, viene tenuto ai margini. Sarebbe, invece, opportuno e davvero inclusivo che si accettasse ogni persona così com'è, elogiando ogni tanto anche "l'inutilità" intesa, con le parole del saggio, come uno degli "infiniti modi di essere diversamente differenti" (GN).

In altri termini, ciò che "ci portiamo via" da questa esperienza è la netta sensazione che ci sia bisogno (da parte di tutti noi) di uno sguardo che non si accontenta, di una re-visione costante del nostro modo di guardare e di porci verso l'altro (chiunque esso sia). Riprendendo le parole di Gardou, possiamo dire che «comprendere l'altro significa soprattutto capire sé stessi, cercare di analizzarsi, fare un lavoro di introspezione, rimettersi in discussione ed esigere da sé un adattamento» (Gardou, 2006, pp.32-33). Un lavoro di decostruzione, riconfigurazione, quindi, finalizzato a mettere a nudo i dispositivi/meccanismi che abitiamo, le forme del sociale che innescano processi di incorporazione e normalizzazione di tutto ciò che tende a discostarsi dal tipico, dal conforme, dal prevedibile. Una consapevolezza da acquisire cammin facendo, come sembra restituirci questa riflessione di una studentessa:

Il laboratorio del prof. Bocci di quest'anno è stato davvero interessante e sono stata molto felice di avervi preso parte; è stato stimolante e mi ha spinto a riflettere su alcune dinamiche che per loro stessa natura scatenano dibattiti e discussioni, anche accessi. Questi temi sono oggetto di studio scientifico di filoni che purtroppo in Italia non hanno una tradizione storica (e forse anche accademica) lunga e sono piuttosto recenti; tra le altre cose vogliono destare la società e risvegliare la sua attenzione verso tematiche che, comunemente, o vengono lasciate ai margini, oppure vengono affrontate dopo essere state depotenziate dell'essenza stessa che le contraddistingue, percorrendo scorciatoie, strade più brevi e meno tortuose, che potremmo ritrovare – a proposito di quello che è il tema del nostro laboratorio – nelle tre derive individuate da Vadalà. Questi studi si muovono certamente su un terreno particolarmente articolato, cercando di suscitare riflessione, analisi, attuazione del pensiero critico e confronto, chiamando anche in causa la dimensione del saper mettersi in gioco e di cercare di uscire da una certa zona di confort che è, spesso, uno spazio attivato in modalità involontaria, quasi in modalità automatica, legata anche alla percezione diffusa dello standard fisiologico dell'essere umano che però rischia di sedimentarsi in uno standard a matrice socio-politico-culturale che diventa il canone dettato dalla società e di cui l'individuo diviene agente inconsapevole (GS).

In conclusione poniamo anche in evidenza che l'aver svolto il laboratorio a distanza, avvalendoci dell'audiovisuale in completa sinergia con tutta una serie di altri mediatori didattici dalla forte valenza partecipativa, lungi dall'essere limitante o di essere una soluzione obbligata più subita a causa della Pandemia che voluta, ha invece inciso non poco sulla significatività percepita da studentesse e studenti in merito alla partecipazione al laboratorio.

Riflettere sul potere delle rappresentazioni sociali mediate dall'audiovisuale e farlo in un contesto formativo immersivo – pienamente in sintonia con il paradigma digitale – ha potenziato la valenza positiva dell'esperienza compiuta, arricchendo la riflessione di ulteriori spunti di analisi e autoanalisi (si tratta infatti di futuri insegnanti e questo aspetto non è stato secondario nel confronto).

A dimostrazione che non è certo la presenza in sé a garantire la qualità della didattica (anche laboratoriale) ma l'attenzione a come pensiamo l'azione didattica, al valore e al significato che le attribuiamo.

Riferimenti bibliografici

Bocci F. (2014). Rappresentazioni cinematografiche della disabilità e Pedagogia Speciale. Dalle classificazioni ai Disability Studies. In M. Corsi, a cura di: *La ricerca pedagogica in Italia. Tra innovazione e internazionalizzazione*. Lecce: Pensa Multimedia.

Bocci (2020a). Altri corpi nei "Film di mezzanotte". Visioni e analisi delle rappresentazioni della disabilità e della diversità. In F. Bocci & A.M. Straniero: *Altri corpi*.

- Visioni e rappresentazioni della (e incursioni sulla) disabilità e diversità*. Roma: Roma Tre-Press.
- Bocci F. (2020b). L'abilismo e i corpi intralciati nella rappresentazione mediale. In F. Gomez Paloma a cura di: *Embodiment & School*. Lecce: PensaMultimedia, pp. 126-133.
- Bocci F., Bonavolontà G. (2020a). Un'altra società è possibile? Ovvero: Il Circo della Farfalla, metafora del valore della diversità o dei corpi produttivi?. In F. Bocci & A.M. Straniero: *Altri corpi. Visioni e rappresentazioni della (e incursioni sulla) disabilità e diversità*. Roma: Roma Tre-Press.
- Bocci F. & Bonavolontà G. (2020b). Tecnologia e diversità nelle rappresentazioni mediiali. Un'analisi di due prodotti seriali per la televisione. *Ricerche Pedagogiche*, LIV(214): 53-68.
- Bocci F., Bonavolontà G. & Domenici V. (2021). Non solo intrattenimento. Una ricerca esplorativa sull'utilizzo dell'audiovisivo nella didattica universitaria durante il lockdown. In V. Carbone, G. Carrus F. Pompeo & E. Zizioli, a cura di: *La Ricerca dipartimentale ai tempi del Covid-19*. Roma: Roma Tre Press.
- Bocci F. & Domenici V. (2013). La rappresentazione complessa della disabilità nel cinema contemporaneo. Analisi de Le Scaphandre et le Papillon di Julian Schnabel. *Ricerche Pedagogiche*, 187: 17-24.
- Bocci F. & Domenici V. (2019). La diversità nelle narrazioni seriali contemporanee. Un'analisi critica dei processi di incorporazione e immunizzazione. *Italian Journal of Special Education for Inclusion*, VII(2): 416-429.
- Bocci F., Gueli C. & Guerini I. (2020). I corpi disabili nelle campagne pubblicitarie. Esiti di un'indagine esplorativa. In F. Bocci & A.M. Straniero. *Altri corpi. Visioni e rappresentazioni della (e incursioni sulla) disabilità e diversità*. Roma: Roma Tre-Press.
- Brown S. (2009). *Play: how it shapes the brain, opens the imagination, and invigorates the soul*. New York, NY: Avery Pub Group.
- Caillois R. (2000). *I giochi e gli uomini: la maschera e la vertigine*. Milano: Bompiani.
- Caldin R. (2005). Identità e cittadinanza nella disabilità: l'approccio pedagogico. *Salute e società*, IV(1): 47-69.
- Gardou C. (2006). *Diversità, vulnerabilità e handicap. Per una nuova cultura della disabilità*. Trento: Erickson.
- Vadalà G. (2013). La rappresentazione della disabilità tra conformismo e agire politico. In R. Medeghini, S. D'Alessio, A.D. Marra, G. Vadalà, E. Valtellina (a cura di). *Disability Studies. Emancipazione, inclusione scolastica e sociale, cittadinanza*, Trento: Erickson.
- Vygotskij L.S. (1972). *Immaginazione e creatività nell'età infantile*. Roma: Editori Riuniti.

Book reviews

Noemi Del Bianco. *Autodeterminazione nelle persone con disabilità intellettive: studi, ricerche e questioni di Pedagogia Speciale*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 2019.

L'autrice Noemi Del Bianco approfondisce nel volume *Autodeterminazione nelle persone con disabilità intellettive: studi, ricerche e questioni di Pedagogia Speciale* le modalità di presa in carico di persone con disabilità intellettive, nell'ottica del costruito dell'autodeterminazione.

La riflessione condotta viene incentrata in modo particolare sulla necessità di porre in essere opportunità attinenti le scelte e le decisioni: l'autodeterminazione contribuisce ad un effettivo miglioramento delle condizioni di vita, divenendo il criterio centrale nella costruzione di traiettorie indirizzate all'adulità in persone con disabilità intellettive.

L'interesse nel volume viene focalizzato su una questione di forte urgenza pedagogica, e quindi sull'autodeterminazione, non solo nella sua definizione ma, e soprattutto, nell'individuazione di procedure che possano implementarla. Nel testo si fa riferimento alle sfide che la persona con disabilità – e la sua famiglia – è chiamata ad affrontare per intraprendere un percorso consapevole verso la migliore Qualità di vita possibile nell'adulità.

Le ricerche di respiro internazionale, esposte dall'Autrice, mostrano chiaramente che le persone con disabilità intellettive e dello sviluppo abbiano meno opportunità di fare scelte ed esprimere preferenze nelle loro vite rispetto ai loro coetanei senza disabilità. Appare necessario dunque capire le modalità di presa in carico, incrementando le competenze nell'ottica di una maggiore autodeterminazione per le persone con disabilità intellettive, riuscendo ad ottenere *outcomes* necessari per far fronte alla complessità della vita adulta, avendo come fine ultimo il miglioramento della Qualità della Vita.

Il testo, dopo aver introdotto le motivazioni fondanti e quindi l'importanza del raggiungimento di una vita autodeterminata anche per persone con disabilità intellettive, prende avvio nel primo capitolo con una delimitazione preliminare del costruito dell'autodeterminazione, offrendo al lettore i concetti e gli ancoraggi scientifici di riferimento, che verranno presentati e approfonditi successivamente. Il focus sarà diretto alla *Self-Determined Learning Theory*, alla *Functional Model*, alla *Causal Agency Theory*, l'*Ecological Theory of Self-Determination* e il *Socio-Ecological Model*.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2021oa12061

Nel secondo capitolo l'attenzione viene rivolta alle strumentazioni di osservazione e valutazione del costrutto. Strumenti specifici e validati vengono presentati in riferimento sia al modello della *Quality of Life (Scala San Martin, POS)* che a quello dell'autodeterminazione (*AIR SDS, ARC'S SDS, SDIS, MDSD*), al fine di procedere verso direzioni che possano far emergere linee procedurali di riferimento.

Con l'obiettivo di valutare implicazioni attuative viene proposta nel terzo capitolo una ricerca in riferimento ad alcuni studi di caso di adulti con disabilità intellettive, permettendo così al lettore di cogliere concrete ipotesi di rilevazioni dei costrutti. Il volume presenta, pertanto, ricerche scientifiche che permettono di poter individuare proposte operative. L'Autrice conclude il volume con delle riflessioni critiche e traiettorie pedagogiche con l'intenzione di rilanciare possibili prospettive di ricerca e ipotesi di attuazioni pratiche.

L'obiettivo di questo testo è mettere in evidenza come un lavoro incentrato sull'implementazione dell'autodeterminazione conduce anche persone con disabilità intellettive, verso il raggiungimento di un doppio profilo di competenze: da un lato un profilo di autodeterminazione personale, legato al processo decisionale e di scelta per saper dirigere attivamente la propria vita, e dall'altro la concretizzazione di un profilo civico di autodeterminazione, con posizioni di auto rappresentanza che conducono a manifestare la propria voce e posizione nella società.

Le considerazioni avanzate dall'Autrice fanno emergere come la finalità del testo sia rappresentata dal tentativo di avviare percorsi e progetti di vita che sappiano essere orientati al costrutto dell'autodeterminazione, dimostrando che tutte le persone, anche le persone con disabilità in generale e disabilità intellettive in particolare, possono raggiungere posizioni sempre più autodeterminate.

La lettura del testo è particolarmente piacevole e consigliata a tutti gli studenti in formazione e ai professionisti che, a diversi livelli, si occupano di processi inclusivi e formativi.

Arianna Santoro

Roberta Caldin (a cura di), *Pedagogia speciale e didattica speciale/1. Le origini, lo stato dell'arte, gli scenari futuri*, Erickson, Trento, 2020.

Il volume *Pedagogia speciale e didattica speciale/1. Le origini, lo stato dell'arte, gli scenari futuri*, curato da Roberta Caldin, raccoglie in un'opera collettanea i contributi dei maggiori esperti nell'ambito della Pedagogia e della Didattica Speciale, approfondendone in maniera critica e riflessiva le origini e lo stato dell'arte, mettendo in luce l'unicità della storia e dell'esperienza italiana in riferimento all'*education for all*.

Nel capitolo primo, dal titolo "*La memoria e l'innovazione. L'impegno della pedagogia speciale tra radici e prospettive educative*", l'autrice Roberta Caldin riprendendo le questioni nodali che hanno caratterizzato storicamente il dibattito sull'inclusione scolastica e sociale delle persone con disabilità, muove verso i nuovi orientamenti che guidano oggi il passaggio dalle pratiche dell'integrazione a quelle dell'inclusione. Attraverso la ricostruzione delle origini e, dunque, delle radici della pedagogia speciale, giunge a considerare le nuove prospettive educative che chiamano in causa la corresponsabilità dei contesti di vita nella costruzione di azioni di sistema in grado di superare le gabbie della contingenza e aprirsi alla complessità che sempre caratterizza la progettualità della pedagogia speciale.

Ferdinando Motuschi nel secondo capitolo, intitolato "*La pedagogia speciale. Uno sguardo al passato e qualche ipotesi sul futuro*", propone una riflessione sulle ipotesi che appaiono maggiormente emergenti nel campo della Pedagogia speciale. Attraverso la presentazione di iniziative e proposte l'autore permette al lettore di assaporare contributi personali che consentono di giungere ad una profonda riflessione da proiettare sul piano operativo.

Il terzo capitolo "*Pedagogia speciale come scienza nomade, perché evolutiva e per il dialogo*", ad opera di Andrea Canevaro, consente di apprezzare gli "antenati" della pedagogia speciale. Prendendo come riferimento le macro dimensioni dell'"aspettare", del "percorrere" e del "dialogare", crea nuove connessioni e reciprocità che, pur essendo proprie delle epoche passate, rilanciano a sfide future. Con il compito di trovare l'equilibrio della complementarietà, l'autore attribuisce alla pedagogia speciale la capacità di contaminarsi, secondo i principi della reciprocità e della riflessività.

Sergio Angori, nel quarto capitolo, dal titolo "*Pedagogia generale e pedagogia speciale: quale rapporto?*" guida il lettore all'interno di nodi concettuali relativi allo statuto epistemologico della pedagogia e dei principali quesiti che abitano ancora oggi il dibattito scientifico. Provando a tracciare l'identità

della pedagogia, l'autore giunge ad interrogarsi sulla complementarità tra pedagogia generale e pedagogia speciale rilanciando nuovi interrogativi e prospettive.

Il quinto capitolo, *“Pedagogia speciale e dimensione interdisciplinare”* di Carlo Fratini, approfondisce i punti di interconnessione tra le numerose discipline che hanno ad oggetto lo studio dell'uomo e la pedagogia speciale. Quest'ultima, intesa come disciplina di frontiera, può infatti proficuamente nutrirsi delle relazioni intersoggettive con le altre scienze dell'uomo.

“La ricerca empirica in pedagogia e didattica speciale: quale metodologia?” è il titolo del sesto capitolo ad opera di Lucio Cottini, nel quale vengono proposti alcuni criteri di qualità per l'implementazione delle ricerche in pedagogia speciale nella prospettiva EBE. In questo contributo, l'autore consente ai lettori impegnati in ambito educativo di conoscere una serie di strategie e procedure da adottare per promuovere contesti orientati verso l'inclusione di tutti.

Lucia Chiappata Cajola, nel capitolo intitolato *“Ambienti di apprendimento per l'inclusione: strategie didattiche e processi regolativi nella visione dinamica e diacronica del «funzionamento umano»”*, espone riflessioni concernenti tre costrutti concettuali propri della ricerca della pedagogia speciale e della didattica speciale, ovvero l'organizzazione della didattica inclusiva, la valutazione nella didattica e l'attuale applicazione del modello bio-psico-sociale ICF. In modo organico ed articolato l'autrice riesce a presentare le tre prospettive in interazione tra loro, restituendo al lettore un quadro univoco ed esaustivo.

“Pedagogia speciale, didattica speciale e internazionalizzazione” è il titolo dell'ottavo contributo, ad opera di Lucia de Anna. Ponendo lo sguardo sugli organismi internazionali e sui processi di internazionalizzazione in senso pedagogico l'autrice consente di avere una visione dall'alto dell'educazione inclusiva. Aspetti critici e nuovi scenari, provenienti dal confronto con realtà europee e mondiali, permettono di apprezzare peculiarità proprie del sistema educativo e scolastico.

Il volume nella sua interezza rappresenta un significativo lavoro di ricerca e interconnessione sulle maggiori questioni che hanno abitato e abitano ancora oggi la pedagogia e della didattica speciale. Le voci autorevoli dei massimi esperti italiani in tale ambito, attraverso le numerose sollecitazioni sullo statuto e sulle traiettorie epistemologiche interdisciplinari ed internazionali, schiudono verso nuovi e futuri scenari che saranno oggetto di indagine e approfondimento di un secondo volume.

Per il significativo valore scientifico ed euristico e l'elevato profilo professionale degli autori scriventi, il volume è caldamente consigliato ad un pubblico di lettori che vogliono indagare ed aggiornarsi in riferimento alla giovane scienza della pedagogia speciale.

Noemi Del Bianco, Ilaria D'Angelo

Ilaria D'Angelo, *Pedagogia speciale per i servizi alle persone con disabilità complesse*, Traiettorie inclusive, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 2020.

Il volume di Ilaria D'Angelo *Pedagogia speciale per i servizi alle persone con disabilità complesse* affronta il paradigma della Qualità della Vita (QdV) nelle persone con Profound, Intellectual, Multiple, Disability (PMID). Nello specifico l'autrice indaga come i livelli di QdV siano condizione necessaria per orientare i progetti di vita di persone con disabilità complesse e per creare contesti inclusivi. Nel primo capitolo l'attenzione viene circoscritta sul "*Framework concettuale*", in cui viene esaminato il costrutto della Qualità della Vita nelle sue diverse declinazioni teoriche. Nel dettaglio, vengono presentati i cinque quadri concettuali che hanno ottenuto maggior riconoscimento da parte della comunità scientifica, con un particolare focus sulla proposta di Falce e Perry (1995) e sul modello euristico di Schalock e Verdugo Alonso (2002). Panoramica concettuale necessaria per l'applicazione concreta del costrutto al fine di orientare le prassi, ri-pensare e progettare la presa in carico delle persone con disabilità complesse.

Nel capitolo "*Il mondo delle disabilità complesse: tra definizioni e sfide*", la riflessione si dirige e converge sulla difficoltà di concettualizzare un'unica definizione di disabilità per le persone con PMID. Infatti, "la pluralità semantica, che si rileva sia a livello nazionale che internazionale, costituisce, come vedremo, un elemento di criticità importante in riferimento alla condivisione di una definizione clinica" (p. 20), divenendo un'enorme sfida per quanto riguarda la presa in carico di persone con PMID. Si giunge, attraverso l'attenta analisi dell'autrice, ad un accordo concettuale nel panorama scientifico pedagogico con il termine disabilità complesse, in quanto "poste al centro dei significati quelle dinamiche di tipo non lineare che si instaurano tra le dimensioni cliniche e psicosociali ed i cui esiti possono tradursi in effetti esponenziali sia di tipo positivo che negativo" (p. 23).

Nel terzo capitolo "*Qualità di Vita e disabilità complessa: ambiti di ricerca e implicazioni pedagogiche*", l'autrice presenta la ricostruzione dello stato dell'arte degli studi condotti sulla validazione dei domini del costrutto della QdV per le persone con PMID e presenta i filoni di ricerca volti alla loro operazionalizzazione (ovvero al loro processo di specificazione delle aree di vita, in base all'identificazione dei rispettivi indicatori), nei diversi contesti di vita. È in questo snodo concettuale che ci si sofferma negli studi sulla QdV dei caregivers (familiari e professionali) e sulla relazione che sussiste tra il benessere di chi si prende cura della persona con disabilità complessa e la sua Qualità

di Vita. Analizzare le figure che ruotano intorno alla persona con disabilità e orientarsi in questa direzione consente di individuare gli interventi e mappare risorse e supporti.

Premessa, inoltre, necessaria per giungere al centro della sfida pedagogica aperta dall'autrice è la definizione degli strumenti di rilevazione della QdV. Questi sono presentati nel capitolo "*La valutazione della Quality of Life nelle persone con disabilità complessa*", in cui emerge quale unica modalità di rilevazione della QdV delle persone con disabilità complesse l'impiego di *proxy*. In particolare, risulta essere la Scala San Martín (tradotta in italiano ma validata solo in contesti internazionali) strumento e guida utile nella programmazione educativa e nell'indirizzo dei diversi interventi per il ripensamento organizzativo dei servizi rivolti alla persona con PIMD.

Nella parte conclusiva del volume, "*Persone con Profound Intellectual Multiple Disabilities nei servizi residenziali: uno studio pilota sulla valutazione della QdV*", l'autrice presenta la ricerca biennale (2018-2020), frutto della pluriennale collaborazione tra la cattedra di Pedagogia e Didattica Speciale dell'Università degli Studi di Macerata e una struttura diurna che accoglie persone adulte con disabilità complessa nel territorio marchigiano. Lo scopo dello studio pilota è quello di analizzare le criticità inerenti le procedure e le metodologie nella disamina della QdV di persone con disabilità complesse per ri-pensare gli interventi e le progettazioni educative all'interno di percorsi condivisi, al fine di sostenere i progetti di vita.

Il volume rappresenta un significativo lavoro di ricerca che pone l'accento sulle criticità relative alla valutazione della QdV per persone con disabilità complesse, rivolgendo l'attenzione all'urgenza di conoscere e applicare strumenti per osservare piani di lettura più ancorati ai contesti di vita e alle specifiche situazioni individuali, così da poter permettere il miglioramento dei livelli di QdV anche nelle persone con PIMD.

Manuela Crescimbeni

