# The Pedagogical Dimension between Innovation and Inclusion

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***Abstract***
*The purpose of this contribution is to provide an accurate and detailed analysis of the pedagogical dimension that directly affects all the stakeholders of the society in which we live. The research carried out emphasizes its attention on two aspects of fundamental importance for all educational sciences: inclusion and innovation, understood as the continuous search for new and effective solutions to guarantee a fair right to education for all.*

***Keywords***: *Pedagogical Dimension, Inclusion, Innovation*

**Pedagogical Approach**

The term Pedagogy derives from the Greek word paidagogos (composed of paispaìdòs = child and a derivative of àghein = to lead) that etymologically indicates the one accompanying children. By translation, the discipline, which concerns the educational problem in its various aspects, is called Pedagogy. If education includes all the educational events, Pedagogy is the reflection on such events. Pedagogy, which is based on the contribution of the Educational Sciences, is realized in the educational act of teaching. Teaching, in its etymological meaning, means "signum in", to impress a sign. Any educational action has value if it generates meaningful forms of knowledge building in the subject that is intrinsically willing to accept different knowledge. In this perspective, every element of the training can generate cultural, emotional and social developments.

***Learning is inherent in human nature***

Jerome Bruner argues that almost everyone has intrinsic reasons to learn, which do not depend on a reward external the activity, in fact they are intrinsic reason to learning:
Curiosity, which represents a typical example of initiation to knowledge as it stimulates the desire to learn and discover.
The need for competence, as an adaptation to the environment, which promotes an effective interaction with the surrounding reality.
The motivation for reciprocity, linked to the profound human need to respond to others and cooperate with them in view of a common goal.
Such profound psychological reasons find a reward in themselves, provide the basis for an open and motivating learning and lead the individual to acquire new knowledge. Learning is a constant process of creation that continuously redefines the goals and modes of development in the search for a more and more articulated and comprehensive knowledge (Bruner, 1995). Bruner, like Comenius, argues that "everything can be taught to everybody at any age", through forms of representation appropriate to the subject's age and degree of psychological maturity. In the culture of education, it connects the idea of education with learning and the concept of culture, considering it as a heritage of knowledge and as a special way of perceiving, feeling and arguing reality too. Bruner claims that a qualifying educational practice must promote reflection on thinking, the awareness of its limits and the possibility of overcoming it (Bruner, 1995; 2001).

***Multiple Intelligences***

Gardner's idea (2007) is based on the overcoming of a restrictive concept of intelligence measurable only with psychometric tests (the well-known Intelligence Quotient) to get to a broader and more dynamic concept that sees intelligence as the ability to find and solve problems, and generate products are appreciated in one's own culture. Thanks to experimental studies too, he theorizes the existence of various types of relatively autonomous intellectual abilities, called human intelligences. The multiple intelligences (logical-mathematical, linguistic-verbal, kinesthetic, visual-spatial, musical, intrapersonal and interpersonal) represent the means to have available in order to live dynamically the complexity of reality.

***The emotional intelligence: a particular ability to learn***

Knowing how to respond dynamically to facts and events requires an intelligence that cannot be attributed to logical-deductive processes, but to a particular ability of the mind to manage, with emotional mastery, complex and unexpected situations. The emotional intelligence "expresses the ability to control an impulse, allows grasping the most intimate feelings and managing relationships with others".

**Special Pedagogy**

Special Pedagogy and Special Didactics place the special educational need are at the centre of the reflection path. Special pedagogy is characterized as a pedagogy of diversity and complexity that can provide answers tailored to the specific training needs. The investigation field of Special Pedagogy deals with disability and is aimed at special individuals who therefore need special interventions. The task of Special Pedagogy does not consist in making the person becoming normal, understood as the average of the performance, but in promoting the development of the human potential for the achievement of the person's autonomy, growth and full participation in the society life. This branch of pedagogy aims at searching for the cause or the elements of uneasiness, deviance and marginality hindering the full development of the human potentialities in subjects in whom the meaning of life is compromised. Special Pedagogy aims at the enhancement of the educational potential of every person, through the forms of integration and cognitive, social, emotional and relational recovery. Among the "fathers" of special pedagogy we cannot but mention some of them like Séguin, Decroly, De Sanctis and Montessori.

*Itard J. M. G.*

It is precisely with Itard (1975-1938) that Special Pedagogy was born, since he noticed the opportunity and the need to educate the individual also in the presence of a severe disability, in view of a person's adequate mental and physical growth. Itard argues that an educational work can resolve functional and non-organic deficits, trusting in the effectiveness of the relationship and of the social context. Itard's pedagogical treatment is based primarily on the imitation exercise. The child's imitation faculty educates his organs, skills and stimulates the learning of a word. In one of his works, he develops his great insight that a distinction should be made between congenital handicap, due to organic lesions, and that one resulting from prolonged isolation or, as we would say today, from social and cultural deprivation (Itard, 2007).

*Séguin E.*

Sèguin (1812-1880) supports the importance of an education of the senses for the enrichment of the intellectual development. The scholar uses music in the treatment of children with mental retardation: a series of rhythmic exercises can educate the senses, the coordination of gestures and movements, voice, phonatory organs and emotional control

*Decroly O.*

Decroly focuses on the Global Method, that is, the educational intervention with "irregular children". The global method respects the globality of the person being educated, his global and unitary way of learning, hence the global teaching mode of the educator. Therefore, it needs to start from the child's centers of interest to generate the motivation to learning. The scholar sees a close connection between motor- sense and emotional development. Decroly starts from the globality of the languages expressed by the child; he stresses that the child is both a biological, psychological (structuring all the emotions, feelings and affections) and social (product and producer of social relationships) being. In his essay, the author attaches big importance to the education of feelings, behavior and will; furthermore, he observes the importance of the interaction between different professional figures of reference for the person: teachers, assistants, nurses, doctors and family (Decroly, 1925).

*De Sanctis S.*

De Sanctis (1962-1935) founded the kindergartens – school for children with mental retardation, by focusing on the welcoming and the organization of the spaces. A better understanding of the students includes a "Biographical card" of the subject, developed during the school path, which provides for the appropriate preparation of the teachers for children with deficits (the current supporting teachers). In particular, De Sanctis dealt with children with language disorders and proposed the creation of a special school for children with the phonic-articulatory expression disorders.

*Montessori M. M.*

With Maria Montessori (1970-1952) you get to what can be considered a work on the observation for grasping, discriminating, discerning from the elements it detects. The term normalization, used by Montessori, indicates a spontaneous rediscovery of curiosity, inventiveness and creativity. According to Montessori, educating means helping the child take advantage of the power of self-educating that everybody holds (Montessori, 1950; 1952). Her method starts from children with psychological problems and extends to the study of the education of non-disabled people. This kind of pedagogical idea has the object of observing not only the child himself, but also discovering the child in his spontaneity and authenticity in an environment designed for him, in which he could act spontaneously; so everything has to be designed and adapted to the needs of development, the appropriate educational interventions are made with specially created and unstructured materials.

**The new perspective in Special Pedagogy**

The new perspective of Special Pedagogy moves from new a terminology, abandoning the terms Handicap and Integration and progressively using those of Disability and Social Inclusion. The socio-cultural and pedagogical development leads to a new vision of disability, focusing on every individual's potentialities. The new international classification (ICF, 2001) is no longer focused on the disability, but on every individual's resource, then on his potentialities.

*The enhancement of every kind of diversity and the life project*

The new concept of educational culture is aimed at the enhancement of every diversity to support every individual's development and growth process. The object of investigation is the person, in his entirety and in his multidimensional system of relationships. The aim is to discovery the potentialities of the individuals in their way of dealing with the life environment: every person has resources and abilities that need to be discovered so that they may develop and manifest themselves. The educational interventions must be designed to

make the subject able to acquire self-consciousness, through the development of his potentialities referred to the socio-cognitive, emotional and affective dimensions. This is the prerequisite for the realization of the personal life project, understood as the need to live, to make sense to existence in order to self-design or self-choose independently through one's own identity.

The elaboration of the life project is multidimensional as it includes all the aspects of the subject's life: the familiar, school, educational, employment and social aspects (Resico, 2005). The current epistemological and pedagogical models are inspired by a clear, positive, and realistic vision of all the subject's expectations in the design of their own lives.

*The epistemology of Special Pedagogy*

"Special Epistemology" aims at discovering the special needs by identifying strategies to enhance learning in view of an effective school and social inclusion, avoiding the creation of special places separated from the experienced contexts. In a disability there may be disorders that affect different areas of the cognitive, psychomotor or affective-relational development. The working method involves a number of interventions and of subjects, and is intended to support the student in carrying out his project of life according to an experimental approach, always ready to reshape itself and adapt to the special needs, but by always preserving the consistency with the educational and learning process of the students with disabilities.

*The Research-Action*

Pedagogical Science is the result of operations of thought and knowledge. Knowledge opens up to new perspectives in a continuum of experiences and research. School abandons the idea of a purely notional place to acquire the value of research and investigation through the essential knowledge and the fundamental nuclei of the study disciplines. In this context, the disciplines allow learning about the world from different points of view and see learning as a means of knowledge and understanding of reality. Knowledge assumes the meaning of active process and personal research, in order to search for possible (but not definitive) solutions. In this perspective, the learning educational environments facilitating the achievement of the educational success, attaching strategic value to the disciplines and to the curriculum structuring, are preferred. Lewin, in a social perspective, proposes an innovation in the research method and process and discovered that every social action becomes a cognitive process involving subjects in the research process. Research process divided into four phases: planning, action, observation and reflection (Trombetta & Rosiello, 2000).

*School: a place of Experimental Didactics and Research Laboratory*

Nowadays, in this perspective, school assumes the characters of research and experimentation laboratory in the daily practice of the activities. In the P.D n. 275/99, in its art. 6, it's possible to recognize the value of research in the education field by providing that ... school institutions exercise the autonomy of research, experimentation and development by taking into account the needs of the cultural, social and economic context of the local realities... with special attention to the educational planning, the evaluative research, the training and the upgrading of the cultural and professional school staff, and the use and promotion of new information and communication technologies .

The school community can be democratic in producing, spreading and exchanging cultural initiatives and research, also in a logic of network organization. Continuous research helps improve the quality of processes and products, through the innovation of the models.

**Develop a System of Inclusive Didactics**

Towards inclusive didactics

The integration of students with disabilities, more than thirty years after the entry into force of law n. 517/1977, is an evolving process today, which undoubtedly has brought great innovations in the Italian school to make it more inclusive, but that still needs to address some critical issues. We often observe an "apparent" integration which makes use of a static learning culture that is not always adapted to the students ' needs. The organizational and didactic difficulties are often huge and do not always allow for the development of the human resources. Learning is strongly linked with the organization of the activities, to the way the objectives set are achieved in the didactics. There can be no denying that in school reality, the educational planning and programming of the disabled students are often assigned exclusively to the teacher for the supporting activities who, unfortunately, finds himself alone in carrying out a project (that is often utopian), shared only apparently by the other teachers of the Class Council who feel strangers rather than responsible of the educational process of the students. The M.C. n. 250/85 states that the teacher for the supporting activities, those of the class council and the whole school community are co-responsible for the integration of students with disabilities. But probably, it is the specialized teacher who needs integration prior to the students. There is an established practice that doesn't open itself up to changes, to the fundamental awareness of the need to collaborate, participate and promote synergistically the educational actions designed in the student's educational plan. Any educational plan must necessarily aim at planned objectives, albeit sometimes differentiated, without completely excluding the student from the activities of the group class. Responding to specific organizational and educational needs, the programming should be able to create situations promoting integration.

The many variables acting on the school context necessarily impose the implementation of strategies that, in the complexity and uncertainty of the teaching learning-situations, can give reference points for adopting appropriate and adequate measures especially when it comes to disabled students. To consider the various dimensions of the disabled person, closely interconnected and mutually complementary, is a fundamental aspect to be taken into account in the design of the didactic and organizational methodology to be adopted (Carlini, 2012).

It needs a synergy of objectives in which didactics, organization, family-school cooperation and life project must accompany the child from his birth to his adulthood, in order to achieve the development of his contextualized skills.

The guidelines of the Ministry of Education (2009), in fact, invite us to design interventions that take into account the different styles, cognitive aptitudes with a synergy between the objectives of all the subjects involved, by making use of the personalized didactics according to the real needs of the students; but these interventions must know how to give importance to the development of learning by socializing, by developing interpersonal relationship and communication.

Raising awareness in all the school actors is a key element to develop a training course that lasts a lifetime, and that guarantees the enhancement, support and recognition of diversity of every individual. It is necessary to use methodologies that go beyond the traditional didactics, methodologies that are able to integrate knowledge with abilities, to turn them into skills (Di Palma et al, 2016).

For methodology we mean the set of factors and means that have been concretely and experimentally considered as valid, and which could therefore ensure the achievement of the objectives.

For strategy, instead, we mean a targeted educational action project in reference to specific goals.

An appropriate strategy is based on an appropriate methodology, which should improve the level of inclusiveness of the class, since the concept of inclusion involves not only the student with a disability but the whole ecosystem surrounding him, and must respond to the obvious and evident needs for justice and equity of our educational system (Nussbaum, 2008).
The guidelines for the curriculum highlight the need to enhance the differences and develop educational practices based on the whole class group (Fioroni, 2007). Ianes defines as "Decalogue of methodological dimensions" a series of aspects that are outlined specifically in Fioroni's guidelines; they aim at inclusiveness and are aspects that must be turned into operational strategies (Ianes & Tortello, 1999; Ianes, 2005):

1) The helping relationship (between teacher-student and student-student to feel "recognized, supported and valued");
2) The democratic participation in the decisions-making process (it is important that everybody feels co-participant in the process of common decisions-making, providing his contribution with motivation);
3) The rituality and structuring (an environment structured by precise rules and rituals makes the student calmer and more conscious of his responsibilities);
4) The spaces and times (a neat and welcoming space allows for free expression, intimacy and sociability, as well as more extended and personalized times allow growing in a safe and serene way);
5) The student's experiences and knowledge (the enhancement of previous experiences lived by individual students is a pedagogical obligation needed for the building of future knowledge);
6) The problematizing, exploration and research (the contextualized problem solving facilitates long-term learning, and concreteness allows for the development of meta-cognitive skills);
7) The collaboration and interaction between peers (the quality of learning and of the integration -inclusion processes is directly proportional to the degree of interaction and/or cooperation within the group);
8) The meta-cognitive awareness (it is important to operate on self-awareness, on self-regulation and on the success-failure relationship, so that the student can learn significantly);
9) The laboratories (the operativeness, supported by the communication and the relationship, satisfies the user and prompts him to produce shared and effective works);
10The documentation (the collection of materials and documents of the school path is relevant to the dissemination of good practices).
In a laboratorial approach, the communication between teacher and student becomes horizontal, open to the interchange of ideas, to the multiplicity of viewpoints and solution hypotheses, supported by continuous self-learning and self-assessments (Carlini, 2012).

*The curriculum and the life project*
The training path of the students, especially is disabled, requires an opening of horizons which are not limited solely to the didactic programming through the Individual Educational Plan (IEP), but that must consider an openness to all the student's life realities.
This wider dimension is defined as "life project", and is precisely that "farsighted look" required by the student in difficulty. Orienting the Individualized Educational Plan towards the Life Project means concretely not only believing in lifelong learning, but also defining goals directly related to the skills required by adult life, using teaching-learning means that are more and more "adult", and promoting the development of the self-defining/self-designing development of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-efficacy, etc. (Canevaro & Ianes, 2002; Ianes, 2005).

As pointed out, also the guidelines for the school integration of students with disabilities (Ministry of Education, 2009), the educational setting assumes a value of strong educational intentionality, which must necessarily be designed to promote the development of new socio-emotional skills both at cognitive and socio-affective level.

It needs to finalize the interventions in order to achieve meta-cognitive skills, which represent a learning tool for every student in his specific nature. The focus is no longer on the results but on how the skills are acquired, i.e. the processes that allow the student to create a wealth of capability that, if contextualized, turns into genuine and long-lasting skills.

The curriculum must be characterized by two key concepts: transversatility and continuity. Transversality is understood as the ability to cope with the difficulties of a complex society, thus as the most suitable educational transversality to the mind of today' students; continuity is understood as the ability to design a path lasting for a whole lifetime.

The life project is an added value that looks ahead, is projected towards a better quality of life according to the conceptual model of the ICF (International classification of functioning).

**Methodologies of Inclusive Didactics in the School System**

The table below shows some of the didactic methodologies used for the inclusion of SEN students (Carlini, 2012; Halvorsen and Nearly, 2001).

**Table 1: Methodologies of Inclusive Didactics**

| METHODOLOGIES AND DIDACTICS | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK | APPLICATION IN EDUCATION |
|---|---|---|
| Metacognitive didactics | Cognitivism | Meta-cognitive didactics aims to make the student aware of his cognitive processes, and put him in the position to control, choose and improve them. For this purpose, the teacher can choose activities with problematic situations that encourage discussion, exchanges of views and possible solutions, and that stimulate reflection on the steps to take to solve the problem. |
| Didactics for integration | Gestalt psychology; Systemic Theory of communication (Palo Alto). Institutional pedagogy (authors of reference: P. Zanelli; and A. | Didactics for integration is an educational work focused on the organization of the background elements, in order to support the processes of cognitive self-organization of the subjects being trained. The integrator background can be defined as a connecting structure, a container of experiences or rather a strategy that allows connecting and interwining different skills and paths |
| Didactic laboratories | Pedagogical activism | Through the didactic laboratories, the teacher acts as a learning facilitator and stimulator, helps students discover knowledge through the action-research method. In this way the student becomes an active knowledge builder, according to his own learning style and by using his different intelligences. |

Source: Our Elaboration

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