

# **Inclusion dans les Cités de l'Éducation**

Défis, Cultures et Ressources

# **Inclusion in the Cities of Education**

Challenges, Cultures and Resources

Jean Pierre Pourtois, Anna Pileri, Nicola Giacomini,  
Roberta Caldin, Clara Silva (Eds.)



CONNECTIONS  
DANS LES CONTEXTES  
D'APPRENDISSAGE

CONNECTIONS  
IN LEARNING  
CONTEXTS

**FrancoAngeli**

# ■ CONNEXIONS ■ DANS LES CONTEXTES ■ ■ D'APPRENDISSAGE ■

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La collection "Connexions dans les contextes d'apprentissage" se consacre à la recherche et à l'étude de l'apprentissage ainsi que les connexions nécessaires pour le soutenir sur base d'actions partagées et coordonnées. La référence à la perspective systémique-écologique, suivant le modèle bio-psycho-social de la CIF (OMS, 2001), est donc privilégiée.

Cette collection met l'accent sur le rôle essentiel que joue la création de liens lorsqu'il s'agit de répondre aux besoins des élèves avec handicap et de leurs familles. Ces liens dépendent d'enseignants compétents et passionnés. Ils sont essentiels pour favoriser l'apprentissage individualisé et personnalisé, de même que pour guider les trajectoires de vie. En effet, les enseignants vont se montrer capables d'accompagner tous les élèves, de favoriser la réussite sociale, de soutenir les familles et de créer un environnement dans lequel tous les élèves peuvent s'épanouir, quelles que soient leurs capacités.

La collection accueillera aussi des travaux de recherches – de niveaux national et international - axés sur l'expérience d'apprentissage dans des contextes allant de la crèche à l'école secondaire. Dans ces contextes, il s'agit de la mise en oeuvre d'actions de planification et d'enseignement destinées à tous les garçons et à toutes les filles, à tous les élèves, est devenue incontournable, de façon à prêter attention à la synergie entre la participation spécifique et leur réussite, dans l'apprentissage, dans la vie présente et future.

Les thèmes couverts sont inévitablement interreliés : de la formation, des perceptions et des compétences des opérateurs scolaires (directeurs, enseignants, éducateurs) avec la collégialité, en utilisant outils multiples et innovants, y compris des outils technologiques. Cette collection porte également attention à l'impulsion inévitable à donner à l'apprentissage pour tous, grâce aux outils multiples et innovants, y compris des outils technologiques. L'espace offert permettra d'entrer en résonance avec de multiples réflexions scientifiques, des recherches et des projets centrés sur la pertinence et l'engagement didactico-pédagogique.

Concernant tous les élèves et ceux en situation de handicap, différents types de connexions s'avèrent nécessaires, afin d'assurer la coordination des actions structurées dans le cadre des projets individualisés et personnalisés. La planification et l'accompagnement de projet de vie apparaissent indispensables. De plus, ces connexions influencent les actions de soins et de réadaptation, les services à la personne, les services à la personne, les initiatives de participation sociale, ainsi que le soutien en matière de collaboration écolesfamilles- communautés.

Chaque volume sera soumis aux membres du Comité scientifique international. Il sera examiné par les pairs et fera l'objet d'un arbitrage en "double aveugle". La Direction accepte les propositions de publication en effectuant une première sélection.

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*En hommage à Huguette Desmet, son engagement  
pédagogique reste pour nous une source précieuse d'inspiration.*



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# **Introduction à l'ouvrage: Quelles ressources inclusives pour les sociétés d'aujourd'hui ?**

*Jean-Pierre Pourtois<sup>1</sup>, Anna Pileri<sup>2</sup>, Nicola Giacopini<sup>3</sup>,  
Roberta Caldin<sup>4</sup>, Clara Silva<sup>5</sup>*

Dans une époque où les sociétés contemporaines aspirent à plus d'équité, l'inclusion dans le champ éducatif s'impose comme un impératif éthique et politique. L'école, espace de socialisation mais aussi miroir des inégalités, est aujourd'hui appelée à devenir un vecteur de réussite et de justice sociale (Benvenuto, 2022). Pourtant, malgré les perspectives progressistes, l'école demeure souvent sélective et peu inclusive, en particulier pour les élèves issus de milieux populaires, avec handicaps, ou issus de l'immigration (Pileri, Caldin, Gremion, 2021). L'école est plus que jamais appelée à jouer un rôle central dans la construction d'une société inclusive. Loin d'être une entité isolée, elle reflète, perpétue ou transforme les dynamiques sociales qui la traversent. Ainsi, penser l'inclusion scolaire, c'est interroger les fondements mêmes de la Cité : ses valeurs, ses hiérarchies, ses exclusions et ses espérances (Pourtois et Desmet, 2013; 2017; Pileri, Prévôt, Silva, 2021; Francis, Giacopini, Silva, 2023).

Ce livre<sup>6</sup> propose une réflexion approfondie sur les défis inclusifs ren-

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6. Les contributions ont été présentées par les auteurs dans le cadre de la 19<sup>ème</sup> Édition du Congrès AIFREF tenu à Venezia Mestre (Italie) et organisé par l'IUSVE (Institut

contrés dans la Cité de l'Éducation. Il l soulève les questions politiques éducatives, les pratiques pédagogiques, les représentations sociales et les mécanismes institutionnels (dans les contextes familial, éducatif, scolaire, social, sanitaire et professionnel) qui influencent la capacité du système éducatif à répondre aux besoins de tous les apprenants, quelles que soient leurs origines, capacités ou trajectoires de vie.

En croisant les regards de chercheurs, d'enseignants, d'élèves et d'acteurs de terrain, cet ouvrage entend non seulement dresser un état des lieux, mais aussi proposer des pistes d'action concrètes pour faire de l'inclusion une réalité partagée. Car il ne s'agit pas simplement d'accueillir la différence, mais de repenser en profondeur le cadre éducatif pour qu'il devienne véritablement accessible, participatif et transformateur.

Cependant, penser l'inclusion ne peut se limiter aux murs de l'école. Les défis sont multiples et s'enracinent bien au-delà de la salle de classe. Sur le plan social, les inégalités persistantes – qu'elles soient économiques, culturelles ou territoriales – freinent l'accès équitable à une éducation de qualité. Les élèves issus de milieux marginalisés, en situation de handicap ou vivant dans des contextes précaires, rencontrent des obstacles souvent invisibles mais profondément structurants. Il s'agit d'assurer "le plein développement du potentiel humain, la dignité, l'estime de soi" (Art. 24, ONU, 2006) parce que personne ne peut être exclu, laissé derrière.

L'inclusion n'est pas une simple stratégie d'intégration des élèves avec des besoins spécifiques dans un système éducatif inchangé. Elle engage une transformation structurelle et culturelle, exigeant que l'école s'adapte à tous les élèves plutôt que de contraindre les élèves à s'adapter à l'école. C'est un changement de paradigme qui remet en cause les logiques sélectives encore très présentes, notamment dans les systèmes éducatifs européens.

Les défis inclusifs ne se limitent pas aux pratiques pédagogiques : ils s'étendent aux structures sociales. Les inégalités économiques, territoriales et symboliques façonnent profondément les parcours scolaires. Bourdieu et Passeron (1970) ont montré combien l'école peut reproduire les hiérarchies sociales sous couvert de méritocratie. Aujourd'hui encore, les travaux de

Universitaire Salésien de Vénice Mestre) et par le Département des Sciences de l'Éducation « Giovanni Maria Bertin » de l'Université de Bologne, co-présidé par les Proff. Nicola Giacopini, Roberta Caldin et Anna Pileri. Nous tenons à remercier Events s.r.l. (Senigallia, Italie), en particulier Chiara Gallinaro, Anna Gabbianelli et Gabriele Moroni, pour leur précieuse contribution à la réalisation du 19ème Congrès AIFREF et pour le précieux travail de secrétariat avec les auteurs de l'ouvrage. Nous tenons à souligner que le chapitre 5, « Défis numériques », compte moins de contributions que les autres chapitres car certaines propositions – soumises au Congrès international – ayant été publiées dans les revues RIEF Italienne et RIEF Internazionale.

Meuret (2022) soulignent les effets délétères de la ségrégation scolaire, notamment dans les quartiers urbains sensibles.

Le rôle des familles est tout aussi crucial. Loin d'être de simples « clients » de l'école, elles en sont des partenaires essentiels. Mais cette collaboration est souvent entravée par un écart entre les codes scolaires et les cultures familiales (Gigli, 2016). En outre, la fracture numérique aggrave ces écarts : l'accès aux outils technologiques n'est ni uniforme, ni neutre.

L'école, de son côté, fait face à des tensions internes. D'un côté, les enseignants sont de plus en plus sensibilisés à la diversité à “une éthique de la reconnaissance” (Plaisance, 2025); de l'autre, ils se heurtent à un manque de formation spécifique et à une pression croissante liée à la performance. Comme le rappellent Gardou (2010), l'inclusion réelle suppose un changement systémique, bien au-delà des ajustements superficiels.

Les technologies éducatives représentent un terrain ambivalent : si elles permettent des adaptations individualisées, elles peuvent aussi renforcer les inégalités d'apprentissage en fonction des compétences numériques. L'inclusion numérique n'est donc pas un acquis, mais un défi à construire collectivement.

Il est indispensable de questionner les représentations sociales véhiculées par le système éducatif : qu'est-ce qu'un élève « normal » ? Quelles sont les formes de réussite valorisées ? L'inclusion, selon Ebersold (2017), ne peut se réduire à intégrer l'Autre dans un moule préétabli, mais implique de transformer les normes elles-mêmes.

- *Des inégalités sociales persistantes*

L'éducation reste l'un des lieux privilégiés de la reproduction sociale. Les chances de réussite scolaire demeurent étroitement liées à l'origine sociale, au capital culturel familial et au lieu de résidence. Cette reproduction est subtile : elle opère à travers les attentes implicites de l'école, les codes linguistiques valorisés, les normes comportementales tacites.

La question territoriale est également essentielle. Les inégalités géographiques renforcent les disparités scolaires : établissements ghettos, manque de ressources, absentéisme enseignant, climat scolaire dégradé. Dans certains quartiers, l'école devient un lieu de relégation plus que d'émancipation, ce qui pose la question du rôle politique de l'éducation dans une démocratie.

- *La complexité du partenariat école-familles-cité*

Si la coéducation est largement valorisée dans les textes officiels, sa mise en œuvre se heurte à de nombreux obstacles. Les familles issues de l'immigration ou des milieux populaires se trouvent souvent en décalage

avec les attentes scolaires, ce qui peut être perçu comme un désengagement, alors qu'il s'agit parfois d'un sentiment d'exclusion ou d'incompétence intériorisée (Moro, 2001).

Par ailleurs, l'émergence de nouvelles configurations familiales, la précarité et l'instabilité socio-économique rendent difficile une implication régulière et « conforme » aux attentes institutionnelles. L'école, pour être inclusive, doit ainsi apprendre à composer avec la diversité des contextes familiaux et reconnaître les savoirs parentaux dans toute leur hétérogénéité. Dans un monde où les modèles familiaux se diversifient (monoparentalité, familles recomposées, précarité résidentielle), la coéducation ne peut s'appuyer sur un modèle unique. Il est nécessaire de reconnaître la légitimité des formes diverses d'engagement parental, tout en renforçant l'accessibilité des espaces de dialogue entre l'école et les familles (Milani, 2018; Caldin et Giaconi, 2021).

- *Des enseignants en tension*

L'inclusion repose en grande partie sur les enseignants, mais ceux-ci sont souvent insuffisamment formés pour répondre à la diversité des besoins (Corbion, 2020; Laville et Saillot, 2021). La formation initiale reste centrée sur une pédagogie standardisée, laissant peu de place à la différenciation, à la gestion de l'hétérogénéité, ou à la compréhension des difficultés de l'apprentissage.

Les professionnels de l'éducation expriment également un sentiment d'isolement et « solitude professionnelle » (Pileri, 2024), de surcharge, voire de culpabilité face à leur incapacité à « tout gérer ». Cette tension peut mener à un épuisement professionnel (burn-out) et à un rejet implicite de l'idéal inclusif, pourtant affiché comme horizon éthique.

L'inclusion ne peut se faire sans les enseignants, mais elle ne peut reposer uniquement sur eux. Trop souvent, ils sont confrontés à un double paradoxe : on leur demande d'individualiser leur pédagogie dans un cadre collectif contraint, tout en répondant à des injonctions de performance standardisée.

La formation continue, pourtant cruciale (Albero, 2010), reste largement insuffisante. Elle devrait permettre de développer des compétences didactiques adaptées à la diversité des élèves, mais aussi des ressources émotionnelles, relationnelles et éthiques pour accompagner cette mutation (Dugas, 2020).

- *L'ambivalence du numérique*

Les outils numériques sont souvent présentés comme des leviers d'accessibilité et de personnalisation de l'apprentissage. Ils permettent, en

théorie, de mieux répondre aux besoins spécifiques des élèves en situation de handicap ou de faciliter la différenciation pédagogique (Dainese, 2016). Toutefois, leur usage intensifie aussi les inégalités d'accès, de compétences, et de capital numérique.

La fracture numérique n'est pas seulement technique, elle est aussi culturelle. Tous les élèves ne disposent pas des mêmes capacités à transformer l'information en savoir, à s'auto-réguler, ou à développer une posture réflexive dans les environnements numériques (Fenoglio, 2021). L'école inclusive doit donc intégrer une véritable éducation critique au numérique.

Le numérique éducatif inclusif doit donc être pensé non comme une panacée technologique, mais comme un dispositif culturellement situé, nécessitant médiation, accompagnement et inclusion dans des projets pédagogiques cohérents (Pino et Francis, 2023).

- *Repenser les normes pour la réussite*

Au fond, l'inclusion suppose une remise en cause de la norme dominante : qu'est-ce qu'un bon élève ? Qu'est-ce qu'un parcours réussi ? Une bonne classe ? Une évaluation juste ? L'évaluation, les curricula, les rythmes, les modalités d'interaction en classe sont autant de dispositifs qui véhiculent des normes souvent implicites et excluantes.

Ebersold (2017) insiste sur la nécessité de passer d'une logique de normalisation à une logique d'accessibilité universelle, c'est-à-dire de penser l'environnement éducatif non pas en fonction d'un élève standard, mais comme devant être modulable en fonction des besoins de chacun. L'auteur plaide pour une accessibilité universelle, qui ne consiste pas à abaisser les exigences, mais à diversifier les chemins d'accès au savoir. Il ne s'agit pas d'intégrer l'Autre dans un cadre figé, mais d'ouvrir ce cadre à la négociation, à l'adaptation et à la reconnaissance mutuelle.

Au cœur de la démarche inclusive, il y a un travail de déconstruction des normes dominantes car les systèmes scolaires reposent encore sur des modèles de réussite implicites, souvent étroits et peu ajustés à la pluralité des intelligences et des parcours.

- *Une éthique pour la transformation collective*

Ce livre s'inscrit ainsi dans une perspective critique, engagée et interdisciplinaire. Il vise à mettre en lumière les tensions, les résistances, mais aussi les leviers possibles pour faire de la Cité de l'Éducation un véritable espace de coresponsabilité, d'apprentissage mutuel et de justice sociale. La société dans son ensemble est appelée à repenser ses représentations de la réussite, de la normalité et de la valeur de chaque individu. L'inclusion

éducative ne peut être effective sans un changement culturel profond, qui valorise la diversité comme une richesse et non comme un obstacle à contourner. Cela implique une mobilisation collective, un dialogue constant entre les institutions, les citoyens, et les acteurs éducatifs, pour bâtir une cité où chacun trouve sa place et peut s'épanouir. En croisant les regards des familles, d'experts, de praticiens et d'acteurs de terrain, cet ouvrage plaide pour une éthique de la coéducation fondée sur la reconnaissance, l'équité et la participation.

L'inclusion ne peut être réduite à une série de dispositifs techniques ou compensatoires : elle engage une vision collective du vivre-ensemble, où chaque individu, quelles que soient ses différences, peut contribuer pleinement à la vie de la Cité.

Construire une société inclusive commence par l'école, mais ne s'y limite pas. C'est un chantier collectif, qui exige des ressources, de la volonté politique, et une profonde remise en question des hiérarchies sociales et culturelles qui traversent nos institutions. À travers ce travail, nous espérons ouvrir des pistes de réflexion et d'action pour que *l'émancipation inclusive* devienne, enfin, une réalité partagée, en sachant que rien ne se construit sans une passion collective, celle du partage des ressources afin de créer une véritable *éducation émancipatrice*.

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# **Chapitre 1. Défis dans les familles**



## **1.1. Des parents acteurs d'inclusion : école, quartier, société**

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### **1.1.1. Introduction**

La présente communication rend compte d'une recherche qui s'intéresse à l'initiative d'un groupe de parents d'élèves élus d'une école publique française classée Réseau d'Education Prioritaire (REP). Ces mères et pères, issus en très grande majorité de l'immigration, construisent une relation de coéducation entre école, tiers éducatif et familles les plus à distance du système scolaire. En mobilisant les ressources du territoire, dans un esprit de cité de l'éducation, le collectif de parents tente de défier les déterminismes sociaux, économiques et culturels au service de la réussite éducative d'élèves en fragilité scolaire.

L'action des parents d'élèves a débuté avant la période de crise sanitaire, s'est poursuivie pendant les périodes de confinement et continue à se développer à l'heure actuelle. Dans une perspective de recherche-action, notre travail étudie les conditions de déploiement de cette démarche co-éducative. Pour la présente contribution, nous souhaitons rendre compte de la manière dont l'action du groupe contribue à favoriser l'inclusion des élèves par le déploiement de la continuité éducative, et permet l'implication d'autres acteurs dans le projet. La recherche s'appuie sur un recueil de données obtenues grâce à une observation participante menée lors des différentes réunions du groupe et des entretiens réalisés auprès de l'ensemble des acteurs impliqués auprès de l'ensemble des acteurs impliqués.

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Du point de vue des résultats, on peut remarquer qu'à l'opposé d'un modèle où l'école est centrale et avec laquelle les autres acteurs ont à collaborer, le groupe de parents étudié construit progressivement un modèle où chaque acteur éducatif occupe une place équitable autour de l'enfant. En devenant une sorte d'acteur politique sur la scène locale, ce type d'association pragmatique cherche à adapter le fonctionnement des institutions locales aux demandes des usagers. Ce mode d'intervention révèle un fonctionnement plutôt communautaire.

### **1.1.2. Inclure, co-éduquer, faire alliance**

La notion d'inclusion s'organise autour d'une conception systémique de la société où chaque individu s'implique activement dans les diverses composantes de la vie en société visant le bien-être collectif. Dans une société inclusive, tous les individus peuvent réaliser leur potentiel et ont les moyens de participer en tant que membres valorisés, respectés et contribuant à leur communauté et à la société. Au regard des différentes définitions de la notion, cinq mots clés caractérisent l'inclusion: la reconnaissance valorisée, les opportunités de développement humain, l'implication et l'engagement, la proximité, le bien-être matériel. Selon l'Unesco (2008), tendre vers une société inclusive constitue le fondement même du développement social durable. Rapporté au domaine scolaire, une «école pour tous» fournit à tous les élèves les compétences les mettant en capacité de s'affirmer en tant qu'acteur de leur devenir et de participer à la construction de la société. Elle doit développer un sens de la communauté et un soutien mutuel dans la recherche du succès pour tous (Stainback, Stainback, 1990). Sa définition dépasse largement la question de la scolarisation des enfants à besoins spécifiques, quels que soient ces derniers.

L'approche systémique caractérise aussi les modèles actuels du développement de l'enfant (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 ; Pourtois, Desmet, 2012). L'éducation d'un enfant ne peut pas être le fait d'une seule personne ou institution. C'est un ensemble social qui permet de répondre, en complémentarité, à ses besoins de développement. Dans le droit fil de cette approche, la notion de co-éducation fait son apparition au début du 21<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Elle renvoie à une forme d'engagement mutuel des éducateurs autour de valeurs partagées, d'objectifs communs, au service de l'enfant. Elle est une manière d'agir, un mode de relation, un processus qui reconnaît les expertises de tous les acteurs éducatifs et favorise, par leur mutualisation, le développement de l'enfant. Humbeeck et ses collaborateurs (2006, p. 653) en donnent la définition suivante: « L'enseignant et le parent coédu-

quent lorsque l'un et l'autre prennent en considération les besoins fondamentaux du développement psychosocial de l'enfant tout en préservant les savoirs respectifs (implicites ou explicites) et les champs d'enseignement (la famille ou l'école) de chacun ». Plus récemment, l'institution scolaire a consacré la notion d'« alliances éducatives ». Ces alliances sont le résultat de liaisons qui s'opèrent entre l'institution scolaire et des espaces éducatifs qui intègrent d'autres formes de socialisations éducatives ou socioculturelles que l'école: dispositifs à destination de publics spécifiques, accueils périscolaires, espaces d'animation et d'éducation populaire, structures socio-éducatives, etc. Elles sont, là aussi, la traduction d'une vision de l'école moins fermée sur elle-même et qui accepte de ne plus avoir le monopole de la diffusion des savoirs et de l'encadrement des jeunes.

Inclusion, co-éducation, alliances renvoient à une vision ouverte de la société où les citoyens ont tous leur part à jouer, ensemble, au profit de tous. L'école n'est plus un espace protégé du monde, ses frontières s'estompent, car « (...) les sociétés ouvertes suscitent des écoles ouvertes » (Rayou, 2015, p. 10).

Quand bien même ce vocable est tombé dans l'usage courant, utilisé aussi bien par les professionnels de l'éducation que par les parents, il est d'abord un vocabulaire produit et défini par les institutions, notamment scolaires. Dans le système éducatif français, suite à la loi du 11 février 2005 sur le handicap, nous assistons depuis 20 ans à une multiplication de nouvelles notions et concepts («élèves à besoins éducatifs particuliers (EBEP)», «inclusion», «accessibilité», etc.), qui sonnent comme des injonctions institutionnelles dans le contexte de la mise en place d'une «école inclusive». Les textes officiels insistent aussi beaucoup sur le rôle des parents. Que l'Éducation Nationale et les familles coopèrent est un impératif qui se discute peu: «Leur participation (celle des parents) à l'action éducative est déterminante dans la réussite des élèves, en particulier des plus fragiles. L'approfondissement du dialogue avec les équipes éducatives, fondé sur le respect mutuel, contribue également à la qualité du climat scolaire et à la promotion de la coéducation» (MEN, 2013). Par ailleurs, ces notions se traduisent par la démultiplication des dispositifs (PRE, PEL, Cité éducative, etc.). Elles sont devenues de véritables catégories d'action publique, au sens où elles constituent l'objectivation institutionnelle de problèmes qui s'imposent comme cruciaux (inégalités, décrochage...) et à propos desquels des interventions légitimes des pouvoirs publics doivent être mises en œuvre. Ce faisant, ces catégories d'intervention servent «la mise en forme institutionnelle» de l'éducation. C'est à partir d'elles que les populations (d'élèves, de parents) sont classées et traitées, avec des effets matériels (octroi de ressources, proposition de dispositifs) et symboliques (reconnais-

sance ou assignation d'un statut). A ce titre, plusieurs risques peuvent être encourus. D'abord, plutôt que de viser l'action, les dispositifs peuvent avoir tendance à viser la coordination des actions. Ils deviennent ainsi des dispositifs autotéliques, c'est à dire des dispositifs qui fonctionnent d'abord pour eux-mêmes (Moignard, Sauvadet, 2016). Avec la promotion des logiques d'alliances, le problème majeur devient la coordination des acteurs sans considérer les tensions, les divisions sociales, morales du travail qui alimentent ces organisations. Ensuite, en imposant la norme de relation qu'est la coéducation, la figure du «mauvais parent» émerge au risque d'essentialiser les familles sur le seul fait qu'elles n'entrent pas dans cette forme de collaboration. Encore, la doxa autour de l'inclusion pourrait faire reposer sur l'individu la responsabilité de sa réussite dès lors que le système met en place une réponse sur ce qui fait problème. Clairement, la volonté de faire ensemble, affichée et promue par l'institution, ne suffit pas. Elle conduit encore trop souvent à une division du travail éducatif et à peu d'espaces d'interventions réellement partagées. «Les rôles et les responsabilités dévolus à chacun, ou encore, les règles à suivre, sont autant d'aspects d'une relation plus encadrée et codifiée par les normes et le pouvoir de l'institution que construite dans la réciprocité» (Périer, 2020, p. 22).

Avec la volonté d'inclure et de coopérer, l'école n'en conserve pas moins le monopole de la définition légitime des formes et des contenus. Par-là, avec une ouverture sous contrôle, elle confirme un octroi limité du pouvoir des parents sur l'école et leurs propres enfants. Même si les textes ventent les parents associés, voire reconnus, ceux-ci sont toujours enjoint à collaborer dans le respect d'organisations instituées, de périmètres prédéfinis, de rôles d'acteurs préétablis. Comment un tel mode de coopération peut-il contribuer à transformer les rapports entre les différents acteurs? Pensée et posée par l'institution, cette coopération permet-elle la constitution d'une communauté éducative soudée autour d'intérêts communs? Une approche consiste à envisager qu'il existe, à l'image de ce qui s'observe dans l'espace public, une diversité de formes d'engagement des acteurs (Ion, 2001), différentes manières de «faire ensemble». Dès lors, il y aurait intérêt à mieux comprendre la façon dont les parents souhaitent s'impliquer dans la scolarité de leurs enfants, les ressources et principes qu'ils mobilisent dans leur action et leur justification. En effet, que savons-nous à propos du mode de relation que les parents, à l'initiative de dynamiques qui visent l'inclusion de leurs enfants, cherchent à développer avec les autres acteurs éducatifs? Ces pratiques sont-elles en concordance avec le modèle dominant ou des écarts peuvent-ils être décelés, porteurs de leviers pour échafauder des alternatives au modèle monopolistique institutionnel?

### **1.1.3. Et les parents dans tout ça?**

L'étude porte sur l'action d'un groupe de mères issues de l'immigration, musulmanes en très grande majorité, vivant dans un quartier prioritaire de la politique de la ville d'une ville moyenne de 50000 habitants de l'est de la France. Impliquées pour l'école, au sein de l'école et autour de l'école (habitants du quartier, associations, collectivités territoriales), elles définissent, au travers de leur engagement, de nouvelles règles de relation entre acteurs éducatifs et décisionnaires du champ.

Le groupe a été suivi sur trois années de fonctionnement de 2019 à 2022. Le matériau étudié est constitué d'entretiens collectifs (deux focus group) et d'entretiens individuels (cinq) menés à la fois au début et à la fin de la période d'observation du groupe.

La méthode de traitement des données retenue a conduit à analyser les verbatims des entretiens à l'aune de quatre registres : les valeurs qui sous-tendent le projet initié par le groupe de parents, les finalités qu'il vise, la place et le rôle des acteurs impliqués et la configuration du territoire d'action sur lequel il se déploie.

Une analyse de contenu a été réalisée manuellement à partir du corpus de données recueillies. Chaque verbatim a d'abord été examiné indépendamment des autres selon les quatre registres définis. Une lecture transversale a ensuite permis d'identifier, à chaque période de collecte, les caractéristiques saillantes de l'action réalisée. Enfin, une lecture longitudinale a conduit à apprécier les constantes et les évolutions du mode de coopération mis en œuvre.

### **1.1.4. Un groupe de mères bien singulier**

Les mères fondatrices du groupe de parents étudié ont fait connaissance il y a dix ans environ, à l'occasion de la scolarisation de leur premier enfant à l'école maternelle. Elles étaient entre 4 et 5 à se retrouver à la sortie de l'école et à fréquenter le même centre culturel et social. Deux constats ont fondé leur initiative de constituer un groupe de femmes, actrices dans l'éducation de leurs enfants.

Un constat personnel d'abord: en tant que femmes issues de l'immigration, la majorité étant venue retrouver leur mari en France, beaucoup ont souffert de la méconnaissance du système français, tant à propos de l'éducation des enfants, de leur scolarité que de leur santé. Ecartelées entre la volonté de s'adapter aux règles du nouveau pays et l'incompréhension vis-à-vis de certains principes éducatifs démocratiques en décalage avec l'édu-

cation qu'elles avaient reçue et qui questionnaient leur rôle de parents, ces femmes étaient en manque de repères et de confiance. Concomitamment, les activités partagées au centre culturel et social leur ont progressivement fait prendre conscience qu'elles n'étaient pas que des mères, des femmes aussi, avec des envies et des besoins propres, mais également détentrices de potentialités et de ressources. En se rendant compte que de très nombreuses mères partageaient leurs problématiques et que la mutualisation de leurs compétences permettrait d'améliorer leur quotidien, elles créent un groupe sur un réseau social, intitulé « Partageons tout ». De bouche à oreille, c'est près de 60 femmes qui rejoignent le groupe et participent aujourd'hui activement à ce réseau d'entraide et de solidarité. Deux des fondatrices administrent le site et assurent le rôle de modératrices.

Un constat collectif ensuite: le quartier rencontre de nombreuses difficultés: insécurité aux abords de l'école (trafic de stupéfiants, règlements de compte), bâtiment et mobilier scolaires dégradés, équipement numérique retardé, activités culturelles limitées en raison du coût du déplacement en ville, etc. Le sentiment d'un traitement inégalitaire est profond. Les parents constatent que les conditions minimales requises pour assurer un apprentissage ne sont pas rassemblées, ni pour les enfants, ni pour les enseignants. A cette difficulté s'ajoute celle liée aux spécificités de la population du quartier. Plus de 10% des habitants vivent sous le seuil de pauvreté. 30% des foyers avec au moins un enfant sont monoparentaux. Et à la forte concentration d'habitants immigrés s'ajoute une récente affluence de personnes migrantes pour lesquelles le faible niveau de maîtrise de la langue française accroît encore les difficultés rencontrées, dont spécifiquement celles qui concernent la relation avec l'école. Le groupe de mères étudié décide alors de réagir en s'impliquant à tous les niveaux: alerte des élus sur les conditions de fonctionnement de leur école, soutien des enseignants en assurant un rôle de relais dans le dialogue avec les familles (explication des codes de l'école, médiation), accompagnement des parents migrants (traduction, aide aux démarches administratives, orientation vers les interlocuteurs adaptés). Ainsi naît un engagement qui s'avèrera durable et protéiforme, au service des enfants et, plus largement, de la communauté du quartier.

### **1.1.5. Les valeurs du projet : Egalité et solidarité**

C'est d'abord au nom de l'égalité de chances et de traitement, que le groupe justifie son action. Face à des besoins patents non reconnus ou pris en compte de manière inadaptée, ces parents œuvrent pour que leurs

enfants obtiennent, comme annoncé par l'Education Nationale, les conditions propices à leur apprentissage, épanouissement et expression de leurs potentialités. Ce qu'ils attendent avant tout de leur engagement, c'est que leurs enfants aient leur chance «en tant qu'enfants nés en France, en dehors de toute discrimination liée à leur nom ou physique». Aucun privilège n'est sollicité, seulement «avoir une école de qualité pour tous les enfants quels qu'ils soient». Si la motivation du groupe est nourrie par un sentiment d'injustice vécu au quotidien, celui-ci ne conduit pas à une revendication de prise en compte spécifique. Ces parents disent croire en la méritocratie et en l'émancipation par l'école «si t'as bien travaillé à l'école, t'as un bon poste, et dans tous les cas, t'as un travail, et pas besoin des services sociaux». Aux enfants de faire leur preuve, mais au système éducatif de garantir les conditions d'une entrée égalitaire dans le jeu. Ces mères se défendent de développer des stratégies de «consommateurs d'école» (Ballion, 1982), autrement dit, d'utiliser leur implication et, conséquemment, leur bonne connaissance du système éducatif et de son environnement, à des fins personnelles pour orienter leurs enfants vers la réussite scolaire et professionnelle. Elles se déclarent opposées à la recherche de la maximisation des profits individuels mais en quête de la satisfaction de l'intérêt général: «on n'est pas là pour défendre notre enfant, mais l'intérêt du groupe».

Une seconde valeur, essentielle aux yeux des fondatrices, est la solidarité dont elles souhaitent faire preuve par leur action. Avant tout, ces mères veulent aider les autres: «j'aime aider, je me trouve utile quand j'aide les gens». Face à la détresse de certaines familles, le groupe se mobilise pour les soutenir dans la recherche d'un logement, d'un travail, d'un intervenant social, d'un médecin... vis-à-vis de l'école, elles médiatisent, expliquent, relaient, considérant que «les enseignants ont déjà tant à faire avec les apprentissages». Elles soutiennent systématiquement les actions pédagogiques des enseignants (sorties, événements), mais encore aident au développement de l'école (installation d'une boîte aux lettres, aménagement d'un espace de convivialité...). Cette aide s'inscrit dans la visée de participer à la construction d'une vie collective meilleure. Ces femmes donnent, sans explicitement attendre un retour, mais avec l'idée que d'autres pourraient fonctionner comme elles et qu'il pourrait arriver à ce qu'elles en bénéficient: «on s'investit, et si un jour on a besoin d'aide, on trouvera peut-être d'autres personnes qui nous viendront en aide». Elles n'inscrivent pas leur action dans la transaction, mais dans le transfert (Mauss, 2007). Cet investissement s'explique par la volonté d'apporter leur contribution à la société et de construire les conditions de leur mieux vivre sans dépendance à autrui, et sans aumône à demander. C'est aussi un principe de vie qu'elles veulent transmettre à leurs enfants: «je veux qu'ils soient acteurs, qu'ils

participent, qu'ils n'attendent pas, qu'ils grandissent en voyant que leurs parents participent à la vie de quartier, qu'ils participent avec des idées, des projets pour améliorer, pour qu'eux aussi prennent ce relais et qu'ils deviennent acteurs dans le quartier parce qu'il y a tellement de choses à faire».

### **1.1.6. Les finalités recherchées : réussite éducative et légitimité**

Les membres du groupe ne font jamais mention de leur ambition d'améliorer, par leurs actions, la réussite scolaire des enfants. Quand bien même ces mères identifient clairement cette réussite en tant que préalable essentiel à « (...) une vie meilleure», elles s'emploient d'abord à garantir l'existence des conditions favorables à un accès à la réussite éducative: « Grâce à une réussite éducative, on peut atteindre une réussite scolaire ». Ces femmes n'ont pas complètement confiance en la société actuelle qui vient, selon elles, facilement contrecarrer leurs projets éducatifs en influençant négativement les comportements de leurs enfants. Elles souhaitent donc en priorité des enfants insérés et bien dans leur vie de citoyen: « Rester dans le droit chemin est le plus important. La réussite scolaire c'est encore mieux ». En prévention, elles sécurisent le périmètre en se constituant une compréhension fine des institutions, de leurs actions et de leurs relations, et en s'investissant dans tous les domaines d'intervention éducative et sociale du quartier. Ayant conscience, d'une part, qu'elles ne sont pas en capacité d'agir directement sur les apprentissages des enfants (contenus d'enseignement, méthodologie des devoirs) et, d'autre part, que les enseignants ne peuvent pas tout, elles cherchent, en proposant une aide à leur niveau, à renforcer les champs d'action et les compétences de tous les acteurs éducatifs qui pourront contribuer à la réussite éducative, puis scolaire de leurs enfants. Par ailleurs, leur responsabilité en propre, vis-à-vis de leurs enfants, est de leur donner l'exemple de l'investissement, mais également de leur montrer, qu'à force d'efforts, les actions entreprises sont reconnues et leur voix sont entendues.

Permettre la participation des parents, faire reconnaître leur légitimité dans les débats, propositions et décisions qui concernent l'éducation de leurs enfants, est justement la seconde finalité à l'action engagée, évoquée unanimement par ces mères. Face aux constats quotidiens de parents qui appréhendent de prendre la parole et auxquels, même aux plus avertis, elle est parfois refusée, sans scrupule: «Notre légitimité, elle est actée dans les textes, en tant que parent élu, mais on n'a pas forcément le respect ; si

aucun parent d'élève élu n'est présent à un conseil d'école, il se tient quand même, alors que si un élu n'est pas présent, il est reporté. On n'a pas encore autant d'importance qu'on devrait en avoir», ces femmes disent batailler pour obtenir leur place. Elles n'imposent cependant rien, elles proposent leur aide en mettant à disposition leur capacité à entrer en relation avec les familles du quartier (les langues présentes sur le territoire sont parlées par une au moins des membres du groupe) et leur connaissance des dispositifs sociaux et éducatifs (Contrat local d'aide à la scolarité (CLAS), école apprenante, Centre d'information des femmes et des familles (CIDFF), centre de santé, etc.). Les avancées constatées motivent à poursuivre: «Par rapport au tout début, on est de plus en plus respectées, par la commune par exemple. On n'est pas des parents râleurs, on félicite aussi. On donne nos points de vue, on ose parler».

### **1.1.7. Requalification de la place et du rôle des acteurs**

Les membres du groupe étudié disent qu'elles assurent un rôle de médiation. Ce peut être auprès des instances administratives pour venir en soutien aux familles migrantes, des élus quand il s'agit de défendre des postes d'enseignants, de la police afin d'appuyer une plainte de l'école, des enseignants dans le but de lever un quiproquo avec des familles. Elles se définissent aussi comme un relais, par exemple avec l'école lorsque celle-ci a du mal à entrer en contact avec certaines familles, ou dans le cas inverse quand des familles les saisissent pour obtenir une information: «On ne prétend pas être des professionnels, mais on l'a toujours dit, on est des relais». Encore, elles assurent une fonction de veille, à l'écoute du pouls du quartier. Leur groupe What's App leur permet de collecter de nombreuses informations, souvent bien en amont qu'elles soient connues «publiquement». Alors, elles préviennent, alertent, comme par exemple quand elles apprennent que des jeux dangereux existant au collège s'importent à l'école primaire ou que du harcèlement apparaît sur les réseaux sociaux: «on veille sur l'école, autour de l'école, c'est notre école». Si ces mères répondent aux sollicitations des différents acteurs éducatifs, elles font également œuvre d'initiatives propres. Face à une épidémie de poux, elles décident de négocier des prix de gros pour que toutes les familles puissent accéder aux produits de soin. Pour que les familles soient informées des absences, des retards, des difficultés que rencontre l'école et qui doivent être portées à leur connaissance (alors que le poste de secrétaire en contrat aidé n'a pas été renouvelé), elles organisent une collecte de fonds pour doter le directeur d'un abonnement téléphonique qu'il utilise en cas d'urgence. A

la maison de quartier qu'elles fréquentent, si elles y ont d'abord été bénévoles, elles proposent aujourd'hui des activités de soutien à la parentalité: activités sportives parents-enfants, sorties au musée, découverte du conservatoire, etc.: « On a d'abord été accompagné et ensuite on s'implique ». Mais ces mères l'affirment, elles sont présentes, sans empiéter sur les prérogatives des autres acteurs. « On ne fait pas à la place, on demande les autorisations ». « Il faut se respecter, mais pas sacraliser. Tout le monde peut se tromper. Mais un cadre, une place à chacun, des droits et des devoirs ».

Ce faisant, en adoptant un mode de relation aux différents acteurs qu'elles rencontrent, qui vise à les associer plutôt qu'à obtenir de leur part un service, elles les obligent, les mettent dans la nécessité de répondre à leurs propositions. Après avoir apporté un soutien inconditionnel aux enseignants dans la défense de leurs conditions de travail, difficile de refuser la proposition d'aménagement, aux frais des parents, d'une salle de l'école en salle des parents proposant un espace d'accueil et des ressources bibliographiques sur la parentalité. Même constat à la maison de quartier lorsque les membres du groupe sollicitent un espace de réunion qui leur permet de se rencontrer dans de bonnes conditions pour développer leurs différents projets. En entrant par l'aide, le soutien, le don, ces femmes ont petit à petit créé un véritable contrat social avec leurs interlocuteurs. Aujourd'hui, dans le cadre de ce contrat, les rôles des acteurs éducatifs arrivent même à être inversés vis-à-vis des pratiques instituées. L'équipe enseignante, via son directeur ou le coordonnateur REP, en vient parfois à consulter le groupe et lui demander conseil. Les familles en délicatesse avec l'école sollicitent spontanément la médiation du groupe. On assiste, non seulement à une reconnaissance des compétences singulières de ces mères, mais aussi à une requalification des rôles des acteurs, notamment institutionnels, dans l'obligation d'adopter une position nouvelle inhabituelle, hors des cadres et usages établis.

### **1.1.8. Reconfiguration des territoires d'intervention**

Au regard de l'ensemble des propos précédents, on aura compris que ce groupe de mères opte pour une action systémique qui concerne tous les acteurs de leur territoire. Leur champ d'action déborde largement celui de l'école. La conception scolaro-centrée de l'éducation de l'enfant s'efface pour replacer ce dernier au centre des attentions des différents acteurs. Tous les engagements pris par ces mères ont un sens, y compris quand ils semblent éloignés des besoins immédiats de l'enfant. Quand le groupe fait du bénévolat de traduction à la « Maison de Jeanne » qui accueille de jeunes

mères célibataires, elles pensent immédiatement à organiser une rencontre de découverte de la structure à l'école car elles savent que de nombreuses femmes de leur quartier sont en grande difficulté. Ces parents deviennent alors des «relieurs» entre différents mondes, parfois très cloisonnés quand bien même leurs objectifs ne sont pas si distants. C'est ainsi que la relation entre la maison de quartier et l'école a pu être tissée. Désormais, les informations socioéducatives du centre de loisirs apparaissent dans le carnet de liaison de l'école et la mise en place du CLAS se fait dans le dialogue avec l'école: « Parfois, on apprend des choses aux écoles. Il faut dire qu'ils sont surchargés d'informations, ils en avaient entendu parler, mais n'avaient pas pu approfondir ». En créant le lien, le groupe augmente la porosité entre les structures, estompent leurs frontières. Dernièrement (mars 2022), il a activement contribué à l'organisation de l'événement « La grande lessive »: installation d'art éphémère à partir des productions réalisées par un quartier sur un thème défini nationalement. Le groupe s'est prioritairement occupé de la participation des parents : « on a d'abord demandé l'autorisation à l'école, il a fallu ensuite chercher du matériel, on a pris contact avec la coordonnatrice REP, l'école nous a donné des feuilles, des peintures..., on a aussi dû chercher un endroit pour préparer les œuvres, la maison de quartier a dit oui ». Dans l'objectif que la parole des parents soit, là aussi, entendue: «que les parents puissent exprimer quelque chose», elles ont proposé que chacun réalise l'emprunte de sa main et écrive un message positif dans sa langue maternelle. L'événement a suscité beaucoup d'émotion chez les parents qui étaient fiers d'être mis à l'honneur devant leur enfant lorsque leur message a été lu un peu plus tard à l'école par les enseignants. Le groupe prévoit déjà la reconduction de la journée en l'élargissant: «Cette action représente une place forte et physique des parents, des enfants et doit concerner toutes les parties du quartier». De nouvelles idées ont même émergé après avoir découvert que les enseignants méconnaissaient certains acteurs du territoire: «Ils sont formés à différentes techniques pédagogiques, mais est-ce qu'on leur donne des annuaires thématiques qui leur permettraient de trouver des référents dans de nombreux domaines, il faudra qu'on y pense».

Par leurs actions dans et hors les murs de l'école, le groupe de parents amène à penser de manière renouvelée les acteurs, leur rôle et leurs relations. Elles les amènent à décloisonner leurs compétences, composer, former des projets partagés. Elles bousculent les relations instituées, les ordres hiérarchiques, les codes d'usages. Plus encore, elles redéfinissent les domaines d'intervention, les périmètres habituels d'action, floutent les frontières. Enfin, elles interrogent les rapports entre l'enseignement et l'éducation, entre la parentalité et la citoyenneté, entre le principe d'égalité et les enjeux territoriaux.

### 1.1.9. Une démarche de coéducation?

En se référant à la définition de l'inclusion donnée en début d'article, on peut affirmer que les mères du groupe étudié font œuvre d'inclusion, pour elles-mêmes et pour leurs enfants. Elles sont incluses dans la société, y ont développé des pouvoirs d'agir, posé des actes. Petit à petit leur action et leurs compétences sont reconnues, elles sont également acceptées en tant que personnes singulières et citoyennes. Enfin, elles développent aujourd'hui des relations avec confiance en elles et aux autres.

Lorsqu'on leur demande si leurs actions s'inscrivent dans une démarche de coéducation, spontanément elles répondent par la négative. Elles collaborent avec les autres acteurs, mais ne coéduquent pas. D'après elles: « Coéduquer, c'est rencontrer un enseignant et lui demander des outils pour palier des difficultés scolaires » et encore « Avoir un échange avec l'enseignant en lien avec l'enfant dans sa scolarité, dans son apprentissage, sur les conditions de son apprentissage, ça c'est de la coéducation ». Elles n'entrent pas dans ce mode de relation individuelle et s'y refusent même. Ces mères revendiquent leur propre domaine d'action, en complémentarité de celui des enseignants, mais également en périphérie de l'école. Pour elles, le travail éducatif est séparé selon les acteurs, mais il est cependant articulé. Force est de constater qu'elles en sont devenues d'ailleurs, au fil du temps, les coordonnatrices, voire les meneuses, renversant parfois la traditionnelle asymétrie des relations entre professionnels et parents. Il s'agit donc bien là d'une forme de coéducation.

Les bénéfices de l'investissement du groupe sont internes et externes. D'abord, par leurs actions, ces femmes existent personnellement et socialement. Elles ont gagné leur légitimité de mère et de citoyenne. Elles incarnent une forme de victoire sur les déterminismes et en sont fières. En outre, les entretiens montrent très clairement que ces femmes ont acquis un haut niveau d'expertise du système éducatif et social ainsi que des politiques publiques liées. Les profits sont également collectifs. Au travers des actions menées, c'est le quartier qui est valorisé et reconnu. Et à cette valeur symbolique s'ajoutent aussi des avancées pragmatiques pour tous, telles que l'accès à des équipements, à des activités, à des conditions de vie meilleure. Concernant l'école, l'influence apparaît positive sur le climat scolaire et le rapport des parents et des enfants à l'école.

La difficulté scolaire n'est toutefois jamais abordée dans le discours de ces mères, si ce n'est sous l'angle des conditions de scolarisation qui doivent permettre l'expression des « talents » de chacun. Les effets directs sur les apprentissages semblent renvoyés à l'action individuelle des parents.

Le groupe fait le pari qu'installer les conditions d'une relation égalitaire et consensuelle entre acteurs et celles d'une bonne qualité de vie pour les habitants du quartier, offrira, par la réduction des inégalités générées, une ouverture des possibles pour tous que chacun aura alors la liberté de saisir. L'approche est séduisante, mais, dans l'explication des inégalités scolaires d'origine sociale, elle néglige l'influence, maintes fois démontrée, des habitudes mentales et schèmes de pensée transmis par les parents, plus ou moins proches de ceux que valorise l'école, des structures logico-syntaxiques rendues disponibles dans le milieu d'appartenance (Lahire, 1995 ; Pourtois, Dupont, 1985), des aspirations scolaires des parents et de leurs comportements inducteurs de réussite (Sullivan, 2001) et enfin du climat éducationnel familial (Baumrind, 1971 ; Lautrey, 1980 ; Kellerhals, Montandon, 1991).

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## 1.2. Families with young people with PIMD<sup>1</sup> Disabilities and Quality of Life: pedagogical analysis for new prospects of intervention

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### 1.2.1. Introduction

The Quality of Life (QoL) construct has been internationally recognized as a conceptual framework capable of guiding practices across different contexts (Boehm & Carter, 2019; Schalock & Verdugo Alonso, 2012; Prieto-Flores et al., 2012).

The ecological interpretation, articulated through the mutual relationships between individual and their contexts, is proposed allowing us to grasp the importance and meaning of QoL at three levels of the system (Macrosystem, Mesosystem, Microsystem) (Schalock & Verdugo Alonso, 2012).

In this direction, at the Macrosystemic level, the QoL construct represents the reference framework for the implementation of social policies (Ibid.). It provides a conceptual foundation for administrative decisions regarding the reorganization of personal services (Ibid.), orienting the creation of inclusive educating cities. The QoL perspective is therefore outlined as a tool for the protection and guarantee the rights of people with and without disabilities (United Nations, 2006).

At the Mesosystemic level, the QoL construct can be employed within personal services to develop and monitor procedures aimed at improving the environments, services planning and the quality support provided (Schalock & Verdugo Alonso, 2012).

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Finally, at the Microsystemic level, the construct allows increasing the opportunities for participation in the overall process of one's life (Del Bianco, 2019; Wehmeyer & Schalock, 2001). Therefore, it represents the necessary dimension to be placed in the dynamics between the new model of human functioning (WHO, 2001) and educational interventions, contributing to the realization of targeted life projects (Cottini, 2016; D'Angelo, 2020a; Giaconi, 2015).

For these reasons, the construct of the Quality of Life assumes the role of «criterion of legitimation and validation of the theoretical reflections carried out in the field of research and biomedical and rehabilitative interventions, on the one hand, but also of those more generically linked to social policy and health care, program validation and cost evaluation, on the other hand» (Schalock & Verdugo, 2002, p. 25).

In light of this ecological articulation, this contribution aims to deepen the socio-pedagogical issues related to the care of families with young people with Profound Intellectual Multiple Disabilities (PIMD), both in the life stages in which the parents are still present (“During Us”) and when family members are no longer able to take care of their sons/daughters (“After Us”) (Giaconi et al., 2020). Specifically, during the Covid-19 outbreak, the condition of these populations was particularly fragile. The restriction of family mobility changed the ways of living the times and spaces of everyday life, of doing school, of spending free time and, above all, has changed the ways of interacting with others and services. The high criticality of the health conditions of people with PIMD, the closure of services, and the aggravation of care tasks reserved exclusively for family caregivers have led to our interest in investigating the perceptions of family caregivers during this period of the health emergency.

Before presenting the survey in detail, we delve into the state of the art of research concerning family caregivers of people with PIMD.

### **1.2.2. The Quality of Life of caregivers of people with PIMD**

Starting in the 2000s, researchers began to identify the crucial aspects that reflect the family's Quality of Life (Giaconi, 2015; Schalock & Verdugo Alonso, 2006), particularly when a child with a disability is present in the family (Turnbull et al., 2004).

Most research on the subject focuses on the impact of Quality of Life, concerning the burden of assistance and care required by the functioning profile of the person with disabilities. In this case, many studies relate the family's Quality of Life to the presence or absence of adequate socio-health policies, resources and services aimed at providing forms of

support for the family (Caldin et al., 2017; Pavone, 2009; Visentin, 2010). As underlined by Schalock and Verdugo Alonso (2006) «there is a general agreement that a positive quality of life should be the result of the policies and services that are implemented in favor of people» and how «the improvement of the quality of life for families could be the “only acceptable outcome” of policies and services» (2006, p. 200).

The Quality of Life of family caregivers is interconnected with the Quality of Life of the person, especially if he/she has intellectual disabilities (Schalock & Verdugo Alonso, 2006). Specifically, the presence of a person with PIMD requires all family members to adopt a daily response to the extended and generalized needs of assistance, which often remain stable throughout the lifespan (Nakken & Vlaskamp, 2007), making parental and caregiving tasks particularly demanding (Luijkx et al., 2019).

As already highlighted in our other research (Giacconi et al., 2020; D’Angelo, 2020a; 2020b), the Quality of Life of family caregivers decreases concerning different circumstances: for example, the discrepancy between the profile of the person’s functioning and the demands of the context (Negri et al., 2019; Grey et al., 2018), the number of difficult situations to deal with (Minnes et al., 2007; Walden et al., 2000), the epileptic conditions (Grey et al., 2018, Kerr et al., 2009) or feeding problems (Kilian et al., 2016), affecting the domain of “Physical well-being”.

Other research (Del Bianco, 2019; Sherpa et al., 2018; Du et al., 2017; Middleton et al., 2014) investigates the changes in the caregivers’ Quality of Life levels in relation to the variation of self-determination and autonomy of their child with disabilities (Del Bianco, 2019), or concerning the reduction of his/her social roles, such as the deterioration of the network of interpersonal relationships (Negri et al., 2019), affecting the domain of the QoL related to the “Social Inclusion”.

Alongside these dimensions, the literature examines the aspect related to the family economy (Chou et al., 2013; Grey et al., 2018), since the costs of healthcare and physical well-being of the person with a disability risk harming the general condition of the family unit. This is related to the domain of “Material well-being”.

Also, several studies (Luijkx et al., 2016; Negri et al., 2019; Tadema & Vlaskamp, 2010; Visentin, 2010) highlight a risk condition for family caregivers in coping with the amount of time needed to care for people with PIMD, often affected by co-morbidities, such as forms of epilepsy or dysphagia. Because of fatigue, frustration, and guilt feelings, caregivers frequently experience depression or symptoms related to the so-called burnout syndrome (Fianco et al., 2015). Always within the studies on the psychological impact of the PIMD’s family caregivers, strategies such as

coping, positive appraisals, psychological acceptance, and internal locus on control play an essential role (Chou et al., 2010; Fianco et al., 2015; Grey et al., 2018; Negri et al., 2019) in the promotion of both personal growth and the social inclusion of caregivers and, therefore, to increase their Quality of Life (Chou et al., 2013; 2010; Fianco et al., 2015).

Previous studies (McCann et al., 2012; Visentin, 2010) show that free time and friendly interactions are the dimensions of the Quality of Life (Giaconi, 2015; Schalock & Verdugo Alonso, 2006) more at risk in the life of the caregiver. Having to dedicate more time to care activities in the daily lives of parents of children with PIMD, there is a significant reduction of the time spent on both housework and leisure activities, in the latter case, with a substantial impact on “Personal well-being” (Luijkx et al., 2016).

Also, in studies on families with young people with PIMD, investigations are focused on the role of siblings as the primary caregivers when parents become elderly or die (Hall & Rossetti, 2018; Luijkx et al., 2016). Research conducted on the perception of Quality of Life levels of young and adult siblings of people with PIMD is still limited (Hall & Rossetti, 2018; Luijkx et al., 2016; Nijs et al., 2016), especially regarding the transition phases, which often correspond to crucial moments of modification of roles and family balance (Giaconi, 2015).

In light of these considerations, the research presented in the next section aims to investigate how families with young people with complex disabilities have faced the pandemic. The spread of the Covid-19 represents a further criticality in managing a challenging daily life, with repercussions on the levels of QoL of caregivers and people with PIMD.

### **1.2.3. Research with caregivers of young people with PIMD**

The Italian government introduced various measures to control the spread of the Covid-19 virus<sup>7</sup> that significantly impacted the entire population and even more families of people with PIMD. The interest of our research is to investigate the perceptions of families with young people

7. Several experts have pointed out how these measures (e. g. Legislative Decree 9 March 2020: “Io resto a casa”; Legislative Decree 17 March 2020: “Cura Italia”; Legislative Decree 26 April 2020: “Rimaniamo a distanza-Fase 2”) scarcely paid attention to the difficulties of people with disabilities and in particular with PIMD or with Autism Spectrum Disorder. As we will see in the research below also from the perceptions of the families the interventions (increase to 15 days, for the months of March and April 2020, of the Parental Leave of law 104; closure of day centers; possibility that center operators and pupil assistants are registered in the home; measures in the matter of extraordinary leave and permits for those who assist a person with a disability) were not enough.

with PIMD related to the condition they were living in as a consequence of those provisions.

The survey presented in this section is part of a large international research project between the University of Macerata and the University of Arizona. This article will show the qualitative results of an extensive research protocol aimed at exploring the perceptions of families with children with intellectual disabilities or with PIMD during the Coronavirus outbreak.

The research protocol has two parallel phases (Table 1):

- Collection of quantitative data, through the administration of a questionnaire on an international sample of families with young people with intellectual disabilities aged between 15 and 30 years<sup>8</sup>;
- Collection of qualitative data through focus groups with a group of family caregivers of young people with PIMD aged between 30 and 50 years.

*Table 1 - Phases of research: quantitative and qualitative data collected*

| <i>Research tool/procedure</i>                                                                                                                     | <i>Amount</i>                                                                               | <i>Research and analysis actions</i>                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| QoL Questionnaires addressed to the caregivers of young people with intellectual disabilities                                                      | 207 questionnaires in total: 107 questionnaires administered in Italy and 100 international | Tabulation of results and analysis in the international research team                                                                      |
| First focus group with caregivers of young people with PIMD, structured on caregiver’s Quality of Life Guidelines (Schalock, Verdugo Alonso, 2012) | 10 caregivers of young people with PIMD: 8 mothers and 2 sisters                            | Focus Group Management<br>Transcription of the texts; analysis of the texts’ contents; cross-reading of the materials by the research team |
| Second focus group to return feedback to caregivers of young people with PIMD                                                                      | 10 caregivers of young people with PIMD: 8 mothers and 2 sisters                            | Returning and sharing the results of the focus group content analysis with the involved family caregivers                                  |

8. The questionnaire is aimed at investigating the knowledge and impact of decrees in families with young people with intellectual disabilities, specifically the changes in everyday life (also in terms of psychological impact) relationship with the school, with the extracurricular and with the territory (services, such as Daycare Service or Family Centred Care). The research team translated the questionnaire into Italian and English and used the Limesurvey platform for data collection. The data are being processed by the international research team.

Table 1 summarises the design, applied methods and achieved quantitative research results.

In this section, we focus on the results of the first focus group. Focus groups were conducted and registered through an online platform and were attended by 10 caregivers of young people with PIMD involved in the activities of a Daycare Service in the Marche Region.

The focus group discussion was transcribed, and the written text was analyzed by staff who activated self-reading and cross-reading of the materials, according to the qualitative methodology.

After the focus group discussion, the analysis involved the following steps (Glaser & Strauss, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Giaconi, 2012, p. 55):

- listening to the recording;
- transcription of the focus group discussion into written text;
- identification and analysis of the parts of the text (sentences, period), identified as significant text units;
- transcription of captions referring to significant text units, paying attention to maintaining the speaker's language;
- attribution to each significant text unit, with a related caption of a conceptual label;
- horizontally (intervention of each caregiver for text units, captions, and labels) and vertically (analysis of the caregiver interventions based on text units, captions, and inverse conceptual labels) rereading of the material;
- collection of the various conceptual labels in broader categories which can identify a particular dimension of the phenomenon investigated;
- conversion of categories into macro-categories;
- creation of a summary document;
- identification of the central categories;
- creation of a map by the coding staff.

### **1.2.3.1. Analysis of the focus group data**

Focus groups created with family caregivers indicate some relevant issues, especially regarding their perceptions during the period of isolation.

In continuity with what has been reported in the relevant literature (Chou et al., 2013; Grey et al., 2018; Luijkx et al., 2016; Negri et al., 2019), the analyses of the interviews conducted show a decrease in levels of perceived satisfaction for the domains of “Social inclusion”, “Emotional well-being”, “Material well-being”, and “Physical well-being” (Bertuzzi et al., 2021).

Parents perceived little attention from the government measures during the emergency period and felt like “invisible families” again. Quarantine measures resulted in limited educational and healthcare services (Muhammad & Prince, 2020).

All families with children with PIMD declared that they feel isolated from the community to which they belong, especially concerning limited access to formal and informal services (Muhammad & Prince, 2020). Caregivers were required to step in to fill the care gaps, which had a negative impact on their emotional and physical well-being.

The data also revealed that caregivers were obliged to withdraw from socio-economic life to care for their children, which added economic strains to the family. In line with the findings of other studies (D’Angelo, 2020a; White et al., 2021), caregivers were faced with job loss or reduced hours at work and economic difficulties. The uncertainty linked to future financial and welfare scenarios, coupled with the social distancing experienced by the caregivers of people with PIMD, worsened an already challenging situation.

Free time and interaction with friends, which are already affected by the needs of care, were very limited during the lockdown, further lowering the level of satisfaction perceived in their life and increasing their psychological strain (Colizzi et al., 2020).

Three out of ten families interviewed declared that they had activated effective strategies for managing their child’s daily life by hinging on the support of siblings or collaboration between partners. Despite the perception of isolation, these families seem to have faced the pandemic period with more significant serenity and have experienced less emotional and physical stress. The remaining seven families, on the other hand, showed high degrees of frustration with the closure of services and the loss of the friend’s support network (Colizzi et al., 2020).

Among the emerging criticalities, caregivers stated that the number of hours of care they provided dramatically increased. The extra demands of time for families have been highlighted as challenging to manage within a fixed daily routine, which does not spare time for the necessary rest for the caregivers’ health (Kent et al., 2020; Rodrigues et al., 2021). With the interruption or reduction of home-care visits and the closure of daily service centres, activities like tube feeding, injections, bedsores’ and catheters’ care, prevention or management of epileptic seizures are assigned to family caregivers, who may not feel adequately prepared to carry out such medical tasks. At the same time, the services’ proposal to activate home visits at specific times to assist in daily personal care and/or carrying out educational activities was accepted by only one family out of ten interviewed.

Even if caregivers would have asked for help and direct support, the fear of transmission of the virus, which could significantly aggravate the already critical health picture of loved ones with PIMD, stopped them from advocating for this kind of service (Del Bianco, 2019; Hole, Stainton & Wilson, 2013).

#### **1.2.4. Pedagogical reflections and open questions: policies implementation**

In light of the results, several central pedagogical reflections guide social policies and educational interventions for families with young people with PIMD, even in emergencies like the one we have experienced.

In this direction, the epistemological structure of the Quality of Life (Schalock & Verdugo Alonso, 2002) can increasingly support social policies and services in the construction of spaces for sharing and listening that are capable of guiding the management and planning toward life trajectories that are both of quality and meaning.

Despite the limited number of cases considered, which do not allow a significant generalization, this study enables us to first reflect on creating a more solid structuring of integrated information actions within the support paths of the entire family network. The partnership between services and caregivers might enhance both the reading of the needs and desires of the person with disabilities and the alignment of the expectations of all the people involved in taking charge (De Geeter et al., 2002). We are aware of the centrality of the connection between the different perspectives and perceptions of the subjects involved in the implementation of the Individual Project for adults with disabilities; we also acknowledge that this «could compromise the creation of an integrated and functional intervention system for the quality of life of the person himself, just as it could weaken the desirable dynamics of co-design» (Giaconi, 2015, p. 87).

Therefore, we should act toward an increased sharing of information and co-design of focused actions within the network of personal services to support critical phases of families, e.g., the transition phase (Gauthier-Boudreault et al., 2018). We should understand more deeply the challenges that these families face – including the duration of the role of caregiving, worsening of the health problems with the aging of the person with PIMD and his/her caregivers, and planning of life paths for the future well-being of the family, especially regarding the “After us” phase (Giaconi, 2015; Luijckx et al., 2019).

These proposals will only be able to function through a strengthened integration of the service network, whose institutional cornerstone is the sharing of project horizons and educational continuity. Only a truly integrated system will be able to adequately support the care of people with complex disabilities.

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### **1.3. Du côté des grands-parents.**

## **Stratégies d'adaptation dans le système de la famille élargie**

*Gianluca Amatori<sup>1</sup>*

#### **1.3.1. La planification familiale face au handicap**

Confirmant ce que certaines recherches internationales ont déjà montré (Findler, 2014, 2016; Yang et al., 2018; Woodbridge et al., 2009, 2011) l'expérience de grands-parents par rapport à la communication du diagnostic de handicap de leur petit-enfant est assez similaire à celle des parents. En fait, les personnes interrogées le racontent avec beaucoup de douleur et de chagrin.

À ce moment-là, je voulais mourir. La douleur que je ressentais chaque nuit, quand je m'endormais, chaque jour, était insupportable. Il ne m'a pas quittée !

Ce n'est pas facile à accepter. Mais ensuite, comme pour tous les malheurs, on se résigne. Il n'y a rien à faire!

Le moment du diagnostic est retenu par tous les grands-parents comme une expérience de désespoir extrême, parfois même comparée, par l'un des interviewés, à la sensation éprouvée par la communication d'avoir un cancer. Le deuil des attentes concerne donc aussi les grands-parents, surtout lorsqu'ils participent activement à la vie de leur petit-fils.

En juillet, nous avons reçu le diagnostic et en septembre, Francesco a commencé l'école maternelle. C'était très douloureux. Je l'ai porté et je l'ai laissé pleurer. Je retournais le chercher et j'entendrais les cris et les pleurs de l'extérieur. J'étais devenu l'ombre de moi-même. Je n'ai fait que pleurer sans arrêt, j'ai séché mes larmes pour aller le chercher. J'étais avec mes amis et je parlais de Francesco, angoissée. Puis je me suis disputée avec mon mari qui me disait d'arrêter, de ne

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pas déranger les amis avec nos problèmes. C'est pourquoi j'ai réalisé que Je devais parler à un expert.

Au début, cela ne semblait n'être qu'un retard dans la parole, mais nous nous sommes rendus compte que même dans les jeux, dans les relations qu'il avait avec nous, c'était différent et cela a surtout inquiété ma fille, qui était celle qui ne voulait décidément pas attendre longtemps, elle s'est tout de suite confiée à des personnes compétentes qui nous ont ensuite orientés. Il a été diagnostiqué très tôt et c'est à ce moment-là que j'ai réalisé aussi, j'ai arrêté de faire semblant, c'était plus un refus inconscient qu'un chose rationnelle.

La perspective du grand-parent peut cependant être lue de manière amplifiée par rapport à l'expérience du parent: le grand-parent, en effet, ressent une double douleur, liée à la fois à la condition du petit-fils et au chagrin de la situation de son propre fils.

Lorsque nous avons reçu le diagnostic, je me souviens encore que mon fils a pris son père dans ses bras et lui disant: "J'ai gâché la vie de Serena", qui est la fille aînée. Comme pour dire qu'elle devra s'en occuper lorsqu'ils seront partis. C'était une scène de douleur immense pour nous.

Les conclusions sont parfaitement conformes aux enquêtes internationales. En fait, comme l'affirment Findler et Taubman - Ben-Ari, les grands-parents traversent également une phase dépressive très similaire à celle de leurs parents: «Les grands-parents subissent souvent un processus de deuil similaire à celui des parents, bien que d'un lieu plus éloigné (ce qui peut en fait prolonger la période de deuil)» (Findler, Taubman - Ben-Ari, 2016, p. 41).

La période de douleur qui suit le diagnostic peut ralentir le processus de construction identitaire des grands-parents, surtout lorsqu'il s'agit du premier petit-fils. Les protagonistes se retrouvent alors souvent contraints de modifier leur mode de vie pour s'adapter aux nouveaux besoins.

Nous habitons à 10 kilomètres, mais nous allons chez eux tous les matins. Et quand ma fille rentre du travail, on rentre aussi chez nous.

J'ai quitté mon travail, puis pendant 11 ans j'ai eu des contrats de, consultation, mais j'ai dû en dire stop car je devais m'occuper de Michele. Et puis aussi parce qu'après 46 ans de travail c'était juste. Je l'ai choisi et ma femme m'a suivi aussi.

La restructuration de la dynamique personnelle est nécessaire, surtout pour continuer à soutenir la capacité générative de la famille dans une circonstance qui exige une collaboration en réseau étendue et systémique.

### 1.3.2. Grands-parents dans la famille élargie

Les résultats de la recherche menée par Miller et ses collaborateurs (2012) offrent une description précise du grand-parent d'un petit-fils handicapé du point de vue de la famille élargie. En effet, il semblerait que les grands-parents en question servent d'intermédiaires dans le maintien des relations familiales. Un nombre important de personnes interrogées ont déclaré que l'arrivée de l'enfant handicapé a entraîné des tensions, des conflits et des défis au sein même du système. Cet aspect ressort également des paroles de nos protagonistes.

Il y avait d'énormes conflits dans la famille, parce que chacun a vécu la douleur à sa manière. J'ai plongé; ma belle-fille ressemblait à un zombie, la pauvre; mon fils désespéré a nié; mon mari a fait des recherches sur internet. Je ne voulais pas de réponses sur internet: je cherchais les réponses aux questions que je me posais. Je n'étais pas intéressée à savoir ce qu'était l'autisme, les pourcentages, si c'est à cause d'un vaccin, non. Je voulais trouver un canal pour joindre mon petit-fils.

Après le diagnostic, ma relation avec ma fille a également pris des nuances différentes... Peut-être qu'aujourd'hui elle est plus sereine mais au début... Ma fille est un peu sergent de fer, très dure à l'extérieur, très résolue, mais elle entrait en crise... Elle avait aussi des problèmes avec son mari, puis heureusement tout s'est mis en place mais même avec moi elle pouvait avoir des attitudes différentes, presque en colère, presque comme si elle avait besoin de se défouler d'une certaine manière sur quelqu'un.

Des conflits peuvent également exister au sein du couple de grands-parents, si le parcours de traitement du diagnostic n'a pas été adopté de la même manière ou en même temps par les deux conjoints ou s'il existe des différences par rapport à la gestion de l'enfant.

Je crois que toute la famille devrait savoir comment suivre cet enfant. Par exemple, j'ai des difficultés avec mon mari, car nous sommes très différents. Il dit qu'il faut être énergique et s'arrêter. Je le fais aussi, mais d'une manière différente. Quand nous sommes ensemble, Francesco vit la tension du grand-père. S'il va bien, mon mari est détendu. Mais dès que Francesco commence à faire un de ses trucs... par exemple, maintenant il veut regarder la vidéo de "The wall" de Pink Floyd en boucle: mon mari ne sait pas comment le supporter. Cela, Francesco le sent et, à ce moment-là, il insiste encore plus. Alors je ne comprends toujours pas très bien si je dois calmer l'enfant ou mon mari! Croyez-moi, ce n'est pas facile: il faut aussi gérer les adultes!

L'enquête précitée de Miller et ses collaborateurs (2012), montre donc que la contribution des grands-parents est particulièrement importante dans l'attribution d'un rôle à leur petit-fils au sein de la famille. Le type de soutien offert, en effet, peut faciliter la communication et les connexions entre les différents membres du système élargi.

Au début Michele semblait être un corps étranger au sein de la famille, parce que c'était nous qui faisions attention à lui, mais lui, je ne dis pas qu'il nous ignorait, mais presque. Mais ensuite, petit à petit, aidés par les thérapies et aussi aidés parce que les thérapeutes nous ont dit de faire par rapport à Michele - parce que nous nous sommes beaucoup appuyés sur ce qu'ils disaient, pour nous c'était tellement différent que parfois on interprète mal les choses, est-ce que je lui permets de faire quelque chose ou pas? Doit-il entrer en crise ou non? Est-ce que je l'arrête physiquement et le laisse déflower en le tenant ou est-ce que je le laisse pleurer sur le sol ? - Nous avons également dû étudier un peu la situation et cela nous a tous aidés, y compris moi-même, qui ai toujours passé le plus de temps avec lui à partir de l'âge de trois ans... Nous lui avons donné un rôle dans la famille, nous lui avons fait comprendre qu'il en faisait partie, et il en est maintenant conscient.

Maintenant, il a un rôle dans la famille, il sait qu'il est là et je pense que ma présence l'a beaucoup aidé en cela, également la présence de sa grand-mère; je dois dire que cela a pris plus de temps (avec la grand-mère), la grand-mère travaille naturellement aussi donc elle a moins de temps à lui consacrer.

Quand nous sommes tous ensemble, un mécanisme s'est créé grâce auquel même les cousins savent que Francesco est spécial. En effet, qu'il a besoin de certaines choses. L'autre neveu qui a 6 mois de plus que lui joue toujours avec Francesco, surtout si sa grande sœur n'est pas là. Même les oncles sont amoureux de lui.

D'après les résultats, le rôle des grands-parents est donc particulièrement précieux pour relier les différents éléments de la famille élargie. Le pont émotionnel qui se crée entre grand-parent et petit-fils s'inscrit dans un cadre systémique qui permet un échange constant entre le microsystème nucléaire et le macrosystème familial élargi.

### **1.3.3. Partage émotionnel**

D'après les entretiens que nous avons menés, une question intéressante, de pleine pertinence pédagogique, s'avère être celle du partage des émotions. Les grands-parents et les parents, en effet, omettent souvent de communiquer leur douleur, en particulier la douleur initiale due à l'acceptation du diagnostic.

Du diagnostic à aujourd'hui, ma relation avec mon fils a également changé. Je ne comprenais pas pourquoi il ne me parlait pas. C'était aussi ma faute... J'étais dévastée et j'avais peur qu'il me parle de sa douleur. C'est la vérité.

Maintenant, il va commencer l'école primaire. Nous avons tous peur, mais personne ne le dit. C'est la grande inconnue: changer d'école, changer de professeurs, changer de compagnons... espérons le meilleur.

L'un des facteurs qui peuvent motiver cette difficulté à partager sa situation émotionnelle réside dans la conviction qu'il n'est pas approprié d'accabler l'autre d'une peine supplémentaire, comme le reflètent les paroles de cette grand-mère :

Notre fille n'a jamais autant parlé avec nous. Peut-être aussi pour ne pas nous accabler. Nous avons fait la même chose avec elle, nous ne voulions pas aggraver la situation. Nous pouvions pleurer seuls, mais nous nous remontions le moral ensemble. Elle a dû faire la même chose, je pense.

L'autre aspect qui constitue une barrière à la communication entre parents et grands-parents est celui de l'expertise. Les mères et les pères, en effet, participent à des formations spécifiques dans des contextes de formation parentale et, dans le cas particulier de l'autisme, ils apprennent à gérer leur enfant ainsi que les stratégies les plus efficaces pour entrer en contact avec lui. Selon les grands-parents interrogés, il est clair que ce qu'ils apprennent n'est pas partagé, et les grands-parents se retrouvent à la merci d'une situation à laquelle ils ne peuvent faire face, sauf par essais et erreurs.

Mon fils et ma belle-fille venaient toujours ici au centre, ils ont suivi le cours de formation des parents, mais ils ne nous ont jamais rien signalé. Lorsque nous étions ensemble, je regardais comment ils s'occupaient de l'enfant pour essayer de comprendre comment faire.

Les grands-parents ne reçoivent pas des parents les répertoires de compétences nécessaires quant aux modalités de gestion des comportements problématiques du petit-enfant. Cela peut être interprété comme une inquiétude, de la part des parents, quant à la surcharge – émotionnelle et pratique – qu'ils feraient peser sur les grands-parents s'ils les accompagnaient dans une formation plus spécifique et complète.

Mais heureusement, il existe des réalités dans lesquelles le partage émotionnel et pratique entre les générations a donné de précieux résultats, en raccourcissant le chemin pour surmonter la douleur et en se caractéri-

sant comme une véritable stratégie d'adaptation. Le partage commence par la reconnaissance: dans l'acte même de partager, en effet, nous donnons à l'autre de nous une valeur authentique.

La relation avec ma fille n'a jamais changé. Nous essayons de lui parler pour comprendre comment la stimuler et donner plus d'attention à l'enfant.

Cette expérience m'a tellement changée. J'ai dû enlever toute la douleur précédente pour faire de la place pour ça. Vivre sereinement, comprendre que si nous voulons que les autres changent, nous devons d'abord changer nous-mêmes. Ne pas se sentir victime: telle est ma réalité. Il devait entrer dans ma vie: à un certain moment, j'ai vraiment senti que j'étais née pour être la grand-mère de Francesco, que c'était ma mission. Avant Francesco, les choses que j'avais faites étaient normales: me marier, avoir trois enfants, avoir des petits-enfants... Francesco est un prix. Parce qu'il permet d'ouvrir votre cœur, d'être honnête avec vous-même et de vivre pleinement les choses.

Le partage émotionnel qui s'active entre grands-parents et parents permet un véritable changement de perspective dans la fonction même des grands-parents. Si, en effet, la fermeture et le manque de dialogue permettent d'identifier le grand-parent comme une barrière protectrice du micro-système nucléaire, l'ouverture et le partage font des grands-parents un véritable pont vers le monde extérieur et, en même temps, un ciment dans les relations entre le couple parental et l'enfant handicapé.

## **Conclusions**

Conformément à la littérature internationale sur le sujet, la fonction des grands-parents au sein des familles avec enfants handicapés est particulièrement importante. Les grands-parents, en effet, peuvent être de véritables ressources résilientes pour surmonter la période de deuil suivant la communication du diagnostic ainsi que d'alliés précieux dans la gestion quotidienne du petit-fils.

Le grand-parent est la figure extérieure la plus proche de la famille nucléaire et, en même temps, du système familial élargi et du contexte social. Toutefois, en ce qui concerne le parcours identitaire des grands-parents et, par conséquent, l'identification de leurs fonctions, le partage émotionnel entre parents et grands-parents, ainsi que celui lié aux modalités de gestion des comportements problématiques du petit-fils, peuvent considérablement faire la différence.

Dans la perspective pédagogique-spécialisée, donc, certaines questions pertinentes se posent. La première concerne la nécessité de reconnaître plus

fortement la valeur éducative des grands-parents au sein des familles en situation de handicap, d'abord avec des interventions plus importantes dans le domaine de la recherche scientifique, ensuite avec l'identification de formations spécifiques. En ce sens, il est important d'écouter les grands-parents et de laisser chacun d'eux choisir d'utiliser l'auto-narration qui correspond le mieux à sa propre expérience.

Sur la base de ce qui a été dit, il faut donc réfléchir davantage dans la perspective de la formation des formateurs, c'est-à-dire de ceux qui rencontrent quotidiennement des familles nucléaires et qui, souvent, n'impliquent pas les éléments les plus proches et tout aussi importants, comme les grands-parents. En effet, dans la pleine reconnaissance des tâches et fonctions spécifiques, les formations méritent d'être réalisés dans la perspective du parent et du grand-parent. L'expérience racontée par l'une des personnes interrogées souligne cette affirmation:

J'ai demandé ici au centre s'il y avait quelqu'un à qui je pouvais parler pour en savoir plus et ils m'ont proposé un cours de bénévolat auprès d'enfants autistes. C'était affreux! Avec moi, il y avait des gars qui venaient chercher des crédits universitaires ou de lycée, des dames plus âgées que moi qui le faisaient parce qu'elles avaient du temps disponible à consacrer aux autres. Je l'ai fait parce que j'étais plongé dans une douleur totale. Alors voir les vidéos, voir tout ça... Je rentrais chez moi dévasté. Mon mari qui était en guerre contre moi parce qu'il disait que ce que je faisais était absolument mauvais, que je devais m'en éloigner... Le deuxième jour – parce que c'était une immersion totale – j'ai trouvé le médecin qui, à la fin du cours, m'a dit: « Madame, pourquoi ne venez-vous pas me voir un jour? J'ai donc commencé à lui parler, seule, et j'ai enlevé cette douleur. Puis j'ai découvert que ce neveu n'était pas que de la peine, parce que tout ce qu'il fait... regarde, si avec les autres neveux je ressens de la joie, avec Francesco je touche le ciel avec un doigt. Certaines expressions, qui n'avaient aucun sens pour moi auparavant, ont pris un sens avec lui. Quand ils m'ont donné mon fils, après l'avoir mis au monde, j'ai pensé: "Il n'y a pas de plus grande joie!". Ensuite, j'ai pris ma première petite-fille et j'ai dit: "Non, vous pouvez être encore plus heureux!". Avec Francesco c'est une autre dimension. C'est la conscience que l'amour existe et cet enfant représente cela dans ma vie ».

Être du côté des grands-parents, c'est aussi envisager la famille dans une perspective holistique et complète. Il s'agit également de jeter les bases d'une pédagogie spéciale des relations familiales, capable de répondre aux besoins et aux exigences de tous les acteurs de la vie familiale. Personne n'est exclu.

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## **1.4. New challenges in family education: supporting the development of a sustainability mindset in future generations**

*Giada Prisco<sup>1</sup>*

### **1.4.1. Introduction**

Tracing the multiple tensions that mark the 21st century is quite difficult when we think of the spread of new poverty and inequalities, the restriction of democratic spaces, the exploitation of natural resources, the alteration of environmental balances, and so on. From 2001 to the present day, we have witnessed unprecedented events, catastrophes, and upheavals: from the 9/11 attacks to the recent Covid-19 pandemic, we have been confronted with deepening and increasingly global inequalities, uncertainties, and asymmetries.

In a world under siege, increasingly complex and vulnerable, families are called upon to support the younger generation, the citizens of tomorrow, in the acquisition of a sustainability mindset (Rimanoczy, 2021) and a planetary awareness (Morin, 2001), which can help them interact in a conscious, responsible and reflective way in the current global world.

Starting from these premises, the paper offers a theoretical-critical reflection on the challenges posed to family education regarding the formation of future generations, focusing on the urgency for a cultural change towards sustainability. More specifically, the article aims to explore the social situation that we are living in, focusing on the need for families to provide the new generations with the necessary tools to project themselves towards the future, assuming the role of active agents of change and transformation.

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### 1.4.2. Lockdown Generation in the Time of the Pandemic

The pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus has burst into the world representing a substantial disruption, causing unprecedented contingencies and upheavals. The Covid-19 pandemic has spared no one and has hit every sphere of our daily actions in a transversal way, accentuating the weaknesses and criticalities already inherent in our systems. Suddenly, we found ourselves catapulted into a “surreal” reality. From one moment to the next, we found ourselves having to radically change every aspect of our lives: our routines, habits and certainties (Silva, Gigli, 2021). We have been able to find alternative ways to continue to carry out those fundamental activities of our lives. We have been able to continue to communicate with others, both in increasingly less social and increasingly social forms, to carry out our work thanks to smart working, to maintain our relationships with family and friends, even at a distance. Unfortunately, this was not the case for everyone. For many men and women, boys and girls, the reality was quite different. Families certainly represent one of the social actors most affected by the effects of the pandemic crisis. Preliminarily, it should be noted that this crisis, for some families, produced particularly harsh and disorienting consequences, exacerbating some precarious situations, even before the advent of Covid-19 (Save the Children, 2020a). For some families, the pandemic took the form of a sort of “hurricane” that caused a major upheaval in family balance. According to the Save the Children’s European report “Guaranteeing children’s future. How to end child poverty and social exclusion in Europe”, the families that have been most affected by the pandemic were those who were already in conditions of vulnerability and fragility: single parent families, large socio-economically disadvantaged families, low-income families, families with a migratory background, families with children with disabilities, families belonging to an ethnic minority, families living in rural or disadvantaged areas (Save the Children, 2021). For all those precarious realities, the pandemic caused further and profound difficulties which consequently worsened the quality of life and well-being of family members. For example, the situation experienced by some large families and the difficulties faced in sharing work and study spaces and in the management of distance learning, or the reality of some single-parent families deprived of the support of the parental network; or the cases of families made up of separated or divorced couples, in which many parents have found themselves unable to look after their children due to mobility restrictions. The problems that emerged during the pandemic were many (Biffi, Gambacorti-Passerini, Bianchi, 2021): a heightened sense of social isolation; distance from one’s own family and

friend network; lack or inadequacy of technological tools for the entire family; sharing of small or unsuitable domestic spaces; difficulty in supporting sons and daughters in their studies; prolonged closure of schools and ECEC services; the management of stress and uncertainty; illnesses and deaths; economic difficulties, to name a few. Many were the situations faced by families, as well as many were the responses given by individual subjects to face this reality (Lorenzini, 2021). It is undeniable that within families with children, the youngest who were the subjects that have been most affected by the restrictions due to Covid-19. Younger generations were certainly those who have paid the highest price: we cannot underestimate the effects and profound changes that the Covid-19 epidemic brought to younger everyday lives if we want to avoid the risk of transforming this health emergency into an educational crisis (Ulivieri, 2018) to the detriment of the rights of children and adolescents. Isolation and social distancing, forced recruitment, the disruption of routines were not only some of the difficulties to be overcome but rather factors that had a profound and, unfortunately very often, negative impact on the development and growth of young girls and boys (Eurochild, 2020). Especially for pre-adolescents and adolescents, this historical period was experienced in contrast with the natural impulses of this phase of life, in which exploration, social experimentation and confrontation with the “outside world” favor the acquisition of the awareness necessary for the construction of one’s own identity (Barone, 2009). Thus, our young adolescents suddenly found themselves having to grow up in solitude and isolation, with so many changes to face and few experiences to be able to experiment, deprived of confrontation with their peer group (Save the Children, 2020b, p. 45). Adolescence is one of the most delicate periods of life for everyone (Erikson, 1968), but “being a teenager” during a pandemic was certainly even more intense for many boys and girls. If, at first, the lockdown could have been experienced as a sort of “vacation”, a break from hectic normality and extra time to spend at home, in the long run, for many of them, the situation became unbearable. Each child and adolescent approached the situation differently; however, it is undeniable that the lived reality has strongly conditioned their growth opportunities, sometimes leaving a deep and indelible trace on their future development (Ammaniti, 2020). In fact, it has been highlighted that in some cases, the suffering experienced by young people during that period resulted in real symptoms, among which the most frequent were anxiety, sleep disturbances, eating disorders, increased irritability and depression (Segre, Campi, Scarpellini, Clavenna, Zanetti, Cartabia, Bonati, 2021). We must therefore realize that, in such conditions, the growth process sees its complexity increase almost exponentially, becoming more and more tiring

and problematic (United Nations, 2020). If we take forced isolation as a reference, we can see how the lockdown limited, if not denied, many of those processes typical of the adolescent phase, such as the experimentation of oneself, the exploration of the external world and therefore suspended all those activities that normally provide meaning, sense, structure and rhythm to everyday life, fundamental for a correct and positive emotional, cognitive and social development. Not by chance, the web, or rather the universe of social networks, seems to have remained, perceived by young people as the place still capable of satisfying their evolutionary needs (Di Bari, 2020). Within that virtual world, adolescents had the opportunity to search and experiment with their own identity, to be inspired by new reference figures, to distance themselves from their family at a time when, due to forced isolation, it seemed to be literally impossible, to maintain contact with one's peers and even to have the chance to establish new friendships without the limits that distance, even in normal times, would pose. At the same time, we cannot forget that the lockdown generation found themselves operating in anomalous conditions of development, isolated from the world, far from their community, closed in their homes, perhaps too small to contain everything that adolescence entails, perhaps too narrow to be able to allow their own self to flourish (Maltese, 2021). Many young people have been forced to put their daily lives on stand-by, narrowing their development in a single place and in a single time substantially characterized by a dilated and not very reassuring present (Mancaniello, 2020). Far from everything and everyone, alone with themselves, adolescents in the digital age have lived in an apparently frozen time, stuck in the stillness of a frightening present, full of uncertainties, doubts and fears.

### **1.4.3. From “Lockdown Generation” to “Anxious Generation”**

The fears and concerns experienced during the period of the pandemic emergency have not died down but rather increased exponentially among young generations. The lockdown generation had to adapt to an environment where protection and safety were at the center, but now that the world has returned to a certain “normalcy,” these same people are facing an even more turbulent and worrisome reality, creating a spiral of anxiety. While the lockdown generation has experienced a period of uncertainty and forced change, marked by quarantines, restrictions, closed schools, social distancing and isolation, today's generation seems to be facing other scenarios characterized by a growing fear and worry about the future.

An understandable concern given that we inhabit an increasingly hotter, more populated, more polluted, more vulnerable and less ecologically stable planet. As the journalist David Wallace-Wells writes, we inhabit an “uninhabitable, unfair, polluted earth” in which our very existence is now in danger (Wallace-Wells, 2020): our societies are increasingly polarized; geopolitical, ideological, cultural and social tensions, armed conflicts and civil wars are the order of the day; natural resources are being depleted; and poverty continues to afflict entire families and communities in every corner of the earth, threatening the livelihood and survival of millions of people in different geographic areas.

The fact that younger generations are more aware and are more willing to talk about these issues is certainly a positive step, but at the same time, these emergencies have contributed to forming a more uncertain worldview among young people. A worldview that is darkened by the myriad of negative news stories that can be found online. Consider, for example, the widespread phenomenon of doomscrolling or doomsurfing, the act of spending excessive time reading negative news on digital devices. This harmful habit, which exploded during the Covid-19 pandemic, continues to expand, especially among the younger generation pushing them to “detemporalize” the present, diverting their attention from the here and now, leading them to nurture a sense of powerlessness over their surroundings (Prisco, 2021).

Misinformation and doomscrolling fuel anxiety, making it difficult for them to disconnect from an incessant cycle of worry. The constant connection to digital devices and the availability of real-time information (often negative or alarming) do not offer young people the opportunity to “disconnect” or have moments of serenity. The constant pressure resulting from the need to always be reachable and up-to-date, as well as the fear of being excluded from online social dynamics, can increase anxiety. This can lead them to cultivate feelings and attitudes of indifference and habituation, boredom and resignation, confusion and demotivation by stirring an inner tension between the impulse to do something and a certain resistance (Sandrini, 2022, pp. 32-33). These processes can thus lead young people to harbor a chronic distrust of the world and the near future, leading them to experience a moral and psychological fatalism. In this case, think for example of the new psychological challenges advanced posed by “eco-anxiety”. In fact, eco-anxiety is not just a chronic fear of natural disasters, climate change and worsening environmental conditions, but it is also a distress that leads people to be unable to focus on their existential planning (Prisco, Isch Lopez, Romero Moñivas, 2024). Especially for the younger generation, this is particularly detrimental since they may face moments of “inner despondency,” experiencing real states of “emotional stagnation”

that lead to a sense of helplessness, inadequacy, and despair (Iaquinta, 2022).

In this regard, U.S. psychologist Jonathan Haidt argues that today's young people, especially those belonging to Generation Z, became the first generation to spend adolescence under the absolute domination of smart-phones, forming their identities and belongings in the largely unregulated and poorly understood universe of social media. According to Haidt, the explosive combination of “over-protection in the real world” and “under-protection in the virtual world” has made them “super-anxious”. Time spent in front of screens and away from face-to-face interactions has contributed to social isolation and made them addicted to likes, retweets, and comments. To restore a more humane childhood and adolescence, he suggests to all parents and professionals involved in education and training to follow four new norms among which stands out “more independence, free play and responsibility in the real world”: that's the way boys and girls naturally develop social skills, overcome anxiety, and become self-governing young adults (Haidt, 2024).

#### **1.4.4. Shaping future generations, building possible worlds: the role of families in the global era**

The current generation is growing up in a complex and unstable social, cultural and economic environment, and parents are faced with a variety of challenges they have never faced before. However, although this presents a significant difficulty, it also offers an opportunity to develop more conscious and empathetic parenting, to build a deeper and healthier relationship between parents and children. In this context, the family can and must make the difference. It must be configured as a safe place in which to “return” and from which to start again, as a secure base (Bowlby, 1988) in which to anchor one's growth and development, as a protected haven in which to recover a sense of security and belonging that, in these complex and challenging times, can risk being lost.

Parenting in the global era is a complex condition, full of challenges but also multiple opportunities. The key to best coping with this condition lies in the ability to adapt to changes, to be flexible and to maintain open communication and dialogue with one's children. Only in this way, flanked and supported by the family, young people will be able to seek their own self-determination and self-assertion as free and independent subjects. Now, more than ever, children and adolescents, the citizens of tomorrow, need to acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that make them

aware of the contribution they can offer to their communities (Prisco, 2021). They are called to walk a journey of self-awareness that will help them to navigate this particular and delicate historical period, treasuring what they have lived and trying to re-signify the experiences faced. Remembering and preserving this life memory, from an educational point of view, will allow them to acquire a greater planetary awareness and a greater sense of individual and collective responsibility (Morin, 2001), to implement responsible choices towards each other and the environment in which they find themselves. The future commitment required of new generations is promoting a new cultural orientation, aimed at developing that “transformative resilience” (Giovannini, Benczur, Campolongo, Cariboni, Manca, 2020), capable of helping them to react and positively overcome the challenges imposed by current modernity. In this sense, family context represents the ideal educational environment for cultivating in young people that pedagogy of care, responsibility, commitment and awareness, required today, to inhabit our common home (Mortari, 1994). Family can be the sponsor of this new phase also as a generative place of new consumption models, new lifestyles and new approaches. Educating young people about current problems and emergencies means making them aware of the reality that surrounds them, it means pushing them to ask themselves questions, reflect on their actions and behaviors, evaluate other, new, renewed possibilities of living in the surrounding environment. The new generations are called to think, imagine, conceive, plan and build the near future. In this sense, the family unit must be constituted as a primary relational space in which to share ideas, experiences, values, visions and perspectives of the world, stimulating the development of reflections that introduce the subjects in a collective, community, global dimension. Family can play a propulsive role transmitting to new generations values oriented towards the common good, the overcoming of individualism and care. It is increasingly recognized that the challenge that the new generations will have to face will be to think about the future world, but also and above all to think about themselves in relation to it. The ongoing crises and emergencies raise important questions that call for the development of a renewed way of thinking, capable of elaborating new criteria of ethical-moral action. It is the birth of a mentality capable of accompanying the person to knowing how to be, how to do and how to act in a responsible, participatory and conscious way (Santerini, 2018). Adopting a sustainability mindset (Rimanoczy, 2021) presupposes a change of perspective. In this sense, family has a fundamental task: accompany the person in the development of specific skills necessary for the construction of his/her Self in a global, complex and interconnected society (Pourtois, Desmet, 2005). Questioning

what it means to be a person in the community and within society becomes one of the crucial challenges for the citizens of the future.

The emergencies we face today offer us a unique opportunity to bring about a revolutionary change, a chance to lay the foundations for the world that we would like to hand over to our future generations. Guiding and supporting the planning of future global citizens is not a simple task but represents a great challenge for all those who find themselves accompanying the growth and development of the new generations (Malavasi, 2010). Especially for parents, this presupposes a great interpretative effort and pedagogical intentionality. Educating in the “era of unsustainability” presupposes learning to navigate fragmentation and liquidity (Bauman, 2000). It means being a “work in progress” parent without ready-made recipes or absolute truths, who remains with their children in uncertainty and disorientation but who, at the same time, tries to provide them that planning push for their freedom and self-determination that will lead them to be autonomous and responsible “free to” and “free from” people. In this sense, Alison Gopnik uses the metaphor of the gardener to describe the parent who has the task of making the land fertile, flexible, ready to welcome the hardship and capable of adapting to change (Gopnik, 2017). This type of parent provides a safe and stimulating environment, letting the child develop skills, make decisions and face challenges. This approach promotes mutual trust, believing that children, when placed in the right conditions, are able to develop skills and self-esteem. “Gardener parents” encourage children to have direct experiences, solve problems and learn from their mistakes. In this way, children strengthen their self-esteem, developing greater resilience and adaptability. Parents therefore who do not model their children in their image and likeness, constantly monitoring their activities, smoothing out all difficulties and obstacles, trying to intervene in every situation but those who try to do their best to offer that orientation vector that will allow them to ferry themselves towards other possible destinations. In doing so, we can turn the pervasive anxiety that characterizes this young generation into a powerful force for collective action, innovation, and hope (Prisco, Isch Lopez, Romero Moñivas, 2024). Through education, families can help future generations build a world that is not just sustainable but also emotionally and socially resilient. To cultivate the mindset of sustainability, parents need to focus on creating a future in which individuals feel responsible, confident and connected to both the real world and each other (Malavasi, 2020), ensuring that young people are not only equipped to meet the challenges of the future, but are also motivated and inspired to shape it. A difficult and challenging task, to be sure, but one that should certainly not frighten because, as Michele Corsi states: “bad parents don’t

exist. At most only clumsy ones. For this reason, the mind and heart must be freed from the fear of being inadequate. Seeing themselves, at the same time, as eager to learn and improve” (Corsi, 2016, p. 16). In conclusion, parents can be spokesmen for these demands by preparing the cultural ground needed to initiate the ecological, inclusive and intercultural transition that we feel so urgently.

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## 1.5. Adoptive parents' perception of social support during adoption process

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Enrica Ciucci<sup>4</sup>

### 1.5.1. Introduction

In Italy, the adoption process is lengthy and complex, governed by Law No. 184 of 1983, “*Disciplina dell’adozione e dell’affidamento dei minori*” and its subsequent amendments. This law prioritizes the child’s right to a family, emphasizing this principle in both national and international adoptions. A recent meta-analysis by Palacios and colleagues (2019) has highlighted that the adoption process can remain “healthy” influenced by factors such as the characteristics of children and adoptive parents, and the attributes of the social services involved.

Couples face numerous challenges throughout their adoption process, some similar to those encountered by biological parents raising their children, and others specific to the adoption process (Long et al., 2021), as for example the search for birth parents (Ciucci & Carpenzano, 2022).

### 1.5.2. Method

#### 1.5.2.1. Aim of the study

The present study focused on adoptive parents, aiming to thoughtfully explore their perspectives on the social support they experienced during

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the pre-adoptive and post-adoptive periods. Specifically, it examined parents' perceptions of informal support (e.g., families of origin and friends) and formal support (e.g., social services) throughout the adoption process.

### **1.5.2.2. *Sample***

Eleven pairs of adoptive parents from Central Italy were recruited through an adoptive families' association (mean age of mothers = 48.91 years, SD = 6.72; mean age of fathers = 50.90 years, SD = 6.02). These parents had a total of 14 adopted children, with a mean age of 12.86 years (SD = 5.62) at the time of the study and a mean age of 5.13 years (SD = 3.08) at the time of adoption. Of the 14 adoptions, 12 were international and 2 were national.

### **1.5.2.3. *Procedure***

Participants were contacted by a psychologist who provided them with the necessary documents regarding privacy protection and obtained written consent for participation, including consent to be interviewed and audio recorded. Mothers and fathers were interviewed separately at different times to allow them to express themselves freely and without external influence. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in a quiet and private room, ensuring minimal distractions or external interference while protecting participants' confidentiality. On average, each interview lasted approximately one hour.

Following the recordings, the interviews were transcribed verbatim, and a content analysis was subsequently carried out by the researchers.

### **1.5.2.4. *Instruments and data analysis***

A semi-structured interview was developed specifically for this study. The first section collected general information about the parents and their perceptions of their relationship with their child. The second section focused on aspects of the adoption process, including the reasons for their decision to adopt and the type of adoption (i.e., national or international). The third section examined informal and formal support, specifically addressing the type of support received from the family of origin and external sources (e.g., friends or adoptive families' associations), participa-

tion in pre-adoption training courses, and the support provided during the post-adoption period by both social services and adoptive families' associations or friends.

The interviews were verbatim transcribed and analyzed using Qualitative Content Analysis software (QCAmap, Mayring, 2014).

### 1.5.3. Results

The transcription of the interviews were categorized into three core themes: family of origin, support outside the family, and social services' support.

Regarding perceived support from the family of origin (see Figure 1), both mothers (73%) and fathers (64%) reported that their families initially had "doubts" about the adoption. Additionally, parents often noted that their families were not adequately prepared or were apprehensive about potential future challenges. However, these concerns were generally resolved over time:

... My mother, I must say, did not have a wonderful first reaction to the idea of adoption, but then when she met them [children] everything was resolved. When we decided, maybe she pulled back a bit in front of this unknown experience we would have, the different color of skin, and so we can say she was afraid (MA01).

Or again:

... as the families of origin were not prepared for the idea of adoption at the beginning... (PA10).

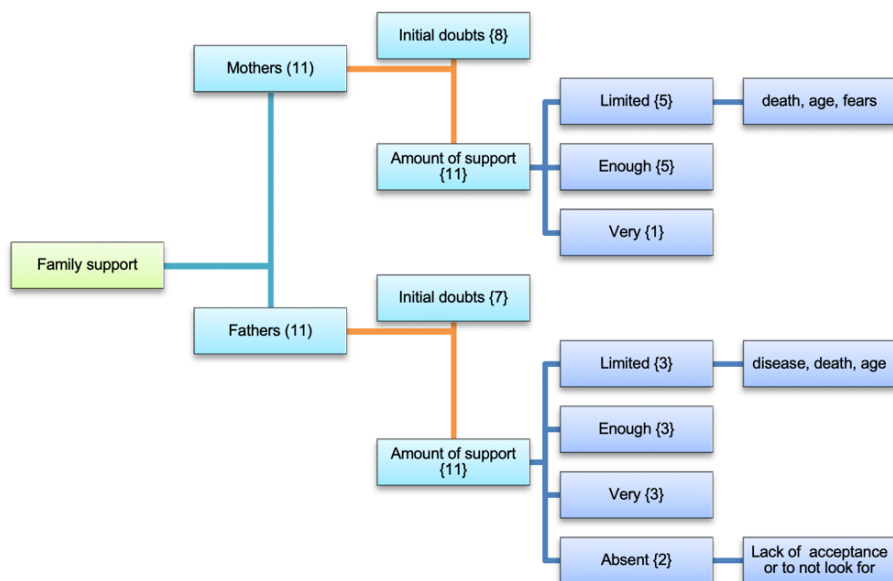
Some mothers (45%) and fathers (27%) reported receiving "limited" support from their family of origin, primarily due to factors such as death, illness, old age, or family members' apprehensions. Similarly, 45% of mothers and 27% of fathers described the support they received as "enough," while 10% of mothers and 27% of fathers indicated they experienced "a lot" of support. Additionally, 18% of fathers reported receiving no support, either because their family of origin did not accept the adoption or because they chose not to seek support.

The parents, both mine and of my husband, were very young at the time and so they helped us (MA02).

Or again:

... they [members of family of origin] agreed [with adoption] and offered us maximum help; in some moments we did not desire a lot of people around us, [...] when we needed them for emergencies, they always were present... (PA08).

Fig. 1 - Family of origin's support



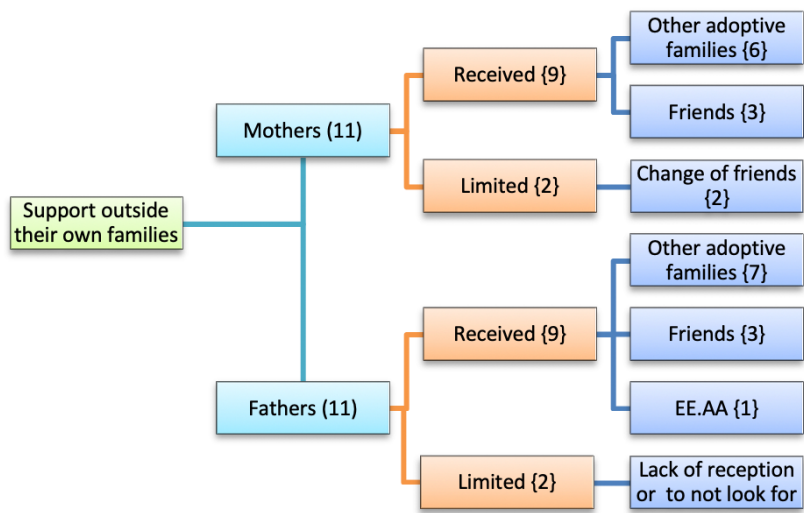
Regarding perceived support outside their own family (see Fig. 2), no differences were observed between mothers and fathers. A total of 82% of both mothers and fathers reported having “received” support from sources outside their own families. Specifically, mothers cited support from “other adoptive families” (N=6) and “friends” (N=3), while fathers identified “other adoptive families” (N=7), “friends” (N=3), and Enti autorizzati (EE. AA) (N=1).

We looked for support outside our families, because before starting the adoptive process we experienced a self-help group (PA04).

Eighteen percent of both mothers and fathers (18%) reported experiencing “limited” support. Specifically, mothers mentioned having “changed friends,” while fathers noted either not receiving support or not seeking it.

... before we started the adoption process, we interrupted several friendships, in the sense that we were often put on the cross by them as a non-procreative parents, ... we have put a lot of friends at the door. However, there were other friends who stayed close to us whatever we did... (MA06).

Fig. 2 - Support outside their own families



Regarding perceived support from social services (see Fig. 3), 64% of mothers and 18% of fathers reported experiencing “limited” support, while 36% of mothers and 18% of fathers described the support as “absent”. Conversely, 64% of fathers reported experiencing “enough” support.

A significant difference emerged in the perception of support received from social services between mothers and fathers: fathers reported feeling to be adequately supported, whereas mothers perceived the support as limited.

In the adoptive process we felt supported by the social services as long as the pre-adoptive course lasted, then afterwards there was a moment of emptiness... (MA03)

Or again:

(...) no one [social services] showed up [to support us]... we faced the adoption with our group of friends, because in any case if we needed, they were there” (MA 08).

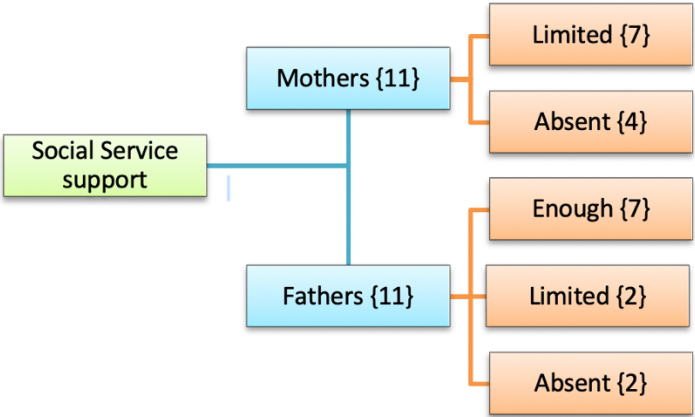
But in the period in which we did it [the adoption], they [social services] were not adequate, in my opinion in terms of modality, but I repeat, they were not there, so it was useless to contact them. When we had to do something, we did it privately (PA01).

Fifty-five percent of fathers (55%) viewed the process of assessing couples' suitability to adopt either lightly or as an opportunity, despite being aware that they were being evaluated. Thirty-six percent (36%) reported feeling judged, while one father stated feeling to be judged but considered it necessary. Among mothers, 73% stated they did not feel to be judged, 18% reported feeling to be judged, and one indicated partially feelings to be judged.

During the assessment of suitability to adopt, 64% of both fathers and mothers reported that the same social worker and psychologist were involved throughout the process. In contrast, 18% of fathers and 36% of mothers stated that the professionals had changed during the process, and 18% of fathers could not recall whether changes had occurred.

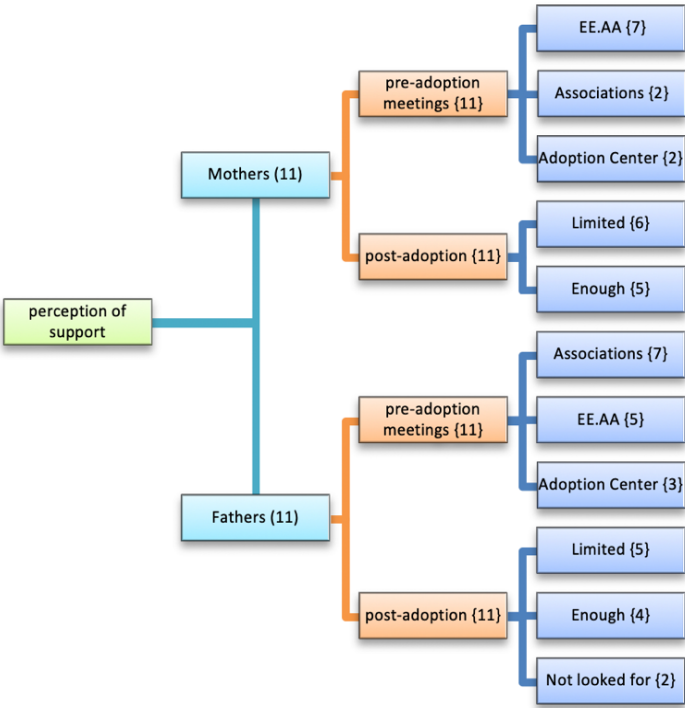
Fathers identified several challenges during the assessment of couples' suitability to adopt. These included being evaluated by social workers who lacked adequate time and tools (36%), insufficient emphasis on their couple's strengths and resources (10%), and excessive bureaucracy (36%). Among mothers, 45% did not identify any critical issues. However, 27% reported feeling to be judged, and 18% highlighted bureaucratic obstacles as a concern.

Fig. 3 - Social Service support



All mothers and fathers reported participating in informational meetings or training courses during the pre-adoption phase, organized by Enti Autorizzati, adoptive family associations, or Adoption Centers. Regarding the post-adoption phase, 55% of mothers and 45% of fathers reported receiving “limited” support, while 45% of mothers and 36% of fathers stated they had received “enough” support. Additionally, 18% of fathers indicated that they had not sought support (see Fig. 4).

Fig. 4 - Perception of support in the post-adoption phase



### 1.5.4. Discussion

This study<sup>5</sup> provided an opportunity to critically reflect on the mothers’ and fathers’ perception of formal and informal support experienced during

5. Declaration of **competing interest**: This research has not received any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial or non-profit sectors.

the adoption process. By considering the perspectives of both mothers and fathers, this study was able to capture the individual perceptions of each parent.

The complexity of the adoption process (both pre- and post-adoption phases) and the presence of various types of support (i.e., formal and informal) highlights the challenges in defining how support is experienced (Serbati, 2016). It is therefore essential to continue in-depth exploration among adoptive families to identify ways to promote adaptive resources for addressing family challenges, while accounting for the specificities of each stage of the adoption process (Ongari & Ceccarelli, 2020).

Regarding support received from families of origin and friends, adoptive couples reported that their families were initially unprepared for the adoption experience (Barbato & Carrozza, 2021). Families often expressed fears of discrimination in cases of international adoption and struggled to fully accept the couple's decision to adopt.

In terms of support outside the family of origin, adoptive couples frequently found assistance from other families with shared adoptive or parenting experiences. This underscores the importance of self-help groups and opportunities for peer meetings and exchanges.

Support from social services, consistent with existing literature (Palacios et al., 2019), was primarily limited to the pre-adoption year, as mandated by formal social service procedures or provided by authorized bodies (*Enti Autorizzati*). In contrast, support was less frequently perceived during the post-adoption phase. These findings emphasize the need for social services to intensify efforts on the post-adoption period to better support adoptive families and address their evolving needs.

This study is not without limitations. The sample size was small and limited to a single Italian region, necessitating validation with a larger and more diverse samples. Additionally, the participants had completed their first adoption many years prior, and their recollection of events may have been less accurate. However, the temporal distance from the initial adoption provides valuable insights into aspects and factors that remain salient despite the passing of time.

Future research should include additional sources, such as families of origin and adopted children, to gain in-depth understanding social support as it relates to the adoption process. Furthermore, there is a need to deeply examine the role of public services as consistent points of reference throughout the adoption process – not only in extreme cases but also from a preventive perspective. Finally, we highlight the importance of fostering a broader culture of adoption, engaging not only adoptive families but soci-

ety at large. Such efforts could help families feel less isolated and more integrated into a network of services and support to cope with the challenges of everyday life.

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## 1.6. Parent training for divorced parents

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### 1.6.1. Marital instability and divorce

In the current socio-cultural context, marital instability is an increasingly common phenomenon, often resulting in divorce, the trend of which is steadily increasing, as Eurostat data tell us. According to the most recent data available for all EU Member States, about 1.8 million marriages and an estimated 0.7 million divorces took place in the EU in 2023: there were 4.0 marriages for every 1000 persons and 2.0 divorces for every 1 000 persons. For divorce in 2023 the lowest crude rates in the EU were registered in Slovenia (1.0 divorces per 1 000 persons), Croatia (1.1) and Romania (1.2). By contrast, the highest crude divorce rates within the EU were reported in Latvia (2.8 divorces per 1 000 persons), Lithuania (2.5) and Finland (2.1)<sup>2</sup>.

Certainly, the causes of divorce include both social changes and cultural factors, which characterize all Western countries, although with different intensity and timing. This helps to explain the varying prevalence of marital instability.

Divorce affects the entire relational system within the family. It alters parental, intergenerational, friendship and social relationships, affecting the status, residence and economic relationships of those involved (Bohannon, 1970; Demo, Fine, 2010; Fine, Harvey, 2006; Bertoni, Iafrate, Carrà, Valls-Vidal, 2015).

As soon as we focus on the social phenomenon of divorce we discern its complexity and multidimensionality. In fact, it postulates reference

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2. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Marriage\\_and\\_divorce\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Marriage_and_divorce_statistics), consulted in May 2025.

to multiple factors, among which the problematic nature of the value framework of contemporary families and the consequent temporariness of the marital bond stand out (Hetherington, Blechman, 1996; Smart, Neal, Wade, 2011).

Divorce challenges pedagogical reflection, which by its very nature aims at finding opportunities and resources even in critical and fragile situations. Specifically, the educational approach can be valuable to support parenting skills in divorce situations. Therefore, it has been taken as a key element to address the issue, knowing that the experience of divorce acquires distinctive features according to the presence or absence of children.

### **1.6.2. Research with divorced parents**

In addressing the issue of divorced parents, from the pedagogical point of view, it is important to answer the following question: what educational support can be offered to separated parents? To answer this question, it is also necessary to answer the following: what are the educational problems experienced by divorced parents? What are their educational needs?

To answer these questions, it was necessary to conduct research that allowed us to get in touch with the experience of some parents, to give voice to their emotions, experiences, problems, and strategies used. Participation and empowerment were the keywords: the actors involved took part in the knowledge-building process and simultaneously became aware of their own resources, acquisitions, and already experienced modes of operation. The purpose of this research was twofold: on the one hand, exploratory, with the intention of examining and understanding the moods, needs and resources of separated and divorced parents; and on the other hand, propositional, in order to be able to offer guidance for their educational support.

The focus group technique (Zammuner, 2003) was used to carry out the research; specifically, it was decided to conduct a multi-session focus group. Three semi-structured focus groups were conducted with the same group, consisting of people who did not know each other and with internal homogeneity (the people all had to be divorced or separated, awaiting divorce). It was important for the researcher to choose people who had already developed coping strategies for the situation. Therefore, those who were still indecisive about the future of their marriage bond were not involved.

A scenario concerning the main issues and the questions to be asked was developed for each focus. The first focus group focused on: moods, needs, and forms of support received and desired. The second focused on parenting and was asked to describe their own situation as a separated

parent, highlighting resources and critical issues. In the second part of the focus, they were also asked to describe their own children, children of separated parents, with their strengths and weaknesses. The third focus concentrated on the parents' living context. They were asked to identify the experiential occasions that facilitated or hindered their parental role. The following contexts were identified: their family, their children's school and sports clubs, the world of work, and their religious community. The focus group concluded with a request to highlight the strategies they experienced as separated parents to cope with the situation, pointing out those that proved effective.

The sessions were recorded and transcribed. A paper-and-pencil content analysis on the text followed, which identified the key themes as well as some interpretive categories. In particular, we used the division into macro and micro-categories and some meaningful quotes from the interviewees. In addition to this, the corpus represented by the focus group transcripts was analyzed by resorting to the textual statistics program TLab, a software program that allows the extraction, comparison and mapping of the content present in a text.

During the three focus groups the participants told their stories of separation and divorce and their current situation. The singular, idiographic element, the unique and unrepeatable experience of each of them was investigated and thanks to their narratives it was also possible to trace some cross-cutting elements. These were useful for fulfilling the transformative purpose of the research: offering pedagogical-educational guidance for supporting separated and divorced parents.

In order to systematize what had emerged from the focus groups, the actors involved in the separation were divided into "the individual, the ex-partner, their children, their relatives and the social context (the others)". For each of these figures, it was possible to outline the problems that had emerged, the help they had received to deal with them, the help they had desired and their resources. The gaps between received and desired support are the basis for designing and developing supportive interventions.

### **1.6.3. Educational needs of divorced parents**

The research described above has made it possible to offer some insights into the needs of divorced parents.

The parents' narratives described the help they had received and the help they would have liked; the gap between them shows where supportive interventions are needed.

Unsatisfied needs can be classified as follows:

- (a) need related to identity: reconstructing and redesigning one's self, as one's role and function;
- (b) need of comparison and sharing, to have spaces and times to meet and exchange with other parents who have experienced separation and divorce, in order to limit the risk of isolation;
- (c) need to build shared parenting, to initiate a co-parenting process, based on the sharing of rights and duties, responsibilities and rules;
- (d) need for acceptance, to cope with abandonment and labeling;
- (e) need to be advised on practical matters, such as separation and divorce documents.

In these regards, pedagogy can offer its contribution, especially with reference to the first three: identity, confrontation and shared parenting. Therefore, educational support should pursue two directions involving existential and parental redefinition as well as the promoting opportunities for confrontation.

Regarding the first purpose, pedagogy is called to highlight the constitutively design structure of the family, to open to the future and to orient to the possibility of triggering changes and modifications of self and relationships. During separation and divorce, one can often be overwhelmed by a sense of failure and inadequacy. Instead, it is appropriate to offer interventions that promote forms of recognition and empowerment of one's resources, strengths (Iori, 2001).

Divorcees should therefore be educated in projectuality, to cultivate commitment and transition from the past to a new existence. To make it possible it is important to reprocess what they have experienced, avoiding sharp cuts. In this sense, failure must be brought out, acknowledged, not repressed or denied. It is important to accept what happened in order to move on (Vegetti Finzi, 2005).

With reference to parental redesign, pedagogy can support parents and children in the difficult educational balancing acts that follow a couple separation (Iori, 2006). Indeed, the educational perspective cannot be ignored when we consider the need for support that divorced parents have in their educational task; that is, in posing themselves as an educating community for the growth of their members. Divorced spouses, in fact, need to work out a new parenting project. In this regard interventions can be aimed at empowering spouses to take decisions about the rules to govern their way of communicating and living (Pati, 2014, p. 125). Indeed, during their married life spouses have enucleated their own relational syntax, which is crucial for constructing and formulating discourses of conjugality and parenting. With divorce, the former discourses disappear but those on par-

enting remain. It is therefore essential for the spouses to continue communicating, making use of a set of rules that they must identify and pursue. It is not a matter of abandoning the relational alphabet so far constructed, but of modifying it. In this sense, it is important not to lose what remains of having once been a family (Iori, 2001), which turns out to be the basis from which you can start paths of co-parenting, of conscious assumption of one's rights and duties, responsibilities and commitments (Ranieri, Molgora, Tamanza, Emery, 2016; Ferrero, Malespin, Oehme, Bruker, 2016).

Thus, parents need to be supported in the process of transforming ties, redefining and renegotiating relationships, which do not fail, but change (Emery, 1982, 1998). As a consequence it is compulsory to dissolve the covenant in its conjugal form, but keeping that bond alive and operational, which has to be transformed and changed (Gennari, Mombelli, Pappalardo, Tamanza, Tonellato, 2014). In other words, it means fostering "continuity in change" (Pati, 2003).

Regarding the purpose of comparing and sharing, it is appropriate to inscribe it in the framework of postmodern society, marked by the increasing privatization of the family and the lack of opportunities for confrontation and sharing with other families. This situation is amplified in cases of separation and divorce, where there is a kind of isolation of the family, hence supporting families means creating links among them: "families help themselves if they get together". It is therefore vital to foster relationships and develop informal networks, in which to share problems and struggles. Indeed, if you connect distress to everybody's everyday life, you might avoid the risk of clinicizing it. This instance is related to the theme of shared parenting, which postulates the construction of a society that understands parenting as a social good that concerns and belongs to all (Iori, 2006). In this way, socially shared parenting opposes the privatization of the family and produces alliances. Parents who attend the same community get to know each other, confront each other and initiate an exchange of educational experiences (Cravero, 2004). This approach is situated in the perspective of the educating society, which becomes an educating subject itself. Still regarding the goal of comparison and sharing, it is also important to develop and sustain a public mindset of understanding and support for separated couples in order to back them up in their parental tasks.

#### **1.6.4. Training Support**

After recognizing and describing some important purposes that a support intervention aimed at divorced parents might have, it is appropriate to ask what possible forms of intervention can be implemented.

Among the various interventions to support divorced parents, I would like to direct attention to the formative ones. Indeed, I assume that small group work coordinated by a facilitator responds well to their needs and promotes empowerment and resilience. The training activity, in fact, becomes an opportunity to support the person in his or her existential and parental redesign, moving from the recognition of his or her skills and resources and encouraging them to detect unprecedented opportunities for growth in adversity (Simeone, 2008). In addition to this, training fosters collaborative behavior: parents come together and confront each other in order to build knowledge and grow together (Catarsi, 2008). The training device allows to become aware of oneself and one's situation, while sharing it with others who are going through similar experiences, imagining new possibilities and foreshadowing untrodden paths.

We intend to foreshadow a type of training that is meant as “accompaniment”; that is to say that helps and supports adults to become aware of their educational tasks and to carry out their parental function. M. Paul, who has been dealing with the subject of accompaniment for years, refers to three synonyms to describe this concept: leading, escorting, guiding (Paul, 2007)<sup>3</sup>. The first outlines accompaniment as a directionality to be followed, through a progression of steps. It is indeed about inciting someone, following and controlling their path. The second calls into question protection, in the sense of both help and educational care. The third suggests an idea of accompaniment as guidance when taking a decision; thus, it refers to advising and urging. As a consequence, accompaniment turns out to be like walking together, standing by (Biasin, 2010; Boutinet, Denoyel, Pineau, Robin, 2007).

Accompaniment will have to start from the parents' own experience in order to strengthen their skills and help them deal with problems regarding the upbringing of their children. Therefore, parental experience is used as a resource for training, as a starting point to design interventions that respond to specific needs and requirements. It is thus vital to detect the educational culture of each family (Pati, 2014). This kind of parent training thus turns out to be a tool for increasing awareness about one's own educational practices, highlighting their weaknesses as well as their strengths; making parents autonomous in dealing with the encountered problems; stimulating discussion and sharing among parents; and fostering processes of change in the way parents and children interact.

The emphasis is on parents' skills and their experiences of the parental function. It is not intended to promote dependence, but autonomy and self-determination.

3. She uses the french term “accompagnement”.

Which directions must be taken to promote training accompaniment for divorced parents?

Training support courses for divorced parents should make use of the leadership of a facilitator and the small group device, recognizing its potential to activate changes. The group will exclusively consist of divorced parents, whether they wish to be present together or not. Mixed-gender groups will give voice to the masculine as well as to the feminine. This parent training will start from the recognition of parents' needs, highlighting wishes, shortcomings, but also resources, strengths and skills. The topics covered will have to pursue two macro goals, that of existential and parental redesign and that of comparison and sharing. Consequently, accompaniment will allow people to give voice to their identities as men and women, to become aware of themselves and who they want to be. It is also crucial to favour co-parenting through the training action, that is to say, implementing actions and behaviors, which foster the possibility of exercising one's parental function jointly.

In this sense, training accompaniment can help imagine how to modify and transform one's relationships. From a family resilience perspective, it might help recognize that suffering and failure due to the breakdown of one's marital and family project may be opportunities for development and growth aimed at personal and family well-being. In addition to this, the training device allows to come in contact with similar stories thanks to comparison and sharing among participants and so to foster relationships and exchanges about possible coping strategies.

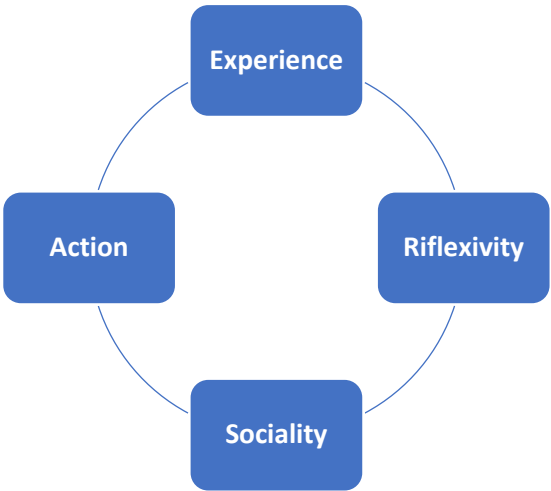
From a systemic perspective, this type of intervention should have repercussions on the self, in terms of awareness, confidence in one's own abilities, sense of self-esteem, and stimulus for change; on the family, by increasing awareness regarding one's parental role, transforming one's relational modes, and improving communication skills; and on the local community, by increasing a sense of co-responsibility, strengthening informal and formal networks, and developing widespread parenting.

In order to make this training effective, it is essential that participants get involved and actively participate in the training where they and their own experiences play the central role (Knowles, Holton III, Swanson, 2008). The ultimate aim is definitely the activation of a process of reflection and reworking of their own stories, which is not intended to "crush" parents with second thoughts and regrets, but to empower them and give them self-confidence. In this sense, participants are accompanied to be more aware, more responsible, more willing to improve their relationships (Sirignano, 2013).

Therefore, this training may represent a specific space and time in which parents can revisit their own practices and activate comparison and

sharing, prompting them to learn from them and from others. There seem to be four cornerstones in training accompaniment to support families and parents in their educational tasks: experience, reflexivity, sociality and action (Zini, 2018). The result of the interweaving of these 4 elements is a cyclical process, which must be traversed and retraversed by parents: personal experience and family practices are the starting point; they must then be subjected to reflective thinking; sharing and confrontation follow; the ending point is action, change.

*Fig. 1 - Elements for training support*



a) Experience

Valuing experience in the process of parents’ accompaniment implies recognizing family practices as real forms of knowledge and the possibility of being able to learn from them. This means assigning a central role to families, who turn out to be the true experts in their own situation. They are indeed the bearers of skills and experiences, which become the pool from which they draw during training. Therefore, parenting skills are recognized (Formenti, 2008) as the starting point for what parents know and do, and not what is lacking. This approach makes it possible to spread a “culture of competent parenting,” which helps to consolidate processes of civic empowerment aimed at “extended social parenting” (Iavarone, 2013).

The educational approach that assigns a central role to experience is that of experiential learning, which moves from the awareness that not all

experiences are educational. It is known that J. Dewey maintained that only those fostering people expansion and enrichment are as such (Dewey, 1949). Experiential learning builds on people's lived experiences and urges them to review them from the proper distance, problematizing them, questioning them, in order to give them meaning. In this sense, it can be argued that training becomes situated, close to people, to their contexts and their problems, and it is not perceived as abstract and ineffective (Kolb, 1984; Reggio, 2010).

## b) Reflexivity

Experience often results in mere operability and repetitiveness and under these circumstances mere participation in an experiential context cannot guarantee the construction of knowledge and learning. There is a need for reflective thinking about such experience, otherwise it runs the risk of being "blind" (Schön, 2006).

In view of this, reflection becomes the second foundation of training accompaniment. It is understood by Dewey as that kind of thinking which consists of mentally falling back on a subject and turning serious and continuous consideration to it (Dewey, 1961, p. 61). According to the author, no experience is meaningful without some element of thought (Dewey, 1992). H. Arendt also goes in this direction. According to the author, people can have meaningful experiences only when they can speak and mutually attribute meaning to their words (Arendt, 1994).

Moreover, training contexts are delineated as laboratories of reflective thinking that have the epistemology of practice as their object (Mortari, 2003), through which participants interrogate their ways of acting, their experiences.

The purpose of such pathways is therefore to promote the growth of the reflective parent. A parenting style dense with reflective rationality is at stake; the goal is, therefore, to make parents gain awareness regarding their parenting behaviors and "implicit" knowledge (Pourtois, 2002). Training has the task of guiding and supporting this inner journey, with the aim of elaborating further meanings to understand the experiences and thoughts that accompany it and to interpret what happens and what happens to us on an emotional and cognitive level (Cunti, 2013). Accompaniment is thus aimed at interpreting practices, attributing meaning to the thoughts and actions that comprise them.

## c) Sociality

The third axis of training accompaniment refers to participation, in the awareness that learning implies participating in the cognitive and relational

processes that distinguish practices. There is learning only if exchange of experiences occurs. There is, in fact, a type of learning, learning by interacting, which is learning through interaction. It no longer appears as an individual process, but as a process of social participation based on practice (Wenger, Mc Dermott, Snyder, 2007). Training, therefore, should be an opportunity to socialize knowledge, skills, in order to co-construct new ones, recognizing that solutions can be found together and are not the preserve of specialists.

In addition to this, it would be important in training to recover an element with a strong educational value: conviviality, which is nourished by the taste of encounter, informality, exchange and comparison of experiences, and the recovery of emotions. It is important, in this sense, to experience the pleasantness of training, of being together and sharing emotions and thoughts. It is a “light” training, which facilitates spontaneous and authentic encounters.

#### d) Action

The goal of accompaniment cannot stop at awareness, but must tend, in a pedagogical-educational key, to action, to change. Parents training accompaniment, therefore, must lay the groundwork for the other to educate himself or herself to change. In this sense, in education the offer of goals and objectives is qualified by the instance of ‘having to be’, that is, by the proposal of a certain formative path which is to be made functional not only to what the subject being educated is at a certain moment of his or her life, but to what the same, in accordance with his or her evolutionary characteristics and the reality in which he or she is placed and with which he or she interacts, can and must become (Pati, 1999, p. 4). Awareness therefore becomes the prerequisite for change, and it produces change because it involves the confirmation, development or change of the theories by which one interprets experience, enabling one to make decisions or take actions that are based on its results (Mezirow, 2003; 2016; Formenti, 2017).

Accompaniment based on these four elements takes the form of humanistic education, which places the person at the centre and tends to the person’s growth and development. It is personalized and personalizing: it takes its starting point from the practices and validation of subjective resources and aims at strengthening them. In addition to this, the accompaniment, aimed at the dual goal of fostering both awareness of oneself and one’s practices and the modification of them, turns out to be transformative. Actually, thanks to reflective practices on experience, such training allows the transformation of reality and our knowledge of it.

Formative accompaniment, based on self-awareness, allows supporting the parent in confirming, developing, and questioning his or her own practices and educational interventions. Proposing this kind of parent training implies strengthening parents' sense of self-control and self-determination over their own lives. It does not mean telling them what to do, but helping them to represent other scenarios, modes of action and strategies.

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## 1.7. Adoption and training. The perspective of adoptive parents

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### 1.7.1. Background

In the recent years, the nature of adoption has changed significantly, by virtue of the evolution of legislative guidelines and, even more, in relation to widespread socio-political and cultural changes. Over the past decade, the number of couples willing to adopt has decreased significantly. However, there is a notable lack of analysis regarding the reasons for the precipitous decline in adoptions. In this context, it may be useful to consider the following factors:

- a) *Decreasing birth-rate.* In line with declining birth rates, adoption desire also gradually decreases over the years.
- b) *Assisted Reproductive Technology.* Couples who are willing to adopt are mostly people who deal with infertility. Therefore, the possible connection between the decline in adoptions and the opportunities arising from Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART), must be considered (Mignot, 2015).
- c) *Progressive increase in the age of couples who apply to adopt.* Another significant factor is the increasing age of couples applying to adopt. This trend is in line with the tendency to postpone trying for a pregnancy to a later age, but also with the length related to the diagnostic process and the multiple attempts of Assisted Reproductive Technology. When couples experience the failure of ART, advanced age leads them to desist from alternative paths such as adoption or foster care.
- d) *Aspects related to the procedure.* According to current Italian law<sup>2</sup>,

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2. Law 4 may 1983, n. 184, and subsequent amendments define the timing for this first phase of the adoption process (Art. 22, par. 4; Art. 29 bis).

assessment of adopters should be completed within approximately eight to nine months. However, unlike pregnancy, the waiting period for adoption is undefined, and there is no certainty that the process will lead to a finalized adoption.

About intercountry adoptions, timing is influenced by the documentation to be produced in compliance with the requirements of foreign authorities, the waiting lists of the Authorised agencies in those countries; the matching and verification procedures of the Central Authorities. Social and political instability in the countries of origin can lead to a complete halt in the procedure or prolong timing to finalization. Critical issues may arise within the diplomatic relationships between the Central Authorities of the country of origin and the receiving countries. Moreover, intercountry adoption is sometimes associated with a suspected lack of transparency in procedures and noncompliance with children's rights laws. Another important issue regards the high costs and the need to stay in the country for a period (one or more trips with variable length of stay).

e) *Covid-19 Pandemic and wars*. It is important to consider that the Covid-19 pandemic has also slowed down adoptions. Limited movement and travel difficulties have made countries very cautious regarding the initiation and conclusion intercountry adoption procedures. Furthermore, the increase in international conflicts, such as the war between Russia and Ukraine, also has repercussions, including the suspension of adoptions within the affected countries.

f) *Special needs*. The Hague Conference on Private International Law (2005, 2008, 2015), urged by the changing trends in intercountry adoptions, impact the issue of *special needs children* in adoption. This category includes children who present at least one of the following elements: behavioural problems or severe traumatic experiences (abuse, ill-treatment, abandonment, long period of institutionalization); mental or physical disability; age over seven years; sibling groups. Special needs increase adoption complexities (Manieri, 2020) and require specific individual assessment to ensure the best match possible. For these reasons, prospective adoptive parents need “specific selection, mandatory preparation and counselling”, including informing them of the post-adoption support available (Hague Conference on Private International Law, 2015, art. 5, 15).

The analysis of the socio-institutional environments emphasises the urgency of supporting families to face the critical issues associated with the adoption, through pre-placement preparation and post-adoption services.

Preparation for adoptive parenthood has long been considered an essential prerequisite and a form of guidance, as the Hague Adoption Convention shows to prospective parents' eligibility criteria to adopt. However,

“despite the importance of adoption in creating permanency for youth and these legal mandates, the preparation provided to adoptive parents is often lacking” (Lee et al., 2018, p. 63). Literature suggests that adoptive parents require adequate training and support that meets the needs of the adoptees (Bartlett & Rushovich, 2018; Bergusund et al., 2018; Murray et al., 2019). It is important that adoptive parents understand the impact of early unfavourable experiences on children’s developmental functioning and behaviour. High-quality training could favour *sufficiently good post-adoption results* (Macario, 2010; Murray et al., 2019). The question to pose is how should we, therefore, consider organizing such training?

In Italy, as in many other countries, the precise format for prospective adoptive parent training has been left to local social services to decide. Relatively “few articles have focused on how adopters experience the pre-approval stage of the process or the ways in which their views change in the course of such process” (Dance & Farmer, 2014). It is, therefore, essential to investigate this area, trying to draw attention to those elements that can be decisive in preparing parents (Rogers, 2018). In this perspective, pre-placement preparation and post-adoption support are key conditions for the adoptive family’s well-being (Chistolini, 2020).

### **1.7.2. Training: adoptive parents’ perspective**

The challenges that adoptive families face require proper preparation and training. For this reason, the paper aims to investigate this theme from the point of view of adoptive parents.

The qualitative research project makes use of the narrative method and involves six couples of adoptive parents in semi-structured interviews (Tabacchi, 2021). It is possible to investigate both the pre-placement preparation and the post-adoption support through the adoptive parents’ perspective.

The research highlights some peculiar aspects, referable to specific phases of pre-adoption.

a) *Adoptive choice*. The adoptive choice requires a gradual process of elaboration, an inner operation, which is set in the interplay between preparation and reflexivity. From the interviews, we can trace some significant passages that describe the path taken towards a deeper understanding of the issues of adoption:

Before giving the availability for adoption, we did some courses that could help us to really understand the world with which we were going to compare. So, before

the readiness to adopt there was still a reflection that is to inform, to evaluate if we have a clear intention to do it (6.2f).

We had approached adoption without knowing so many things. With a totally simplistic approach. Because one says ‘Ah I have so much love to give and I must give it’. But a child is not an adult already well-formed, precise, and balanced, so you must know how to give love in the right way (5.2f).

The adoption choice is deepened by participating in training programs that offer a preparation about the adoption process and allow to examine the underlying reasons for adoption. “Courses in which the possible path of adoption was explained, what this entailed and how it developed. We had an idea, before giving the availability” (6.2m).

Some opportunities are promoted by the public services, through pre-adoption counseling, to evaluate the issues related to the adoption: “reflect on the discourse of welcoming children with disabilities, special needs, risks associated with evolutionary processes...” (4.2f); or through pre-adoption support groups to encourage a correct knowledge of adoption.

The Accredited Agencies for Intercountry Adoptions often offer informal support groups open to couples who are approaching adoption, in which they can know intercountry adoption and get in touch with some adoptive families.

On internet I found these meetings with an Authorized Agencies [...]. And we went [...] and we saw a lot of families with beautiful children. There were children with labiopalatoschisis who had not yet undergone surgery, but they were beautiful, each with its specificity (2.2f).

Another training opportunity comes from the family associationism:

Our training has also been in this direction. Then acquire as much information as possible, even according to the exact experience of the couples who had already made the adoption. To get into the situation [...], to understand what was being put forward (6.7m).

Listening to the adoptive parents provides a glimpse into experience, to “start getting an idea and to insert oneself into the discourse, to attend adoptive families” (2.15f). The informality of exchange and sharing facilitates comparison:

There were adoptive parents who spoke of their experience and you could ask questions. So, some things have emerged there too (5.5m).

It merges that, in the presence of the adoptive parents, it is easier to open up, and raise doubts or perplexity, without the fear of being judged.

b) *The adoptive process.* The adoptive process begins with the presentation of the application to adopt at the Juvenile Court. The institutional process is seen as an obligatory path, which the couple faces with anxiety, but through a retrospective reading we can see deeply formative elements for the couple.

It was a devastating experience. Everyone said 4-5-6 interviews. We got to 10. We did so many. The psychologist was a caterpillar. In the sense that if there was something to dig, she did not take the shovel. She took the plough directly. So, let us say that it moved a lot, even those things we did not have... so also many topics that she brought up... we discussed them a lot at home. In the sense that we realized, even retrospectively, that although at the time it seemed that she had massacred us for something useless, she prepared us for the afterwards, the afterwards that is not only the judge's judgment and the questions he would have asked us, that were more contingent on the moment, but also for what would be the afterwards... That we are now living and that is only the beginning (2.8m).

The judge turned us like two socks. But it was useful. He said 'If you get a Rom child?'. And I told him that I know that it can happen to adopt a Rom child. But I have no problem about race. And there I misspoke because we shouldn't have talked about race (5.9f).

From April to September, the Tribunal called us five times. The fourth time the judge did not treat us very well (1.9f).

Not all those meetings were constructive (1.9m).

No, almost none, because anyway those meetings were very stressful, because the judges always seemed to want something from us and we did not know what to give them (1.9f).

We were not enough (1.9m).

We were not enough. And they treated us as if we were not enough (1.9f).

It is a critical, tiring period, which undermines the couple's stability. Partners often feel questioned and unjustly harassed. The duration of the adoptive process is unpredictable. The couples perceive themselves as being in a "*limbo*", in an undefined space and time. Prospective parents need to explore the deep meanings of the adoptive choice and prepare for the acceptance of the child, who is the bearer of a personal experience marked by suffering, but also by potential and resilience.

For this reason, it is important to have contexts in which to reflect with other people on the experience lived and to find support.

We followed the training with Public Services. After that, we participated in several evenings where there were debates, we participated in courses for couples waiting for adoption with an intervention of couples who had already adopted and then brought their precious experience. We spent our time like this, so that we were not always hanging on to wait, which is the hardest thing (5.15f).

One person who was very close to us was the psychologist from the Accredited agency, who was always very kind. She always answered any phone call or email, encouraging us, giving us the information that she had [...]. I liked the way she approached us, the way she talked to us and how she made us feel (2.8f).

With this time of waiting, we have met people in different contexts. [...] Now we are still in contact with them and their children. [...] With some, we see regularly. Moreover, we also exchange our respective desperations, because then there are those who have older children and so they tell us to be patient (2.15f).

We have always been hooked on someone. We never stopped. There is never been a year of emptiness when we have not done something (4.8f).

c) *The adoption waiting.* It becomes important to find their own way of waiting and respondents give examples of different ways of living the pre-adoption period

We have filled the adoption waiting by moving forward in this life, so as not to be always hanging on to wait. It was always hard anyway the wait. [...] However also the waiting was beautiful. Difficult but fruitful (5.11f).

The wait was, in many ways, long, very long. Perhaps the perception was much longer than real time. It helped a lot anyway having continuous relationships with the other couples waiting, because anyway together we were stronger, because anyway we support one another, because you share, you talk, you feel a little group. And within the group, in my opinion, waiting becomes lighter (2.13m).

It is like a drop that digs. Because anyway it was just like a slow continuous to dig much in our emotionality... Dig a little deeper into our emotions, into our difficulties and how we felt. The metaphor I see from beginning to end of the adoptive process is digging (2.13f).

The training also includes a plan of reflection, which involves prospective parents on a hypothetical level, which opens them to possible educational actions and strategies.

Will I be able to love my son, my son who does not come from my belly? [...]. Will I be able to make him love me? Will he love me? Will he accept me? Will I be enough for him? (1.15f).

We needed ‘Pretend’: ‘Here comes our son, sitting in the middle of you. What do we say?’ . Nevertheless, here are the answers. For example: ‘He puts his feet on the wall’... What do we say to him? And if he says: ‘I am not your son. What do you want?’... So, what do you do? What do you tell him? Here we lived an imaginary but real situation (3.16f).

The waiting period is, on the one hand, an opportunity to implement parenting, develop emotional, relational, and communicative skills. On the other hand, it is a process of empowerment that supports families in overcoming difficulties and taking awareness, starting from their resources.

At the same time, the couples believe that the educational path should also offer opportunities for growth in marital relationships, seeking positive experiences that help them to live beyond the waiting for adoption.

In this, I had a need that my life was perhaps conditioned by this waiting... which could be more or less long. So, we tried to do everything we had to do. We made trips. Always with the thought that adoption was there. But after I had waited so long for a child, I was no longer able to live that expectation. I had to try to live normally (5.11f).

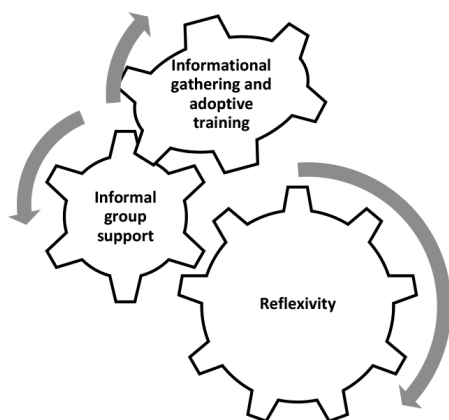
The narratives focus on three interrelated levels, determining the time of pre-placement preparation and training: one involving the acquisition of knowledge and skills about adoption; another concerning the emotional and relational sphere and that benefits from meeting adoptive families; another one that implies the couple’s reflexive behaviour, to start a transformative experience in view of the transition to adoptive parenthood.

### **1.7.3. Discussion**

The interviewees’ narratives and the scientific literature available on pre-adoption lead to the identification of educational support proposals that meet the needs of adoptive parents.

In this perspective, pre-placement preparation must consider upcoming aspects, in the short but also in the long term. The narratives show the importance of attending information and training courses promoted by the services or family associations. The reflexivity of prospective adoptive parents is therefore called for on several dimensions (Fig. 1).

*Fig. 1 - A mature approach to adopting*



The interviews made it possible to collect the stories of each couple, stimulating a retrospective reading of their family history. From these narratives the richness of pre-placement practices was traced.

Preparation and training unfold over a period, involving a technical-bureaucratic process, connected to institutional aspects, and a subsequent preparation phase, which concerns the profound meaning of adoption. Initially, it must include aspects related to the concrete steps that will be taken: understanding the deep meaning of adoption; considering the assessment; meeting the judge for the approval to adopt; strengthening the motivation to adopt. All aspects that involve the adoptive family in the medium-long term must also be considered: inclusion in social/school contexts, adoption storytelling and memories, adolescence, identity building. Another important challenge during pre-adoption regards the preparation for parenthood (Pati, 1999; Rosnati et al., 2003; Rosnati & Iafrate, 2023).

Furthermore, the adoptive parents declared that it is important to enter a network of relationships. “To meet other people in the same situation and who they sometimes provided a considerable amount of mutual support during the preparation period” (Dance & Farmer, 2014, p. 106). Here, too, the role of family associations is essential, because they not only provide the opportunity to investigate certain issues related to adoption, but also to share experiences within a group and find support.

It is noteworthy that there is a need for both formal training from professionals and adoption services as well as informal help that comes from other prospective parents or adoptive families. In addition to the institutional process, a reflective and self-training process is essential in adoption.

The maturation of adoptive thinking evolves over time and through experiences. This process is not to be understood in a linear sense, but according to the dynamics of an upward spiral where, in relation to the family life cycle, it may be necessary to deepen.

Becoming adoptive parents is a slow and gradual process, a real transition (Brodzinsky & Huffman, 1988; Brodzinsky & Pinderhughes, 2002; Levy-Shiff et al., 1991; Golberg, 2010), which requires adjustments and modifications.

In the construction of the parental function, it is urgent to rediscover the *social support*, as outlined by House (1981) and taken up by Stylianos and Vachon (1993):

- *In-formational support*, the result of thorough pre-adoption preparation and training;
- *Emotional support*, offered by others to implement knowledge and skills in the field of adoption. It also contributes to the reinforcement of the feeling of *self-esteem* and of *self-efficacy*;
- *Appraisal support*, a parental motivation oriented towards adoptive parenting, fostered by the deepening of the meanings underlying the experience, a balanced marital relationship, and the full assumption of the parental function;
- *Instrumental support*, as a range of strategies and models to be applied in the educational field, as well as services useful for family life.

As we have pointed out, pre-adoption training must cover a broad dimension, which consists of those aspects of knowledge but also of good educational practices and strategies to be applied during family life.

It is therefore desirable to design training interventions that help the couple to deal effectively with the educational tasks arising from the assumption of the parental function (Simeone, 2008), in relation to the placement of an adopted child in the family.

To this end, new forms of educational intervention can be rethought. On the one hand, the offer of educational counselling services that help the couple to assess their own motivations and to deeply understand their own resources and frailty. On the other hand, group-training support favours a profoundly experiential and participative approach that considers the situation of the participants.

There is an urgent need for lifelong learning, which combines pre- and post-adoption training and facilitate the progress of the educational function in accordance with the evolution of the family life path. The circularity of the educational relationship calls for constant reflection on the dimension of family communication.

The adoptive family, by virtue of the peculiarities that distinguish it, faces specific challenges throughout the life span. These critical events af-

fect the ordinary course of every family, as well as precise moments related to the adoptive story. For this reason, it is necessary to provide special support for adoption, as well as to promote family policies to meet the real needs of adoptive children and parents. In this perspective, the urgency of post-adoption services throughout the family life cycle is evident.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, the research results highlight the necessity to invest in the preparation of adoptive parents and the importance of family networks and associations. The intertwining of the interviewees' narratives and the scientific literature on the pre-placement period made it possible to outline educational support proposals that meet the needs of adoptive parents. Training has the important objective of favouring a transformative process, which can be compared to the butterfly effect (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017), in which the inner work, reflexivity, the alternation of regular and irregular events leads to increased awareness, resilience and access to a broader perspective of adoption (Tabacchi, 2023).

It is essential to provide for the customization of processes, considering the needs of individual couples and the developmental steps they are required to perform. Training must include elements of reflexivity for their family plan.

In this regard, an integrated intervention between local social services, accredited agencies for intercountry adoption, and adoptive family associations, is required. Family associations offer a valuable resource for pre-placement, by making available training courses and tutoring between families. Listening to and discussing with those who live through a similar experience is a precious opportunity to develop skills in adoptive parenthood.

However, it is also necessary to invest in public services, which could support adoptive parenthood and adoptive families in preplacement preparation and in post-adoption training.

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## 1.8. Parent training, resource for the family

*Chiara Bellotti<sup>1</sup>*

### 1.8.1. Supporting the family

The transformations in the structure and functions of modern families have made this educational task more difficult. Over time, these transformations have put a strain on the internal equilibrium of many families.

The members of a family are constantly changing. If we connect the transformative dimension to the evolutionary one, the family system can be evaluated as a living organism, which is subjected to continuous modifications caused by the maturation of single individuals and by the variation of their needs. We are not dealing with a linear, chronological development model; on the contrary, there is an intertwining of gains and losses, successes and failures (Pati, 2014). Each critical event in the individual life cycle becomes collective and affects family relationships.

Each critical event in the individual's life cycle affects the entire family and relationships therein.

Never before have we witnessed such evident signs of relational fragility, demonstrated by the numerous marital breakdowns (separations and divorces), the increase in single-parent families and marked conditions of economic poverty.

Unexpected crises determined by unpredictable situations, together with developmental crises linked to the natural process of evolution of the person, (Simeone, 2014), are conditions that the family must learn to cope with (Loiodice, 2016). However, the suffering caused by a foreseeable event seems in some way bearable, while the suffering caused by unexpected situations risks becoming a highly painful, even destructive, moment for the person.

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Suffering and crises generally refer to a situation of discontent that causes profound changes in the person's life. However, it is important to underline how a problematic situation can become an opportunity for re-orientation. The person concerned should be helped to become aware of the resources necessary to understand the situation and make the necessary changes.

The support offered to the family is a complex process, it aims to provide concrete help so that all its members can grow in a serene and harmonious way.

From the pedagogical perspective, supporting the family means accepting the requests for help that derive from their pain with discretion and delicacy (Cadei, 2017, pp. 85-88).

The educational practice of support refers to the idea of an intervention aimed at promoting family skills for the autonomous resolution of their problems.

Support in the educational field are intended as a set of projects, strategies and tools that affect the various areas of human life. They can be both of a relational nature and involve relationships with close friends and relatives (*informal support*), or of a material nature (*practical and economic support*) which require interventions by services and the community.

*Informal support* of a relational nature (Winnicott, 1970), refers to the presence of figures who, with an empathic attitude, promote the self-empowerment of the person.

This type of support, that families could draw on in the past in times of difficulty, has gradually faded, leading to situations of loneliness and isolation.

Contemporary families ask institutions for guidance in its educational functions through various services.

In particular, the traditional support models of a reparative, therapeutic and welfare nature, the so-called *curing models* (replacement-type interventions), appear to be outdated, while *caring models* (relational-type models) are increasingly affirmed.

The logic underlying these forms of support is based on the *idea of caring* for and taking care of families, strengthening the self-empowerment of its members. It is about *taking care* by leveraging existing resources, reinforcing latent potentials, stimulating them to acquire new educational and care methods. It should not be forgotten that the relationship based on care is a place of reciprocity, co-evolution, and education (Montanari, Costantini, 2021).

Families are thus considered as active and autonomous subjects at the center of the educational process, rather than passive objects of therapy and intervention (Gigli, 2007, pp. 7-17).

In times of difficulty, the family confirms itself as a place in which to experiment and build new forms of balance, allowing its weakness to become its renewed strength (Formenti, 2008).

### 1.8.2. Parent training

In recent years, the theme of *parent training* is often referred to at both national and international levels within the sphere of family support.

Parenting support pathways aim to promote a greater understanding of the relationships between parents and their children, through training and educational counselling. Training, as a theoretical and practical device to cope with the complexity of the present time, aims to offer people the opportunity to face continuous social, economic and institutional changes with their own resources (Bellotti, 2022, p. 15). Parenting training is a journey of growth and continuous transformation that contributes to the improvement of the family. It must be thought, planned and calibrated based on the needs of the people involved.

In recent years, numerous institutional interventions of a preventive nature have been developed for parents. In particular, European policy considers parent training a social investment aimed at increasing the well-being of minors and their parents.

Parent training is part of family-oriented services, a vast set of interventions aimed at prevention (*universal services*). This type of activity involves parents in a situation of “normality” who are faced with specific needs (*targeted services*) (Milani, Zanon, 2015, pp. 1-12). Many activities are carried out in the period pre and post natal, and in the period of adolescence: two phases considered critical in the life cycle.

The courses to prepare for childbirth or those that intervene in the post-partum period are important information and training opportunities for parents aimed at promoting awareness of the needs of the child and of family changes.

They are very useful for couples with their first child who are not always equipped to experience the transitions towards parenthood. For parents of adolescents, the training services aim to strengthen the relational skills with their children, in order to help the young person in his difficult growth path (Milani, 2005).

According to Pati (1995, p. 289), the training of parents is presented as an intentionally structured educational intervention, through which the spouses are to be helped to fulfil their educational responsibilities in the best possible way.

Educators who support parents in this process (learning facilitators) have the difficult task of opening relational spaces, moments of reflection during which they urge parents to reformulate their problems to reach a new way of seeing things (Zani, 1998).

Accompanying parents towards the development of educational skills is a delicate job that requires the establishment of an authentic relationship based on trust.

It is therefore important that the educator continues with his own training and research. These are professionals capable of guiding parents to detect their own needs and to cultivate the ability to responsibly make choices and decisions.

The relationship between the educator and the family, offers forms of help aimed at promoting parental empowerment during times of need.

This creates the conditions for cultivating the development of an autonomous search for strategies, to deal with situations of imbalance and difficulty.

Working towards family empowerment means designing development paths for autonomy, and encouraging parents to face the problems of everyday life (Contini, 2013, pp. 81-86).

In parent training there can be no definitive formula applicable to every family with the same problem. We need an individualized design that takes into account the needs and resources of the family. It is necessary to think of the active involvement of parents as strategic partners (Milani, 2005).

Training does not aim to foster a momentary balance in the family, but to provide a transformative (Mezirow, 1978) and profound learning (*life-deep learning*).

From a pedagogical perspective, there seem to be four formative characteristics of the parent training device:

1. *A moment for knowledge and learning.*

During the training it is important to provide parents with information about the growth of the child, parenting functions and tasks, and communicative-relational modality.

Aspects regarding the values and meaning of “*educating*” should not be neglected. Parent training initiatives are aimed at developing the family’s ability to independently manage the needs of all members of the family unit; increase educational responsibilities; increase the skills and resources of the family and foster the capacity for family dialogue.

2. *A moment for reflexivity.*

With the use of reflective methodologies, it is possible to create forms of learning that start from the analysis of errors continuing up to the construction of new modes of action (Simeone, 2012, pp. 123-138).

### 3. *A moment for dialogue and discussion.*

In most cases, the training uses the methodology of reflection within a small group. Group work allows for the sharing of educational experiences, the overcoming of any feelings of inadequacy, and the acquisition of resilience and empowerment.

During these meetings, parents have the opportunity to talk about and discuss their situation. It is important to allow adequate time and space to facilitate this.

Comparison with other parents supports the learning process and the acquisition of new educational methods.

### 4. *A time for Change.*

Parent training courses aim to develop the ability to analyse problems, search for causes and find effective strategies to cope with difficulties in a new way.

Parent training can be an adequate form of help for parents and an important opportunity to build family well-being.

## Conclusions

Each family, in the course of its history, experiences difficult situations of suffering that put a strain on internal equilibrium. The fragility of the family is very complex and multifaceted reality.

Problematic relationship between parents and children, or between spouses, affect the entire household, causing profound crises to which the need arises to intervene with forms of help and *educational support*.

The forms of support are placed in the dimension of caring for and taking care of families, strengthening the agency of its members.

In particular, it is about taking care by leveraging existing resources, reinforcing latent potentials and developing new relational modalities.

The parent training has the function of guiding and helping to rediscover the value of educational action. This is, through dialogue and comparison with the professional, who does not offer ready-made answers and remedies, but intends to accompany the parent to redesign his own path in a autonomous way.

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## 1.9. Supporting foreign parents through storytelling

Dalila Raccagni<sup>1</sup>

*Good education is needed  
and is needed in life.*

Father, 62 years old

### 1.9.1. Introduction

The various forms of migration that characterise the contemporary era are integral to what is commonly referred to as the 21st-century migration crisis. This period has witnessed approximately one million people crossing European borders, challenging the continent's capacity to uphold the fundamental values upon which it is founded.

The family serves as one of the primary agents of stability for the foreign presence within both European and Italian contexts. This dynamic encompasses diverse modes of establishing relationships in both public and private spheres, which have undergone significant transformations in recent years. Within this evolving framework, pedagogy must engage with the multi-ethnic reality of Italian family life to provide effective support to parental figures originating from different cultural backgrounds.

Europe serves as a critical research field for the study of family migration phenomena, as parents navigate their educational roles while living far from their countries of origin. The diverse forms and experiences of migrant families with a migration background underscore the dynamism and innovative potential inherent in the migration phenomenon. Among these, Italy presents an interesting picture, since as Vincenzo Cesareo defines, from a migratory perspective, it is “an emblematic case [...] because throughout its history it has been from time to time a country of emigration, internal migration, and immigration” (2015, p. 39).

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The issue of migration is a constantly evolving phenomenon, and the presence of foreign nationals residing in Italian territory increasingly demands specific attention to the unique characteristics of each country of origin. Only by closely examining the specific attributes of a migrant's homeland can we gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and perspectives. Conversely, understanding migrants cannot be confined to statistical and demographic analyses alone, particularly when we acknowledge, as Tobie Nathan highlights, the foreigner, even the neediest, is rich in languages that he brings with him, rich in smells and sensations, rich above all in explanations, beings, objects of which he becomes, through the magic of the journey, the representative among us, his guests (2003).

### **1.9.2. Life and background of Ghanaian parents**

Italy presents a multicultural face, the result of a 30-year history of migratory flows, demonstrated by the fact that on 1 January 2018, there were 195 nationalities out of a world total of 232. Among these, the Ghanaian community – involved in this research – was still among the top twenty nationalities with the presence of 49,940 people, an increase of 1,303 people compared to 2016. By January 1, 2022, the number had increased to 50,778 (1% of foreigners in Italy).

The presence of foreign nationals from the Republic of Ghana has been numerically significant and stable in Italy since the 1980s, which is why this group has been selected for analysis.

While migration initially involved primarily the head of the family, many Ghanaian migrants now reside with their families, facilitated by residence permits predominantly obtained for family reunification purposes. The aspiration for a better life and self-fulfilment, often intertwined with the migration experience, represents one of the primary motivations behind their decision to migrate.

This aspiration typically develops prior to migration and frequently constitutes its core motivation: individuals envision a world and a social or familial context offering a superior quality of life. This vision is often shaped in part by connections to social networks within their cultural community already established in the destination countries.

Ghanaian migration aligns with this vision, as both adults and parents aspire for the prosperity gained in the host country to be passed on to their descendants, particularly their children.

As part of the research under examination, ten parents – four women and six men – from Ghana, residing in the provinces of Brescia and Bergamo, participated as volunteers.

In the knowledge that every autobiography is “a complex social interaction, a system of roles, expectations, injunctions, implicit norms, and values, often also sanctions. Every biographical interview conceals tensions, conflicts, and power hierarchies [...] where the forms and contents of a narrative vary with the interlocutor” (Ferrarotti, 1981, p. 44) we proceeded with the collection of stories and subjective information from each participant through face-to-face interviews, in their semi-structured declination (Bichi, 2007).

Sampling was carried out following the non-probabilistic reasoned-choice model (Trinchero, 2002); followed by snowball sampling (Frank & Snijders, 1994), whereby the first person falling within the inclusion criteria was interviewed and others are then asked to report.

The interviews collected were an opportunity to get to know and give voice to the living link of parents’ reality and experience, since “narration becomes not only an elective and privileged instrument of knowledge, but an indispensable one insofar as it is the bearer of meaningful and indispensable links between the vital worlds of cognition, education and living itself” (Formenti, 1998, p. 111).

The narration of life stories enables the emergence of both collective representations and individual subjectivities, drawing on fragments of shared reality provided by the participating parents. Through storytelling, events and experiences, emotions, and opinions are brought into the realm of shared meanings, offering deeper insight into their perspectives.

### **1.9.3. Storytelling as an opportunity for dialogue with oneself and others**

In the light of the interviews collected, several themes emerged. In these considerations, the relationship with children will be examined.

The foreign family present in the territory is, as emerged also emerged from the interviews, often torn between the intention of maintaining its own ethnic-cultural specificity and the need to come closer to the family norms widespread in the context of arrival.

The culture of origin is thought of by the parents as an experience, a reservoir of memory from which they rework, read and interpret the world; however, the offspring struggle to recognize themselves in this collective history and place their parents’ culture in the myth of the past.

Given this evidence, it is considered appropriate, in keeping with the theme of supporting migrant parenthood, to emphasize on the one hand the need for meeting spaces between native and foreign parents, and on the other hand to recognize the formative and reflexive power of narrative.

### **1.9.3.1. *Promoting meeting spaces***

The Other is the bearer of rituals, traditions, and values, and therefore forces the interlocutors to become aware not only of the migrants' peculiarities but also of what they have forgotten or overcome. This is because "thinking of culture as something linked to a place, a people, a society that would strive to reproduce it identically and absorb foreign elements by neutralizing them is no longer useful" (Fabietti et al., 2002, p. 31).

We are called to know how to stay and inhabit the spaces of the educational relationship, confronting the other. This implies taking charge of both dynamics of reception as such and of the construction of a lifestyle that challenges us, that is open to diversity and therefore also to interculturality, to build an educating humanity and community.

If you grow up in a place different from yours this is not easy, there is the culture which is different (mother, 62).

But being two different cultures it's not so easy to make a comparison, me being here at least I managed to steal the good part of here together with the good part of Ghana and it was good for me. So even if some Italian parents manage to take [...] putting them together with the ones they have here then it could be something useful (father, 60).

It's important for me to have people to compare myself with (father, 46).

In confrontation you need to be patient (mother, 40).

Building on these observations, it is deemed valuable to consider providing these parents with spaces for dialogue that allow them to reflect on the generativity arising from the intersection of tradition and the migratory experience. In this regard, the creation of moments and spaces for exchange could be proposed, where foreign parents residing in the area can discuss the educational and relational approaches they adopt with their children. This would provide an opportunity to identify common challenges and shared reflections. Simultaneously, it would be beneficial to establish contexts for exchange with non-foreign parents, reinforcing the idea that education and parenthood are not merely private concerns, but communal ones that require collective reflection.

Revisiting significant events and sharing them with others necessitates attentive and active listening. Consequently, the ensuing dialogue is not simply a conversation or a mere exchange of information. Rather, it is guided by the individual in order to reveal something new about them-

selves to their interlocutors. It follows that otherness becomes constitutive of selfhood, as the other serves as a foundational reference for the individual's own identity.

In this regard, it is clear how the narrator entrusts the other with his own experience, his world of values and all the encounters and events that have studded his existence. This non-judgmental listening requires self-referential attention to the thoughts, feelings and emotions aroused by the tale and the consequent willingness to decentralize one's point of view in order to be prepared to accept every narration, the significance of which emerges for the narrating subject (Demetrio, 1999, p. 91).

Listening to one another, observing, and reflecting within these spaces represent valuable opportunities for individuals to re-elaborate and critically examine their own experiences as parents. At the same time, these moments serve as a means of studying the parents both Italian and non-Italian with whom they engage. Creating opportunities for such encounters, driven by the educational intent of mutual care and attentive listening, allows parents to come together around the common educational principles inherent in the experience of parenthood, irrespective of their origins.

### **1.9.3.2. *The formative power of narration***

At the same time, it is crucial to recognize how the opportunity to tell one's own story is a powerful formative tool, which cannot be relegated to chance.

Finally come on, I consider myself a good parent, I was good. It was important for me to tell myself (mother, 50).

I think my opinion as a parent is useful (father, 60).

Autobiography is a methodological tool that straddles an educational practice, especially for adulthood, and a literary genre, the tale as narration, representing a path of self-education and research into and for the recognition and reconstruction of the historical memory of each subject, whether woman or man (De Carlo, 2010, p. 13).

Experience, therefore, becomes an object of evaluation and reflection precisely to the extent that it is narrated and shared. An attitude of availability towards the other must therefore be assumed, where to understand does not mean to enclosing the experience of others within the framework of our own, but opening our personality to understand the problematic

nature of others: this principle [...] teaches that even in understanding the ethical requirement of availability must dominate (Bertin, 1962, p. 74).

Narrative provides privileged access to the re-elaboration and understanding of both the experiences of others and one's own personal experiences. It offers an opportunity to become aware of events and encounters, transforming these moments into experiences imbued with meaning. This process is often referred to as retrospective teleology, where meaning is understood only in hindsight, after the events have occurred.

Autobiography is therefore a narrative practice that creates a new dimension in the subject, in fact narrating oneself is to re-elaborate and reflect on one's own inner, temporal and social experience to orient oneself towards a pathway endowed with meaning, because narrating oneself is also "forming oneself, giving oneself a face, an identity, a form. Autobiography is an educational process, self-educative in the sense – precisely – of formative" (Cambi, 2002, pp. 12-13).

The parent thus becomes reflexive, since through narration he or she rethinks his or her actions in relation to the effects they have produced and revises their forms. A reflexive style is capable of rethinking the course of actions, of rereading the effects, and planning more congruous courses concerning the ends-principles of one's actions, which the parent must keep in mind, with a view to a formation-of-the-child that is growing in freedom and for freedom (above all) and the construction of an authentic self (that is one's own, but also "universal", and made such by culture and values that develop, precisely, one's "humanity") (Cambi, 2020, p. 10).

Exploring, through narrative, parents as bearers of practices, as people who share them through language, actions, philosophies, tacit or explicit theories, values, and meanings, therefore means questioning how they pass through "a pre-reflective condition, based on implicit, non-validated knowledge to arrive at a reflexive condition, aware of what they do and why they do it" (Fabbri, 2008, p. 47).

Meetings between parents – in ad hoc promoted spaces – can therefore be a place for discussion, exchange, and participation between adults who, even though they have different roles, including gender, and come from different cultures, care about the well-being and growth of their children.

The use of a reflexive approach within these spaces, using narration, allows "parents to become active builders of their knowledge and skills and conscious interpreters of their experiences by making explicit and transparent [...] the implications and ideological and cultural assumptions underlying actions, relationships, events and enables continuous analyses, revisitation, and negotiations" (Fabbri, 2008, p. 50).

### 1.9.4. What attitude to adopt?

The presence of individuals from diverse cultures in our society opens up various scenarios, ranging from indifference to acceptance, as well as often conflicting emotions, from fear to understanding.

It is first and foremost essential to recognise that, irrespective of cultural background, parents should be acknowledged as educational agents who contribute to the holistic and organic development of individuals. This occurs through a dialogical exchange with the broader social and cultural reality.

Interfacing with others requires an attitude free of fear, because a sense of security or fear towards the other is an expression of the trust a community has. If one believes in one's own ability to integrate other individuals within oneself, one has an attitude of openness towards the foreigner, one is not afraid of his culture (Cotesta, 2002, p. 5).

This is equally true for pedagogy, which must consider how the parental role is evolving, reshaping, and increasingly structuring itself in response to the very contamination of cultures. This process unfolds at the intersection of the subjects' actions and the contexts they come from, starting with their shared histories. However, it is not only the migrant family that has to adopt mechanisms of cultural modification and adaptation but also the native family. Both must be able to leverage their intrinsic capacity to be not simply places of transmission of tradition but also, and above all, centers of cultural elaboration, concerning their roots, the socio-cultural instances present, and to the demands and needs posed by the new generations who demand to learn to live in them (Pati, 1998, p. 17).

Exchanging and feeling welcomed helps families and parents to emerge from the isolation they often experience, particularly in culturally disadvantaged contexts.

Therefore, it is crucial that everyone's culture serves as a spokesperson for values and meanings, recognising that such meanings are revealed precisely in the encounter with the other, once closure and one-sidedness are transcended.

When a dialogical encounter between two cultures takes place, each retains its uniqueness and integrity; they do not merge or become indistinguishable. Instead, there is mutual enrichment. The encounter between cultures, within the framework of reciprocal appreciation, allows for the recognition of the other in their personal and ethical identity. Every culture has something to both give and receive from others, as none can exist in isolation, free from the influence of encounters, relationships, and exchanges. As Don Lorenzo Milani wrote, "Every people has its own

culture, and no person has less than another”. Thus, no educational community can shirk its responsibility to foster exchanges and encounters with individuals from different cultures. The need for dialogue and coexistence with different cultures is an opportunity for growth.

On the contrary, this exchange between individuals of different origins can become an active form of participation, capable of providing continuous impetus for change to both individuals and institutions. Consequently, it can also revitalise democracy, as it genuinely engages all actors within the community.

In a logic of valuing differences and dialecticism, it is therefore important to emphasize that meeting the foreigner does not mean making oneself an image of his or her situation, but rather putting oneself in charge of him or her without expecting reciprocity [...] a disinterested and gratuitous relationship is not required. Thus, the event of the encounter with the stranger becomes an epiphany of humanity for all (Bianchi, 2010, pp. 40-41).

### **1.9.5. Future Perspectives**

The parent is also educated by virtue of the service offered by other parents: the interview can give rise to solicitations and contributions, interactions and solidarity intended to promote the overcoming of difficulties, self-interrogation and self-examination, the disposition to openness and mutuality and the consequent renunciation of closure and self-referentiality, the aptitude to seek with others and to find together the answers to the fundamental questions posed by existence (Rossi, 1996, p. 34).

Pedagogy is called upon to reassess its field of action, specifically considering the growing awareness that those it engages with are increasingly shaped by journeys and transformations. Spaces for encounter and mediation do not arise naturally; rather, they must be actively sought, desired, created, and defended. These are pathways that need to be consciously and intentionally chosen and established. The risk lies in succumbing to indifference, in fostering superficial relationships that hinder free expression, whereas the encounter with the other can become an experience of mutual recognition. To recognise the other is to acknowledge them as distinct from oneself, to engage with them, to understand and appreciate their way of being, and above all, to avoid reducing them to one's own frame of reference, but rather to respect their world. In doing so, one also recognises, loves, and in some way affirms a reciprocal and empathetic gaze.

The relationship is therefore fundamental, and pedagogy must support it since it is “a place of mutual learning through experiencing common humanity” (Bellingreri, 2019, p. 56).

Mutual dialogue and the ability to place oneself in a position of interpersonal availability enable individuals to value and recognize themselves within a broader horizon of meaning. It is therefore important for the encounter to take place, since “the transformations of social existence in the journey indicate that there is no “I without the “other”, and that after all, identity is created with mirrors and reflections. When those reflections change or become distorted, identities are transformed” (Leed, 1992, p. 252).

Support for migrant parenthood must take the difference into account as an enhancement because only in this way is the family truly an active protagonist, avoiding situations in which foreign parents are “only called into question when faced with behavioral problems or problems related to their children’s learning, the causes of which seem to be attributed (almost always) to the family” (Bove, 2015, p. 182).

Family pedagogy – in its actions – must therefore recognize itself in exotopia, “understood as a complex relational capacity that allows one to understand the other when they present themselves as characterized by a profound ideological and/or cultural diversity” (Lombardi, 2017, p. 363).

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## **1.10. Families and community: solidarity in the age of Covid-19**

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### **1.10.1. Introduction**

The global society has been confronted with issues relating to social, economic and educational inequalities, as well as both old and new forms of poverty, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. The stringent lockdown measures had a considerable impact on people's quality of life and family ties, causing experiences of loneliness and isolation. Local communities have been systematically affected, but they have also been able to provide bottom-up responses in order to deal with collective and individual needs. Of particular note is the active role played by families in community efforts, acting as a resource for collectivity and establishing networks of solidarity and mutual support.

The present contribution aims to analyse the potential role of families in promoting active citizenship and collective action within the local communities. The experiences presented here are illustrative examples that highlight the significant contributions of widespread/social parenting and generativity to the community life.

Specifically, the paper presents a case study involving four institutions engaged in community solidarity activities in the city of Brescia, in Northern Italy. The employment of a comparativist approach made it possible to identify the distinctive characteristics of each case, whilst simultaneously emphasising the recurrent and transversal elements of promoting active citizenship, social protagonism, empowerment and inclusion.

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### 1.10.2. The impact of the pandemic on individuals and family ties

It is through the encounter, collaboration, and mutual aid of the community processes – those impacted by the pandemic, though not extinguished – that their own regeneration can be achieved. Indeed, although these bonds may have been weakened, community ties still preserve relational resources, as evidenced by the proliferation of widespread and social parenting initiatives that emerged during the lockdowns.

Despite the increasingly marked tendency towards privatisation of family life in recent times, there is a strong call for an educational commitment that takes on the characteristics of widespread parenting (Godet & Sullerot, 2005). The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted increased fragility and vulnerability, while raising awareness of the value of social ties and community efforts.

Indeed, as posited by Uhlaner (2015, p. 184), common action enables individuals to overcome feelings of loneliness and to enjoy the benefits of relational goods, which in turn can affect the provision of public goods through collective action. Openness to collectivity enables individuals to recognise one another as a resource and to become active protagonists of shared social life. Consequently, the responsibility of being part of an *educating community* and bearing witness to the values of active citizenship takes place through the encounter, collaboration, and dialogue with other families, associations and the schools.

### 1.10.3. The research

In Italy, the city and province of Brescia have been one of the most affected areas by the Covid-19 pandemic. The present research adopted a comparative approach to investigate four different cases of community efforts carried out within this context. This methodological framework enables a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic needs, highlighting the distinctive features and complementarity of the bottom-up responses initiated by various institutions. The exploration of these complex and multifaceted experiences, each with its own unique characteristics, along with the aspiration to discern their profound significance and value, guided our decision to adopt an inductive and embodied research approach. As a result of these considerations, the research strategy frames this work within the Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2002).

The theoretical framework is attributable to an ecological and systemic perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1981), which has enabled us to understand the role of the individual actors involved in different experiences, as well as the multiple interactions that characterise each entity under investigation, in conjunction with the broader networks to which they are affiliated. The systemic perspective is integral to the case study methodology, whose distinguishing characteristic is the assumption that each case (i.e. human system) cannot be understood without consideration of the context in which it occurs and its “characteristics of wholeness and integrity” (Cecconi, 2002, p. 33). Furthermore, this perspective has shown to be crucial in the analysis of results and identification of pedagogical community prospects.

The research, which is set as a multiple descriptive case study (Yin, 1984), was conducted through the composite use of the following qualitative tools: participant and semi-structured interviews; ethnographic tools (Garfinkel, 1967; Bruni & Gobo, 2005); collection of texts and documents concerning the research topic.

The examined cases are the followings:

- ***Cibo per tutti (Food for all people)***: this network emerged from the spontaneous commitment and collaboration of a wide network of citizens and associations, which started cooperating at the beginning of the pandemic. This entity has been established with the recognition of the following principle: “This virus is isolating us, but in this situation of isolation a political need is arising, the need to be together within a community”. The network has witnessed a steady growth in its membership, comprising individuals and associations that share a common vision. From the outset, one of the most active and committed associations, also in terms of coordination of shared activities, was the *Calini Primary School Parents’ Committee*. Initially established in the 1980s with the objective of providing mutual support to pupils and families enrolled at the school, the association has progressively engaged in a wide range of social initiatives, thereby extending its reach to the local community and the geographical area in which it is situated. This expansion has been guided by the association’s commitment to fulfilling its extensive parental role.

The primary objective of *Cibo per Tutti*, as implied by its name, was to address fundamental and physical needs, particularly the requirement for sustenance. However, the association’s efforts extended beyond this, aiming to foster inclusive community relationships through its activities. Indeed, *Cibo per Tutti* actively involved people of different ages, socio-economic backgrounds, cultures, and those with disabilities;

- The second case is represented by *Association via Milano 59*: the association derives its name from the address of its headquarters, which are situated in a working-class and multicultural district of the city. It should be noted that, similarly to *Cibo per Tutti*, this citizens' association was founded during the pandemic. However, its origins can be traced back to the community work of *Casa del Quartiere* (*Quarter's House*) and *Porto delle Culture* (*Cultures' Harbour*). These are, respectively, a community gathering space and a social library, which intentionally promote inclusion and participation. Since its inception, the initiative has been guided by the principles of solidarity and mutualism, fostering a strong sense of community and shared purpose. This *ethos* has enabled the creation of new collective experiences, fostering increased responsibility and activism, ultimately leading to the establishment of this reality. *Association Via Milano 59* seeks to promote change and collective well-being through a bottom-up approach, involving citizens in horizontal and participatory processes and responding to various areas of need of the population. In this case too, the association is committed to paying greater attention to the active engagement of families, who are prospective or current members;
- The *Islamic Cultural Centre* is a significant reference and meeting point for the Muslim community of Brescia, particularly for the sons and daughters of immigrants. For the younger generations in particular, the Centre serves as a religious reference point, while offering them experiences of active citizenship and facilitating mutual exchange with other local initiatives. The Centre fosters the concept of religious community as an integral component of the local community through experiences of active citizenship, participation, interreligious and intercultural dialogue. During the pandemic, the Islamic Centre provided assistance and solidarity to all the people in need, regardless of their religious affiliation. The concept of solidarity is inherently intertwined with Islamic religious values, and the Centre's commitment to the local community is profoundly significant in terms of fostering inclusivity and reciprocal recognition, as articulated in their interview: "We are citizens of Brescia and we participate in the true sense; so when the city needs us, we are here" (I3);
- The final case focuses on Caritas, the Catholic Institution charity association. The analysis is primarily concerned with *Caritas of San Giovanni*, a local institution overseen by the volunteers of San Giovanni Evangelista parish, which has a long and deep-rooted history of solidarity. The Caritas approach is person-centred, addressing both material and personal needs. A significant component of the Caritas

solidarity service is the “listening desk”, which aims to identify the underlying causes of vulnerability through dialogue with people in need. The efficacy of the listening desk in identifying various forms of vulnerability, including, but not limited to, educational poverty, appears notable. The ability to recognise both vulnerability and resources enables families to receive support, thus facilitating their capacity to address and overcome challenges.

The following transversal categories were identified by comparing these four associations:

- Empowerment of people, families, relationships and community;
- A complex and multidimensional approach to poverty and vulnerability;
- Recognition and giving voice/visibility to people and families experiencing a condition of exclusion, while valuing them as resources for the community;
- Active citizenship and volunteering;
- Inclusive and intercultural approach;
- Networking between formal services and associations;
- Social generativity.

It is on the basis of these categories that we have outlined some educational guidelines with a view to promoting inclusion and active citizenship. In addition, we have established a new agreement of collaboration among the public administration, private social agencies and families.

#### **1.10.4. Problematisation**

In the case study analysis, the focus was on entities that place families at the centre, and the research highlighted the distinctive nature of family associations’ contributions to the community context. Specifically, we have been able to identify several valuable perspectives on the valuation of the family contribution to the community.

Firstly, emerged the necessity to empower all families, including those encountering precarious socioeconomic circumstances (Commission of the European Communities, 2003). From a community perspective, each person and family can be recognised as concurrent bearers of resources and fragility. The establishment of social networks and opportunities for collective action has been identified as a means of fostering support and enhancing resource empowerment. Moreover, within the community context, numerous unseen family needs may emerge and be addressed, including those associated with feelings of loneliness and isolation. These issues are often not addressed by formal services and, in addition, loneliness and

isolation can exacerbate these needs even further. Indeed, the initiatives promoted by formal services are often sector-specific and hardly systemic, thus they run the risk of activating more welfare-like dynamics.

Furthermore, in order to cultivate a sense of belonging to community spaces, it seemed essential that people not only dwell in these spaces, but also share them. In the neighbourhoods, premises and courtyards, people have the opportunity to meet, build relationships and thus develop friendships or forms of solidarity, as our interviews highlighted. This fosters the development of authentic collective spaces, which, in turn, become accessible to all people. Finally, it appeared important to acknowledge the potential for community experience to catalyse the emergence of numerous community-based initiatives. This phenomenon is characterised by a generative potential that stems from a sense of belonging and collective responsibility (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1998). This dynamism has the capacity to engender a proliferation of forms of participation, to expand shared initiatives, to weave new networks and to engender change.

#### **1.10.5. Towards the social protagonism of families**

In consideration of the aforementioned perspectives, it is our conviction that the support of these initiatives is crucial. The objective is to ensure that these efforts do not remain isolated events, but rather evolve into an integral component of recognised governance and welfare practices. These experiences and networks have the potential to instigate a review of the prevailing models of social intervention, which, while they are undoubtedly consolidated, are often self-referential and centralised. Community-based initiatives, involving families, have the potential to engender a sense of solidarity and foster the development of associations that can effectively promote inclusion and cultivate a shared sense of responsibility for the common good (Gui, 1996).

The active engagement of families can also be a powerful factor in the growth of both communities and individuals. The relational model that underpins family life, which is characterised by interactions between genders and generations, as well as intra- and extra-familial relationships, can be profoundly assimilated. The internalisation process that occurs through family life encompasses not only a relational model but also a comprehensive set of values. These values manifest in various forms, including compliance with shared rules, the way authority is exercised, the pervasive assumption of responsibility, the approach to diversity, and the engagement in community life (Amadini, 2021). The family can be considered a

strategic agent for the transmission of a genuine democratic culture across generations.

The encounters, interconnections, and generative exchanges between families and life contexts have been identified as having an educational and participatory potential. These dynamics have the power to generate a complex and composite network that aims to promote collective wellbeing, care for the common good, relationships, and a sense of belonging and participation.

Family education is an everyday phenomenon, and it is precisely in the course of everyday life that the foundations of active citizenship are expressed. The question that arises is how this can be achieved. Active citizenship can be promoted by experimenting with small but constant forms of participation, shared responsibility and mutual effort. The nurture of democratic values and a participatory attitude does not occur through sporadic and intense experiences; rather, it is developed through a *habitus*, which becomes a way of life and manifests itself in a particular way of being in the world and expressing citizenship (Hoskins & Janmaat & Villalba, 2012). Consequently, everyday life assumes a political dimension, becoming a form of “(...) ‘normality’ that collaborates towards systemic change: a transformative normality whose existence alters the existing economic, power and knowledge balances” (Manzini, 2018, p. 106).

### **1.10.6. New perspectives of citizenship**

Citizenship is included among personal rights, but in fact it entails a much more complex semantic background. From a legal perspective, citizenship is associated with the status of rights and duties that accompany membership of a state; conversely, it can also be interpreted as a societal ideal, firmly embedded in the field of human coexistence.

The latter interpretation facilitates the establishment of a link with more social issues, such as active citizenship and participation. The recognition of this more active and proactive dimension also assigns a greater inclusive value to the concept of citizenship. In summary, citizenship can be interpreted in terms of commitment to the common good. This logic encompasses all actions that promote the defence of justice, commitment to the common good, and the pursuit of a collective solidarity.

It is precisely this dimension that, in the post-pandemic era, merits re-launch, both from an educational point of view and through the implementation of social policies. Initiatives that have emerged spontaneously and informally require recognition, narration and, most importantly, sup-

port to evolve into long-standing and durable practices. These initiatives, by responding to present needs, can also prefigure alternative future social configurations. Indeed, “solidarity bridges different temporalities in that it arises both out of present contradictions and certain images of the future” (Vandevoordt & Fleischmann, 2021, p. 192).

The generative capacity of bottom-up family solidarity demands recognition and activation of synergistic dynamics across multiple levels. It can serve as an effective response to the needs of the most vulnerable segments of the population, complementing institutional responses rather than substituting for them (Hass & Wisensale, 2006). The concept of solidarity, therefore, must be accompanied by the principle of horizontal subsidiarity, which guarantees a mutual effort that originates from different initiatives and safeguards the specific vocation of each, converging towards a single goal.

Active participation in social life, characterised by the pursuit of collective good that transcends individualistic and instrumental motives, is integral to fostering citizenship, its propagation, and its dissemination. This approach is regarded as a highly sophisticated form of education, entailing personal commitment, testimony and experience. This pedagogical approach, exemplified by great educators such as Freire (1968/2013), who integrated education with the cultivation of a civil conscience, underscores the significance of family involvement in this process.

The return of these values to family education and the experience of home life is a promising way of conveying new forms of commitment to community solidarity. It can be argued that children and young people, working in collaboration with their parents and family members, have the capacity to establish innovative models of citizenship, thereby creating forms of testimony that are capable of transcending generations and ensuring the preservation of an authentic cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, family actions – however minor and daily-based – have the capacity to assert themselves as actions of citizenship, expressing the potential to take care of the common good and to put oneself at the service of the community, while being accountable, first to oneself and one’s immediate circle of people or family members, and then, gradually, to others. Furthermore, family life can function as a training ground for advocacy, thereby enabling active contribution to the transformation of life contexts towards more supportive and inclusive directions.

## Conclusions

In view of these findings, the training of community workers is of the utmost importance (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). In the aftermath of the health emergency, it is crucial that the numerous community experiences and networks involving families are not merely terminated, but rather, undergo a process of transformation. To facilitate this evolution, the presence of strategic figures is important: namely, community mediators who possess the expertise to promote community-based initiatives aimed at fortifying community bonds.

It is through experiences of solidarity and care for the common good that socio-political change, social innovation and community renaissance can be promoted. These experiences, characterised by widespread and social parenting, serve as catalysts for the exploration of new spaces for shared experiences, effectively functioning as living laboratories for citizenship.

It is therefore essential to highlight the critical issues that have made bottom-up experiences discontinuous in the past and present, while at the same time carefully mediating and empowering the community, especially those families living in conditions of economic fragility and educational poverty. These families can also be regarded as a community resource, rather than merely recipients of collaboration and solidarity action.

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## 1.11. Family, pandemic, and education: reflections on the future

Gennaro Balzano<sup>1</sup>

### 1.11.1. Introduction

In a very short time, just a few years, two realities have emerged, two completely different, opposite, antithetical worlds. In between, the Covid-19 pandemic, an unexpected revolution, a generative engine of different and differentiated scenarios, in which the family has both suffered and reacted to previously unthinkable changes, up until the start of 2020. The crisis of a society challenged by the pandemic has reflexively re-proposed criticalities within the family. Here, however, the crisis has assumed its original Greek meaning – *krisis* – a *choice*, a *decision*, a *decisive phase of an illness*. It thus became an opportunity, and from that opportunity, a chance to create a new family that looks to the future, starting from a re-discovery of its peculiarities, which had been obscured and hidden before the pandemic, when many underestimated the potential of this foundational unit of modern society.

Indeed, «if we think of the family as the primary educational environment, engaged in educational care functions from the perspective of adaptation, psychological growth, and the socialization of its members, especially minors, identifying situations of difficulty becomes complex because the functions that the family performs (or fails to perform) are many and diverse» (Rossini, 2020), even more so in a moment of disorientation such as that of the pandemic.

The classical themes of a family education that looks to the future have had to be harshly confronted with the stark reality of the most important period of global crisis on a planetary level. To a broad vision of family dy-

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namics – dynamics that are also educational – has necessarily been added a contextualization that has, on one hand, disrupted established habits, but on the other hand, stimulated capacities for reaction, creativity, and reconstruction in a time that, though seemingly without reference points, almost immediately revealed the family as the safe harbor from which to begin again.

### 1.11.2. Family life and pandemic

The starting point is undoubtedly the lockdown: confinement at home, within the domestic walls, to counter the spread of the virus with the only possible method at the time. As Mariani immediately pointed out, “the ‘force of character’ (as James Hillman taught us) responded with forms of caring for family members, with a more active parental involvement with children and their activities at home, as well as with a ‘care of the self’ (revived by Michel Foucault) that was essential to rediscover essentiality and ‘cultivate humanity’ (as advocated by Martha Craven Nussbaum), starting with oneself” (2020, p. 6).

This marked the beginning of a new phase for families, where relationships carried significant weight, laden with the authenticity so often lost in the pre-pandemic daily routine.

In several studies it has been possible to highlight some aspects that together have characterized (and not a little) the intensification of a family dynamism all focused on the actual relational potential of the family, during the lockdown experienced with more awareness by everyone. In Colla’s work, «the implicit educational density of ordinary conversations between parents and children» is highlighted, events that are often spontaneous and that can put this cell back into dialogue and, in addition, «thus making visible what is educational in everyday family life» (2021, p. 110). In a study, however, of the University of Milan “Bicocca” (Biffi et al.) some aspects such as the management of emotions in the family context were lucidly photographed: «lockdown caused parents to experience swinging emotions, and conflicting feelings, which sometimes escaped their control» (2021, p. 104).

A digression, useful for the purposes of the discourse in question, is the reflection according to which «the pandemic experience has highlighted the fragility of the system of family educational policies» (Tabacchi, 2021, p. 254), with the need for a «rethinking of the needs of families and the guarantee of equitable support for those who find themselves struggling in the difficult balance between family and work» (p. 255). This was an-

other crucial factor that cannot be ignored and which has, indeed, significantly influenced the family life that underpins this thesis.

As a generative place of affection, emotions, feelings, and relationships, the family found itself living through a new chapter beginning in March 2020. Longer periods of contact among family members were associated with relationships that were no longer voluntary or sought out but nearly obligatory, given the home confinement of family units for almost the entire day. Not to be underestimated is the variable of fear: fear of infection, of death, of the future.

Before arriving at what is argued to be a season of rediscovery, of promoting relationships and closeness that was not merely physical or linked to time spent together, numerous difficulties emerged: managing spaces, interpersonal dialogue, and the strong individualistic imprint of contemporary society. However, the first vocation and the intrinsic community dimension of the person have played a decisive role on the one hand, without forgetting a second equally interesting aspect: the family is «the educational environment to cultivate and strengthen identity» (Pati, 2019, p. 86), understood as the possibility for young people to develop transversal skills (soft skills) that are essential to building personal identity and relationships of trust. A perspective that must also deal with a weakening of the educational authority of the family that necessarily compromises the whole of relationships, since the family system becomes less and less capable of taking on precise responsibilities and of overcoming its own limits to allow its children to mature in the richness of relationships and become fully ‘people’ (Balzano, 2021). The freedoms that today’s young people enjoy compared to previous generations have been undermined not only by the social condition of the pandemic but, also, by the approach that adults have in convincing themselves that there is a sort of deep separation between their skills and those of young people.

The pandemic and the resulting social distancing disrupted our usual ways of life and interpersonal relationships, introducing, on one hand, an excess of proximity in intimate family relationships and, on the other, a drastic and unprecedented thinning out of everyday relationships – sometimes with dramatic consequences, like the permanent loss of relationships through the death of one or more family members (Silva, Gigli, 2021, p. 6). Many have compared this health crisis to a war, a catastrophic event destined to change the landscape of our time, suggesting that once the most critical phase is over, our individual and social habits will never return to what they once were. Initially, people responded to the interruption of daily life with alternative forms of communication and socialization, as well as mutual aid practices within families and neighborhoods. However, the

prolonged situation led to a crisis condition, generating feelings of anguish and loneliness and eroding the psychological resources of many people, especially those in vulnerable situations. For some types of families, the health crisis has produced particularly harsh and disorienting consequences, testing the intrafamilial relationships that form the fabric of our society (Rania et al., 2020).

### **1.11.3. The new post-pandemic relational family**

The profound transformations affecting the family were already evident before the pandemic. The years immediately preceding it were marked «by profound economic and social changes, including a noticeable slowdown in population growth, inflation, declining investments, and rising unemployment – all signs of a structural transformation of the economic system and an expression of an evident cyclical crisis» (Catarsi, 2006, p. 11), later exacerbated by the global turmoil triggered after the first quarter of 2020. From here emerged the rediscovery of care within the family, seen as «a place of responsible choice capable of enhancing its potential through the network of relationships» (Balzano, 2021, p. 234). It is also useful to emphasize that «the family is the educational environment for cultivating and strengthening identity» (Pati, 2019, p. 86).

One critical aspect called into question by the pandemic is the concept of parenthood. The freedoms that young people enjoy today, compared to previous generations, are undermined not only by the pandemic's social context but also by the adult belief in a profound separation between their competencies and those of the young. «The generative component of identity fails to emerge clearly in the new generations, in some way it tends to be devalued, obscured and often put completely out of the field, in the name of a strong individualism that pushes to procrastinate more and more choices, especially irreversible ones such as parenthood» (Vinciguerra, 2015, p. 89).

Specifically, to an already more attentive form of parenthood in our time – marked by the need for listening and personalized responses – the pandemic added new challenges, thus requiring families to redefine their models of action. When the family is a place of authentic exercise of values and relationships, it rejects convenient, transactional logics or market-driven mentalities, fully embracing the logic of love, which is simultaneously desire and gift. «Others are seen not only as a resource from which to derive advantages, but also and above all as a good as such: as irreplaceable, non-interchangeable people, without price and with an absolute value» (Balzano, 2021, p. 234).

In the new post-pandemic family, each person is themselves while fully welcoming the other, learning that freedom does not consist in breaking ties but in authentically living real bonds. The life of a couple is thus defined as the place of generativity par excellence, as any choice made by the partners is marked by generativity understood as original tension, which manifests itself in taking care of others, in the concern to leave a trace, something of us as a legacy. «In expressing greater openness to the other, parents are more willing to manifest co-adaptative forms with respect to the context of the family and children» (Cunti, 2013, p. 76). Nonetheless, men and women are fully aware that their relationship is always generative because it has the capacity to transfer goodness, responding to the intrinsic human need to be wanted, recognized, welcomed, loved, and helped to live.

The relational dimension thus regains a prominent and foundational role compared to what was happening before the forced confinement and isolation that led to a complete rediscovery of the value of the family as a natural nucleus. The educational crisis calls into question the responsibility of society as a whole and that of the family in particular: prioritizing work, career, and entertainment over caring for children; the alternating presence of the father, the increasing absence of the mother, the lack of strong ethical and religious shared values, a permissive attitude, disagreement between parents, and possible traumas from separations, divorces, or domestic violence. Even economically comfortable families see many children as unconscious victims of an educational poverty that shifts everything towards mere entertainment and personal gratification, often educationally disempowering parents as well. Yet, all is not lost. In fact, at least from this perspective, the pandemic has reinvigorated family dynamics, positively stimulating some of them: the rediscovery of the parent-child relationship, the exercise of care and relationship, and the promotion of dialogue. The power of dialogue, in particular, has been the subject of study, since even spontaneous interactions can be educational events (Colla, 2021, p. 104); from phenomenological pedagogy (Bertolini, 1988; Caronia, 2011, 2018) to subsequent educational research developments, from Vygotsky's sociocultural approach (1962 [1934]) to the paradigm of linguistic socialization (Ochs, Schieffelin, 1983).

Broadening the perspective, society has rediscovered certain family dynamics that had been partially or wholly lost. The pandemic, which forced a large part of the global population indoors, has encouraged – if not compelled – us to rebuild relationships that had long been the foundation of identity construction and the parent-child and couple relationships.

Educational relationships must resume «the long journey of interpersonal relationships» (Bholinger et al., 2015, p. 91). Doing so requires that

we not overlook the lockdown, post-lockdown, and our current era, not only from a social point of view but especially from a pedagogical one. This is the great opportunity we have and must not let slip away. A project of self, in fact, is born in places where positive relationships can be established with others – both young people and significant adults – where one can express their ideas, vital energies, cultural, artistic, and musical tastes, and their ways of perceiving and expressing social engagement. The post-pandemic family is a natural space for building an educational relationship, in the ways and spaces analyzed so far, founded on the principle of care and mutual help. Everything starts from this natural nucleus, within a broader perspective that embraces all places and contexts where authentic relationality can be exercised.

«Facing the new educational emergencies thus means returning to that practical perspective on education understood as action to be carried out, which unfolds within different contexts, from the most traditional to the most innovative, and which necessarily takes on a gerundive sense: an action that must be carried out but also an inevitable action that, even if not explicitly recognized, is nonetheless carried out» (Elia, 2016, p. 14).

## Conclusions

Starting afresh from families to face the educational emergency of our time «becomes an opportunity for discernment and new pedagogical planning, to govern every aspect of educational practice according to the direction of intentionality in daily action»; therefore «the need to recover a paradigm of development that is no longer only economic, but that is able to enhance the human and relational dimensions to place the person at the center in his uniqueness and integrality» (Giovanazzi, 2021, p. 154). Where, if not in the family, can the foundations of a new relationality between people be sought – a context where it is first built and then consolidated? The value crisis and individualisms of our time were also severely tested by the lockdown, which, beyond the countless challenges it created, fostered a new – and perhaps obligatory – need for relationships. This latter aspect is not an end in itself but represents the pivot around which to build a new idea of society – more supportive and sustainable – and also a response to the educational emergency, seen «as a challenge to be embraced to innovate educational processes through planning and the promotion of relational networks [...]. A cultural transformation that involves how we see and think about the world, open to the values of fraternity, intra- and intergenerational solidarity, and the education of responsibility to envision the possibility of a future» (Giovanazzi, 2021, p. 155).

Education is thus called to question itself and to interpret the transformations that have taken place within families, driven by the pandemic emergency. The family – as a generative place of affection, emotions, feelings, and relationships – has found itself living a new chapter. A season of rediscovery, of promoting relationships, of closeness that was not merely physical or linked to time. A springtime (of the pandemic), but also a springtime for the family that coincided with the flourishing of its ever-present generative power. The family, as a place of relationship, has changed – *for the better*. The legacy of a significant event like the pandemic could lead to a complete rethinking of our time, not only from a social but, above all, from a pedagogical perspective.

This is thus an important opportunity – not only for the family but also for schools, society, and all relational contexts. There are many possible scenarios, with the conviction that the weight of educational processes within the family should never be overlooked. These processes require a broad perspective, as they follow different trajectories, encompassing the emotional bonds that unite couples (Simeone, 2009), the relationships between the partners and the respective families of origin (Amadini, 2015), and of course the relationships between parents and children. Yet this latter dyad is perhaps the one most impacted by the new post-Covid family relationality, the one that can most clearly chart a new pedagogical course for discussions about families and new family forms.

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## **Chapitre 2. Défis dans les écoles**



## 2.1. INES. New Psychoactive Drug Prevention Pathway for Secondary Schools

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### 2.1.1. Introduction

INES<sup>4</sup> is an imaginary name we have given to our project. INES represents any student who enters the “drugs tunnel” but who, thanks to the contribution of an authentic and inclusive education program promoted by his/her school context (together with other important actors), succeeds in getting out of it, by changing the course of his/her life. Therefore, INES represents a positive and powerful image of possibility, an example of success that something can really change with respect to the contrast and spread of new drugs of abuse at school. New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) represent a large and increasing group of compounds mainly of synthetic nature, characterized by pharmacological and toxicological properties particularly dangerous for the health of consumers. The emergence of NPS in recent years is a worrying phenomenon that is taking on ever more imposing dimensions: NPS have become a global phenomenon with over 110 countries and territories from all regions of the world having reported one or more NPS. Up to December 2017, more than 800

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4. The Innovative Teaching and Learning Paths for the Prevention of New Drug Abuse (INES) project, coordinated by Department of Education Studies (University of Bologna), has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein. Project code: 2021-1-IT02-KA220-SCH-000032570 - Cooperation Partnership in School Education. Duration: 1 December 2021, 30 November 2024: <https://ines.unibo.it/>

substances have been reported by governments, laboratories and partner organizations.

As underlined in the European Drug Report (EMCDDA, 2018) the “New psychoactive substances continue to challenge public health”: [the priority is] to identify and respond to the emergence of drugs that has been lacking elsewhere”. Furthermore, it is also relevant to clearly identify the specific characteristics of the “market” where the NPS are available, and who are the target groups (consumers) of this type of compounds. The ESPAD Report (2015) identified, for example, a growing number (3-4%) of 15-to 16-year-old school students in 24 European countries which frequently use NPS. Under this framework, INES aims to strengthen the teaching profession by developing learning content and innovative teaching methods to overcome the NPS abuse phenomenon, starting from the more vulnerable and exposed target group: secondary school students. To promote prevention and early intervention focusing on risk of new drug abuse, processes of didactic innovation in secondary education, are to be mediated by a transversal use of digital technologies.

## **2.1.2. Project background**

The INES project sustains the creation of Open Educational Resources, an open Handbook, and Open-Source Educational Software (game platform), as well as supporting teachers, students and school leaders, and other teaching professionals. The project foresees, on one side, the co-construction of Open Educational Resources (involving teachers and academic partners - e.g. academic staff and researchers) on a topic of great importance in Europe, such as New Psychoactive Substance (NPS), a large and increasing group of molecules mainly of synthetic origin, characterized by pharmacological and toxicological properties particularly dangerous for the health of consumers. On the other hand, INES promotes the design and experimentation of educational paths, valorizing the teachers’ and students’ innovative role/roles to strengthen the profiles of the teaching professions and to tackle early school leaving and disadvantage. In this way, an effective combination of digital technologies, active learning strategies (using gaming, questioning, cooperative learning or peer instruction techniques etc.) and didactic contents, will be promoted within classrooms characterized by the presence of vulnerable students i.e. secondary school students.

All materials produced during the project lifecycle will be released under Creative Commons licenses. This will make the INES project sustainable, allowing other teachers or trainers to use, reuse, adapt and implement

the resources produced within the project in other school environments and experiences. The above-mentioned approaches and strategies, within the framework of the INES project, will be described within a digital collaborative Handbook. The OERs created in the framework of the INES project could be used in the LifeLong Learning frame of reference, in which OERs showed great potential in diverse social, economic and cultural contexts reaching (potentially) huge audiences of disadvantaged backgrounds. By doing so, OERs potential to tackle early school leaving is seen as an effective intervention strategy to deal with new drug abuse among secondary school students.

The use and abuse of these substances is a problem for individuals, but also for families and communities across the EU. The substance market is a factor in the spreading of criminal activities and has social and health implications (Tsochatzis et al., 2021). To reduce early school leaving and disadvantages, it is essential to recognize and valorize both the so-called “student agency” which can be defined as “the power to make choices” and the development of a student’s critical capacity. Students with agency are those who feel a high level of responsibility and ownership for their learning.

### **2.1.3. Aims and target**

INES aims to achieve the main goal through the creation of a network of actors, able of originating an effective network collaboration of teachers, scientific experts, external experts or institution and students to find, test, adapt and use teaching strategies and resources to address the problem of NPS. To provide a concrete-and scientifically based-response to the context previously described, the specific objectives of INES are oriented to:

1. Increase focus on developing targeted education and prevention activities by sharing scientific expertise and experience among all stakeholders. In other words, we want to activate the knowledge and adapt the attitudes of teachers and students regarding NPS, its global spread, and the resulting problems associated with its dissemination. Therefore, it is necessary to share scientific knowledge and expertise between universities and schools to provide increasingly caring and capable education to support at prevention from the use of NPS. Academic partners (e.g., academic staff and researchers), according to the needs of each school, will organise a short-blended learning course for students and teachers to introduce the topic of NPS.
2. Avoid training interventions in schools represented by episodic one-off events, resorting to teaching activities and experiments based on collab-

orative co-design processes involving academic partners, game design experts (an instructional strategy that will be used and managed by experts in the field within the project), teachers, and students in developing effective “learning pathways” on the topic of NPS, across all school disciplines. Teachers “should be empowered to use their professional knowledge, skills and competencies to deliver the curriculum effectively (OECD, 2018)”. For these reasons, INES advocates active participation (based on teachers’ and students’ voices) to promote teachers’ and students’ agency (Calvert, 2017) and empowerment and to support innovation at the school system level (and not just at the classroom level).

3. Promote the agency and empowerment of teachers and students and to support innovation at the school system level (and not only at the classroom level).
4. Involve teachers, students, and academic partners (e.g., academic staff and researchers) in defining and implementing content and instructional strategies to address NPS. For this reason, opportunities will be promoted for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary teachers and researchers to exchange ideas and work together in designing and constructing Open Educational Resources (OERs) on the project theme. The schools involved, as project partners, will create and experiment with educational content (released under open Creative Commons licenses to facilitate adaptation and reuse) and teaching strategies suitable for addressing the topic of NPS use.
5. Promote the educational value of game through the adoption of participatory working models, to support ordinary teaching-learning processes.
6. Design the school curriculum “around students to motivate them and recognize their prior knowledge, skills, attitudes and values” (OECD, 2018). Empower teachers to use their professional knowledge, skills, and competencies.

INES project aims to involve different types of external actors and realities; the range of participants and potential users (targets and beneficiaries) of the knowledge shared and created within the INES project is very wide and can be divided, mainly into three broad categories: primary and secondary, and indirect beneficiaries.

Primary target group:

- school teachers (open to all disciplines);
- professional educators (professionals who work in the classroom to sustain the development of strategies for inclusion in school);
- school leaders;
- upper secondary schools’ students.

Within the school and through educational activities, the “battle” (also) takes place against the prevention of substance abuse. We consider all schools as a kind of ecosystem in which each component must perform its functions (in this case, pedagogical and educational coordination) in full cooperation with the others, to ensure that we all act towards a common direction and goal. For this reason, even though the ‘recipients’ of pedagogical practices and resources are the students, the group that constitutes our primary target, we express it in a top-down order that starts with the school leader and, descending, encompasses the teachers, educators, and, finally, of course, the students. This is to emphasize how the prevention and combating of NPS use – therefore, the dissemination of targeted education toward this topic – must start from the policy level; advisors and policy makers in schools have an enormous influence on what will be the educational spin-offs of the activities that INES intends to develop over the course of this project.

Secondary target group:

- academic partners, that will benefit from the various and replicable results obtained during the project (e.g., open educational resources, teaching strategies, technologies to support active learning in the classroom, didactic activities based on hybrid game architectures etc.);
- undergraduate students, PhD students, post-docs, researchers (intended from study programs related to education, engineering, pharmacy, medicine, toxicology etc.).

Third target groups:

- institutional stakeholders and policymakers;
- senior officials from the Ministries of Education and Health;
- law enforcement departments working to combat the spread of substances of abuse;
- families;
- general population.

In the “Lifelong Learning era” we need to consider the importance of broadening the reach of potential users of the knowledge generated by the INES project and maximizing dissemination opportunities. For this reason, and with the support of the OERs created, available in the INES platform, the activities carried out during the project’s three-year lifespan were carefully designed to involve a diverse range of stakeholders beyond the research and education sectors.

These stakeholders, who could make a significant contribution to combating the use of NPS among younger generations, include law enforcement agencies. Many operational groups within these agencies work daily to curb the spread of substance abuse. Engaging with law enforcement

– while addressing the same issue from different perspectives and approaches – has the potential to add immense value to the project and to the dissemination of the knowledge generated within the INES framework.

### **2.1.4 The action-research approach**

The INES project aimed to create the conditions to support the collaborative networking of teachers, external experts, and students to foresee processes of change in secondary schools, also mediated by a transversal use of digital technologies. The objective was to identify and test teaching strategies and proposals (Pancirolì, 2019) to address the issue of NPS.

The Research-Action design was conceived to bridge the gap often created between practice and theory so that teachers also took on the role of researchers. Teachers were therefore called upon to enhance a hypothetical dimension, critically evaluating and reflecting on the motivations for their actions; in this way, the reasons for certain teaching practices were also made explicit (Coonan, 2000).

Incorporating a Research-Action path opened the door to complexity, thus accepting the need to face risks and uncertainties. As Jean Pierre Pourtois (2013) also reminded us, risks were assumed, but so was the possibility of creating an untrodden path that passed through the triad characterizing the process: power, knowledge, and will.

The first step was to identify the desire to participate collectively in management, implying the exercise of will and its power as active participants in the process. Participants were required to exercise this power respectfully, keeping in mind that it was generative of change. To exercise this power, knowledge was required to negotiate changes deemed useful and to examine the needs and requirements of the project. When alignment for action among all actors was achieved, the will to act became the main driver for transforming theoretical practice and co-design into action.

These three phases were constantly in dialogue with one another so that change could originate (Pourtois, 2013). The choice of the blended organizational model was adopted to enable the entire team to maximize the potential of online learning (Pacetti & Pancirolì, 2021) in the co-construction activities of Open Educational Resources (OERs).

### 2.1.5. The project results

At the end of the project, the following results were achieved.

#### *Survey Report*

A survey on the perception of students and teachers regarding NPS use prevention was designed and conducted. Two questionnaires (one for students and one for teachers) were created, distributed, completed, and analyzed. The study was carried out with target groups from the high schools involved in the project and included 357 students and 99 teachers. The responses provided several important insights into the project activities and the development of teaching materials.

#### *European Syllabus*

The syllabus serves as a methodological guide for integrating the teaching-learning path developed during the project lifecycle into the mainstream secondary school curriculum. It showcases the results of strong collaboration between researchers, teachers, and students in creating a didactic proposal to address the issue of NPS in schools. The curriculum was designed with a student-centered approach to motivate learners and acknowledge their prior knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values (OECD, 2018). The first part of the syllabus introduces five interdisciplinary learning modules on New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). The second part outlines the teaching-learning paths and game ideas. The final part provides pedagogical and didactic recommendations to facilitate the transferability of the learning modules beyond the INES project.

#### *Online Blended Learning Course*

An online blended learning course on NPS was developed and made available to teachers, students, and educators through the open-source INES online platform (based on Moodle). It introduces the NPS topic by helping the target group to homogenize the level of knowledge about the new psychoactive substances from an interdisciplinary point of view.

#### *Serious Game*

The project also led to the design and development of a serious game titled “Paradise on Earth”. The aim of this game was not only to theoretically create the most suitable game structures for the project but also to provide a methodological and operational framework to guide the students in the creation of the game elements/scenario. These elements formed the game model for schools (Soriani et al., 2022); the game created began with

the definition of a narrative pathway shaped by characters, actions, and implications, which students successively implemented in classrooms in an unplugged format (drawings, sketches, storyboard). The technical development of the game was led by SwingTree.

### *Pedagogical Planner*

The INES Pedagogical Planner (IPP) was designed and created as an open educational resource to help teachers build effective interdisciplinary learning paths on NPS. The INES toolkit is an online pedagogical planner for secondary school teachers who wish to design and implement interdisciplinary teaching-learning experiences focused on New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). The IPP aims to support teachers in the ideation phase by providing a clear and practical design framework, alongside examples and teaching resources inspired by the hands-on teaching experiences of those involved in the INES project. This tool was developed based on the findings that emerged during the creation of the INES teaching and learning paths.

### *Collaborative Handbook and final publication*

The INES Collaborative Handbook was published, containing all the learning content, teaching strategies, and game structures developed during the project lifecycle. Additionally, an open-access publication (INES Book) was released, presenting the project, the results of didactic experiments, and the key organizational, technical, and didactical recommendations for transferring the results to other educational contexts.

## **Conclusive remarks**

INES project aimed to strengthen collaboration among all actors within schools, as well as with families and other external stakeholders, by supporting didactic innovation and collaborative teaching and learning approaches on the topic of NPS. As recommended by OECD (2018), school curricula were designed around students to motivate them and acknowledge their prior knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. Following this direction, INES promoted students' voice (participative approaches) during the creation and adaptation of learning content, teaching strategies, and games designed to address the diffusion of NPS in schools. The involvement of students as co-producers of learning materials, along with the active engagement of both students and teachers in the co-design of game prototypes, was emphasized as a means to enhance digital skills and

competencies. This approach aligned with the Council Recommendations (2018), which identified these skills as crucial for personal development, employability, social inclusion, and active citizenship.

The NPS topic represented a complex reality that affected a considerable number of people, including adolescents, the target group of the pedagogical and educational actions of the INES project. Schools played a crucial role in the fight against the spread and use of such substances, serving as a significant environment not only to increase awareness of the issue but also to develop effective strategies that promoted students' autonomy, their reflective capacity, and key skills to address substance abuse.

To ensure the sustainability of change and/or innovation processes within the pilot schools, an action-research approach was adopted, allowing the ideas, resources, and strategies developed in the INES project to be integrated into the school curriculum. Starting from the identification and recognition of current educational practices widespread in partner schools, attention was paid to improving teaching and learning, as well as the working conditions of teachers and students.

The improvement process was based, among other things, on the conscious use of digital technologies to support and enhance face-to-face activities (Adekola et al., 2017), and on a digital approach useful in promoting and supporting lifelong and life-wide learning, consistent with the lifestyles of both adults and children. The operational implementation of the project's pedagogical and educational objectives was achieved through ongoing interdisciplinary collaboration among all stakeholders. Scientific knowledge on the topic was conveyed to schools through a careful selection of pedagogically sound methods and strategies. Moreover, during the collaborative work between schools and universities, the continuous exchange of feedback and information on the progress of project activities, alongside the co-construction of teaching resources, allowed for careful pedagogical and didactic monitoring of the workflow, essential for achieving the project's tasks with a high level of quality.

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## **2.2. Narratives, detours, and creative learning between schools and social contexts. Promoting intercultural dialogues by exploring places, images, and imaginaries**

*Rosita Deluigi<sup>1</sup>, Miriam Cuccu<sup>2</sup>, Francesca Mondin<sup>3</sup>, Ilenia Marino<sup>4</sup>*

### **2.2.1. Artistic itineraries, intercultural dialogues, and plural creativities**

The role of art and creativity in educational and learning processes can be seen through different lenses in numerous educational contexts. Languages and means of expression intertwine to establish new models of communication that offer dignified and cooperative spaces to be reinterpreted from an intercultural perspective. Differences and pluralities meet in spaces of interaction, words, images, and imagery, where there is no need to establish clear boundaries between contexts, thoughts, and creative subjects.

The approach to the enjoyment of works of art and artistic expression can create a free and informal dimension where everyone can share their interpretation and express different meanings (Pancirolì, 2012). Artistic languages raise doubts, questions, and possibilities, orienting exchange, and bringing about original forms of decoding, starting from a range of

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different reference contexts that, if appropriately questioned, can become fertile ground for a cross-cultural hybridisation.

The dialectic between artistic and creative languages is an interesting field for intercultural education, which includes activities in which children and young people can become protagonists in an interdisciplinary learning process. Active education in art means taking kids in the direction of cognitive experiences that fascinate, amaze, and arouse curiosity and divergent thinking. Creativity allows everyone to combine, imagine, and create something new (Vygotsky, 2004) and children, who have not yet internalised the information that allows adults to act in a socially shared way, can think differently and embark on imaginative itineraries (Munari, 2017) that do not reflect homogeneous canons, but release the pleasure of discovery.

Relational spaces help to nurture further views of the world and ways of thinking about it in a global and ecosystemic key (Morin, 2016), seeking connections with the uncertainty and wonder of an explorer approaching new lands, without any claims to conquer them. Exploration is a possible method for renewing education and didactics, committing oneself to a dialogue between subjects and contexts, focusing on questions rather than answers, believing that everyone could bring meaningful doubts (Guerra, 2019).

In these learning transitions we discover fantasy, inventiveness, creativity, and imagination, elements that Munari distinguishes to link them together. «Fantasy: is our ability to think of something that did not exist before, even if it is unrealistic. Invention: is our ability to conceive something that did not exist before but with a strictly practical use that does not concern form or aesthetics. Creativity: is our ability to conceive of something that did not exist before, which is realisable in scale and in an essential way. Imagination: imagination, invention, and creativity think, imagination sees» (Munari, 2017). With the motto “Playing with Art” (1968) Munari developed a teaching method that uses multi-sensory education to stimulate the child’s development in cognitive, emotional, social, and physical dimensions.

«Creativity, as the ultimate goal of imagination and invention, is formed and transformed continuously. It needs a ready and flexible intelligence, a mind free of preconceptions, ready to learn what it needs in any case and to change its opinion when a more just one comes along. The creative individual is therefore constantly evolving and his creative possibilities derive from the continuous updating and expansion of knowledge in every field» (Munari, 2017, p. 22). The opportunity to move from one subject to another, to relate with peers and adults, and to co-create new ideas enriches individual perspectives and supports openness to a commu-

nity dimension. In a lively context such as this, an intercultural approach can be relaunched, starting from the transcultural traces in an artistic and educational experience as transformative domains of individual and group identities.

This paper will analyze one of the research lines within the TICASS project – Technologies of Communication Imaging, Art and Social Sciences<sup>5</sup> – aimed to discover and promote artistic and creative processes in primary and pre-primary schools in Italy and Kenya, looking for ideas enforceable in heterogeneous contexts, where visual language becomes one of the possible means of intercultural communication (Deluigi, Machová, & Stara, 2021).

Starting from the inclusive and participatory approach, we'll present the workshop experiences of Visual and Urban TICASS, highlighting: collective educational design, learning strategies, methods of using plural languages, the dynamics of interaction between peers, the teaching approach, and the attitudes of teachers, educators and researchers<sup>6</sup>.

### **2.2.2. The language of art, with participatory learning environments and inclusive methods**

The educational experiences underpinning the TICASS project move in a plurality of community multiform contexts, while relying on the enhancement of visual language as a tool for conveying creativity, active participation, and cooperative learning processes. The co-design between Unimc and schools focused on the potential of the art and the mixing of languages. The integration of words and images encourages the creation of a shared dynamic of «being in a productive meeting place» between the self and the other (Cima, 2019, p. 13). The pedagogical function of art in the educational context is deeply rooted in the structuring processes of personal identity, further reinforced through interactions with others (Ber-

5. TICASS – *Technologies of Communication Imaging, Art and Social Sciences* – was a project, financed by the European Union as part of the Horizon 2020 programme (<https://ticass.eu/>).

6. The Visual TICASS and Urban TICASS experiences took place in Italy and Kenya with periods of international mobility between 2018 and 2020. The University of Macerata (Unimc) research team coordinated by prof. Rosita Deluigi, involved prof. Giuseppe Capriotti and prof. Morena Muzi with a group of university tutors who supported the development of a didactic-educational approach as well as the realisation of activities in Italy (Jessica Canestrari, Francesca Casamassima, Miriam Cuccu, Ilenia Marino, Francesca Mondin, Maria Luisa Ricci, and Laura Salvatori).

tolini, 1996). The integration of artistic languages in educational contexts, therefore, develop symbolic capacities that facilitate the representation of self and the world, through the synergic use of verbal and visual codes (Arnheim, 1974). The processes of personal identity formation, consequently, traverse education in an aesthetic dimension, conceptualised as the nurture of sensitivity, creativity, imagination, and deep self-perception (Ciarcià & Dallari, 2016).

The experience of contact between differences allows for the transcendence of stereotypical representations. This process enables an understanding of the diversity that is inherent in human beings (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2020). Providing a space of expression for our respective uniqueness within an inclusive framework thus fosters the recognition of the value of difference without renouncing the principle of equality, respect for rights, and access to opportunities (Ciarcià & Dallari, 2020).

### **2.2.3. Educational action starting from the setting**

The adoption of a creative dimension as a means of personal and group expression is reflected in the design of a learning environment as a *third educator* (Filippini & Vecchi, 1996). Space assumes an educational function that fosters interaction, thereby generating coexistence and emotional and cognitive situations that contribute to well-being and trust (Ibid.). Within these experiences, children's nuanced expressions and personalities intertwine, coming into contact with each other in unusual ways, while conflicts are 'resolved' as part of the process of navigating unexplored territories and boundaries. Learning spaces characterised by a collaborative construction of knowledge through experimentation and everyone's engagement promote cooperative dynamics (Comoglio & Cardoso, 2002), peer tutoring, autonomy management, and intergenerational dialogue between children and educators. The use of creative language, enhanced by the co-creation of images and narratives, facilitates the expression of personal interpretations, intuitions, and beliefs, thus inviting individuals to explore the domains of the imagination.

### **2.2.4. Open materials and plural narratives**

The exploration of open, unstructured, and multisensory materials has been shown (Restelli, 2016) to encourage participants to engage in divergent thinking, transcending the conventional right-wrong binomial (Ciarcià

& Dallari, 2016). Through art, «the meanings of otherwise dumb, undefined, limited and contrasted elements become clearer and more focused; [...] through the creation of a new experience» (Dewey, 1996, p. 29). In the process of knowledge co-construction, «cognitive activity [...] involves the interaction of at least three specific and deeply united elements: the knowledge already acquired, our goals and the area of feelings and emotions» (Fabbri Montesano & Munari, 1984, p. 335). It is at this point that experience becomes *meaningful* (Dewey, 2014).

The process of reclaiming and reinterpreting the surroundings becomes a catalyst for new participatory practices, involving the educational community at various levels. By exploring and revisiting familiar and everyday spaces through the lens of children, new nuances and meanings hidden in local contexts emerge. The act of critical observation holds creative potential, provided it encourages divergent and metaphorical thinking (Dallari, 2018). The creative reworking of elements of urban space through visual languages activates new and plural narratives (Deluigi et al., 2021) generated from the perspective of childhood in a *milieu* in which we reside, perceive, love, or repudiate, and which is shaped by its inhabitants (Frémont, 1976).

The integration of different viewpoints becomes a catalyst for new forms of active intergenerational collaboration (Cadei et al., 2016) in which children make a valuable contribution to collective knowledge (Dallabona, 2007). In the context of research focusing on local realities, the adaptability of artistic languages emerges as a valuable educational tool, facilitating forms of participation and expression, both at the individual and community level.

### **2.2.5. Visual TICASS: visual art as an intercultural educational tool**

Visual TICASS utilised visual language and narration to stimulate children's imagination and creativity, enabling them to become users and producers of images. The initiative was structured into three phases in Italy and Kenya. The first experience took place in Italy at Gianni Rodari's pre-primary school in Macerata from January to March 2018, with 110 children participating. The initial narration with silent books was enriched with sounds and music. The second workshop was in Kenya between July and August 2018 in three primary schools: Ocean of Wonders, Kilimo Primary School, and Nazareth Church School, in the districts of Kilifi and Mnarani. Each school took part in three activities involving mixed-age

groups of 20 to 120 children, for a total of 352 children between the ages of 7 and 13. The programme used the visual books “Little Blue and Little Yellow” and “Mix It Up” and the artworks co-created were displayed spontaneously in the school yard. The third workshop was conducted in Italy, at the same pre-primary school, between March and May 2019, and involved 84 children. We read the same books used in Kenya, plus “Say zoop”. Paintings from the various workshops, as well as the narratives and interpretations collected, were exhibited at the final event (Cuccu, 2021).

In November 2019, the exhibition, T.I.M.E. – TICASS Museum Experience was held at the “Buonaccorsi museum” in Macerata, to present the experience with an interactive area.

#### ***2.2.5.1. Taking part in the narrative: from silent book to “staging”***

The use of participatory narration was key to the visual experience, promoting a range of interpretations through silent books (Zizioli, 2017). During the workshop, children were able to decode images based on their knowledge, personal experience, and everyday contexts of reference. During the sessions, sounds were used while visuals were kept minimal, allowing imagination to thrive. The images used were simple. Adults narrated and synthesised the contributions of the children without evaluating them. The children felt integral to the group and all viewpoints were considered, including unconventional or humorous ones.

#### ***2.2.5.2. The workshop: from experimentations with colour to spontaneous storytelling***

A second art workshop in Kenya got kids working together to use colours in small groups, sharing and working as a team on the same activity. This was based on the ideas of Hervé Tullet who has made major contributions to the field of interactive books. His approach encourages kids to freely experiment and express themselves with colours and materials. However, children from a Kenyan background were initially overwhelmed by the lack of instructions (Tullet, 2020). They adopted a cautious approach, refraining from excessive mixing of colours and maintaining a certain spatial order. As time went on, they became more active and experimental, using tools like leaves, potatoes, and passion fruit skins. Pupils in Italy

immediately engaged with the group, experimenting with colour and contributing to the collective space in diverse ways. As artistic and creative activities progressed, the research team observed a tendency to experiment with unconstrained colours (Deluigi, 2021).

### **2.2.5.3. *Visual and shared data collection***

The working group's strategies (observation, monitoring, reflection) collected quality data for all workshops. Children's voices, feedback, and reactions were collected using grids, audio recordings, and snapshots. Inspired by Art Based Research and Photo Elicitation, we used pictures to document the most expressive moments and look more closely at the pedagogical reflections. The research group also verbally recorded their observations at the end of each session. Researchers shared audio and visual materials to collect data without disturbing the children.

### **2.2.5.4. *Urban TICASS: views, details, and urban contexts***

Urban TICASS is a project that took place in Italy and Kenya between 2018 and 2019. The various editions of the project demonstrated a circularity between experiences and a mutual change in the definition of activities depending on the contexts in which they occurred.

In Italy, two editions were held (Urban TICASS in 2018 and Urban TICASS 2.0 in 2019), in which approximately 200 primary school students from the Istituto Comprensivo Mestica in Macerata engaged with the theme of the city through a variety of media, including photographs, videos, texts, narratives, and drawings. These activities were initiated with an examination of urban details and spaces.

In Kenya, the activity was completed in a single stage in 2018 (Urban TICASS Kilifi), involving 25 children from the Ocean of Wonders primary school in Mnarani. The objective was to develop the students' familiarity with visual language through the use of photographs to discover the details and contexts of a Kilifi suburb.

## **2.2.6. Exploring the city: visual architecture and plural narratives**

In Urban TICASS, the children explored the city with parents and teachers, taking pictures of some details of the public space and creating a short description and imaginative story of what they had observed. In Urban TICASS 2.0, the children, after taking pictures, made short videos to present a part of the city they liked.

Subsequently, the material produced by the primary school pupils was reworked from the perspective of cultural heritage and didactics by a group of students from the Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism (Unimc), to realise two playful-didactic events open to citizenship.

In the inaugural edition of Urban TICASS, primary school students participated in the organisation of a “treasure hunt”, during which they visited the city and photographed various urban details. These elements previously fulfilled a specific function but have since lost their significance, resulting in the emergence of enigmatic presences capable of evoking curiosity among both local inhabitants and visitors (Deluigi & Capriotti, 2019). The primary school students were tasked with identifying and documenting elements that piqued their interest, fostering a deeper understanding of these subjects. Concurrently, they have written a narrative around a detail that had captured their imagination, thereby cultivating their creative storytelling abilities.

At this stage, the Unimc students endeavoured to transform the material into a playful educational product about the city and its heritage: a treasure hunt. The true treasure to be discovered and subsequently returned to all participants at the final event was the historical significance underlying every detail. The Cultural Heritage students worked on the cultural-historical and art-historical value of these details, using theoretical knowledge to create a ‘competence-based’ educational practice (Guasti, 2017; Maccario, 2012). They are tasked with the creation of a 10-line caption that elucidates the historical significance of each detail, which is to be presented as a ‘treasure’ on the day of the final event. This allowed the students to understand the importance of the situation in which the symbols are placed, finding ways to communicate and access information.

The second Urban TICASS edition focused on contexts, i.e. broader places with specific personal significance (for the individual’s experience) or general significance (for the city’s history). Primary school students made a video about a significant area of their experience. Cultural Heritage students brought out the historical significance of these places with 10-line

captions. Students from the Intercultural Pedagogy course worked to understand the meaning of symbols in an urban context, recoding the information in a playful-educational format. The intercultural perspective was decisive in achieving personal and disciplinary decentralisation (Catarci, Macinai, 2015; Fiorucci et al., 2017). The students implemented participatory-creative processes and carefully designed learning paths and tools suitable for primary school students (Cadei et al., 2016).

#### ***2.2.6.1. Urban spaces on the move: important places and maps for orientation***

In Kenya, the activity was conducted in December 2018 over four workshops. The first session was an open dialogue with teaching professionals about the activity's rationale and the target demographic. The participatory proposal was to use visual language to discover the territories' values. In the subsequent workshop, each participant created a drawing of a significant place in their suburb. Guided by a facilitator, the group created a map of the area, indicating the locations in the artwork. To enhance the map, the pupils used fingerprints of various colours. The third meeting explored the Mnarani suburb, using digital cameras and mobile phones to capture details. After this, there was a forum at the school where people shared their ideas and impressions. During the final session, the students put their photographic images (transferring them to plastic cards) on a map, which were then used in a memory game (each picture was printed twice). The project achieved its objectives. Some pupils demonstrated an understanding of the difference between a detail and a bigger picture. Some participants displayed storytelling skills right from the start. On exploring the territory, pupils talked about everyday life, interacting with people, justifying choices in feedback. The group's attitudes towards cooperation and interest in the city context were noteworthy (Capriotti & Deluigi, 2021, pp. 121-123).

#### ***2.2.6.2. Open dialogue between public spaces and research perspectives***

Both experiences took children, researchers, and teachers into cities and public spaces, encouraging their curiosity as an impetus for research based on details and stories embedded in contexts more or less familiar to the participants. It was necessary to observe, photograph, film, describe,

narrate, and explain choices, sharing activities and ideas with peer groups. The experiential educational approach fostered various soft skills, such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. The possibility of being a dynamic part of the spaces and times in the different contexts led to mutual coaching between adults and children, nurturing shared hypotheses and interpretations. In this way, we were able to deconstruct the role of the competence bearer, extending the learning paradigm in a transversal way. Indeed, the adults learned a lot from the children, who “took them by the hand” in discovering historical corners of the city and elements of everyday life.

### **2.2.7. Art, images, and interculture: positions in educational research**

The disparate editions of the Visual and Urban TICASS traversed times and spaces under the banner of curiosity, creativity, and learning, promoting interaction between languages and backgrounds. As has been demonstrated, all the participants were active producers of new and original stories, co-created and mediated through art, creativity, and interaction with peers. Children were able to reveal aspects of their cognitive processes, including modes of thinking, feeling, and perceiving. This occurs when adults are willing to engage in a learning process with kids, paying attention to their needs and potential, and providing support and autonomy in workshop contexts.

Creating a dialogue between generations means taking care of details and abandoning known assumptions to free up creative paths. Being prepared for the unexpected is part of the teacher’s and researcher’s posture in contexts of mutual attention and trust. «Promoting students’ involvement through visual language can help them to be active in experiences. They may remember activities and learning objectives longer because engagement in memorable and actionable experiences is more interesting [...]. The use of local materials and the enhancement of personal attitudes and professional skills are ways to create intercultural dialogue and promote common understanding. [...] It is important to develop training paths for teachers, educators, and curators to improve the creative approach to new media, starting from different perceptions of visual images» (Deluigi, 2021, p. 88).

Designing inclusive and intercultural educational practices and reflecting on them requires attention to the community dynamics. Moreover, openness to dialogue with oneself, with others, and with surrounding

contexts is an essential movement to conduct meaningful transitions, immersing oneself in experiences with blurred and inhabitable boundaries, looking for multiform narratives.

Educational and didactic experiences have promoted significant relationships between teachers and students, creating interdisciplinary research spaces. The theoretical frame of reference (Deluigi, 2019) opened up transversal panoramas and unprecedented scenarios in areas of proximity. The transdisciplinary encounter took place in a border zone, in a place that did not specifically belong to any of the interlocutors. Exploration in the field made it possible to enter lesser-known territories, starting from unexpected points of view and increasing the network of dialogue with the local context, building participatory discoveries toward sustainable strategies and new languages for the future (Capriotti, Deluigi, 2019).

The pathways in Italy and Kenya have encouraged dialogue between university, schools, archives, civic spaces, and associations, highlighting the importance of creativity in urban learning.

These experiences have also emphasised the value of urban spaces as communities. The feedback process was designed to include multiple voices and was open to schools, families, and citizens. This approach highlights the adaptability of research methods and the value of unconventional explorations of living spaces for encouraging dialogue.

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## 2.3. Critical, creative, caring and cosmopolitan thinking

*Mariangela Scarpini<sup>1</sup>*

### 2.3.1. Introduction

Even the most recent national and international policies underline the importance of envisaging an education targeted towards the promotion of complex thought, creative and nonviolent conflict resolution, and emotional expression: an education promoting ethical commitment in a cosmopolitan perspective. Can philosophy, and P4C in particular, offer a path that responds to the right to learn to think in childhood also in the schools? And in the Montessori School? Maria Montessori and Matthew Lipman – the former in the first half, the latter in the second half of the 1900s – have systematically observed children of different ages. This theoretical research investigates these two perspectives that offer valuable opportunities and share points of view.

Both characterized, gave value, and focused their scientific contributions on the children's ability to think and express their thoughts through languages (purposely in the plural form). As is known to education researchers and professionals, the world of childhood indeed owns the ability to think, but such ability has not always been (or still isn't) considered to exist. To express the pedagogical value of their interconnection paves the way for reflections that may guide the actions of teachers, educators, and learning process experts in different context.

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### 2.3.2. Montessori and Lipman

Considering the framework of our age – which seems to highlight a context involving a high risk of widespread conflict and drenched with different levels of conditioning – even the most recent national (MIUR, 2012) and international policies (United Nations, 1989, art. 29; United Nations, 2015, Millennium Development Goals) underline the importance of envisaging an education targeted towards the promotion of complex thought, creative and nonviolent conflict resolution, and emotional expression: an education promoting ethical commitment in a cosmopolitan perspective. The legal framework mentions the right to think, from childhood. In the Italian context, purely by way of example, we shall refer to the 2012 national guidelines.

Among the different proposals for the creation of opportunities to exercise complex and multidimensional thought, there are the educational tools promoted by Montessori and Lipman, both with their peculiarities and with their connections. As she called upon the need to exercise thought starting as a child, Montessori came to ask herself a question, almost rhetorical: “why shouldn’t a child be able to exercise philosophy?” (Montessori, 2016, 100). Some thirty years later, on the other side of the Atlantic, inspired by the same observation on childhood thought skills, Lipman and his collaborators (Lipman, 1995, 2003, 2008) asked themselves similar questions. They created Philosophy for Children, which envisioned the possibility to exercise philosophy in a classroom (Lipman, 2003, p. 139). In this sense, it appears even more unavoidable to favor a suitable time and space – along with methods – to promote the exercise of dynamic and complex thought. Education to complex thought – including features of the reflective thinking dimensions – shall thus include an exercise on multiple levels, with a focus on their combination. Lipman identified three dimensions that we shall investigate hereinafter: creative, critical, and caring thinking (Lipman, 1995, 2003, 2008).

Lipman discussed multidimensional thinking, namely the contemporary presence of the three dimensions he identified. This type of thinking finds expression as a higher order thinking only when it attempts and brings about the inclusion of the threefold structure, with each element equally promoted and mutually dependent. “For the schools to be committed to eliciting from each student an equilibrium among the critical, creative, and caring aspects of thinking would result, it seems to me, in a dramatic change in the nature of education” (Lipman, 2003, p. 202). The dimensions we shall explore and that make up the complex/multidimen-

sional thought (i.e., thought itself and its process) do not have a hierarchical positioning – e.g., they do not match high-level thinking with critical thinking – but are, on the other hand, tightly knit. Lipman specified:

Some thinking is quantitative; some is expository, some narrative. The list goes on and on, but it will be enough if we recognize that thinking entails an interpenetration and interbreeding of different forms of mental behavior, which we are free to conceptualize as reasonableness, creativity, and care. Each form of these behaviors is a form of inquiry; put together, the result is not merely additive but multiplicative (Lipman, 2003, p. 198).

The recognition, thus expression, of the different dimensions is also functional to Lipman's exhortation: "The teacher must encourage students to look beneath the more superficial levels of discourse to discover what these levels conceal" (Lipman, 2003, p. 202). An educational commitment that is reflexive and of a deontological nature is required for the critical exercise to become an ethically sound and emotional exercise and cease to be an abstract reference for an exercise with which to deconstruct, investigate, decipher, and interpret even that which already seems transparent, assumed, and shared by the vast majority.

It is thus, above all, the adult perspective that needs to be educated. The educational thought shall be trained to constantly grow and become an ethically sound and emotional exercise (Contini, 2014).

On the back of the considerations made thus far, we shall now explore each thinking dimension presented by Lipman.

### **2.3.3. Critical thinking**

To be supported, statements and opinions require assessment and classification criteria. Indeed, a given criterion may be expressed as a specific reason behind a discussion, as long as it is – within such discussion – considered coherent, valid, suitable, and reliable. In this sense, in order to be critical, a thought shall be questioned by the critical thinker him/herself (even with the support of a third-party, who is the mirror for the thought expressed and shared). The thinker shall question its most intrinsic errors, its weaknesses, its misleading elements that, by involving different views of the world, have effects on the different experiential dimensions, including the affective and relational dimensions (Paul, 1984). We thus call for a critical thought that is able "to recognize the circumstances that provide sense and depth to an issue and its fundamental elements. This implies the ability to identify exceptions and irregularities, limitations, contingencies,

normality paradigms, and peculiarities, as well as a specific language (cfr. Santi, 2005; Kohan, 2015; Kohan, Santi, Wozniak, 2016).

Most of the thoughts we process are acritical and remain superficial in their path. At the same time, thinking a thought does not make it critical per se. I may indeed think of a thought (including my own thought) uncritically: it would in any case be a good metacognitive exercise, but one that would not make my thought critical unless I corrected it.

“In traditional education it is taken for granted that the important thing is providing correct answers. In an education based on appropriate judgment, it is implied that asking questions and recognizing one’s mistakes and those of others is the badge of honor of a good education” (Santi, 2005, p. 36).

Critical thought is growingly identified as a thought that must be exercised in opposition to sterile and superficial chatter and, at the same time, to facilitate the recognition of bias.

We have mentioned the value of the critical dimension of thought and – in the connotations presented – we have underlined the importance of exercise upon assessing causes and effects of a given argument or the action. We have discussed the recognition of fallacies in a discussion or thought process, as well as the importance of training reasoning and discussion skills for a more conscious decision-making process. Let us now present the touchpoints with the other two dimensions proposed by Lipman.

### **2.3.4. Creative thinking**

The word “creative” derives from “creare”, whose etymology includes the Sanskrit and Zend root<sup>2</sup> kar, which may be translated as the verb “to do” and the word κραίνω (kraino), meaning “to achieve”, “to realize”.

To realize by causing reversals; by seeing opportunities where, apparently, there is only waste and scrap, perhaps even praising their features!

By using neuroimaging techniques, neuroscience research has identified some of the areas of the brain involved in the different experiences, including the ones we may define “creative”. Neuroimaging is a technique that avails itself of different tools and procedures to view the subject’s brain in the performance of different activities. Despite its strong progress in the past decade, it is still a constantly evolving field. It is indeed in vivo observations that have allowed us to discover the constant correlations

2. Similarly, from the same root, the words that derive from create, such as creator, creativity, creation, creature ecc.

between the phases of artistic creation and the activation of specific areas of the central nervous system. Maffei (2016) has attempted to investigate the physiological mechanisms behind creativity. He has distinguished two main phases: the intuition phase.

The various nervous impulses may derive from memory, centers controlling emotion or ones controlling attention and, in general, the state of excitation/inhibition of the synapses between the various nerve circuits. Bear in mind that in the cerebral cortex, the visual memory of an image generates the same activity caused by the real experience of that image.

Activity taking place in the cerebral cortex – but also any other area of the brain – is always the result of multiple doors that control the exit of a specific group of cells (Maffei et al., 2016).

If messages are clear, the following action is predictable. Oppositely, nerve messages behind creative acts are born out of unpredictable and less consolidated nervous mechanisms that involve, in any case, the left hemisphere – without a verification by the latter, the act would not be considered creative.

One must seize numerous opportunities for a creative experience in order to train the mind to see that which exists under different perspectives and create new paths or imagine new possibilities for oneself and others, therefore understanding (in the different senses and meanings we may assign to such word) the latter. It is not enough to distinguish the skills of each child. In this scope, one must break free

from the rather ideological screens and concepts saying that *the child is essentially creative* and that *creativity is instinctive and finds expression in an instinctive context* and, most of all, work on the cognitive areas, towards flexibility and divergence [...]. The playful element and the interaction with others, alongside the recognition of the right to a personal pace and rhythm when performing the various activities may contribute to developing a *taste* for doing, thinking, and *trying*, which paves the way for experimentations whose result is not obvious or predefined (Contini, 1999, p. 47).

Training complex thinking in its creative dimension may contribute to providing the tools to walk in this direction.

Let us now discuss the third dimension of complex thinking: the caring dimension. Through a balance of the three dimensions, individuals may walk their existential path in the direction of fulfillment: self-fulfillment through fulfillment of another.

### 2.3.5. Caring thinking

Lipman's proposal – in line with the previous statements – is permeated with the stimulation to emotional literacy since childhood in order to recognize, identify, distinguish, and grow aware of one's emotions.

Ever since childhood, it appears important to identify paths towards emotional education to fight the risk of emotional illiteracy.

Educational responsibility is necessarily called on so that an educational offer may be presented to allow the encounter with one's emotions and those of others. One must learn how to name them, embrace them – also with the awareness of their possible ambivalence and ambiguity – and express them in the various forms of communication (anywhere from nonverbal communication to music, to silence, to hugging, to other arts) that may open relationships.

Therefore, a required education that, also in line with the recent neuroscience research, retraces the principle that when individuals are able to feel an emotion – because they see it in themselves and know it – they are able to recognize its motivations, connections, and intentions. Individuals that are educated from a relational and emotional perspective are able to easily identify, recognize, and motivate their own emotions but are also facilitated in performing the same tasks in relationships with others (Gallese, 2013).

Education to relationships based on care, respect, and empathy cannot and must not continue to be considered optional in educational settings; it cannot continue to be promoted and trained only thanks to the common sense of few skillful teachers and their excellent care in the educational praxis. Based on a renewed view of childhood, P4C considers education to thinking (in its various dimensions) as a goal to pursue with a long-term approach and by using services that may, above all, be renewed in their informal structure and – only at a later stage – use philosophy as one among the many thought-training exercises. In conclusion, I shall refer to Contini, who described an encounter he had with Maité, an 8-year-old girl who took stock of a P4C experience:

Let me tell about my first time, when I was in kindergarten. The teacher had asked us to bring our favorite stuffed animal (the one we went to sleep with) to school. The morning after, she put us in a circle, each holding his/her stuffed animal, and invited us to ask each other questions. We started saying: «Yours is so ugly, so scuffy, why did you choose this one?». The more we said these things, the worse we felt. Each of us protected his/her animal and said that the comments of their peers weren't true: it was not ugly; it was the other stuffed animals that were ugly... In the end, we understood that each stuffed animal was beautiful because

we were attached to it, we loved it, and it didn't matter how it looked aesthetically: what mattered is how it was in each girl's or boy's eyes. We understood that you can even grow fond of a thought, and instead of saying it is a bad thought it is better to talk and understand why we are attached to that thought...".

I like to think of Maité and her classmates growing and getting involved in discussions – useful, this time – in which they face their own emotions and those of others. Not to win battles for the realization of needs or “wants”, but to grow literate in terms of knowing, feeling, communicating, and clashing with others on the topic of respect and peace (Contini, 2017).

### **2.3.6. Cosmopolitan thinking**

Education to complex and multidimensional thinking, with its facets expressed in the critical, creative and caring dimension, calls us to action and does so not by questioning an ideal or aprioristic context, but by questioning our everyday dimension: our reality. What reality? As mentioned in the first chapter, the reality described in our current socio-cultural context comprises a broad mix of multiple characteristics, which find their form in GLocal citizenship. It must be said that the term GLocal is a neologism to define belonging (on a large scale) to both a local and a wider, global reality.

It is the awareness of the complexity of such context that is invoking us to provide, at different levels, an effective educational response.

Let us bear in mind that, in line with the elements described thus far, P4C has achieved explicit recognition by the UNESCO Philosophy Division (2007), which has identified the setting, the theoretical system, and the basic methodological setup as functional tools to train complex thought (in the broadest and strictest sense) and for the development of an effective thought structure: a continuation of the concept of well-made head (Morin, 2000).

The national and international education system finds itself facing new challenges born out of deep transformations in the society we live in. In this scope, we shall integrate learning/teaching targeted to the acquisition of knowledge with more articulated and significant educational mechanisms designed for the achievement of cognitive and socio-relational life-skills both in the school context and in lifelong learning. Lipman believed that exercising thought was not only legitimate – given children's ability to think – but necessary: in the 1970s, as he worked as a Logic professor at Columbia University, Lipman observed the need for students to exercise their thought processes long before the beginning of their university career, namely as children. This was the start of the Philosophy for Children experience.

Along the same lines, Montessori had already posed an interesting doubt on the matter: “why shouldn’t a child be able to exercise philosophy?” (Montessori, 2016, p. 100). Montessori made the skills and the value of children the focal and starting point of her work, always underlining that at the basis of the system she created there is always, inextricably, “the discovery of the child”: it is interesting to notice how, ever since the first appearance of her method, Montessori highlighted a considerable negation of childhood skills and rights. Starting from the abundance of standards and national/international research pinpointing the effort made by the adult world to recognize the skills and rights specific to children, we may hereby observe how certain organizational proposals – even targeted towards children – tend to encourage performances related to summary thinking and winning – even in terms of competition – and more concentrated on the product rather than on the growth and/or learning process.

We interrogate ourselves – through Montessori and Lipman – on the possibility to teach children how to interact with each other in ways focused on respective care: to ask, ask themselves, and be asked questions; to find answers together and think together! In order to find an answer to such interrogative, I hereby reiterate the perspectives of the two abovementioned masters: the Montessori Method (Montessori, 1964) and Philosophy for Children (Lipman, 2003). Both educational paths contemplate education to complex thought as a possible and necessary element.

Among the identifiable interconnections between the theories of Montessori and Lipman, that the present article does not have the ambition to present, I shall attempt to consider some of the founding principles of Philosophy for Children that show a link with the Montessori Method. The identified elements may be especially interesting for those involved in current research on the Montessori Method or for teachers choosing to work using such method. Let us begin by expanding on the ones already partially introduced: Contexts as protective and creative environments, Society by cohesion and Community of Inquiry, and the new teacher and the Teacher in P4C.

We thus move on to a second point of intersection between the two educational proposals identified: the construction of the environment. In her experience, Montessori started giving priority to context design upon creation of her first Children’s House. Children proved to be competent, skillful, and able, as they were placed in the condition to work independently. They did not need to ask for help to pick up an object, or cry until someone poured them a glass of water: objects were made to measure for them. But, when we speak about an environment, we don’t only refer to child-size chairs and desks – that would be reductive. I do not mean that, simply,

desks were laid out as group pods to facilitate co-construction of knowledge. It is part of the picture, but not the full picture. The physical aspects are essential, but at the same time the aspects related to the emotional and relationship environment are also instrumental. The environment presented by both Montessori and Lipman is, indeed, a safe and at the same time creative context, which fears not the mistake in itself, but rather accepts the risk to commit a mistake, and for the child to use it to its benefit, as a bringer of new creations.

The environment in itself may be considered in the scope of two fundamental and functional implications to the topic in concern. On one hand, an environment stimulating heuristic processes from a perspective we may define as disciplinary and content-based; it is with this element that interactions between the individual and the world – meant as the privileged interlocutor to which ask questions and from which to initiate discovery-based paths. On the other hand, an environment distinguished by positivity, open to dialogue and to each and everyone's originality, in which children may express themselves and ask their own questions; children interrogate themselves and interrogate others when they experience the relationship with effective interlocutors, able to reflect and reformulate their question and/or their thought process, and able to build a non-repressive, stimulating environment in which little boys and girls may feel complete and accepted for both their existing and potential capabilities.

### **2.3.7. Society by cohesion and community of inquiry**

Redefining the concept of a group (individuals of the same or different age group or a class) as a Society by Cohesion-Community of Inquiry in which children may exercise thought together and experiment the value of discussion. In Philosophy for Children, the concept of class is interpreted as a community, and more specifically a Community of Inquiry. Of course, the two pedagogic tools may not be overlapped, but their common denominator is the centralization of the relationship between individuals as a tool for construction and co-construction of discovery. Similarly, in the eyes of Montessori the class is not simply a set of individuals or a Group of children sharing the same spaces and activities – although it may seem this way upon superficially reviewing her early (and, perhaps, most popular) essays. Instead, in a cohesion-based society – as the term itself hints – children are oriented towards a common goal that keeps them together, close-knit, and with a shared sense of respect and community. The class is not seen as a set of individuals performing perhaps the same activity

on their own, but as a group that builds its shared horizon of sense and knowledge together. In the Community of Inquiry, meant as, in particular, the philosophy Community of Inquiry (Dewey, 1916; Peirce, 1972) each child is the active protagonist of a research path along which collective and individual thought travel together. The guarantor for the creation of the Community of Inquiry and the society by cohesion is the so-called Teacher in Philosophy for Children, who serves as a coordinator, a moderator, and a facilitator. This concept of teacher, given its indirect and non-directorial action, seems to recall the teacher figure envisaged by Montessori: the “new teacher” – of course, always maintaining an asymmetrical role compared to the children – observes and offers his/her presence without being invasive or directorial.

### **2.3.8. The new teacher and the teacher in P4C**

The environment thus set up and the independent (though not solitary) work of the children thus overcome the conventional role of the teacher, which manifests itself by subtraction and not by addition. The teacher, who doesn't dare to act as the only possessor of knowledge, has not so much the role of transmitting notions, but that to observe individual children, their relationships and – building on such relationships – set up an environment that is functional to the harmonic growth of children as a group and as individuals. The role of the teacher may be compared to that of a moderator, a facilitator that prepares the environment (as previously described) and serves as a vehicle to accompany every child in his/her discovery. A “new teacher”, as suggested by Montessori, who rather than words, shall learn silence; rather than teaching, shall observe; rather than the proud dignity of a person who once wished to appear flawless, instead wears the drapes of humbleness and activates research processes. The teacher is thus mainly a channel that “puts the children in contact with their reagent”. The figure of the Teacher in Philosophy for Children and the new teacher proposed by Montessori mirrored that of Socrates, the son of a sculptor and a midwife. The teacher is a facilitator, a mediator that sets up heuristic occasions and, by means of observation or data collection, facilitates learning processes starting from the recognition of the children with their individual interests, questions, and challenges. Such leading figures will unavoidably be a professional who make reflexivity and deontology become categories of their own.

## Conclusions

Therefore, we can ask: can P4C find fertile ground in schools that apply the Montessori Method? The paper focused, among other elements, on the importance of giving space for thinking experience from childhood on, and on the recognition of the value of childhood. Both Lipman and Montessori have systematically observed children of different ages – the former in the first half, the latter in the second half of the twentieth century. Both recognized, gave value, and focused their scientific contributions on children's ability to think and express their thoughts through languages (purposely in the plural form). As educational researchers and professionals know, children have the ability to think, but such ability has not always been (and still isn't) considered to exist. Even when it is evoked in words, educational choices and proposals seem – even today – to express mistrust towards children's thought. The two mentioned authors have repeatedly highlighted the importance of an essential right: the right to think and to be given a space – even as children – to exercise thinking with others. In particular, both authors – though envisaging different educational paths – identified the same categories functional to exercising thinking. Their interconnection may guide the actions of teachers, educators, and learning process experts.

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## **2.4. Lutter contre le décrochage scolaire par des pratiques inclusives telles que l'observation et le coaching en classe**

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### *Abstrait*

Cette étude présente une intervention intégrée d'observation et de coaching menée de février à mai 2022 auprès d'élèves et d'enseignants d'une classe de troisième année dans un collège de Taranto en Italie. L'objectif était de renforcer les processus d'enseignement-apprentissage, de développer les compétences des élèves et d'analyser l'impact de cette intervention sur la dynamique de la classe et les performances scolaires. L'analyse visait notamment à identifier les stratégies et comportements enseignants efficaces, ceux à réajuster, ainsi qu'à examiner l'existence d'un lien éventuel entre ces adaptations et une réduction du décrochage scolaire.

### **2.4.1. Motivations et choix des stratégies**

Le décrochage scolaire est un phénomène qui produit chez les élèves une perte de ressources, de temps, d'apprentissage (Batini & Benvenuto, 2016), «un sentiment de malaise grave qui les empêche de vivre une expérience scolaire pleinement formatrice» (Bombardelli, 2001, p. 75), sereine et gratifiante, en raison de laquelle il y a des interruptions de présence, des assiduités irrégulières et des échecs. Il s'agit d'un phénomène complexe dont la gestion nécessite une planification systémique dans laquelle plusieurs figures de l'éducation interviennent avec différents rôles, fonctions et actions, de manière organisée, structurée et à plusieurs niveaux (Liverano, 2023).

Le choix d'utiliser ces stratégies a été influencé par la présence d'élèves incapables d'adopter des comportements appropriés dans certaines situations d'apprentissage et par des enseignants résignés à l'idée de ne pas pou-

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voir améliorer le climat de la classe et la qualité de l'apprentissage car ils avaient peu confiance en leurs propres ressources et compétences, au point d'avoir besoin de moments de réflexion et d'introspection, essentiel pour améliorer la qualité de l'enseignement, en relation avec certains objectifs éducatifs (Schraw et al., 2006). La classe, ouverte aux innovations pédagogiques et à la demande d'aide qui est venue des enseignants, a convaincu tout le monde d'utiliser des stratégies qui, tant en termes de qualité d'engagement que de méthodes et de temps, devaient être extrêmement exploratoires et transformatrices d'un point de vue systémique-relationnel et capables de générer de la confiance, de stimuler la motivation et l'implication, comme un effet de la maturation individuelle, à travers un plus grand sens de la conscience, de la responsabilité et de l'auto-efficacité. Pour certains élèves ayant des besoins éducatifs particuliers et à risque de décrochage scolaire, cela pourrait représenter une voie pour réduire le sentiment de marginalisation et améliorer la cohésion avec le reste de la classe.

### **2.4.2. Le cadre théorique**

L'observation participante se prête à ce type de collecte de données tangibles et intangibles car l'observateur, dans le plein respect des principes qui garantissent la validité de l'observation, a la possibilité de s'intégrer au groupe-classe pour participer à la vie du groupe lui-même et interagir avec les sujets observés, dans une dimension dynamique dont il fait partie intégrante. L'observation participante devait servir de loupe pour comprendre ce qui se passait dans le contexte de la classe et, en même temps, pour essayer de créer un climat de confiance entre les élèves, pour développer en eux la conscience qu'ils pouvaient compter sur l'aide et le soutien de quelqu'un d'autre que l'enseignant de la classe. Dans le même temps, une observation discrète mais incisive a dû enregistrer la qualité des processus d'enseignement et d'apprentissage et détecter quels comportements des enseignants étaient efficaces et lesquels devaient être remodelés (Tacconi & Gomez, 2012, p. 23). Afin d'éviter le risque de transformer l'activité d'observation en une action envahissante d'un domaine dont la gestion est entièrement entre les mains de l'enseignant, et de limiter la tentative des étudiants et des enseignants de délégitimer l'observation du chercheur, il a été décidé d'utiliser les enregistrements vidéo comme formes supplémentaires d'observation autobiographique indirecte. Ceux-ci devaient soutenir ce qui avait été enregistré par le chercheur et s'opposer à toute tentative des enseignants de dévaloriser les informations qui en découlaient. L'observation réalisée à travers des vidéos, en effet, garantit

le principe d'objectivité des faits. De plus, une triangulation des informations trouvées à partir de plusieurs modalités d'observation a également été effectuée (Trincherò, 2004; Trincherò & Robasto, 2019), qui, dans le cadre d'une recherche qualitative dans le domaine de l'éducation, réalisée dans un contexte qui considère les observateurs aux côtés des protagonistes, dans une confrontation constante des perspectives, représente une méthodologie qui compare les données afin de vérifier une éventuelle coïncidence et corrélation des facteurs, la véracité des interprétations et d'attester de leur qualité, la fiabilité et leur signification (Sorzio, 2005; Mortari & Ghirrotto, 2019). L'implication conjointe du chercheur, des enseignants et des étudiants est un aspect fondamental de l'observation participante, car la collaboration entre ces sujets permet d'interpréter et de valider les développements dans le domaine de l'éducation. En résumé, l'activité d'observation participante devrait:

1. Obtenir des informations sur la qualité de l'enseignement et les aider à identifier la voie positive à suivre pour améliorer la qualité de l'enseignement (Haep et al., 2016);
2. Comprendre la culture de l'école, la qualité des relations, les facteurs qui peuvent influencer les performances scolaires et la qualité de vie en classe;
3. Redéfinir la culture de la collaboration entre les écoles et les autres institutions pour une attitude plus confiante à l'égard d'activités telles que l'observation et le coaching pour le développement de compétences personnelles et sociales (Musaio, 2017; Avilés-Dávila et al., 2023), afin de rendre les personnes impliquées dans le processus d'enseignement plus ouvertes et plus habituées à de telles initiatives et donc de les vivre non pas comme une source de nervosité mais comme des opportunités éducatives.

L'observation participante devait être préparatoire au temps du coaching, c'est-à-dire qu'elle devait préparer les sujets à activer de manière autonome un processus d'autodétermination et de modification des attitudes et des comportements. La préparation comprenait le moment de la lecture et de l'interprétation objective de l'information qui a émergé à travers les différentes stratégies d'observation directe et indirecte, d'autoréflexion et de réflexion partagée de l'information. La qualité de l'enseignement, à cet égard, peut être améliorée par l'évaluation critique de ses actions pédagogiques par rapport à certains objectifs (Schraw et al., 2006) car elle peut montrer la nécessité de changements et d'ajustements dans l'organisation du processus d'enseignement et des contextes éducatifs; pour cette raison, elle constitue un moment central dans la formation des étudiants et des enseignants (Steins et al., 2015).

Le coaching, en vertu de ses caractéristiques, exige un haut degré de proximité et de collaboration entre la figure de l'entraîneur et de l'élève, en particulier dans le milieu scolaire, qui, à travers une plus grande confidentialité, une confiance mutuelle, une motivation et une implication accrues, vise à une plus grande conscience, responsabilité, capacité de choix, confiance et autonomie. Dans une situation où l'équilibre de la classe serait compromis, comme dans ce cas, le coaching pourrait représenter une pratique capable de rétablir l'harmonie et la conscience existentielle à chaque sujet, et être utile pour créer une vision positive de l'avenir, en donnant aux sujets la possibilité de maîtriser leur potentiel et de s'ouvrir aux défis, par opposition à l'effort éternel de «survivre et d'essayer d'éviter les problèmes» (Whitmore, 2006, p. 6). L'influence que le coach a sur l'élève, qui ne subit pas passivement cette action, mais collabore avec lui et construit une dynamique de développement, est un facteur fondamental dans l'activation et la construction du sens (Angel & Amar, 2008, p. 31) visant à développer le potentiel du sujet de manière intégrale, transversale, holistique, et donc avec une valeur éducative élevée. Le processus d'accompagnement que le coach mène envers l'apprenant tend à faciliter son apprentissage et à façonner ce que l'apprenant a et n'a pas encore fait ressortir (Ghenot, 2014, p. 11). Le coaching travaille sur le domaine du développement proximal du sujet, c'est-à-dire entre ce qui est un potentiel non développé et la difficulté de faire, de manière indépendante, quelque chose qui nécessite l'utilisation de ce potentiel inexprimé. Le coaching est donc très avantageux s'il est réalisé avec des personnes qui expriment de la curiosité et le désir d'explorer leurs capacités, mais qui ne sont pas encore en mesure de le faire de manière indépendante. Une relation de complicité, de co-construction et de coopération s'établit entre le coach et l'élève. De cette façon, l'étudiant peut chercher des solutions et participer activement à un processus d'autodétermination et d'atteinte de ses objectifs, dans lequel le coach agit en tant que facilitateur et sujet qui promeut une orientation maïeutique (Musaio, 2017) à travers des stimuli clairs, puissants, ouverts et, souvent, aussi stimulants. Dans un environnement scolaire, le coaching prend la forme d'une intervention individuelle conçue pour travailler avec des élèves qui ont de multiples problèmes critiques, qui sont incapables de définir de manière indépendante des objectifs et d'adopter de nouveaux styles de comportement (Capstick et al., 2019), qui ont de faibles compétences en matière d'étude, d'engagement et de planification scolaire, et dont le rendement scolaire global est médiocre (Bettinger & Baker, 2011).

À travers ce processus, le coach et le coaché se concentrent sur l'exploration des obstacles internes et externes qui empêchent l'accès et l'utilisation du potentiel inexploité et qui ont affecté négativement la performance.

Ensemble, ils élaborent des objectifs réalisables et des stratégies appropriées pour les atteindre, en plus de travailler sur la gestion du temps.

### **2.4.3. Méthodologie**

L'efficacité de l'encadrement scolaire en termes d'acquis d'apprentissage, de développement des compétences et de performance scolaire, y compris dans les situations liées à la gestion du handicap (Mitchell & Gansmer-Topf, 2016; Bellman et al., 2015) conduit le monde de l'éducation à encourager les pratiques de coaching pour les enseignants et les élèves car, bien qu'il n'y ait pas beaucoup de preuves scientifiques, il estime que le coaching scolaire est extrêmement utile pour améliorer la qualité de l'enseignement (Musaio, 2017) et, indirectement, celle de l'apprentissage des élèves.

#### **2.4.3.1. Questions de recherche**

L'objectif de cette étude était de tenter de répondre aux questions de recherche suivantes:

1. L'observation et le coaching facilitent-ils l'exploration des possibilités d'apprentissage pour renforcer les compétences des élèves et améliorer leur rendement scolaire et leur vie en classe?
2. L'observation et le soutien des enseignants peuvent-ils favoriser une meilleure action pédagogique et ainsi avoir un impact indirect sur la qualité de l'éducation des élèves et réduire le décrochage scolaire?

#### **2.4.3.2. Le type d'étude**

Compte tenu de la nature de l'échantillon de classe et de l'expérience, l'enquête peut être comptée parmi les études de cas (Stake, 1978) et comme une nouvelle expérience pédagogique et didactique de la recherche d'évaluation, qui examine les données qui ont émergé à travers de multiples modes d'observation. Parmi celles-ci, l'enregistrement vidéo permet de capturer plusieurs photographies qui, ensemble, sont capables de donner une vue globale d'un contexte. Il est extrêmement sensible à toutes les dimensions et à tous les aspects cachés, révèle des informations intangibles et favorise les transformations. Elle a donc une fonction d'orientation par rapport aux compétences à développer et aux comportements à modifier

(Bellini et al., 2007) par le biais du coaching. Pour les enregistrements vidéo, l'autorisation des parents des élèves a été demandée et obtenue. Deux cinéastes ont été contactés pour filmer la dynamique de classe et un coach pour l'activité de coaching.

#### **2.4.3.3. Les temps et les actions éducatives**

L'étude, qui a duré 16 semaines, a impliqué 19 élèves de la troisième A du lycée classique et 7 enseignants, dont un soutien pédagogique, pendant une heure seulement par jour, afin de ne pas avoir une quantité excessive d'informations. Le choix d'utiliser l'enregistrement vidéo, avant et à la fin de l'activité de coaching, n'a pas été fortuit mais justifié par la nécessité d'agir dans une perspective formative et transformatrice, basée sur une organisation des phases préparatoires (observation et coaching) et des objectifs. L'observation et l'enregistrement vidéo du chercheur devaient respecter certains paramètres et être fonctionnels pour:

1. Identifier les comportements typiques considérés comme «dysfonctionnels/critiques»;
2. Observer et réfléchir sur les actions enregistrées dans les vidéos pour comprendre le type d'impact que les actions ont produit;
3. Identifier le type d'impact potentiel résultant d'un changement d'attitude et de comportement;
4. Identifier les attitudes et comportements à modifier et les compétences à développer pour cette transformation;
5. Comprendre dans quelles situations il était nécessaire d'intervenir;
6. Discuter pour le co-développement d'actions d'accompagnement et la négociation des modalités de coaching.

#### **2.4.3.4. Lecture des données**

La comparaison entre les données issues de l'observation du chercheur et du visionnage des vidéos s'est avérée être un moment fertile pour valider ce qui en ressortait, surtout lorsqu'il y avait une coïncidence complète d'interprétations. Les deux méthodes d'observation ont mis en évidence certains facteurs représentatifs de la mauvaise qualité du processus d'enseignement-apprentissage et de la qualité de vie en classe, considérée comme malsaine, à savoir:

1. L'inadéquation du travail coopératif en classe ne favorise pas le renforcement de la dimension sociale;

2. Uniformité presque totale des méthodes d'enseignement;
3. La précarité de la formation pédagogique et didactique des enseignants;
4. Soumission excessive de la part des enseignants envers le comportement de certains élèves et manque d'autorité;
5. Faible niveau d'engagement et de participation des élèves à l'apprentissage;
6. Le manque de confiance des élèves dans les outils pédagogiques;
7. Capacité insuffisante à gérer les émotions et le stress de la part de certains élèves et enseignants;
8. Manque de confiance en soi et d'auto-efficacité chez certains élèves et enseignants;
9. Difficultés pédagogiques résultant du manque de médiateurs didactiques (tableau blanc interactif, PC, etc.).

Sur la base de ces questions critiques mises en évidence et confirmées par les enseignants et les élèves, des actions de coaching ont été développées, réalisées en sessions, dans des espaces et des temps distincts, tant pour les enseignants que pour les élèves. Le processus de réflexion a été mené en séparant les différents interprètes, afin d'atténuer les effets de délégitimation potentiels que l'observation et le coaching auraient pu exercer sur les identités professionnelles des enseignants, si la réflexion avait été menée avec la présence simultanée des étudiants. Le visionnage des vidéos a permis de comprendre exactement sur quoi et comment intervenir et de bénéficier du temps nécessaire pour partager la stratégie à élaborer pour réaliser une action de coaching fonctionnel afin d'améliorer l'autonomie et le développement intégral des différents sujets. Les principales actions de coaching menées auprès des enseignants et des élèves ont été les suivantes:

1. Des entretiens individuels et de groupe visant à faire connaissance, à identifier les difficultés individuelles et collectives;
2. Des jeux de rôle pour renforcer la confiance en soi, gérer la peur de l'échec, développer un sentiment d'accomplissement personnel et des compétences pédagogiques pour une bonne gestion sociale et en classe;
3. Analyse des comportements «critiques», réflexion et évaluation par les pairs, coaching par les pairs, brainstorming de groupe;
4. Observation de vidéos de formation et de simulations d'enseignement individuel et en groupe sur un sujet donné;
5. Un accompagnement individuel et collectif pour comprendre les attentes éducatives et professionnelles;
6. Accompagnement individuel et séries de simulations répétées pour la modification des attitudes et des comportements «critiques».

L'action du coach, pour chaque enseignant et pour chaque élève, était fondamentalement basée sur le respect de l'unicité de la personne et sur

la valorisation du talent et de ses propres inclinations, c'est pourquoi une action éducative personnalisée a été promue qui a permis une exploration approfondie des caractéristiques de chaque personne, une expérimentation créative pour réduire les problèmes critiques, et, par la suite, une réflexion partagée. À travers un dialogue continu et fructueux, le coach a constamment essayé d'encourager, de stimuler et de motiver chaque enseignant et élève à explorer, reconnaître et utiliser des ressources internes dont il n'était pas encore pleinement conscient, et un potentiel, compris comme un ensemble de forces. Pour le coach, cette orientation didactique extrêmement accueillante et inclusive représentait l'approche la plus adaptée et la plus fonctionnelle pour atteindre certains objectifs, qui, établis en accord avec l'élève ou l'enseignant, devaient être mesurables, parfaitement réalisables et évolutifs pour des niveaux de difficulté croissants. L'objectif était d'accroître la sensibilisation des enseignants et des élèves aux ressources individuelles et de leur fournir les outils nécessaires pour exploiter pleinement leur potentiel de manière indépendante, en ce qui concerne les défis éducatifs qui pourraient se présenter à l'avenir. La participation aux activités de coaching était gratuite et volontaire.

#### **2.4.4. Analyse des données et discussion**

Les entrevues avec les enseignants et les élèves qui ont participé au programme ont généré des réponses qui ont été cataloguées de manière conventionnelle et codifiées dans des modèles. Ce catalogage a également permis de codifier certaines compétences. Les questions étaient les suivantes:

1. Quelles sont les choses qui vous limitent à l'école?
2. Quelles sont vos priorités à l'école?
3. Quelles sont les choses que vous aimez le plus et le moins à l'école?
4. Que voulez-vous qu'il se passe avec le coaching?

Pour la codification des compétences, le tableau des compétences transversales contenu dans les Lignes directrices pour les compétences transversales et les parcours adoptés par l'ordonnance du Ministère italien de l'Éducation n. 774 du 04/09/2019 a été utilisé comme référence. Chaque modèle de réponse devait représenter la synthèse de réponses similaires. Ces catégorisations conventionnelles représentent des attributions ex post qui découlent de l'analyse du contenu textuel des réponses des élèves et des enseignants sur lesquelles il y a eu un accord complet entre les enseignants, les chercheurs, les étudiants et les entraîneurs. Cependant, pour

assurer le développement réel de certaines compétences, il sera nécessaire de procéder à d'autres évaluations, capables de déterminer ce qui ne représente actuellement qu'une simple perception. Cependant, bien que les réponses ne puissent pas être considérées comme des indicateurs déterminants dans le codage qualitatif, dans certains cas, elles peuvent aider à comprendre si le développement des compétences et le changement de comportement ont été minimes et s'il y a eu des avantages connexes supplémentaires (Saldaña, 2013; Zhang et al., 2016). Cela se produit lorsque ce sont les mêmes personnes en charge de la mise en œuvre d'un programme de formation qui vérifient la crédibilité et la rentabilité de l'expérience d'enseignement, en termes d'apprentissage et de transformation des comportements, surtout s'il existe une corrélation suite au croisement d'informations enregistrées par de multiples méthodes d'observation, d'évaluation et d'auto-évaluation. Et, dans cette étude, la comparaison entre l'évaluation du coach, la documentation du chercheur et les données qui ont émergé des vidéos enregistrées à la fin de l'activité de coaching, lorsque les étudiants et les enseignants ont été invités à réaliser des exercices de test sur les défis posés par le coach, a mis en évidence à plusieurs reprises des concomitances. Le tableau 1 montre les défis posés par le coach (en lien avec les actions de coaching mentionnées au quatrième paragraphe), les schémas de réponse conventionnels, les difficultés rencontrées et les compétences codifiées. Pour des raisons d'économie de la contribution, seuls quelques-uns seront déclarés.

*Tab. 1 - Modèles de réponse et compétences codifiées pour les enseignants et les élèves*

| <i>Catégorie de sujet</i> | <i>Défi/objectif</i>                                           | <i>Modèles de réponse conventionnels</i>                                                                           | <i>Compétences codifiées (selon le DM n. 774 du 04/09/2019)</i>                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Enseignants               | Améliorer la collaboration et favoriser l'autonomie des élèves | Le coaching m'a aidé à être moins autoréférentiel et plus disposé à accueillir les autres et à collaborer avec eux | Capacité à apprendre et à travailler à la fois en collaboration et de manière indépendante<br>Capacité à travailler de manière constructive avec les autres.<br>Capacité à exprimer et à comprendre des points de vue différents |

| <i>Catégorie de sujet</i> | <i>Défi/objectif</i>                                                                   | <i>Modèles de réponse conventionnels</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <i>Compétences codifiées (selon le DM n. 774 du 04/09/2019)</i>                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Enseignants               | Amélioration des compétences pédagogiques et maîtrise des méthodologies d'enseignement | Je me suis concentré sur les besoins des élèves et j'ai adopté de nouveaux points de vue et de nouvelles attitudes                                                                                                                                                                           | Capacité à créer la confiance et l'empathie<br>Capacité à exprimer et à comprendre des points de vue différents<br>Capacité de courage et de persévérance dans la réalisation des objectifs  |
| Enseignants               | Gérer le climat de la classe et favoriser l'expressivité des élèves                    | L'expérience de la formation nous a permis de retrouver le bien-être et de comprendre comment gérer les conflits en classe et travailler pour rendre le contexte plus serein. Il était crucial d'atteindre cet objectif                                                                      | Capacité à négocier<br>Capacité à promouvoir son bien-être physique et émotionnel<br>Capacité de courage et de persévérance dans la réalisation des objectifs                                |
| Élèves                    | Améliorer l'engagement des enseignants et le respect des règles de l'école             | La lecture d'extraits de cas spécifiques en classe, la rédaction de réflexions sur certains sujets, la discussion avec le coach et les entretiens individuels nous ont donné l'occasion de nous exprimer et de gérer nos émotions et nos sentiments. Avant, c'était une limite insurmontable | Capacité à réfléchir sur soi-même et à identifier ses aptitudes<br>Capacité à promouvoir son bien-être physique et émotionnel<br>Capacité d'accepter des responsabilités                     |
| Élèves                    | Collaborer, gérer le stress et améliorer les relations dans la classe                  | Les activités de groupe avec le soutien du coach nous ont aidés à mieux nous connaître, à nous comprendre et à nous accepter. Avant cette expérience, nous avions de grandes difficultés                                                                                                     | Capacité à rester résiliente<br>Capacité d'apprendre et de travailler à la fois en collaboration et de manière autonome.<br>Capacité à exprimer et à comprendre des points de vue différents |

| <i>Catégorie de sujet</i> | <i>Défi/objectif</i>                                                                 | <i>Modèles de réponse conventionnels</i>                                                                                                                       | <i>Compétences codifiées (selon le DM n. 774 du 04/09/2019)</i>                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Élèves                    | Amélioration des résultats scolaires et des compétences cognitives et non cognitives | Nous avons appris à accepter les défis avec optimisme et à trouver les ressources internes pour atteindre nos objectifs, ce que nous ne faisons pas auparavant | Capacité à rester résiliente<br>Capacité de concentration, de réflexion critique et de prise de décision<br>Capacité à transformer les idées en actions<br>Capacité de courage et de persévérance dans la réalisation des objectifs |

## Conclusions

L'observation et le coaching ont conduit à la mise en place d'activités éducatives hautement inclusives qui ont favorisé le développement d'une plus grande conscience, la connaissance des limites mais aussi du potentiel, et d'identifier de manière autonome le chemin de croissance à soutenir avec motivation, concentration, engagement, proactivité, optimisme et espoir. L'analyse individuelle, avec l'aide de l'entraîneur, a rendu chaque matière plus disposée à développer un sens de la communauté, ce qui a généré une analyse de groupe qui s'est avérée fondamentale pour souligner l'importance de la dimension sociale dans le contexte scolaire et pour améliorer les relations entre les élèves et entre les élèves et les enseignants, avec des répercussions substantielles également sur les relations familiales. En ce qui concerne les difficultés, «abandonner les vieilles habitudes, répéter plusieurs fois les mêmes exercices, être cohérent dans le changement d'attitude, gérer le temps imparti, retrouver la concentration et la motivation, avoir peur de se tromper et avoir honte», ont été les plus enregistrées. Il y a eu plusieurs avantages pour les enseignants et les élèves, notamment «une réduction des absences, une diminution de la motivation et du sens des responsabilités, une plus grande ouverture d'esprit et une plus grande volonté d'apprendre, une amélioration du climat de classe et du sens de l'harmonie, une meilleure collaboration et interaction entre les enseignants et les élèves, un meilleur sentiment de bien-être individuel et collectif, de meilleures relations familiales et, pour les étudiants seulement, un désir plus fort de poursuivre leurs études». Les informations qui en sont

ressorties, bien que réfutables ou partiellement suffisantes pour établir le caractère scientifique des résultats, permettent de conclure que le coaching est extrêmement efficace pour prévenir les causes, mieux gérer les facteurs et réduire les effets du décrochage scolaire, comme le soutiennent déjà certaines recherches internationales (Van Der Steeg et al., 2015; Capstick et al., 2019). Les informations reçues de l'école, suite à une demande du chercheur, montrent que tous les élèves qui ont suivi le programme d'accompagnement ont non seulement été admis et réussis, mais ont également exprimé le souhait de poursuivre leurs études dans les établissements secondaires techniques pour 60% des élèves, dans les lycées pour 30% et dans la formation professionnelle aux arts et métiers pour les 10% restants. Cela suggère que le coaching peut également avoir produit une amélioration des processus d'enseignement et d'apprentissage et un impact positif sur la réduction du décrochage scolaire, car certains étudiants, avant les actions de cette expérience de formation, avaient révélé qu'ils souhaitaient interrompre leurs études. Cette étude, à elle seule, ne peut pas prouver l'hypothèse selon laquelle l'observation et le coaching peuvent réduire le décrochage scolaire, favoriser la transformation comportementale et le développement de compétences transversales et non cognitives. Cependant, il s'ajoute à la recherche nationale et internationale dans ce domaine, et, avec ses limites, il est proposé d'élargir l'épistémologie de ces deux stratégies de formation, comme base pour d'autres implémentations, qui, cependant, seulement si elles sont réalisées sur des échantillons plus stratifiés et plus grands, pourront mettre en évidence la qualité et le caractère scientifique de la recherche.

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## **2.5. “Labs to Learn”: from training process to cooperative dynamics. Countering school dropout with an interdisciplinary approach**

*Miriam Cuccu*<sup>1</sup>

### **2.5.1. Introduction**

When the school environment becomes a place for exchanges among members of the education community and the different education professions, it can form new alliances that have a positive effect on the whole social fabric. The establishment of opportunities for dialogue, reflection, and ongoing learning within the school facilitates the identification of authentic needs and the support of reflexive processes and alliances, thereby leveraging the strengths of the context (Cadei et al., 2016).

The focus of this paper is on the actions dedicated to teachers as part of the “Labs to Learn. Places of growth, meeting spaces” project<sup>2</sup> which, through the establishment of spaces for dialogue and interaction among teachers and education professionals from outside the school environment, has facilitated an increase in collective reflection and mutual enhancement with respect to welfare and education. The implementation of project activities – particularly those included in the Study Method intervention – has encouraged the exploration of teaching and learning methodologies among teaching staff. This has been achieved through a collaborative, bottom-up approach that has had a significant impact on the dynamics among students. The research group<sup>3</sup>, which monitored the learning dynamics with a qualitative analysis of the data, collected pedagogical reflections regarding the collaborative processes activated. The enhancement of cooperative dy-

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2. The project was co-financed by “Con i Bambini Impresa sociale” and lasted 34 months from October 2020. For more information: <https://labstolearn.it/>.

3. Composed by Prof. Rosita Deluigi, Dr. Miriam Cuccu, Dr. Francesca Mondin, Dr. Ilenia Marino (University of Macerata).

namics generated the exchange of didactic-educational practices, tools, and methods to work for shared objectives. The analysis of case studies also enabled a focus on the teaching-learning styles. The results of the study indicate that the cross-sectorial approach was instrumental in fostering collegial reflexivity, which can transform into interdisciplinary perspectives with constant attention to the class group in terms of cooperative learning (Comoglio & Cardoso, 1996), management of class, and the role of the school in educational contexts, thereby enhancing school-territory-family alliances.

### 2.5.2. The “Labs to Learn” project

“Labs to Learn” is designed to address the educational exclusion of at-risk youth in the Piedmont region of Italy, with a focus on the cities of Alessandria, Bra, Casale Monferrato, Vercelli, and Turin. The objective of the project is to face the issue of school dropout rates and to counter educational poverty by increasing the number of disadvantaged adolescents who complete their education, access higher education or employment, and embark on a personal growth trajectory that aligns with their inclinations and aspirations. The project is financed by social entrepreneurship “Con i Bambini” and draws from the experience of the Salesian oratories and professional training centres, gained as part of previous planning courses. This expertise, which benefits from an established, prolific area network, has created unconventional inclusion measures in which to consolidate educational alliances between different professionals in the field of education.

Study Method is an initiative included in the “Labs to Learn” project, the focus of which is first-year students in lower secondary school. The objective of the initiative is to identify personalised strategies that consider individual differences, strengths, and learning styles (Boscolo, 1981; Stenberg, 1998). This approach is designed to enhance students’ perceptions of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994) in relation to their school environment.

The students are guided in the consolidation of effective learning methods, with teachers, pupils and other experts involved in a tripartite intervention:

- *Training*: aimed at teachers and centred on guiding concepts and operational tools for effective learning.
- *Learning lab*: aimed at students from the first year of low secondary school, to develop personalized study methods.
- *Supervision*: aimed at each class council involved in the project, to provide a reflective space on the application of Study Method during the learning lab.

The necessity to transition from passive learning methodologies within educational institutions has emerged in response to the rapid transformation of the social landscape. The confluence of social, technological, and cultural shifts that children and adolescents are particularly exposed to has given rise to a diversification of developmental trajectories and cognitive structures in comparison to previous generations. The imperative to develop new learning strategies is further reinforced by the need to avoid the exacerbation of difficult school situations (Lucangeli, 2019)<sup>4</sup>.

Teachers play a pivotal role in the learning journey of children and adolescents. Consequently, enhancing their planning, relational, and reflective skills can have a positive impact on their approach to learning, fostering curiosity, motivation, organisational abilities, and self-confidence. In the context of the Italian school system, which encompasses pre-adolescents between the ages of 11 and 14, the significance of these aspects is further accentuated, particularly in the classes designated for Study Method. These classes, which correspond to the first year of lower secondary education, represent a point of departure for a selection process that is not neutral. A comprehensive analysis of Pisa and TIMSS data reveals a substantial decline in average mathematical and scientific skills from the end of primary school to the conclusion of lower secondary education. This decline is more pronounced among pupils from disadvantaged social and cultural backgrounds (Perla, 2016). The promotion of courses with the objective of customising study methods and consequently acknowledging the uniqueness of each pupil is fundamental to the construction of an inclusive educational environment. Such a paradigm shift entails not merely the recognition of differences, but their centralisation within the sphere of educational action. This approach involves the adoption of a non-one-size-fits-all stance, emphasising the cultivation of distinction and diversity in terms of culture, gender, capacities, and talents (Perla, 2013).

The creation of spaces in which teachers can distinguish themselves as *reflective professionals* (Schon, 1993) facilitates the generation of new expertise, so as to «gradually increase the ability to understand their work and, as a result, improve it» (Stenhouse, 1977, p. 143). The positioning of the teacher as the pivotal figure in reflective and planning processes signifies the recognition of their professional competencies and their capacity to

4. The findings of the OCSE-PISA study were utilised to evaluate quality indexes concerning learning, well-being and discomfort. The analysis of these data revealed that 27% of the Italian sample exhibited average performance, while 73% experienced discomfort. Notably, 60% of this latter group reported persistent discomfort, indicating a lack of recollection of happy school experiences. Further information can be found in Lucangeli D. (2019) Cinque lezioni leggere sull'emozione di apprendere, Erickson, Trento.

function within a networked environment (Rivoltella & Rossi, 2012). This perspective acknowledges the distinct qualities of each teacher and their ability to design and implement a training initiative tailored to the individual educational requirements, drawing upon their expertise in handling contextual emergencies and addressing the needs of both individuals and groups (Reuchelin, 1978).

### 2.5.3. Methodology

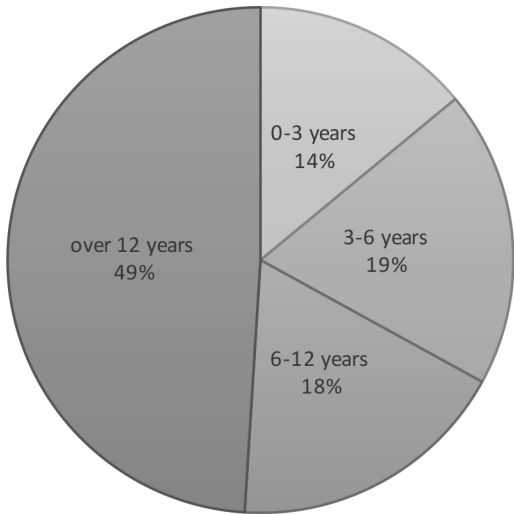
The present session delineates the procedural framework for interventions and monitoring, the characteristics of the participants, and their active engagement.

Study Method was implemented in seven first-year classes (one per lower secondary school) and the respective teachers in the class council. The interventions were directed towards heterogeneous schools, thus requiring the necessity to pay heed to the particular elements of the context, whilst maintaining the pedagogical guidelines that govern educational actions.

An analysis of the responses to the questionnaire administered to 49 teachers prior to the commencement of activities revealed a diverse range of experiences (Fig. 1). The composition of the group was based on pro-

Fig. 1 - Overall expertise of the teachers

How many years have you been teaching?

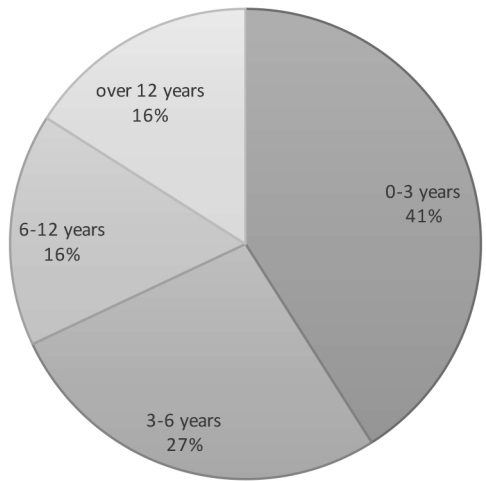


professionals with significant expertise in the field, integrating precious theoretical and practical knowledge. Concurrently, the presence of teachers who have recently entered schools has introduced new perspectives, which are important to initiate a dynamic dialogue between different professional backgrounds.

A further analysis of the group’s composition, considering the duration of their teaching tenure at the current educational institution, reveals that the majority have not been in their current position for an extended period (Fig. 2). This observation underscores the significance of meticulously designed training paths that take into account the heterogeneity of experiences and knowledge, as well as the inherent complexity of each class council, where diverse planning and organisational cultures coexist. It is important to note that the impact of these interventions extends beyond the selected classes, as 80% of the interviewed teachers also teach year two and three classes.

*Fig. 2 - Expertise of the teachers in the current school*

How many years have you been teaching at your current school?



**2.5.4. The Study Method interventions**

The focus on Study Method entails the provision of assistance to students in the acquisition of learning strategies through a metacognitive approach. This approach facilitates the activation of reflective thought and

self-awareness, which are pivotal processes in the context of learning. The implementation of these processes necessitates the creation of an environment conducive to both collective and individual learning.

In scenarios where external experts enter classrooms characterised by considerable complexity and numerous variations, the establishment of collaborative relationships among professionals in education becomes imperative. This facilitates the implementation of synergistic strategies, enhanced by sustained feedback cycles. The returns on impressions and reflections are mutually beneficial: the expert gains insight into the impact of their intervention beyond the immediate meeting, enabling them to plan actions that are more tailored to the context. Teachers, in turn, benefit from an outside perspective, which can capture further aspects observed in students. This is particularly important in calibrating teaching activities in class and homework, especially for students facing difficulties. The joint responsibility of significant adults (teachers, parents or carers, outside professionals) in schools engenders cascading benefits for students, due to increased participation, greater autonomy, and higher satisfaction connected to activities at school.

The objective of Study Method is to establish learning environments in which students can experience learning that is not exclusively focused on assessment. These environments should be designed to provide students with the opportunity to make mistakes and should foster an environment in which both minors and adults collaborate to address errors (Lucangeli, 2019). It is therefore essential that teachers are provided with appropriate training and opportunities for collective reflection to ensure that these conditions are met.

The *training path* constituted the initial intervention, commencing in November 2020. Due to the circumstances surrounding the containment of the pandemic, the course was designed to be delivered remotely. The programme encompassed five webinars (each spanning a duration of one hour) complemented by four hours of video lessons and personal study time. The course curriculum was primarily structured around two themes: the psychological dynamics involved in the learning process, and the observation and assessment of learning employing a global approach. The course was conducted by two psychologists specialising in neurodevelopmental problems, and focused on case studies, exercises, and group work to develop teaching strategies.

The *class learning lab* was divided into 10 meetings led by a psychologist and expert in neurodevelopmental problems. The objective was to provide support to students in their learning processes, with a focus on enhancing their cognitive frameworks through a proactive and strategic approach. The curriculum has been designed to encompass modules dedicat-

ed to the acquisition of rules, strategies, self-assessment, time management, and planning both academic and extra-curricular activities. These included strategies for engaging with texts, such as reading, comprehension, and analysis, as well as preparation for oral and written assessments.

An essential action that connected the first and second interventions was *supervision*, which was 10 hours divided into 5 meetings – also remote – and dedicated to the single class council, to offer suitable time for sharing needs and specific problems connected to the application of Study Method in the individual classes.

### **2.5.5. Assessment**

The research team from the University of Macerata was responsible for the qualitative monitoring and assessment of the interventions. To this end, a questionnaire was developed and administered to teachers at the beginning and at the end of the activities. The information collected was analysed to draw up reports, at six-month intervals, to assess the results achieved and the critical issues that emerged. These reports were then shared with project partners during coordination meetings. The data were integrated with semi-structured interviews and focus groups for the stakeholders (participants, coordinators, outside experts) who were deemed to be of essential importance in defining the pedagogical guidelines that accompanied the project.

The establishment of collaborative relationships between the individuals responsible for assessments and the partners has facilitated the development of tools and devices capable of evaluating the quality of educational processes. This has been achieved by leveraging a quantitative approach in conjunction with a dialogue-based strategy to ensure the attainment of desired outcomes.

### **2.5.6. Results**

This section underscores the most salient aspects that emerged from collaborative practices as part of Study Method. A significant proportion of the participants in the study, amounting to 80%, attested to the training course a profound impact on enhancing cooperation among teaching staff. Despite the intervention presenting critical elements, such as excessive commitment, a lack of connection between theory and practice, and logistical challenges, participants asserted that they received support in the «consol-

idation of group work strategies among teachers» and that remote training was «favourable for comparison and exchange of educational experiences» among colleagues. The collaborative approach was identified as one of the three areas in which Study Method brought about the most significant change, enhancing teaching quality. This aspect, which refers to the need to manage problems and critical issues within the class as a “single body”, was accompanied by the perception of improved awareness of self-reflective thought and attention towards the characteristics of every pupil.

During the learning lab, the construction of collaborative methods among teachers and experts was found to be essential in generating genuine interest among students.

Most teachers participated actively, and I saw a notable ability to question themselves among those who had been teaching for some time. Relationships and dialogues were continued and at times although we could only see each other for half an hour, we wrote and exchanged information, they asked in advance about activities for the next session or for feedback on tasks to assign. Gradually as teachers became more and more involved, students were more and more prepared and aware of the activities from the previous meetings. The students began to ask questions, to look at things [elements connected to study] on a broader level. Teachers reported improved concentration and the ability to stay in class; often the main problem highlighted had been connected to behaviour and attention – even when they showed potential – rather than intellectual performance<sup>5</sup>.

The exchange of information among educational professionals facilitated the management of situations requiring greater attention, with the identification of relational and cognitive difficulties in some students by the external expert prompting the contribution of insights that initiated a cycle of shared responsibility between teachers and families. Another facet of inter-professional collaboration entailed the redesign of the Study Method material employed in classes, with the objective of adapting it to the requirements of students with special educational needs.

In class there was a pupil with low-functioning autism. The support teacher, working with the educator and neuropsychiatrist, adapted the planning material using movable cards to work on the weekly routine. This created a great collaboration between professionals and when this happens, it becomes obvious<sup>6</sup>.

5. Interview with Dr. Elisabetta Govoni, clinical and community psychologist, and Dr. Jessica Dell’Orletta, developmental and educational psychologist. The interview was held on 21 June 2021 by Prof. Rosita Deluigi, pedagogy lecturer from the University of Macerata and reference for the qualitative monitoring of the “Labs to Learn” project.

6. Ibidem.

The supervision constituted a crucial connection between the training and experience, thereby facilitating the integration of action and reflection. In this setting, teachers were able to enhance co-responsibility and educational continuity, which were identified as foundational elements of class activities.

Supervision was fundamentally important in curating communication with teachers. Meeting after meeting, the questions emerging circumscribed their interests and needs in a more detailed progressive way, anchoring these spaces to the real needs of their classes. This allowed me to give them more detailed feedback and made it possible to see the growth in collaboration and mutual trust<sup>7</sup>.

This action elicited questions among teaching staff, given its capacity to facilitate significant opportunities for the collaborative development of teaching and educational strategies. It functioned as the primary forum for the provision and reception of feedback on class activities, dynamics observed among peers, and perceived changes. Additionally, it served as a space for further exploration, wherein teachers from the class council utilised time away from bureaucratic concerns to address educational stresses, challenges related to the class, and the specific needs of students. This initiative was recognised as a pressing need, so much so that one of the partner schools adopted this practice even after the project's conclusion, donating the institute's funds to ensure a dedicated reflection space for teaching staff.

### **2.5.7. Critical elements**

The evaluation of the participants' opinions has revealed fundamental elements for the subsequent planning phase, ensuring alignment with the authentic requirements of the participating schools with a view to the next year of experimentation.

The project's initiation was identified as a matter of critical importance, with the ongoing restrictions imposed by the pandemic serving as a significant constraint. While digital technologies played a role in maintaining connectivity, the absence of physical interaction hindered the establishment and sustenance of collaborative endeavours. In addition, the initiation of class interventions was postponed in February 2021. The participants, however, emphasised that commencing the activities at the beginning of the school year would have allowed more time to explore the project topics.

7. Ibidem.

Finally, it was recommended that the class learning lab be scheduled at times that would be more convenient for a greater number of teachers. This would contrast with the previous arrangement of planning each week for the same day and time, with the aim of including more colleagues in the observation of classroom activities.

### **2.5.8. Learning times and spaces**

At the conclusion of the school year, the monitoring of study methods was integrated with feedback from teaching staff by combining verbal and visual languages (i.e. an image, a detail or an instant shot). This combination returned various important elements concerning the teachers' considerations of the Study Method. The utilisation of visual and metaphoric language has facilitated the identification of diverse representations and provided valuable insights into how professionals were able to address the numerous challenges associated with the school context during the experimentation.

According to the teachers, Study Method facilitated listening and supporting students» and made it possible to «accompany young people on their study path, picking up on and reproposing interesting ideas as learned and taken on board during the training activities and supervision meetings. The importance of paying greater attention to teenagers was emphasised, with the acknowledgement that understanding the individual and group challenges they face is crucial. The focus on pupils from diverse perspectives, and the emphasis on the emotional and relational aspects of the learning process, has enabled teachers to gain a more profound understanding of the intricacies of educational practice (Perla & Riva, 2016; Rivoltella & Rossi, 2012).

The provision of psychological supervision has been shown to encourage «meta-reflection on use and the identification of areas for improvement in routine teaching activities, thereby underscoring the significance of collaborative effort to achieve shared objectives» (Perla & Riva, 2016). Notably, in educational environments characterised by interdisciplinary activities involving multiple teachers and subjects, there has been an enhancement in the articulation of the interconnected nature of various academic disciplines, including both the sciences and the humanities.

Furthermore, class interventions have been shown to equip pupils with the fundamental strategies and tools necessary to develop or refine their study methods. However, it is crucial to recognise that without individual application and refinement, these interventions may not yield substantial

results. This observation underscores the pivotal role of motivation in studying, individual responsibility, and the capacity to plan a learning path that enables each pupil to experiment and acquire their effective study methods.

It was further observed that some of the students involved in the activities recognised that the study method is useful not only for studying but also for life in general, showing that they had interiorised the importance of soft skills and the transversal nature of dynamic and exhaustive learning (Morin, 2000). The involvement of pupils in awareness of their learning path has been shown to engender a group that takes responsibility for learning, thereby extending the effects of cooperative logic of responsibility at both student and teacher levels.

## Conclusions

The educational stances that teachers shared at the conclusion of the course have their origins in reflective processes that have contributed to the development of our “educational we” in schools and the potential for participation (Vittoria, 2017). Teachers have transcended the mere transmission of knowledge, fostering a culture of proximity that emphasises active listening and provides support for students and their emotional and relational aspects. The supervision spaces have facilitated interdisciplinary exchange, enabling meta-reflection, review of actions, recognition and appreciation of students’ differences and identities. The adoption of an interdisciplinary stance has fostered a professional ethos characterised by curiosity, orientated towards the identification of strategies and the promotion of collaborative processes. This is underpinned by the awareness of working for the well-being of each individual student, the community (comprising teachers, families, students) and others (Cadei et al., 2016).

Class interventions have been shown to be an effective tool in equipping students with the necessary tools and strategies to enhance their study methods. This, in turn, has resulted in students engaging in creative processes that are open to experimentation and error, and seeking out strategies that could be effective for them. Within these bottom-up experiments, the teacher’s role is to work alongside students, particularly those who are more fragile, along trajectories of inherent improvement into *zones of proximal development* for each pupil (Vygotsky, 1980).

The creation of material through shared, creative methods demands greater effort; however, it simultaneously enables protagonists to explore spaces for the co-construction of projects involving change, possibility, and transformation at both the individual and collective level. Students collabo-

rated in groups, established rules, and teachers observed these processes of autonomy and self-regulation, identifying authentic needs and interests that led to personalised interventions and consideration of the context.

The establishment of cohesive relationships, which have the capacity to engender well-being for teachers and students, is facilitated by a group of adults and professionals working collectively to promote shared responsibility for learning, as assumed by the class group. This group constitutes a collective of individuals bound by a shared aspiration for growth and learning in relationships.

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## **2.6. ‘Making the teacher speak’ as a practice for building the family-school partnership in parent-child homework conversations**

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### **2.6.1. Introduction**

Building on Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological theory, a great amount of pedagogical research in the last thirty years has investigated the effects of parental involvement in children’s school education (see among others, Castro et al., 2015; Epstein, 1990, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). Overall, these studies have indicated positive correlations between parental involvement and children’s academic results and motivation toward learning and schooling. In line with these studies, education policies in Western countries have been promoting the so-called ‘family-school partnership’ as the formula for maximizing students’ success and promoting social equality. In Italy, the idea that parents should get involved in children’s school life and ‘team up’ with teachers has emerged gradually but steadily, throughout the years. Since the delegated decrees in 1974 (DPR n. 416-420/1974), parents’ participation in school initiatives has been increasingly expected and encouraged. In more recent years, the introduction of the “educational pact of co-responsibility” (DPR n. 235/2007) has formally established the ‘family-school alliance’ as a moral benchmark for parents and teachers. Following these studies and policies, the collaboration between parents and teachers has become an “educational postulate” (Gigli, 2016, p. 135); home-school relations have increased along with expectations that ‘good parents’ should get involved in their children’s education (Contini, 2012; Milani, 2012; Forsberg, 2009; Ochs & Kremer-Sadlik, 2013).

In the building of the family-school partnership, two interactive activities are commonly attributed a crucial role: parent-teacher conferences

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(Caronia, 2021; Pillet-Shore, 2015) and parent-assisted homework (Colla, 2020, 2023; Caronia & Colla, 2024). Involving parents on a daily basis (Izquierdo et al., 2006), parent-assisted homework is a particularly relevant site for bridging family and school, and potentially building the partnership between parents and teachers (Montalbetti & Lisimberti, 2020; Pontecorvo et al., 2013). However, despite being an allegedly ‘good practice’ of parental involvement, parent-assisted homework is still little explored as an arena for the interactive construction of the family-school partnership (but see Forsberg, 2007; Kremer-Sadlik & Fatigante, 2015; Wingard, 2006). The present study contributes to this underexplored line of inquiry by illustrating how parents visibly orient to the golden standard of the family-school partnership and implement it in the unfolding of homework conversations. In particular, the study illustrates how parents deploy the practice of ‘making the teacher speak’ (which consists in reporting teachers’ claims) as well as how they respond to this practice when it is deployed by their children.

The paper is structured as follows. The next section delineates the contemporary debate on (parent-assisted) homework and discusses extant literature on the relationship between ‘good parenting’ and moral expectations concerning parental involvement in homework. After the description of the data and methodology of the study, the analytic section illustrates two sequences of parent-child homework interactions where parents and children deploy the practice of ‘making the teacher speak’, which consists in reporting teachers’ claims. The analysis illustrates the ways in which parents make the teacher speak and respond to this practice when deployed by children. Finally, the concluding discussion delineates how parents’ interactive conduct in the analyzed excerpts contributes to discursively creating a school-aligned moral horizon inside the home, thus achieving the sharing of values between family and school recommended by studies and policies, and commonly ratified as a moral benchmark for ‘good parents’. In addition, the final section reflects on the relevance of the practice of ‘making the teacher speak’ as an educational resource, which contributes to educating children into teachers’ authority.

### **2.6.2. Parental involvement in homework: debated issues and moral standards for ‘good parents’**

Being a school activity to be completed at home, homework has a strong impact on family life in terms of ordinary routines (Izquierdo et al., 2006), time organization (Colla, 2020; Wingard, 2006), stress (Pressman

et al., 2015), and parent-child relationships (Wingard & Forsberg, 2009). Not surprisingly then, after decades during which homework has been a taken-for-granted educational practice, its effectiveness, suitability, and appropriate quantity have been increasingly questioned in recent years. Many books and articles have made the case against homework, arguing for the need to ‘free’ children and families from this ‘burden’ (e.g., Ben-net & Kalish, 2006; Kralovec & Buell, 2000, 2001; Parodi, 2016, 2018). Concurrently, a large amount of research has been devoted to investigating whether and how homework, especially when parent-assisted, can increase children’s learning and academic results (Cooper, 1989; Cooper et al., 2006; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Patall et al., 2008; Polito, 2013). While these studies have indicated mixed results and the “homework battle” (Cooper, 2006) is far from over, assignments continue entering the home of most pupils’ families, bringing with them a series of expectations and moral standards concerning parental involvement in this activity and the construction of the family-school partnership. Such moral standards are explicitly formulated in some studies and policies. For example, according to Walker et al. (2004), parental involvement in children’s homework should entail not only parents’ practical engagement in the exercises but also and more importantly the explicit formulation of school rules and the meeting of school requests. In a similar way, Epstein (1995, 2001) stresses that parents should make their homes “school-like”, that is they should “duplicate the school” in ways that increase the probability of students’ school-aligned learning (Epstein, 1995, p. 83). As emerging from these works, parent-assisted homework presupposes a precise model of ‘good parent’, one that is not simply available and willing to assist the child, but also competent in the school culture and able to reproduce school rules inside the home. In other words, parents are expected to be “pedagogicalized” (Popkewitz, 2003) and act like “quasi-literacy teachers” at home (Blackmore & Hutchinson, 2010, p. 503). Interestingly, this model of ‘good, involved parenting’ is consistent with the guidelines issued by the Italian Ministry of Education, which promote the family-school alliance and specify that it should be based on the authentic ‘sharing of values’ between parents and teachers (see Nota Miur 22/11/2012, “Trasmissione linee di indirizzo”). As we will see in the excerpts below, these moral standards concerning parental conduct are visibly assumed and pervasively put into practice by the parents involved in the present study. By ‘making the teacher speak’ and abiding by the teachers’ requests reported by children, parents display their orientation to meeting teachers’ expectations, aligning with the morality of the school, and making their homes “school-like”.

### **2.6.3. Data and methodology**

The data used in this study are drawn from a corpus of 62 video-recorded homework sessions collected in nineteen Italian families between 2018 and 2020. The families involved in the study live in Northern Italy and are composed of two working parents and at least one child attending primary school (i.e., aged 6 to 10). Only three families have an immigrant background; in all families, parents and children speak Italian when doing homework. Participants were recruited by the author through her personal and professional connections. To minimize the potential impact of the research setting, video recordings were self-administered by the parents; participants' consent was obtained according to Italian law n. 196/2003 and EU Regulation n. 2016/679 (GDPR 2016/679).

The selected excerpts have been analyzed according to the principles of conversation analysis (Sidnell & Stivers, 2013), which is particularly suited to analyzing the situated and inherently interactive unfolding of morally dense educational events like homework (Colla, 2021). In line with the multimodal approach to the study of interaction (Mondada, 2016), transcripts have been enriched with notations for gaze directions, gestures, and body movements when ostensibly relevant for the participants in unfolding the conversation. Transcripts are presented in two lines: the original Italian transcript is followed by an idiomatic translation in American English. For the sake of anonymity, all names have been fictionalized and references to places and people have been removed.

### **2.6.4. Building the family-school partnership in parent-child homework conversations: 'Making the teacher speak' as an interactive practice**

The data feature various sequences where parents and children 'make the teacher speak', i.e., report the teachers' claims. These sequences are extremely relevant for studying how parents and children co-construct the family-school partnership in and through homework conversations. Below are two examples (examples 1 and 2).

### Example 1 - A mother making the teacher speak

- 1        Mother        la maestra Martina vuole che scrivete in stampa-in:  
corsivo.  
**teacher Martina wants you<sup>[plur.]</sup> to write in lower-in:  
cursive.**

### Example 2 - A child making the teacher speak

- 2        Tania        a me la maestra mi dice sempre di far così. guarda  
**the teacher always tells me to do it like this. look**  
*((starts leafing through the math notebook))*

The analysis focuses on the ways in which parents a) deploy the practice of ‘making the teacher speak’, and b) respond to this practice when deployed by children. As the analysis will show, parents’ interactive conduct displays their pervasive orientation to enacting the moral standard of ‘parents as school partners’. At the same time, it discursively creates the sharing of values between family and school recommended by education policies and studies.

## 2.6.4.1. Parents make the teacher speak

The following excerpt (example 3) illustrates how a mother ‘makes the teachers speak’ in the unfolding of an interactive sequence where she problematizes the child’s homework-related conduct.

### Example 3 - A mother making the teacher speak in problematizing the child’s conduct

Mother; Ludovico (7 years old, second grade)

- 1        Mother        *((looks closely at the homework page))*  
2        °puoi scrivere un po’ più piccolo e ordina:to?°  
**°can you write a little bit smaller and ti:dier?°**  
3        Ludovico        (o)k*((stretching toward the eraser))*  
4        5 turns omitted: mother and Ludovico discuss whether he should erase his writing  
5        Ludovico        *((starts erasing his writing))*  
6 >> Mother        ti han chiesto di scrivere un po’ più piccolo,  
**they asked you to write a little bit smaller,**  
Ludovico        *((erases his writing, then takes the pencil and rewrites it))*

In this exchange, the practice of ‘making the teacher speak’ is deployed by the mother in line 6. Yet, before focusing on this turn, it is worth describing how the interaction unfolds up to that point. After observing what Ludovico has written (line 1), the mother asks him to write “a little bit smaller and tidier” (line 2). With this request, she problematizes the child’s handwriting, discursively constructing it as sloppy and therefore unacceptable. Ludovico immediately provides a positive answer to the mother’s request (line 3) and finally complies with it by erasing his writing (line 5). At this point, the mother makes the teacher speak: she recycles part of her previous turn (“write a little bit smaller”) and retrospectively frames it as the teachers’ request (“*they asked you* to write a little bit smaller”, line 6). By making the teachers speak, the mother brings their voice inside the home, conveying that she shares the teachers’ request and point of view on the issue at hand. Furthermore, she demonstrates to know the school expectations concerning the child’s homework-related conduct and stages herself as entitled to problematize the child’s handwriting based on such knowledge and shared school rules. A partnership between parent and teachers is thus subtly constructed and conveyed through the reporting of teachers’ request. The teachers’ voice is legitimated inside the home and the mother conveys her alignment with their request.

#### 2.6.4.2. *Parents respond to children making the teacher speak*

To describe how the family-school partnership is interactively produced in parent-child homework interactions, it is particularly relevant to observe not only how parents make the teacher speak, but also how they respond to this practice when it is deployed by children. Interestingly, whenever the children in the study ‘make the teacher speak’, parents stop problematizing what they are doing. The following excerpt (example 4) provides an example.

##### *Example 4 - A mother responds to her child making the teacher speak*

Mother; Virginia (8 years old, third grade)

- |   |          |                                                                                                                |
|---|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Mother   | perché lo hai trasformato in sei?<br><b>why did you turn it into six?</b>                                      |
| 2 |          | (3.0) ((Virginia stares silently at the calculation))                                                          |
| 3 | Virginia | °dopo devi fare quattro per ^no:ve°<br><b>°then you must do four times ^ni:ne°</b> ((pointing to the numbers)) |
| 4 |          | ^((turns to mother))                                                                                           |

- 5     Mother     no:,,  
                  no:,,
- 6     Virginia    °si:°  
                  °ye:s°
- 7     Mother     l'operazione è cinquanta per nove  
                  *the calculation is fifty times nine* ((pointing to  
                  the calculation))
- 8     >> Virginia   me l'ha detto il maestro Marco  
                  *teacher Marco told me that* ((pushing the mother's hand away from  
                  the photocopy))
- 9     Mother     va bene. se te l'ha detto il maestro Marco,  
                  *ok. if teacher Marco told you that,* ((with a smiling voice))

The excerpt is opened by the mother problematizing the homework done by the child. In this case, the mother uses a request for account (Sterponi, 2003) asking Virginia information about how she has done the exercise (“why did you turn it into six?”, line 1). After a three-second gap, Virginia explains the procedure for the problematized calculation (line 3). With this turn, the child justifies the procedure adopted, thus resisting the mother’s problematization. However, the mother bluntly rejects the procedure described by Virginia, then she provides an account explaining the reasons why the procedure described by the child is wrong (line 7). While talking, the mother points to the calculation on the homework page (line 7), thus making visible the specific calculation under discussion.

Facing the mother’s persistent problematization, Virginia makes the teacher speak: she reports what teacher Marco said at school. By attributing her previous claim to “teacher Marco” (“teacher Marco told me that”, line 8) and concurrently pushing the mother’s hand away from the homework page (line 8), Virginia multimodally rejects the mother’s problematization and constructs the homework exercise as her exclusive territory of expertise. By reporting what the teacher said at school, the child evokes her first-hand knowledge of school life, which the mother lacks, and presents her work as aligned with the teacher’s requests. At the same time, making the teacher speak is a way for the child to reduce her own agency in contradicting her mother. By “ventriloquizing” the teacher (Cooren, 2010), Virginia shares with him the responsibility for rejecting the problematization. Interestingly, in response to the child’s deployment of the practice of making the teacher speak, the mother stops problematizing her work: after the child invokes teacher Marco’s words, the mother aligns with the child’s claim (“ok”, line 9) and ratifies teacher Marco’s speech as an authoritative source of knowledge (“if teacher Marco told you that”, line 9). Even though the prosodic contour of the mother’s turn demonstrates her skepticism about the child’s claim (see the rising intonation and

smiling voice, line 9), she does not cast doubt upon teacher Marco's statement evoked by the child; rather, she closes the problematization sequence.

### **2.6.5. Concluding discussion**

The analysis presented above has focused on two interactive sequences where the practice of 'making the teacher speak' was deployed by either a parent or a child. As the analysis has pointed out, this practice was deployed in the unfolding of sequences of problematization and performed specific functions. When deployed by parents, the practice of making the teacher speak was used to problematize the child's work ("they asked you to write a little bit smaller," ex. 3, line 6). By making the teacher speak, parents increased their own authority insofar as they displayed their knowledge of and alignment with the teacher's requests. At the same time, this practice allowed the parents to stage themselves as merely reporting the teachers' claims, thus downgrading their own responsibility for the problematization. In contrast, children deployed the practice of making the teacher speak as a response to parents' problematization of their work, as in example 4. By reporting what the teacher said at school ("teacher Marco told me that", ex. 4, line 8), children made relevant their direct knowledge of school life, thus increasing their own authority vis-à-vis their parents. At the same time, by making the teacher speak, the children could share with their teachers the agency in contradicting their parents, thus reducing their personal responsibility for it. For the aims of this study, it is particularly important not only to notice that parents made the teacher speak, but also to observe how they responded to this practice when deployed by children. In this corpus, whenever children reported teachers' utterances, parents stopped problematizing the children's work and acknowledged the child as competent and authoritative over homework (see ex. 4). In other words, using the teacher's voice to support children's claims had the effect of increasing children's authority and making parents give up the problematization. The practice of making the teacher speak therefore appears to be an interesting resource through which parents and children negotiate and establish their respective authority in interaction (Nasi & Colla, 2025).

Beyond the strictly interactive function of this practice, it is crucial to stress that the ways in which parents deployed and responded to this practice demonstrate their orientation to establishing a partnership based on the sharing of rules, values, and expectations between family and school. The idea that the micro contexts of family and school should share the same moral system was visibly assumed by the parents in the study. By echoing

the teacher's voice at home (ex. 3) and abiding by it when evoked by the children (ex. 4), parents ratified the teacher's authority and reproduced the normative system of the school inside the home. In this way, they discursively created the "school-like homes" theorized by Epstein (1995) and implemented the family-school partnership based on shared values and active collaboration proposed by education policies and research. Interestingly, the family-school partnership visibly assumed, evoked, and implemented by parents through the practice of making the teacher speak had the effect of reinforcing both parents' and teachers' authority. By interactively constructing family and school as partner institutions sharing values, expectations, and rules, the parents in the study contributed to creating a mutually supportive relationship between family and school as well as an interactive landscape where parents' and teachers' voices authorize and reinforce each other.

The practice of making the teacher speak is particularly interesting for a further reason: it displays parents' culturally informed understanding of what it means to be a 'good parent' during homework. By making relevant and complying with teachers' claims, the mothers in the study performed the role of 'school partners' recommended by pedagogical literature and policies, and commonly held as an unquestionable moral benchmark (Forsberg, 2009; Gigli, 2016). The fact that parents reported teachers' claims and did not dare question them when they were evoked by the children demonstrates that parents were deeply oriented to performing the role of school partners and took for granted the moral imperative of supporting teachers and collaborating with them.

In concluding this article, it is worth reflecting on another point that has to do with the educational valence of micro, parent-child exchanges like the ones analyzed above. Undoubtedly, despite their ordinary and contingent nature, sequences where parents and children make the teacher speak are extremely rich and powerful from an educational point of view. Clearly enough, these brief exchanges constitute not only occasions for parents and children to locally manage their own and each other's authority over homework; they are also precious, culturally dense means for educating children into specific moral orders. As a matter of fact, in the excerpts presented in this study, the idea that 'the teacher is always right' is pervasively assumed and "talked into being" (Heritage, 1984, p. 290) by both parents and children. By taking part in everyday conversations like those analyzed here, children are exposed to this idea as a totally self-evident and indisputable principle, and they are gradually educated to the unquestionability of teachers' authority and school rules.

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## 2.7. Promoting Critical and Intersubjective Judgment: An Action-Research Project in Primary School

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### 2.7.1. Social challenges and schools' commitments: re-imagine cities and communities

If the task of the school to enable new generations to *adapt* to the social challenges is not new, the school educational commitment to *transform* society (Dewey, 1899, 1929) in a more just and sustainable direction is less known and practiced. However, within the actual social scenario, it is no longer postponable.

Indeed, in this scenario, marked by different features of crisis (racism, economic and climate crisis, etc.), the reality is radically transformed in a risky, violent, ambiguous, uncertain, not totally knowable and contradictory way. It is a way *that presents* at least three new and urgent challenges regarding the management and the transformation of the human communities and the rethinking of the spaces of common and democratic life, the cities (Fucecchi & Nanni, 2019).

The first challenge is given by the dilemma between *innovation and sustainability*, in respect of which a problematic hub can be recognized in the climate crisis and in the environmental risks and needs (Oreskes & Conway, 2014). The second challenge is given by the dilemma between *personal well-being and common good*, in respect of which a problematic hub can be recognized in the crisis of the sense of *communitas* itself (Bauman, 2013). The third challenge is given by the dilemma between *short-term effectiveness and long-term meaning*, in respect of which a problematic hub can be recognized in the current difficulty to decide and

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act not only in terms of immediate utility but also and first of all in terms of human value, life quality and big dreams of social and planetary transformation (Latouche, 2020; Mortari, 2020).

Within this perspective, starting from the primary school it is necessary to work at educating all children in order to promote their capacity to examine the communities and the cities in a critical and ethical way, to reimagine *them* (Meirieu, 2018) and to contribute to their innovation and transformation in a sustainable and value sense (UNESCO, 2021). This re-imagination can find in the capacity of *personal, critical and intersubjective judgment* (Arendt, 1978) the first key capacity in order to be able to examine, evaluate, decide and act together (*with children, teachers, community adults and families*) (Meirieu, 2018) in the name of founded and ethical criteria, necessary for safeguarding both society and humanity itself from post-humanization and self-destruction (Meghnagi & Di Castro, 2021).

### **2.7.2. The theoretical foundation of the faculty of judgment: the lesson of Hannah Arendt**

It isn't the first time that primary school is called to question itself on the promotion of competence in judgment. Indeed, in the face of different social instances – such as liberalism or neo idealism, democracy and neo-liberalism – the capacity to judge has been conceived as the prior capacity and has been interpreted from different epistemological perspectives, more oriented towards positivist or pragmatist, personalist, Marxist or cognitive-constructivist views (Bruner, 1966; Dewey, 1929; Gabelli, 1992; Manacorda, 2008; Maritain, 1966; Washburne, 1970).

Despite this tradition, the features of novelty brought by the current *challenges* recall an *epistemological perspective on judgment* that differs from the past, and that can give foundation to a rethinking of the judgment capacity. The foundation on which it is possible to work today on the rethinking of the capacity to judge can find an interesting and coherent theoretical base on the hermeneutic-phenomenological perspective.

Within this frame, a particular contribution can be offered by Hannah Arendt's thought (Guarcello, 2020). Indeed Arendt, a prominent figure in philosophical debate and particularly in contemporary political philosophy, questioned the great *challenges* of human existence (violence, racism, justice, freedom, revolution, ...), recognizing a turning point that went on to represent both the cardinal point of her entire reflective structure and highest expression: the *Faculty of Judging* (2006, 1978, 1989).

Rethinking the classic soul of judgment starting from Arendtian thought can represent a significant opportunity for primary schools based on three principal reasons.

The *first reason* is given by the specific framework of “Crisis in Education” (1954) where Arendt recognizes an essential responsibility of teachers to promote the competence of every child to develop themselves in an original way, respecting their integrity and the others’ dignity, overcoming the social clichés or the bias towards what is different or unknown. The *second reason* is given by the Kantian theoretical foundations based on which Arendt reconstructs the idea of judgment. A judgment that is conceived and defined “in partnership”, an intersubjective judgment which decides and chooses through a dialogic relationship – among people who represent different perspectives and interests – in view of the realization of an associated life in the name of the protection and promotion of human rights. The *third reason* is given by the very topical horizon towards which the idea of judgment is oriented: discerning “good from evil, the good from the bad “[...] in the rare moments when every position is at stake” and where the ability to judge can be “really able to prevent catastrophes, at least for one’s own self” (1978, p. 289, our translation).

It is particularly in the work “Lectures on Kant’s political philosophy”, a collection of lectures given in 1970, that Arendt works on a clarification of what she calls “Faculty of Judging”. The faculty of judging, the highest human faculty, can be understood starting from the clarification of the other human faculty necessary to judge in a founded and ethical way: the “Faculty of Thinking”.

The *faculty of thinking* deals with a very precise work: the understanding of the ethical meaning of our existence in the world. Precisely for this reason, thinking is the capacity through which we ask those questions that are unanswerable because they concern topics that do not have a definitive answer, a concrete effectiveness, short-term results, such as freedom, death, beauty or faith. In this perspective, the faculty of thinking renders us able to ask ourselves if what is concretely feasible and effective also has such an ethical meaning for human existence to make it right. So, whether it should be done or avoided or, if it is already done, transformed in a long-term perspective.

Starting from this frame, the *faculty of judging* deals with a second precise work, consisting of making manifest the thinking outcomes and of translating them into decision and action, an action that allows us not only to understand but to “make” the world (the communities, the cities) as it should be, that is to act concretely for its transformation. It is in this sense that judgment is a critical judgment.

### **2.7.2.1. *Fostering the judgment capacity for participating in the construction of cities of education***

Relying on Kantian thought and in particular on the work “Critique of the faculty of judgment”, Arendt reconstructs a particular reflection on the fostering of the capacity to judge according to which we can state that the formation of the capacity to judge be conducted through three moments. The first moment is the education of taste, i.e. the ability to perceive the feeling we have regarding the matter under judgment. The second moment is the education of the imagination, that is, the ability to see the point of view of all the possible others involved in the matter itself with the eyes of the mind. The third moment is the education of the *sensus communis*, that is an extra sense that allows us to “limit” our decisions and actions to what protects and promotes the human dignity that should be common to all. This *sensus communis* should be one extra sense necessary to feel what is common to all human beings, to feel a sense of unity, a sense of a fundamental bond among people.

Why does Hannah Arendt argue in favour of the centrality and the priority of working on the fostering of the capacity to judge?

Arendt argues in favour of its centrality and priority precisely because, in her opinion, it can – perhaps – prevent the repetition of what she calls the *skandala* that generated an irreparable fracture in the history of humanity: the crimes against humanity perpetrated by Nazi and fascist totalitarianism. “From unwillingness or inability to choose one’s own examples and one’s own company, as well as from unwillingness or inability to relate to others through judgment” wrote Arendt, come “the true skandala, the true stumbling blocks that men cannot remove because they are not created by human or humanly understandable reasons. The horror and at the same time the banality of evil is hidden in there”. The banality of an evil that is perpetrated by “ordinary” people, by most people, and that is implemented by what she called “the sleep of thought” (Arendt, 2006, p. 126, our translation). This banal evil was a drama for the Arendtian time in the same way that it is for our time.

This Arendtian perspective could have interesting implications for the field of the primary school and for the children’s capacity to reimagine cities and communities in a sustainable and value sense (Meirieu, 2018; Mortari, 2020). Indeed, one of the main challenges of the schools nowadays is rethinking the formative paths in order to exercise the children’s capacity to decide and act with respect to the different perspectives and cultures and in the direction of contributing to the construction of *cities of educa-*

tion (Mega, 2013). Cities that are spaces for imagining and projecting new hopes and desires for the revolution and the transformation of the future in an ethical sense. Spaces in which the common artistic and cultural heritage is lived as expression of the collective intelligence, sensitivity, and commitment for the common good and the improvement of the well-being of the community. Only in this sense the cities can be spaces of innovative thoughts and actions, of intercultural dialogue and debate, of freedom and creativity.

The training of children that can take part in the construction of the cities of education requires the exercise of their critical judgment capacity under all the aspects (feelings, logical reasoning and social relationships). Actually, not only to exercise all the aspects, without reductionisms, but to educate critical judgment *starting from* the feelings, starting from the personal “taste”. Starting from the personal feelings, the personal and the immediate taste is the only way, in the Arendtian perspective, for perceiving and expressing our immediate (also partial or wrong) likes or dislikes and for promoting decisions and actions that can be refined with the cognitive reasoning and the intersubjective debate but that (at the same time) can be aware of prejudices and stereotypes and that can also maintain a personal dimension and so, perhaps, avoid the uncritical adherence to clichés, to commonly accepted rules of conduct.

### **2.7.2.2. Fostering the “Critical and Intersubjective Judgment Experiences”**

Within this frame, the “Critical and Intersubjective Judgment Experiences” *action-research project* is developing at the University of Turin during the s.y. 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 within a primary school near Turin, involving two critical friends, ten teachers, six classrooms and the children’s families<sup>2</sup>. The research methodology refers to the participatory action-research (Cadei, Deluigi & Pourtois, 2016; Orefice, 2006; Pourtois, 1988, 1990, 1993; Sorzio, 2019). It is a research methodology particularly fertile not only in the social field but also in the field of primary school (Barbier, 2007, 2003; Losito & Pozzo, 2005) and in particular because of its commitment to transforming society. Action-research in fact is intend-

2. The research was presented at ECER 2022 Conference. Guarcello E., Educating Global Citizens to be “Changemakers”: the Togetherness Between Primary School & Families to Promote the Judgment Capacity, 2022, <https://eera-ecer.de/ecer-programmes/conference/27/contribution/53928> (21.12.2024).

ed to propose itself as an experience of empirical and qualitative research aimed not only at the study of phenomena but especially to their transformation with particular regard, following Lawrence Stenhouse (1975), to the needs genuinely perceived and identified by the teachers, the families, the children and the actors involved, who have the role of co-researchers.

For each s.y. the project is articulated in two different phases: firstly (during the first scholastic year, from January to April 2022) a path of teacher training and dialogic design of educational activities on the promotion of the judgment capacity; secondly the realization of these activities with children, reflecting, discussing, deciding in partnership about a central topic for the transformation and innovation of the community life in an ethical sense (during second scholastic year).

Therefore, the realisation of these two phases will allow researchers and teachers to identify the formative phases and the educational practices to promote the judgment capacity in children, to identify the methods and the instruments to evaluate the transformation of the judgment capacity, and to understand the role of the families in this formative path. In particular the realization of the first *action-research phase* (through six meetings among researchers, teachers and critical friends) and the phenomenological analysis of the emerged reflections and of the materials written by the teachers and the critical friends (the diaries, and the self-evaluations), allowed *researchers and teachers* to identify the five principal formative areas to exercise the children's judgment capacity and to identify some central topics on which to exercise the judgment capacity itself.

Regarding the formative areas, *based on* Arendtian thought the teachers designed a formative path that presents five principal formative areas that follow a spiral logic (Guarcello, 2021). The first area, the *tasting*, promotes the *habitus* to “taste” the problematic situation in an irresistible, immediate and subjective way, starting from feeling, from personal likes or dislikes. The second area, the “*thinking for oneself*”, promotes the reflexive and critical capacity, aimed at refining the immediate feeling, searching the *personal* reasons of their own pleasure or disgust. The third area, the *dialogical confrontation*, promotes the capacity to account to others, discussing the criteria and the logic supporting their position and eventually transforming it based on the dialogue. The fourth area, the *imagining*, lets the participants reflect on the possible views of other children and adults who might be involved in the matter, even if they aren't present at that moment. The fifth area, *deliberation*, promotes the capacity to examine, decide and act in partnership, reaching an *inter-subjective judgment*. The judgment, therefore, becomes a space within which to prepare a *common*

*action*, that can affect the scholastic and social community to improve its sustainability, well-being, beauty and justice.

Regarding the central topics on which to exercise the judgment capacity, the emerged themes are various: the debating about the favourite “dish”, the discern and decision about the wild herbs, the care of the flowerbeds of the city or of the sports fields near the school. Among theme, the most interesting topic is the theme of the different kinds of breads children can prepare and bake, taste and eat in the same community from different personal, social and cultural backgrounds. Different breads that children can share with parents and teachers, adults and classmates in convivial experiences. Experiences of relationship, of reciprocal knowledge, of mutual understanding, of discussing and debating, of constructing community bond among different people.

### **2.7.3. Educational experiences connected to the judgment capacity**

The educational activity on the different kinds of breads was the first activity realized starting from May 2022, planned in one class of the primary school involved in the action-research project. The activity was led by the teacher of the literary discipline with 22 children of nine-ten years old (class of the fourth year). The activity was connected to ancient history and to the discovery of agriculture and the cultivation of cereals, a subject that is interconnected at least also with literary, civic and geographical disciplines (Matvejević, 2009).

Cereals cultivation and eating represent a human experience that unifies all the cultures and human beings on the planet, also if in different times and ways. Therefore it is a subject (as well as weaving and the building of temples and places of worship) that allows children to experience both the originality, the unicity of each different kind of bread – of cultures, of social belongings, of contexts and so on –, and the *unity among human beings*, the feeling of a “*sensus communis*”, a sense of common, deep and human bond among people. So, the bread could represent a universal conceptual box, a metaphor of the human condition deeply constituted by the tension between the diversity, the unrepeatable uniqueness of each one and at the same time the fundamental equality, the original humanity that belongs to all in the same way.

In this sense, bread is not only a metaphor for the human condition but also a metaphor and a concrete experience of planetary citizenship. Indeed, it is expression, it is witness to the fundamental equality within the differ-

ences that is the essence of democracy. Moreover, it is expression of the enormous richness of the awareness of our differences, of the sharing of these differences, of the possibility to “taste” these differences, to feel our feelings about a theme, our agreements or disagreements without forcing the other to change, to be homologated, to lose his/her identity.

Starting from this frame, the educational activity on the different kinds of breads was promoted with children through a spiral process:

- the different kinds of bread in ancient history (the bread in the human culture, the bread understood by the children from the outside);
- the formative experience of tasting, reflecting, discussing and acting in partnership regarding the different kinds of bread (the bread in children’s personal experience, the bread felt by the children from the inside);
- the deep understanding and the personal awareness of the human condition about the tension between difference and equality, so with regard to the meaning of a democratic community.

This spiral process was articulated into ten specific and concrete phases, started within the 2021-2022 s.y. and that will be concluded in the next scholastic year. The first phase was centered on the *involvement of the families*. Before starting the formative experience, the families were met by the teacher to share the educational activity of tasting different kinds of bread, discussing the sense of this activity and presenting the involvement of the families in the process of baking the bread and, at the end of the formative process, in the sharing of the work done by the children and of the findings emerged during the formative path. The second phase was centered on the *first tasting experience*. During lunch, in the school refectory, the teacher gave the children a specific time to taste the bread in order to memorize the immediate and subjective sensations and feelings. The third phase was centered on *personal reflection*. After lunch, the children individually wrote these sensations, answering the questions: how do we taste breads? Do we like/dislike them? Why?

The fourth phase was centered on the *intersubjective discussion*. The day after, the children expressed the written personal sensations in a small group and then, in the plenary group, specifying the reasons for the personal like or dislike about the tasted bread (consistency, smell, food habits, relationship connected to the bread), and writing the main positions emerged thanks to the plenary discussion. During this phase the small groups and the big one reflected on these questions: which are the main positions on the bread? Do we like/dislike them? Why?

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The fifth phase was *imagination*. The children thought about possible other positions of people that could be involved in the discussion but that were not present (people with other cultures). During this phase the children reflected on these questions: do we know the stories of these breads? What do they mean for the people who usually eat them? How do they bake and prepare that particular bread? What could be the positions of the people potentially involved in the same matter, but who are not now present?

The sixth phase was centered on the *second tasting experience*. During this phase the children reflected on this question: how can my personal taste change when I taste the same bread again after this discussion, after the narrations of the people involved in person or through our imagination? The seventh phase was centered on the reconstruction of a possible *common point of reflection* on the tasted bread. During this phase the children reflected on these questions: what common evaluation and position can be made with regard to the matter under consideration? Does this common point take into account those dimensions that cannot and must not be violated in the life of every person so that their humanity and their dignity are respected?

These seven phases will be realized in the same way for tasting, in the next scholastic year, all different kinds of breads (regional breads, Arabic, unleavened, rye, corn bread, ...), prepared with the help of the families and of the community (for example, the parents could bring the ingredients of some particular breads, the professional culinary schools could contribute to baking the breads). At the end of all the experiences of taste and starting from the positions and the common point of reflection emerged for each kind of bread, the eighth phase will be centered on the research of a *common agreement decision and action* that can be shared in the final meeting with parents and that can be presented to the community and act within it. During this phase the children will reflect on these questions: what can be the class's agreed decision and action on the topic of the different kinds of breads? To realize a paper to promote a social awareness on the meanings of the different kinds of breads and so on? How can this decision and action become a positive resource for the transformation of the community? What joint actions should be taken on the basis of the most "correct"

judgment that we have identified? The ninth phase is centered on the *confrontation among teachers, children and families* and the tenth phase is centered on the *involvement of community*.

This educational experience exercises the children with regard to some particular outcomes connected to the judgment capacity: the broad, articulated and respectful expression of their perceptions and personal feelings, the understanding of prejudices and stereotypes with regard to the personal perceptions, the argumentation of the personal position, the definition of founded and ethical criteria of choice, the debating and discussing with others about the topic, the research of a common decision and action on the topic and its realization.

In order to evaluate, analyse and interpret the outcomes of this formative path and the process itself, a phenomenological analysis (Kvale, 1996) will be led on the pre and post self-evaluation of the children, on the recorded dialogues realized during the activities in classroom, on the materials created by the children (written materials, drawings), on the professional diaries written by the teachers after each activity, on the interviews with the teachers (Beed, Stimson, 1985; Ammuner, 1998), on the group interviews with families and children realized at the end of the formative path.

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## 2.8. Alliances école-famille et inclusivité : le regard des enseignants

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### 2.8.1. Introduction

La relation entre l'école et la famille constitue un enjeu crucial dans le parcours éducatif des élèves. Une alliance solide entre enseignants et parents peut avoir une influence positive sur le bien-être psychologique, la motivation et la réussite scolaire (Purtois & Desmet, 2017; Epstein, 2018). Cependant, la manière dont les enseignants perçoivent cette relation – autrement dit, leurs représentations d'alliance ou de dis-alliance – joue un rôle tout aussi essentiel, bien que parfois sous-estimé.

L'alliance éducative entre l'école et la famille repose sur le partage d'objectifs, de valeurs et de stratégies éducatives. Lorsque les enseignants perçoivent les parents comme des partenaires fiables et collaboratifs, ils sont plus enclins à se ressentir valorisés et motivés dans leur rôle, ce qui a des effets positifs sur la qualité de l'enseignement et sur la relation avec les élèves. L'interaction entre des acteurs (parents-enseignants), qui partagent des objectifs communs, est particulièrement pertinente en termes d'alliance, mais aussi en termes de processus d'inclusivité<sup>2</sup> et de prise en charge, si cette interdépendance repose sur une éthique du "care" (Molinier, Laugier & Paperman, 2019).

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2. L'adoption du terme "inclusivité" au lieu de "inclusion" répond à la nécessité de re-conceptualiser ce principe, à la lumière de l'étymologie même du mot "inclusion" qui, comme le soulignent également Charles Gardou (2018) et Éric Dugas (2023), s'avère particulièrement inapproprié, car il véhicule des connotations d'enfermement, d'occlusion, voire même de réclusion.

Au contraire, des situations de dis-alliance – telles que des conflits, un manque de communication ou des attitudes dévalorisantes de la part des parents – peuvent générer chez les enseignants de la frustration, du désengagement et des attitudes défensives (Pileri, 2024). Ces dynamiques influencent non seulement la relation école-famille, mais aussi la perception de l'élève de ses capacités, et par conséquent sa réussite scolaire et plus largement sur son projet de vie.

Un corpus croissant de recherches (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler; Francis & Pileri, 2021) a mis en évidence que la qualité du lien entre l'école et la famille est étroitement liée à un ensemble de variables scolaires et psychoéducatives importantes telles que :

- La réussite scolaire des élèves.
- La motivation et le sentiment d'auto-efficacité.
- Le comportement en classe et l'adaptation sociale.
- Le niveau d'engagement dans les tâches et activités pédagogiques.

Souvent, ces représentations se forment de manière implicite et non réfléchie, mais peuvent influencer profondément les dynamiques de classe, l'attitude de l'enseignant envers les élèves et même son propre sentiment d'efficacité professionnelle (Pileri & Dainese, 2023). L'alliance éducative se présente comme une forme de coresponsabilité fondée sur la confiance mutuelle, le respect des rôles et la volonté partagée de soutenir le parcours de croissance de l'élève. Lorsque les enseignants perçoivent les parents comme des interlocuteurs collaboratifs, ouverts au dialogue et investis dans le processus éducatif, un cercle vertueux se met en place, renforçant le sentiment d'appartenance, la motivation au travail et la qualité de la relation éducative.

Au contraire, dans des situations perçues comme conflictuelles, distantes ou marquées par des incompréhensions, les enseignants peuvent développer des attitudes de frustration, de fermeture à la communication ou de dévalorisation, avec des répercussions négatives tant sur la relation avec les familles que sur la perception de l'élève lui-même, pouvant entraîner des dynamiques dysfonctionnelles. La dis-alliance ne représente donc pas seulement une rupture relationnelle entre adultes, mais un facteur de risque éducatif susceptible de générer de l'insécurité, de la démotivation et de faibles performances chez les élèves (Pianta, 1999).

À la lumière de ce qui précède, cette contribution vise à explorer les modalités par lesquelles les enseignants construisent et mettent en œuvre leurs représentations de la relation avec les familles, en analysant les répercussions que ces représentations peuvent avoir sur l'interaction éducative, la gestion de la classe et, plus généralement, sur le parcours scolaire des élèves. Une attention particulière sera portée aux facteurs influen-

çant la perception et les représentations d'alliance ou de dis-alliance, ainsi qu'aux stratégies possibles pour promouvoir un dialogue authentique et con-constructif entre l'école et la famille.

### **2.8.2. Les représentations des enseignants envers les familles : comment se forment-elles ?**

Les représentations que les enseignants construisent à l'égard des familles ne résultent pas d'une observation objective et neutre, mais constituent des constructions subjectives, stratifiées dans le temps et influencées par de multiples facteurs d'ordre personnel, professionnel et contextuel. Ces représentations ne se contentent pas de décrire la réalité, mais contribuent à la définir, orientant les attitudes, les attentes et les pratiques relationnelles. En ce sens, elles peuvent être comprises comme de véritables lentilles interprétatives à travers lesquelles l'enseignant décode les comportements des parents et attribue du sens aux interactions école-famille.

La théorie des représentations sociales de Moscovici (2001) offre un cadre théorique fondamental pour comprendre ce phénomène. Selon l'auteur, les représentations sociales sont des constructions collectives qui permettent aux individus de s'orienter dans le monde social, servant de système de pré-connaissances partagées guidant l'action. Transposée au contexte scolaire, cette théorie suggère que les enseignants développent des représentations spécifiques des parents – telles que « collaboratifs », « absents », « envahissants », « protecteurs » – à partir d'un enchevêtrement d'expériences, de récits professionnels et de modèles culturels intériorisés.

Les expériences antérieures représentent, dans ce processus, une source cruciale. La relation avec des familles rencontrées par le passé, surtout si elle a été fortement positive ou problématique, peut influencer durablement la perception de situations ultérieures. Comme le souligne Cornoldi (2017), les enseignants ont tendance à interpréter les nouveaux contextes familiaux sur la base d'analogies avec des expériences antérieures, générant des attentes qui ne peuvent être confirmées ou infirmées qu'avec le temps. Ce mécanisme de catégorisation automatique, bien que fonctionnel pour la gestion quotidienne du travail enseignant, risque de consolider des stéréotypes et des préjugés implicites, notamment à l'égard de familles issues de groupes sociaux minoritaires ou culturellement éloignés du modèle scolaire dominant.

Outre l'expérience directe, les croyances pédagogiques et les valeurs professionnelles de l'enseignant jouent également un rôle fondamental. Comme l'affirme Fang (1996), les croyances des enseignants – souvent

acquises lors de la formation initiale et ensuite renforcées dans la pratique – influencent profondément les modes d'interaction avec les autres acteurs éducatifs. Par exemple, un enseignant qui considère la participation parentale comme un devoir moral aura tendance à juger négativement les parents qui, pour des raisons professionnelles, linguistiques ou culturelles, sont moins présents. Inversement, un enseignant adoptant un paradigme plus inclusif et contextualisé sera probablement plus enclin à interpréter ces absences comme le fruit de barrières structurelles, plutôt que comme des manifestations de désintérêt.

Le contexte socio-culturel de l'école contribue également de manière significative à la construction des représentations. Dans des environnements à forte complexité sociale, où les familles peuvent se trouver en situation de désavantage économique, éducatif ou migratoire, le risque de stigmatisation est élevé. Des études telles que celles de Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch et Greenfield (2001) montrent comment les différences culturelles dans les modèles éducatifs familiaux peuvent générer des malentendus et des évaluations erronées de la part du corps enseignant, notamment en l'absence d'une formation interculturelle adéquate.

Les dynamiques organisationnelles et institutionnelles de l'école influencent également la formation des représentations. La présence d'espaces structurés de confrontation avec les familles, la disponibilité de figures de médiation, l'existence d'une culture scolaire orientée vers la coresponsabilité éducative peuvent favoriser la construction d'images plus nuancées et moins jugées (Milani, 2018). À l'inverse, dans des contextes scolaires rigoureusement bureaucratiques ou hiérarchiques, où la communication avec les familles est rare ou unidirectionnelle, il est plus facile que se développent des représentations défensives ou négatives.

En résumé, la formation des représentations des enseignants envers les familles résulte d'un processus dynamique, influencé par un ensemble d'expériences, de croyances personnelles, de schémas culturels et de conditions de travail. Comprendre la nature construite et, en même temps, modifiable de ces représentations est la première étape pour promouvoir une alliance éducative authentique et réflexive. Ce n'est qu'à travers un parcours de conscience professionnelle et de formation continue qu'il sera possible de réduire le poids des préjugés implicites et de valoriser la diversité des modèles familiaux comme ressource pour la croissance éducative. Les représentations des enseignants envers les parents se construisent au fil du temps à travers un ensemble d'expériences personnelles, de croyances et d'influences contextuelles. En s'inspirant de la pensée de Cornoldi (ibid., 2017) il souligne que la perception de l'environnement familial par l'enseignant est souvent médiée par des facteurs tels que :

- L'expérience antérieure avec des familles « similaires ».
- Le style de communication des parents.
- Les valeurs personnelles et professionnelles de l'enseignant.
- Le contexte socio-culturel de l'école.

Dans de nombreux cas, ces représentations ne sont pas conscientes, mais influencent profondément la manière dont l'enseignant interagit avec l'élève et ses parents. Par exemple, un enseignant qui considère les parents comme « peu présents » pourrait avoir tendance à accorder moins de confiance à l'élève, réduisant ainsi les opportunités de valorisation.

### **2.8.3. Les implications de l'alliance sur la réussite scolaire**

La littérature a mis en évidence une corrélation étroite entre la qualité de la relation école-famille et les résultats scolaires des élèves (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Lorsque les enseignants perçoivent un climat de confiance et de respect mutuel avec les parents, ils ont tendance à investir davantage dans la relation éducative, à adopter des attitudes empathiques et compréhensives, à utiliser des stratégies pédagogiques plus flexibles et personnalisées, et à développer un sentiment d'efficacité partagée avec les parents (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Cela se traduit par :

- une motivation scolaire accrue des élèves;
- une amélioration de l'apprentissage et des résultats;
- une incidence réduite des comportements problématiques;
- une plus grande résilience en période de difficulté.

Par contre, comme l'affirme Pianta (ibid. 1999), une relation perçue comme négative entre l'enseignant et les parents peut déclencher un cercle vicieux : l'enseignant se sent isolé, réduit son engagement, l'élève perçoit de la méfiance et se désengage. Même sans conflit explicite, les tensions implicites peuvent se refléter dans la relation éducative et compromettre la qualité de l'expérience scolaire. Les perceptions négatives ou conflictuelles de la part des enseignants envers les parents peuvent générer un climat défavorable qui affecte directement l'expérience scolaire des élèves. L'élève, même sans connaître les détails du conflit adulte, peut percevoir des tensions et des messages implicites qui influencent son estime de soi, son sentiment d'appartenance et ses performances. À l'inverse, lorsque l'enseignant perçoit une relation de confiance et de collaboration avec la famille, il est plus enclin à adopter une attitude empathique, à valoriser les ressources de l'élève et à promouvoir des interventions personnalisées.

Les familles les plus fragiles, en particulier celles ayant un accès limité aux ressources culturelles et linguistiques, sont souvent exclues d'un

dialogue authentique avec l'école, qui tend à privilégier des modes de communication unidirectionnels ou bureaucratiques. L'absence de médiation interculturelle, d'espaces d'écoute et de reconnaissance mutuelle contribue à alimenter un sentiment d'impuissance et de résignation pouvant conduire à l'abandon scolaire (Trumbull et al., 2001).

Les pratiques scolaires et les structures organisationnelles jouent également un rôle crucial. Un système scolaire excessivement standardisé, axé sur la performance et peu attentif aux dimensions relationnelles, risque de négliger les signaux précoces de décrochage et de ne pas valoriser adéquatement les ressources familiales en tant qu'alliés éducatifs.

Promouvoir une véritable alliance éducative n'est donc pas une tâche simple, ni laissée à l'improvisation des enseignants. Il est nécessaire d'investir de manière consciente, systémique et stratégique. La littérature souligne l'importance de politiques scolaires orientées vers la participation, la formation des enseignants aux compétences relationnelles et interculturelles, ainsi que la création d'espaces de dialogue structurés et continus avec les familles (Weiss et al., 2009). Un exemple concret est représenté par les modèles d'engagement familial développés par Epstein (2019), qui proposent une approche à plusieurs niveaux de la relation école-famille, fondée sur la co-conception, la communication bidirectionnelle et la valorisation des contextes communautaires. D'autres approches, comme celle systémique-relationnelle (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), soulignent l'importance d'intégrer la perspective familiale dans les choix pédagogiques, en reconnaissant la famille comme une partie active du processus éducatif.

La prévention du décrochage scolaire (Gilles, Potvin & Tièche-Christinat, 2012) ne peut donc se passer de la qualité des relations. Il ne s'agit pas seulement de « faire participer les parents », mais de les reconnaître comme des sujets éducatifs à part entière, à écouter, valoriser et accompagner.

#### **2.8.4. L'influence des stéréotypes et des préjugés sur l'alliance école-famille**

Les stéréotypes et les préjugés constituent une composante latente mais profondément structurante dans les processus de construction des représentations sociales que les enseignants élaborent à l'égard des familles d'élèves. Il s'agit de schémas interprétatifs enracinés, souvent inconscients, qui agissent comme des filtres cognitifs dans la lecture des comportements, des pratiques éducatives et des modes d'interaction des parents avec l'institution scolaire. Ces représentations, loin d'être de simples perceptions neutres de la réalité, se configurent comme des constructions sociales

complexes, issues de l'entrelacement entre dynamiques cognitives automatiques, implications affectives, appartenances axiologiques et héritages culturels (Mazzara, 1997).

Dans le contexte éducatif, ces représentations influencent de manière significative non seulement la qualité du dialogue école-famille, mais aussi la possibilité même de construire une alliance authentique, symétrique et durable entre les acteurs en présence. Lorsque les pratiques parentales sont interprétées à travers des lentilles stéréotypées – souvent liées à des catégories telles que le statut socio-économique, l'origine géographique, l'appartenance ethnique ou le style de communication – des mécanismes de catégorisation s'activent à un niveau pré-réflexif, orientant l'agir professionnel au-delà même de la conscience intentionnelle de l'enseignant (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). En particulier, les familles issues de milieux défavorisés ou ayant un parcours migratoire sont parfois perçues comme « peu présentes », « peu compétentes » ou « dysfonctionnelles », en opposition à un modèle implicite et idéalisé de parentalité « normative » de type bourgeois-occidental.

Telles attributions réductrices tendent à constituer des formes de déficit épistémique (Fricker, 2007), dans lesquelles le parent est privé de légitimité dans le discours éducatif. En conséquence, les attentes relationnelles et scolaires envers ces familles deviennent faibles, stéréotypées et peu inclusives. Ces mécanismes répondent, comme le montre la psychologie sociale, à un besoin de réduction de la complexité par des processus de catégorisation sociale (Tajfel, 1981; Genovese, 2006; Lorenzini & Bolognesi, 2017), mais ils risquent de rigidifier le champ interactif, générant un effet de « prophétie autoréalisatrice ». Le parent perçu comme distant ou défaillant, s'il est ignoré, exclu ou dévalorisé dans la communication scolaire, aura tendance à se retirer effectivement, finissant par confirmer l'attente initiale. Ce cercle vicieux relationnel entrave non seulement la possibilité de construire une confiance réciproque, mais compromet également l'image scolaire de l'élève, souvent inconsciemment associée au jugement porté sur sa famille, avec des répercussions négatives sur son sentiment d'efficacité personnelle, sa motivation à apprendre et son sentiment d'appartenance scolaire.

Dans les contextes scolaires à forte complexité sociale, où la pression normative est élevée et les ressources relationnelles limitées, ces automatismes peuvent se cristalliser en schémas de sens partagés au sein du corps enseignant, assumant une dimension institutionnalisée. Ainsi, on assiste à la formation d'une « culture scolaire implicite » qui tend à légitimer des visions asymétriques de la relation avec les familles, dans lesquelles l'école adopte une posture dominante et prescriptive face à des parents perçus comme « problématiques ».

Ce déséquilibre mine à la racine les fondements d'une collaboration égalitaire et favorise une communication unidirectionnelle, parfois teintée de jugement, qui risque d'accentuer la distance entre l'école et le territoire. Par ailleurs, il convient de ne pas négliger que plusieurs études ont mis en évidence la persistance de préjugés implicites à l'égard des élèves en situation de handicap. Ces représentations peuvent se manifester par des attentes scolaires diminuées, une tendance à la surprotection ou une posture de mise à distance, compromettant de ce fait la qualité du processus inclusif. Le handicap est parfois perçu de manière globalisante, comme une "déficience" généralisée (Ramel, 2014), plutôt que comme une caractéristique singulière inscrite dans un parcours de développement spécifique. Ces biais cognitifs, souvent inconscients, influencent les pratiques pédagogiques quotidiennes (à l'école et en famille) et peuvent nuire au bien-être, à la motivation et au sentiment de compétence des élèves concernés. Comme le souligne Ebersold (2015), les attitudes négatives ou les représentations déficitaires du handicap dans le monde enseignant peuvent constituer un obstacle majeur à la construction d'un environnement scolaire réellement inclusif. Pour contrer ces risques, il est indispensable d'activer des processus intentionnels de réflexivité critique, permettant aux enseignants d'interroger leurs propres représentations sociales, les biais implicites qui orientent leurs jugements, ainsi que les attentes silencieuses qui régulent la relation avec les familles.

Comme le suggère Schön (1983), l'enseignant réflexif est celui qui sait reconnaître l'ambiguïté de son agir professionnel et remettre en question les cadres interprétatifs à travers lesquels il construit le sens de l'expérience éducative. Il faut souligner, encore une fois, que la formation initiale et continue du personnel scolaire ne peut donc se limiter à l'acquisition de compétences techniques ou disciplinaires (Contini, 2009). Elle doit inclure des parcours systématiques d'éducation à la relation, favorisant le développement de compétences communicationnelles, dialogiques et "d'accordage affectif" (Pileri, 2024). Seule une posture professionnelle dotée de conscience critique, d'ouverture à l'altérité, de sensibilité relationnelle et éthique est capable de co-construire des alliances fondées sur la reconnaissance réciproque, la valorisation des différences et la coresponsabilité éducative.

Au regard de ce qui a été analysé, un changement de paradigme dans la culture scolaire s'impose, capable de décoloniser le regard éducatif et d'accueillir la pluralité des formes familiales, des langages affectifs et des modes de soin. L'objectif est de construire une communauté scolaire inclusive, qui ne traite pas la diversité comme un problème, mais la reconnaît comme une ressource génératrice. Ce n'est que dans cette perspective

qu'une alliance éducative authentique peut naître, capable de soutenir non seulement la réussite scolaire, mais aussi le bien-être personnel, relationnel et social de chaque élève et de sa famille.

### **2.8.5. Alliance et inclusivité: pas seulement un objectif souhaitable**

La relation entre l'école et la famille revêt un rôle particulièrement délicat et stratégique lorsqu'il s'agit d'élèves ayant des besoins éducatifs particuliers (BEP). Dans ces cas, la qualité de l'alliance éducative ne représente pas seulement un objectif souhaitable, mais une condition nécessaire pour garantir un parcours de formation équitable, personnalisé et inclusif. Pourtant, précisément dans les contextes où le besoin de coopération est le plus fort, le risque de désalliance est plus fréquent et plus nuisible, tant pour l'équilibre relationnel entre adultes que pour l'expérience scolaire de l'élève. C'est le propos du rapport mondial sur le handicap (OMS, 2011) qui souligne combien l'implication des familles et l'alliance entre les parents, les membres de la famille, les écoles et les services socio-éducatifs et sanitaires est une clé essentielle pour une inclusion réussie.

Les BEP englobent non seulement les situations de handicap certifié, mais aussi les troubles du développement spécifiques (comme les troubles dys ou le TDAH), ainsi que les désavantages sociaux, culturels ou linguistiques etc. Ces situations requièrent des interventions éducatives ciblées, une planification partagée et une communication constante entre l'école et la famille. La réussite de ces parcours dépend fortement de la capacité des adultes à construire un réseau de soutien stable et collaboratif, fondé sur la confiance réciproque et la coresponsabilité éducative. Cependant, il n'est pas rare que les familles se sentent jugées, incomprises ou exclues des décisions pédagogiques de l'école. De leur côté, les enseignants peuvent percevoir la relation avec les parents comme une source de pression, de conflit ou d'impuissance (Contini, 2012), en particulier lorsqu'ils ne disposent pas des outils adéquats pour gérer la relation éducative. La charge émotionnelle associée à la gestion de situations complexes peut également affecter négativement les dynamiques collaboratives. Les situations de désalliance peuvent prendre diverses formes. Dans certains cas, il s'agit d'une rupture de communication, causée par le manque d'espaces de dialogue authentique ou par l'usage d'un langage technique de la part de l'école, rendant difficile la compréhension du parcours éducatif. Dans d'autres cas, se développent des dynamiques de délégation ou de déresponsabilisation mutuelle : la famille confie tout le poids éducatif à l'école, tandis que les enseignants

perçoivent les parents comme peu coopératifs ou trop protecteurs. Parfois, les conflits latents se transforment en accusations réciproques, où les difficultés de l'élève sont perçues comme la faute de l'un ou de l'autre adulte de référence, avec des effets délétères sur le climat relationnel et la continuité pédagogique. Cette désalliance peut avoir des conséquences profondes et négatives sur l'expérience scolaire de l'élève. L'enfant ou l'adolescent, plongé dans un climat relationnel fragmenté, peut percevoir une incohérence entre les figures adultes, développer une méfiance envers l'institution scolaire, ou intérioriser une image négative de lui-même en tant que sujet "problématique" ou "inadéquat". Dans les cas les plus complexes, un désengagement scolaire progressif peut apparaître, avec des répercussions sur le bien-être psychologique, la motivation et la participation active (Zanobini & Usai, 2005), pouvant aller jusqu'à l'isolement, les comportements oppositionnels ou l'abandon précoce.

La littérature sur l'inclusion souligne que la collaboration école-famille est l'un des principaux facteurs prédictifs de réussite scolaire pour les élèves avec handicap (Caldin & Giaconi, 2021; Akkari & Kalubi, 2023). L'implication active des familles, la co-construction de projets éducatifs individualisés, le partage des objectifs et des stratégies pour le projet de vie, sont des éléments essentiels pour promouvoir une éducation véritablement inclusive et centrée sur la personne. Comme le souligne Ianes (2022), l'inclusion ne se joue pas seulement en classe, mais dans la qualité des relations interinstitutionnelles et interpersonnelles qui soutiennent l'élève dans tout son écosystème éducatif (Brofenbrenner, 1986). Dans cette perspective, il est fondamental que l'école se dote de moyens pour prévenir et gérer les situations de désalliance, en investissant dans la formation des enseignants sur la communication et la relation éducative, en adoptant des modèles de *family engagement*, et en créant des espaces permanents d'écoute et de dialogue avec les familles. Il est également crucial de soutenir les enseignants dans leur travail de réflexion sur leurs propres représentations, attentes et émotions envers les familles, notamment dans les contextes complexes et à forte intensité émotionnelle.

Ce n'est qu'en renouvelant l'attention portée à la dimension relationnelle, à la construction de la confiance et à la valorisation des ressources familiales qu'il sera possible de surmonter les barrières qui freinent encore aujourd'hui une inclusivité scolaire pleine et effective pour tous les élèves.

### 2.8.6. En guise de conclusion: vers une alliance authentique

L'analyse des dynamiques d'alliance et de désalliance entre l'école et la famille, menée à partir du point de vue des enseignants, révèle un cadre d'une grande complexité, à la fois riche, stratifié et parfois contradictoire. Ce paysage met en évidence l'importance cruciale des relations intersubjectives dans l'expérience éducative inclusif. En effet, les représentations que les enseignants construisent à propos des familles – et plus précisément des parents – ne sont pas de simples reflets neutres de réalités objectives, mais bien le produit de processus cognitifs, émotionnels, sociaux et culturels. Ces représentations orientent les pratiques pédagogiques et influencent de manière significative les formes d'interaction éducative, les attitudes professionnelles et les décisions didactiques.

Au fil de cette réflexion, nous avons cherché à souligner combien il est essentiel de promouvoir une véritable alliance éducative entre l'école et la famille : une alliance pensée non seulement comme un facteur de confort relationnel ou de gestion du quotidien scolaire, mais surtout comme un levier fondamental pour favoriser la réussite, l'inclusion et le bien-être des élèves. Loin d'être automatique ou implicite, cette alliance suppose un engagement conscient, une volonté partagée et une construction progressive, nourrie par le respect réciproque, la reconnaissance de l'altérité, une communication authentique et la co-responsabilité éducative (Pileri & Prévôt, Silva, 2023). Il convient de rappeler que cette alliance éducative ne peut se réduire à une série de contacts ponctuels ou de démarches formelles : elle exige une éthique relationnelle, un investissement professionnel et personnel dans la qualité des liens tissés avec les familles. Cela implique d'abandonner les logiques hiérarchiques ou prescriptives qui ont historiquement marqué les rapports entre école et parents, pour s'ouvrir à une vision plus horizontale, dialogique et collaborative du partenariat éducatif.

La construction de cette alliance passe inévitablement par le dépassement des stéréotypes, des préjugés et des malentendus qui peuvent parasiter la relation école-famille. Elle nécessite également la reconnaissance des parents comme détenteurs de savoirs éducatifs, de compétences précieuses et de points de vue légitimes sur les besoins et les potentiels de leurs enfants. Cette reconnaissance est la condition préalable à l'émergence d'une véritable co-construction des parcours d'apprentissage, fondée sur une écoute réciproque et une vision partagée des finalités éducatives.

Dans les situations où l'alliance est absente ou fragilisée – ce que l'on désigne par le terme de *désalliance* –, les conséquences peuvent être pro-

fondes. Il ne s'agit pas seulement d'une rupture de communication, mais souvent d'un affaiblissement du lien de confiance, d'une démobilisation des parties prenantes et d'une mise en danger du projet éducatif global. La désalliance peut générer des dynamiques de délégitimation mutuelle, une perte de motivation chez les élèves, et une détérioration du climat scolaire. Elle engendre aussi un isolement professionnel pour les enseignants et un sentiment d'exclusion pour les familles, notamment dans les contextes marqués par la diversité sociale, culturelle ou linguistique. La relation avec les familles des élèves à besoins éducatifs particuliers mérite ici une attention spéciale. Pour ces enfants et adolescents, l'école représente souvent un espace où les enjeux d'inclusive, de reconnaissance et de soutien sont particulièrement aigus. Dans ces cas, la coopération étroite entre l'école et la famille devient une condition nécessaire, parfois vitale, pour garantir des parcours éducatifs réellement équitables et adaptés. Une désalliance dans ce contexte peut amplifier les vulnérabilités déjà existantes, renforcer le sentiment d'isolement des familles, et augmenter le risque de marginalisation ou de décrochage scolaire.

Par contre, une alliance solide et durable peut ouvrir la voie à des réseaux d'entraide, stimuler la résilience des élèves et renforcer leur sentiment d'appartenance et d'efficacité personnelle. De ces constats, plusieurs orientations stratégiques se dégagent. Tout d'abord, il est impératif que les établissements investissent dans la formation continue des enseignants, en particulier dans les domaines de la communication interpersonnelle, de la gestion des relations conflictuelles, de la médiation, de la réflexivité et de l'empathie professionnelle (Dugas, 2020). Ces compétences relationnelles sont aussi fondamentales que les savoirs disciplinaires pour construire un cadre éducatif porteur et inclusif. Ensuite, il est nécessaire de repenser les dispositifs organisationnels et les protocoles de communication avec les familles. Il ne suffit pas de créer des moments de rencontre institutionnalisés (réunions, bulletins scolaires, carnets de liaison) : il faut inventer des espaces véritablement participatifs, accessibles, bienveillants, où parents et enseignants peuvent dialoguer sur un plan d'égalité, partager leurs points de vue et co-construire les réponses éducatives aux défis rencontrés.

Enfin, un changement de culture scolaire s'impose. Il s'agit de reconnaître pleinement les familles comme partenaires éducatifs à part entière, porteurs de compétences singulières, de ressources précieuses et d'expériences éducatives diverses. Ce changement nécessite de déconstruire certaines représentations dominantes sur la "bonne parentalité" ou la "famille idéale", qui peuvent exclure ou stigmatiser certaines formes familiales ou éducatives. Construire des alliances éducatives authentiques, c'est finalement mettre au cœur de l'action scolaire la relation humaine dans sa

dimension éthique, affective et cognitive. C'est reconnaître que l'éducation n'est pas uniquement affaire de transmission de savoirs, mais un processus de rencontre entre sujets, un espace de négociation de sens, d'exercice partagé de la responsabilité, de transformation réciproque. En accord avec Biesta (2010), l'éducation est un acte profondément relationnel et démocratique : elle ne vise pas simplement à la transmission des compétences, mais à former des sujets capables de pensée critique, d'action autonome et d'engagement responsable dans le monde. L'école, en ce sens, ne peut réussir pleinement sa mission sans le concours actif, lucide et solidaire des familles. Et c'est dans cette alliance – fragile mais féconde – que se joue l'avenir d'une école véritablement inclusive, équitable et humanisant.

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## **Chapitre 3. Défis dans les services éducatifs, sociaux et sanitaires**



### **3.1. Designing art workshops from a transcultural perspective. Observations, dynamics and challenges from the TPAAE project experience**

*Rosita Deluigi<sup>1</sup>*

#### **3.1.1. Intercultural dialogue as a platform for transcultural perspectives**

To promote an authentic inter/transcultural approach, it is necessary to invest in an open, problematic, and anti-dogmatic dialogue. The circular movement of thought and action could be the basis for the sharing of critical and developmental paradigms for educational interventions situated within creative rationalities, where the contributions of each subject become a shared heritage.

Planning intercultural paths implies commitment to seeking out methods, opportunities, and tools to develop a dialogue between cultures and a constructive, creative comparison, promoting opportunities to exchange different ideas, values, and cultures. Pedagogical research agrees on the importance of the reciprocity of this process and numerous authors have stressed the urgency of identifying meeting points through a dialectical tangle of interactions (Zoletto, 2020). The most common error is to consider oneself satisfied with a comparative transfer between cultures, where the perspective of adaptation, assimilation, and subordination prevails instead of a conscious postcolonial reflection (Burgio, 2022). It is decidedly interesting to opt for a dynamic view of culture by which the prefix *inter* indicates intercultural reciprocity, the proximity of the difference, and the possibility of crossbreeding, in a productive negotiation.

The intercultural perspective can break down reflection into the practices of education, training, and dialogue, opening up spaces for experimentation, where one of the essential dimensions to be addressed is

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disorientation. The search for meeting points opens up to the concept of reciprocity and presupposes the willingness and intention to engage in dialogue through critical thinking. It is essential to emphasise that no openness to individuality is neutral. Proximity, therefore, is the result of a tension between differences that recognise each other and that first and foremost listen to personal identities and shared roots, the same ones from which worldviews, interpretations of reality, and the ability to narrate oneself arise.

Openness to “the otherness” is based on the desire to meet and the willingness to change oneself or allow oneself to be changed by connections such as exchanges. With the awareness that these are articulated and complex processes in which to discover new parts of oneself, sometimes even in a conflictual way, valuing points of contact and their multiple representations. Constructive encounters between differences require open and fluid forms of communication, in which each subject can share his or her journey and participate in processes of change and personal and social enrichment. An important effect of intercultural understanding is to allow subjects to find themselves in a space where boundaries are blurred from a geopolitical point of view, of interacting identities, of shared knowledge, of creative discoveries, and of ways of co-constructing open communities.

It is a matter of wanting, being able, and knowing how to live in several border zones (Deluigi & Cadei, 2019), where the recognition of the other and the relativisation of one’s system of values and ideas allows for the generation of cultural ideas in motion, immersed in an ongoing experience of openness and dialogue, of distinction and encounter, of cohesion and separation, of estrangement and return to the self, of disorientation and familiarity, of memories and projects. The comparative dimension, the categorisation, and the juxtaposition of differences risk ciphering complexity in the light of the competitiveness of majority cultures devouring minority ones. It is more important to work, albeit with uncertainty, on the intercultural paradigm understood as activity that leads to change, transformation, and integration as a result of experiences of dialogue with others. Its origin lies in the awareness of the many diversities that condition and characterise the development of society, but which require coming to terms with one’s internal contradictions and removing the conceptual stages that distinguish “our” practices from “theirs”. The need to question one’s limits, to discuss and enrich the self with new elements, to change without losing one’s identity of reference (Casagrande, 2020).

These conditions have oriented educational and pedagogical research leading to the definition of different intercultural lines and plans that, over time, have taken on a variety of forms and hybrids, opening up to further

dialogues and continuous transformations. The practice of dialogue, the search for creative languages, experimentation in the social and educational field have led to a virtuous short-circuit of thoughts, words, images, and narratives, opening up a fertile breeding ground for the idea of transculturalism, understood as the ability to cross the boundaries of individual cultures as a result of the awareness of being part of a common human species on a unique mother earth, sharing a project of planetary citizenship, based on the principles and values of a universal ethics (Morin, 2016; Bauman, 2003).

The transcultural approach exceeds individual cultures, moving among them without being absorbed by them, and freeing the possibility to cross over between different expressions of human society. «It means sharing a wider vision, able to look at the bigger picture, past diversity, and with these diversities, can reshape a fragmentary image that is now surpassed. A shared project requiring teamwork, “working together” with the same objectives, where every participant is, and feels actively involved in and responsible for the creation of a new and different culture, able to cross over between the borders of individual elements, bringing them together in the name of that which, if achieved, makes them all winners in a single team» (Casagrande, 2020).

Designing mutual understanding also means promoting projects of peaceful coexistence, guaranteeing the fundamental rights to freedom, knowledge, creativity, and respect for differences in language, culture, and religion. Coexistence must be understood in systemic and ecological terms, not as the parallel coexistence of cultures, with enclave-like extremism and ghettoisation, but with the ability to generate complex and heterogeneous spaces and times, where being together is the premise for building new ideas of community.

To improve authentic inter/transcultural pathways, it is necessary to invest in projects that aim to educate on differences and dialogue, through the development of open, problematic, and anti-dogmatic thinking. «A political thought and practice capable of decentralising and moving away from one’s value references to direct oneself towards new cultures that include differences and similarities, returning to one’s own culture of reference, using the experience of dialogue for a more conscious evaluation of one’s specificity in its more or less positive aspects» (Ibid.).

It is the circular movement of thought-action that we can use to build new ways for sharing critical and development perspectives for actions placed in creative, non-linear paradigms, where the contribution of each subject becomes a shared heritage.

«Transculturalism rejects homogeneousness, rigidity, and cultural and gender consistency, highlighting the process of hybridisation among cultures, generating new and unpredictable forms. The varied lifestyle of individuals, the everyday routine, their conduct as architects of their biographies, their self-invention, and methods of social interaction embody a new understanding of culture» (Tumino, 2018, p. 28). The challenge is not to focus merely on differences, avoiding the risk of confirming our mutual distances. It is decisive to identify our mutual contiguities and shared aims, to contribute to the breakdown of prejudice or easy and poor generalisations (Demetrio & Favaro, 2016).

The use of a multitude of languages can create further closeness among people and the artistic dimension, in its ever-changing forms, makes it possible to represent and narrate different worlds that do not necessarily need to be assimilated by everyone. We can set out on new tracks and trajectories of intercomprehension, towards the creolisation of knowledge (Glissant, 2007; 2020). This is a process that we should consider transformative, also in terms of the design of educational practices, as we will illustrate below.

### **3.1.2. Orientation and reference framework for the TPAAE project<sup>2</sup>**

The project Transcultural Perspectives in Art and Art Education (TPAAE) investigates contemporary art in Europe and East Africa, and forms art education on both continents from a transcultural perspective among a Consortium containing academic and non-academic institutions from Poland, Italy, and Kenya. All the institutions investigate art, culture, and cultural heritage, with various complementary competences, allowing for the research and implementation of its effects into practice. International and intersectoral mobility guarantee an elevated level and effective sharing of knowledge due to the different lines and goals of the project, aimed at developing research at theoretical, academic, and practical levels.

We have seen the importance of living experiences of decentralisation, where diversity can find room for expression. Planning educational actions

2. This section contains some parts of the description of the project, taken from Addendum B of the planning proposal, approved, and financed in 2019 as part of the line Horizon 2020 - Call: H2020-MSCA-RISE-2019 (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research and Innovation Staff Exchange). Topic: MSCA-RISE-2019 Type of action: MSCA-RISE (2020-2024) (<https://tpaae.eu/>). The author has added further thoughts and scientific references connected to research ongoing as part of the project itself.

that move away from linear trajectories requires children and adults to listen, to express the wealth of cultural interpretations linked to each person's biography, as a subject, as part of an educational environment, expanding communication channels and co-education experiences aimed at change and ready to deal with the stresses of today's complexities (Pourtois & Desmet, 2015; 2015a). Differences and pluralities come together in spaces for play, interaction, words, pictures, and imagination, where it is not necessary to set out clear borders between disciplines, contexts, materials, ideas, or subjects. The dialectic between artistic-creative languages is an interesting area in which to take children and teens – and also young people and adults – towards cognitive experiences that fascinate and amaze, able to arouse curiosity and the divergent thoughts that derive from this, and which are exercised within the peer group and adults. The discovery of the self, of others, and the world through plural representations, images, and imaginaries, makes it possible to describe and rewrite situations of which we are not only users or recipients, but also creators.

Transcultural perspectives are essential, today more than ever, to appreciate cultural diversity and to recognize the importance of defending and promoting tangible and intangible cultural heritage. To a transcultural interpretation of social contexts, education implies a relational connection able to mediate between an irreducibly fractal self and the many forms of otherness. If the understanding of others is conditioned on the understanding of ourselves and vice versa, then the process of transcultural education is also a process of self-knowledge and of self-education in relation to otherness.

This approach is even more challenging in contemporaneity, since the singularity of “the Other” disturbs and slows down maximum speed flows and the reproduction of “the Equal”, which fosters the maximum speed and functionality of social processes. If only the positivity of “the Equal” is promoted, life becomes poorer and new pathologies arise in a cycle of self-referentiality and self-destruction. Only meeting the – destabilising and enlivening – Others can give each of us our own identity and generate real experience. For this reason, there is a real urgency to build a human community based on authentic listening and on real openness to “the Other” (Han, 2018).

Interactions of cultural perspectives in processes of education can be fostered while developing an institutional model of artistic education and creating spaces for free creativity development, artistic creation, cooperation, and so forth. The fact that this takes place anyway and anyhow due to globalisation, can be directed consciously in the educational system and at universities due to orientating programmes towards transcultural openness,

and can be stimulated by direct cooperation between co-creators from different countries and cultures.

### 3.1.3. Fluid spirals of creativity and imagination

Planning artistic and creative activities within the TPAAE, has followed the logic of the third aim of the project: *Practical* – supporting the development of an art scene in the region of Kilifi (Kenya), with fruitful artistic research and interaction, concretizing in the Festival of Art and Education “DUOS,” fostering mutual relations between the European and Kenyan art scenes (Jastrubczak, 2024).

The activities implemented were transformative in the way the participatory research paths were conducted, supporting collective and involved thinking in the contexts of intervention. A community approach was favoured, which, over time, took on further value, especially in terms of educational and didactic co-design. In the following, I will describe some significant stages in the development and declination of the concept of creativity of artistic language, as this paradigm has influenced transcultural operating methods (still being implemented and developed in further research-action projects in the field).

There are no common definitions of creativity and related dispositional factors. «Creativity is a complex process that can be viewed as an interactive system in which relationships among persons, processes, products, and social and cultural contexts are of paramount importance. [...] People are not creative in a general sense; they are creative in particular domains such as the visual arts» (Zimmerman, 2009, p. 386). [...] «Creativity based on models developed in art education and other fields, can be enhanced and teaching strategies can be developed to stimulate creativity. [...] A model of creativity for the visual arts that is inclusive, rather than exclusive, and views creativity as possessed by all people, not just an elite, is one that should be encouraged» (Ibid., pp. 391-393).

Regarding the broader relationship between creativity and knowledge, Herber Simon sustained that «acts are judged to be creative when they produce something that is novel and that is thought to be interesting or to have social value. Interesting or valuable novelty is the touchstone of the creative» (1985, p. 3). This definition directs our reflection to the collective impact that divergent thought can have at level of innovation and social change. We all have potentialities to develop to be creative (Barile, 2017) and we can all play an active role in global and local contexts. It is also interesting to specify the aspects that define creativity from a psychological

perspective (Guilford, 1950) looking in greater detail at some characteristics from an educational viewpoint:

- *fluidity*, that is the ability to generate ideas, regardless of their use in problem-solving. It means being able to overcome performance anxiety and the results often associated with learning;
- *flexibility*, that is the ability to change ideational strategy, and therefore to pass from a succession of ideas to another, from one pattern to another – with critical revisions, arguing choices in close connection with completed situations, adding to the flexibility of thought, not just as a dispersion of energy but as an exercise in critical thought;
- *originality*, which consists of the ability to find unique, particular, and unusual answers, which may not be included in the immediacy, but which raise questions and doubts, leading to exchange dynamics valorising intuition and personal discoveries;
- *processing*, can be defined as the progression through to the conclusion of an ideational trajectory, characterised by a substantial degree of intricacy and interconnectedness. This progression should be pursued with a view to identifying a consistency that does not constrain creative logic, but rather serves to reinforce it in the face of linear approaches and other readily identifiable rationales within training and educational facilities;
- *awareness of problems*, which means selecting ideas and organising them in new ways, understanding what is and what isn't right, can be perfected in the use of everyday objects – with a strong reference to practice, experience, and being part of specific contexts that, being plural, heterogeneous and complex, require tools for analysis, thought, and dynamic and transformative action (Biasion, 2017).

Creativity is part of the life skills that denotes an innovative design thought (Glăveanu, 2011; 2014; 2021). «Creativity and innovation involve putting things together in new ways, it involves risk-taking, experimenting and refining, valuing the role of productive failure, it involves making and doing, and is often collaborative and co-creative. While creativity is about the capacity to put things together in new ways, innovation is often seen as putting them to work and out into the world so that they meet a need, want or interest. These capacities do not get switched on when people hit the world of work, they need to be cultivated across the education lifespan in all subjects in as many ways as possible» (Davis, 2017).

The capacity to articulate ourselves in a creative manner enables children, young people, and adults to immerse themselves in diverse scenarios, transcend cultural boundaries in novel ways and ascertain their significance as articulate advocates for their personal development and their

function within community frameworks. This occurs in a continued dialectic between acquired knowledge and the production of an original thought: “inside-the-box thinking” is the basis for creativity “out of the box” (Weisberg, 2009). Creativity, therefore, is not the result of the complementarity of deduction and intuition, reason and imagination, emotion and reflection, divergent and convergent thought (Biasion, 2017). It is therefore essential to develop learning paths aimed to circulate a «culture that makes it possible to understand our condition and to help us to live, it is, at the same time, a way of thinking, freely and openly [...] through the power of “ecologising” thought, it is because this «is a fundamental quality of the human mind [...], it is a question of developing it rather than atrophising it» (Morin, 2000, pp. 3-19).

### **3.1.4. Plural orientation of the Kids’ Session: design thinking**

One specific action of the TPAAE project was the DUOS Festival (an exchange and cooperation among artists from Poland and Kenya) in which the Italian partner was responsible for the Kids’ session aimed to involve children, teenagers, families, schools, and communities in meaningful creative and artistic experiences.

Two editions of the Festival were organised in 2021 (given the interruption to activities caused by the Covid-19 pandemic), through the creation of a special Kids’ session that, continuing the subjects dealt with in the project, focused on the areas of “Community” in the first edition (February 2021) and “Women Empowerment” in the second (August 2021). The last edition was implemented in March 2023 taking in consideration the topic “Social Ecology”.

Different levels of intercultural, transcultural, and creative reflection are present in the design of the activities and art workshops carried out in various primary schools and socio-educational services in the city of Kilifi. The objective was to reconnect pedagogical and educational processes within a complexity that is still evolving and has left different traces on the way of thinking and interpreting pedagogical research and art education approach, together (Knowles & Cole, 2008; Leavy, 2017).

The first level concerns the work group that conducted the activities: a team of researchers in educational and art history from the University of Macerata; teachers and educators from the primary schools and socio-educational agencies in Kilifi; local artists (painting and sculpture professionals); students from Pwani University and volunteers from local

socio-cultural associations that cooperated in the planning and creation of the workshops.

The management of a team with different skills, cultural backgrounds, and roles was a decisive step in interrogating educational intentions in dialogue with numerous requests. Interaction, group consolidation, the possibility to reconnect with working networks that have been in place for some time, and cultural mediation, connected to a readily available dialogue among the parties have played a key role in co-planning the work system and in conducting the activities (Deluigi, 2019). This was not an episodic gesture, a sporadic event, or a momentary action, it was a matter of consolidating bridges of dialogue that had been open for quite a long time (considering that initial research activities carried out in partnership on similar subjects date back to 2018 with the TICASS project)<sup>3</sup>, including processes for the deconstruction of stereotypes and decolonial discussions that are still ongoing. The strength of the partnership network lies in its extreme variability regarding to the issues addressed and the communities involved and, at the same time, in its consolidation in relation to the methodologies of interaction and collaboration.

The second level of reflection concerns the actual realisation of the artistic and creative activities that, starting with co-stimulation of researchers, artists, and teachers, opened many learning perspectives and expression of forming identities. Through the use of artistic materials, prevalently pictorial and graphic – the children explored their imaginations, working individually and in small and large groups.

On the theme “Community” cooperative workshops were set up, focusing mainly on the creative process of the group and not only on the outcome. The need and ability to share time, spaces, materials, ideas, and representations encouraged participants to cross over into inclusive, interactive dynamics, making room for creativity as a shared process and experience (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 2014).

Narratives of personal experiences were considerable, as were the expectations and the wishes for the second edition of the workshop, “Women Empowerment” which saw, in particular, young girls and teenage girls at

3. TICASS - *Technologies of Communication Imaging, Art and Social Sciences* - is a project, financed by the European Union as part of the Horizon 2020 programme. Call: H2020-MSCA-RISE-2016. The Consortium was composed by: Akademia sztuki w Szczecinie (Poland - coordinator), The Polish University Abroad in London (UK), Stowarzyszenie Edukacja, Nauka, Kultura in Szczecin (Poland), Univerzita Jana Evangelisty Purkyne v Usti nad Labem (Czech Republic), University of Macerata (Italy), University of the Witwatersrand (Republic of South Africa - until 01.02.2018), Pwani University College (Kenya - from 01.02.2018) (2017-2021) (<https://ticass.eu/>).

the centre of attention, looking for rights and educational opportunities that participation could offer for more equality. Knowledge was co-constructed among the children and adults through constant dialogue, with different languages that conveyed a host of abilities, skills, and attitudes, such as elements of personal stories outlined using different expressive modes (Deluigi, Cuccu & Mondin, 2022).

Finally, the last edition, dedicated to the “Social Ecology”, explored the theme in depth through artistic and expressive workshops in which children and adolescents explored the territory, took photographs, drew personal and group representations, and mapped significant areas of urban and rural spaces they had experienced. The use of the body in the realisation of the activities took on a particular value, also to learn cooperation and team-work logics, aimed at supporting the importance of creating human communities in balance between ecological and eco-systemic subjectivities.

The third level of analysis regarding creative and participatory processes concerns the adults who interacted with the children in an interdisciplinary team, proposing a transcultural model (in development), getting involved, and opening dialogues aimed at understanding complex situations within the context of numerous classes and with a developing teaching syllabus, currently in use in Kenya (CBC – Competency Based Curriculum). The presence of researchers, artists, teachers, students, and volunteers fostered a greater awareness of their skills to design initiatives that could convey educational approaches for adults and children. Promoting creativity to support children in the discovery and narration of their imagery required an educational care able to solicit critical reflection from an artistic and cultural point of view and a repositioning of adults within the contexts of action. Moreover, the possibility of experimenting with collective creative approaches in formal and non-formal learning contexts opened up further educational opportunities, even in more peripheral areas, which thus had equal access to the same opportunities.

Finally, in the current state of research, a final element that emerged concerns the cooperative approach and “learning by doing” (Dewey, 1938; Reese, 2011) which has allowed participants to become the actual protagonists of the workshops with a high level of engagement. This made it possible to create spaces open to dialogue and the creation of shared stories that could be further narrated in the light of the significant experiences that led to the involvement and desire to communicate points of view, interpretations, and emotions linked to the proposed themes. The function of “third educator” performed by the environment, understood as a setting, broadened the meanings, also in a relational climate that stimulated the

exchange of ideas and brought out personal and group skills on the creative and expressive axis (Capriotti, Deluigi, 2022).

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## **3.2. Les compétences professionnelles des éducateurs et des enseignants dans les services éducatifs et scolaires 0-6 ans: de l'auto-évaluation aux besoins de formation**

*Elena Falaschi*<sup>1</sup>

### **3.2.1. Les compétences “personnalisantes”**

Jacques Delors déclare que «l'importance du rôle de l'enseignant en tant que promoteur du changement, de la compréhension mutuelle et de la tolérance n'a jamais été aussi évidente qu'aujourd'hui (Delors, 1997, p. 133)». Également, «la globalisation continuant à confronter l'Union européenne à de nouveaux défis, chaque citoyen devra posséder un large éventail de compétences clés pour s'adapter de façon flexible à un monde en mutation rapide et fortement interconnecté» (Recommandation du Parlement Européen et du Conseil, 2006, p. 13).

Partant de ces déclarations, l'objectif de l'étude présente était d'enquêter sur les compétences professionnelles des éducateurs et des enseignants qui travaillent dans les services publics de la petite enfance 0-6 ans, en partageant tout d'abord le construit complexe de “compétence”, individuelle et collective, sur la base de modèles théoriques scientifiquement accrédités.

Guy Le Boterf (2013; 2018) présente la distinction entre “*être* compétent” et “*avoir* des compétences”, distinction qui fonde sa définition duale de la compétence. «Du point de vue ‘être compétent’, il s'agit d'un processus consistant à savoir agir en situation professionnelle en mobilisant une combinatoire appropriée de ressources internes personnelles (connaissances, savoir-faire ou habileté, aptitudes, émotions...) et externes (ressources de l'environnement) et en faisant appel à l'usage de fonctions de guidage [...]. Du point de vue ‘avoir des compétences’, il s'agit d'une ressource personnelle ou d'une combinaison de ressources personnelles nécessaires pour savoir agir en situation professionnelle» (p. 57).

1. Professoressa Associata di Pedagogia Generale e Sociale presso il Dipartimento di Civiltà e Forme del Sapere dell'Università di Pisa.

C'est pourquoi il est important de contextualiser la compétence dans le cadre de tâches authentiques et contextes d'apprentissage ancrés dans la réalité, afin que les ressources personnelles (motivations, culture, compétences, etc.) et celles disponibles dans l'environnement puissent être engagées, mobilisant la logique du savoir-faire vers celle du savoir-agir.

### **3.2.2. L'auto-évaluation "écologique": une compétence en construction**

L'excellence dans le domaine professionnel exige un processus interactif de réflexion et d'auto-évaluation. En d'autres termes, la capacité d'une personne à contrôler et à gérer son amélioration personnelle est un élément clé pour atteindre l'excellence (Pollard, 2014).

L'auto-évaluation est une compétence complexe et délicate qui requiert une mentalité de chercheur pour formuler des questions et trouver des réponses de manière autonome dans son activité professionnelle. Le processus d'auto-évaluation influence les croyances des enseignants quant à leur capacité à promouvoir l'apprentissage chez les élèves, déterminant ainsi le sentiment d'auto-efficacité professionnelle de l'enseignant. À cet égard, Cristián Desbouts (2005) identifie trois facteurs qui constituent la base de l'auto-évaluation: la perception de sa propre capacité, le niveau de performance et l'effort fourni pour atteindre l'objectif.

L'auto-évaluation n'est pas synonyme d'auto-référentialité, c'est-à-dire de fermeture dans des paramètres personnels de jugement détachés de la réalité. Certes, le processus d'auto-évaluation implique une *perception subjective* de la compétence mais, précisément pour cette raison, l'engagement consiste à s'efforcer d'assurer également aux modalités d'auto-évaluation les niveaux de qualité (validité, fiabilité, transparence et partage) qui devraient être communs à toutes les opérations d'évaluation.

S'auto-évaluer, c'est effectuer une opération métacognitive, c'est prendre de la distance par rapport à son propre "soi", objectiver sa propre expérience, son propre vécu, et le regarder comme quelque chose d'autre que soi, affiner les processus qui permettent d'expérimenter la connaissance de la connaissance (Morin, 2000).

C'est très important que les éducateurs et les enseignants s'engagent dans la construction de compétences d'auto-évaluation concernant leurs propres actions professionnelles afin d'être en mesure de réaliser, en conséquence, des actes d'auto-régulation intentionnels également grâce à la comparaison avec les autres. L'interaction doit permettre de se décentrer en portant un regard réfléchi et extérieur sur ses propres actes, accompagné par la réflexion de l'autre (Pillonel, Rouiller, 2001).

Cette vision de l'auto-évaluation comprend à la fois une perspective longitudinale (qui fournit des jugements sur les connaissances et l'expérience passées, mais aussi présentes, et qui aborde les besoins et les projets futurs) et une perspective transversale de nature "écologique" (comme une expérience d'apprentissage vécue positivement par rapport à son environnement professionnel).

S'auto-évaluer de manière plus analytique et moins dépendante d'une perception subjective exclusive conduit à une plus grande fiabilité, en se rapportant aux autres, et grâce aux autres, selon des critères transparents et partagés. Savoir se mettre en relation avec le monde extérieur implique d'apprécier toute divergence entre nos propres jugements et ceux des autres et d'être capable de négocier un éventuel nouveau jugement. Ces aspects évoquent la dimension humaine des pratiques d'auto-évaluation, car les résultats et le succès de ces pratiques dépendent du contexte, du climat et de la qualité des relations établies entre collègues.

En effet, la réalité organisationnelle des professionnels de l'éducation n'est pas seulement un contexte de processus productifs, mais aussi un environnement vivant, un espace émotionnel et passionnant, dans lequel les sujets peuvent apprendre à se connaître, expérimenter et produire des connaissances, établir et renforcer des relations, prendre des responsabilités, pratiquer la créativité et la sensibilité. D'où le sens et le développement d'une pédagogie du bien-être pour les professionnels de l'éducation (Falaschi, 2016) basée sur la conviction que, par la mise en œuvre de relations éducatives particulières, il est possible d'aider les individus à générer des comportements "confirmants", accueillants et encourageants, des attitudes positives et proactives, envers la vie et leur propre bien-être existentiel (Catarsi, 2002).

### **3.2.3. La dimension formative de la Recherche-Action**

Selon Jean-Pierre Pourtois et Huguette Desmet (1997) le rôle du formateur est de conduire chacun à devenir sujet-acteur et, plus encore, sujet-auteur, en dépassant le cadre des savoirs pédagogique normés et irréfléchis vers le développement d'un esprit conscient et critique.

Conformément à cet objectif, cette recherche a envisagé 86 éducateurs et enseignants (répartis en 16 groupes) des services éducatifs et scolaires 0-6 ans de la municipalité de Livorno, avec un engagement temporel de 2 ans (2019-2020 et 2020-2021).

La méthodologie utilisée a été celle de la Recherche-Action, conformément aux objectifs caractérisant cette approche (transformer la réalité et produire de nouvelles connaissances sur la base de ces transformations)

et à ses opportunités méthodologiques: la possibilité d'établir une relation de collaboration et de confrontation entre le chercheur et les acteurs; l'idée de la "non-neutralité" de la recherche, mais reconnue comme un agent de changement en raison de sa dimension formative; l'objectif visant moins à étendre les connaissances qu'à déclencher des changements améliorateurs dans un contexte de travail spécifique; l'attention portée au contexte environnemental et aux dynamiques sociales, interprétés à la fois par rapport aux criticités éventuelles et aux ressources potentielles; la circularité entre "théorie" et "pratique" (Barbier, 2007).

Au cours de la première année, la Recherche-Action s'est développée à travers plusieurs moments qui ont impliqué les participants : l'identification d'un focus (relatif à ses propres compétences professionnelles); la discussion collective (concernant les méthodes d'auto-évaluation); l'utilisation d'outils conformes à cette approche (un questionnaire avec des réponses quantitatives et qualitatives); la restitution et le partage des résultats (par une discussion de groupe).

Au cours de la deuxième année, en réponse aux besoins qui ont émergé des résultats des questionnaires d'auto-évaluation, la Recherche-Action a été développée à travers un cours de formation, d'accompagnement et d'encadrement, spécifiquement dédié à certains nœuds critiques mis en évidence par les données recueillies.

### **3.2.3.1. Première phase. L'auto-évaluation de ses propres compétences professionnelles: l'instrument d'enquête et les résultats**

La première phase de la recherche comprenait une discussion collective avec chacun des 16 groupes de travail. En s'appuyant sur la littérature scientifique, des réflexions intéressantes ont émergé sur le concept de "compétence" et sur ses articulations possibles. Par la suite, les éléments suivants ont été identifiés en macro-domaines avec leurs relatives déclinaisons.

Plus précisément, les macro-domaines "culturel" (appartenant à la sphère du "savoir"), "méthodologique et didactique" (appartenant à la sphère du "faire et agir"), "communicatif, relationnel, réflexif, transformatif" (appartenant à la sphère du "être et devenir") ont été divisés en sous-compétences.

Ensuite, il a été demandé à chaque participant: *Décrivez (par écrit) un incident critique, un événement contextualisé (spatial, temporel, relationnel), vécu récemment, qui vous a fait réfléchir sur vos compétences dans le rôle de "professionnel de l'éducation".*

Enfin, en repensant à cet événement et en le reliant à les sous-compétences identifiées, chaque participant a exprimé une auto-évaluation quantitative (en utilisant une échelle de Likert de 0 à 7 points) et qualitative (en décrivant brièvement la raison pour laquelle cette valeur numérique a été attribuée).

Vous trouverez ci-dessous l'outil élaboré en collaboration avec les 16 groupes de travail des crèches et des écoles maternelles.

Tab. 1 - L'auto-évaluation de ses propres compétences professionnelles

| Cadres                                                            | Compétences                    | Sous compétences                                                      | Auto-évaluation quantitative |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Auto-évaluation qualitative |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------------------|
| S<br>A<br>V<br>O<br>I<br>R                                        | Culturelles                    | Psycho-pédagogiques et sociales                                       | 0                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                             |
|                                                                   |                                | Théories de référence                                                 | 0                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                             |
|                                                                   |                                | Culturels au sens large                                               | 0                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                             |
| F<br>A<br>I<br>R<br>E<br><br>ET<br><br>A<br>G<br>I<br>R           | Techniques professionnelles    | Utilisation des techniques et des outils                              | 0                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                             |
|                                                                   | Méthodologiques et didactiques | Observatives, projectives, évaluatives                                | 0                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                             |
| Ê<br>T<br>R<br>E<br><br>ET<br><br>D<br>E<br>V<br>E<br>N<br>I<br>R | Communication                  | Utilisation intentionnelle de la communication verbale et non verbale | 0                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                             |
|                                                                   | Relations humaines             |                                                                       |                              |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                             |
|                                                                   | Réflexion et transformation    | Soigner les relations                                                 | 0                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                             |
|                                                                   |                                | Conscience et responsabilité                                          | 0                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                             |
|                                                                   |                                | Période historique et sociale                                         | 0                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                             |
|                                                                   |                                | Ouverture au changement                                               | 0                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                             |

L'analyse des données des questionnaires renvoyés par les éducateurs/enseignants (86 répondants au total) a été effectuée en calculant les moyennes et les écarts types pour chacune des sous-compétences.

Nous présentons ci-dessous quatre graphiques descriptifs relatifs, respectivement, à l'auto-évaluation de ses compétences: "Culturelle" (Fig. 1), "Méthodologique et didactique" (Fig. 2), "Communicative, relationnelle, réflexive, trans-formative" (Fig. 3). Enfin, un résumé final de toutes les auto-évaluations de ses propres sous-compétences, en comparant les scores moyens, est décrit dans la Fig. 4.

Après la lecture analytique des Figg. 1, 2 et 3, nous pouvons observer la Fig. 4, qui donne une comparaison de toutes les auto-évaluations pour chaque "sous-compétence". En particulier, on constate que les auto-attributions les plus faibles (dont les moyennes sont surlignées en rouge) sont, respectivement, les "Compétences culturelles" déclinées sur la connaissance des "Théories de référence", avec un score moyen de 4,53 et celle des "Compétences méthodologiques et didactiques" déclinées sur les "Compétences dans l'utilisation des techniques et des outils", avec un score moyen de 4,61.

Les auto-attributions les plus élevées (dont les moyennes sont surlignées en vert) se réfèrent aux "compétences communicatives, relationnelles, réflexives, trans-formatives" déclinées sur "Conscience et responsabilité par rapport à l'action professionnelle", avec un score moyen de 5,9 et aux "Compétences communicatives, relationnelles, réflexives, trans-formatives" déclinées sur "Utilisation intentionnelle de la communication verbale et non verbale", avec un score moyen de 5,94.

Fig. 1 - Auto-évaluation des compétences "Culturelles"

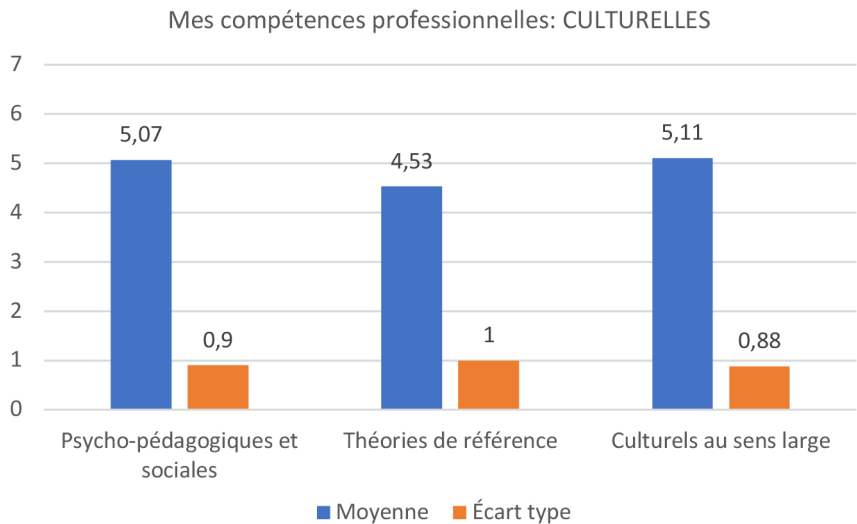


Fig. 2 - Auto-évaluation de compétences “Méthodologiques et didactiques”

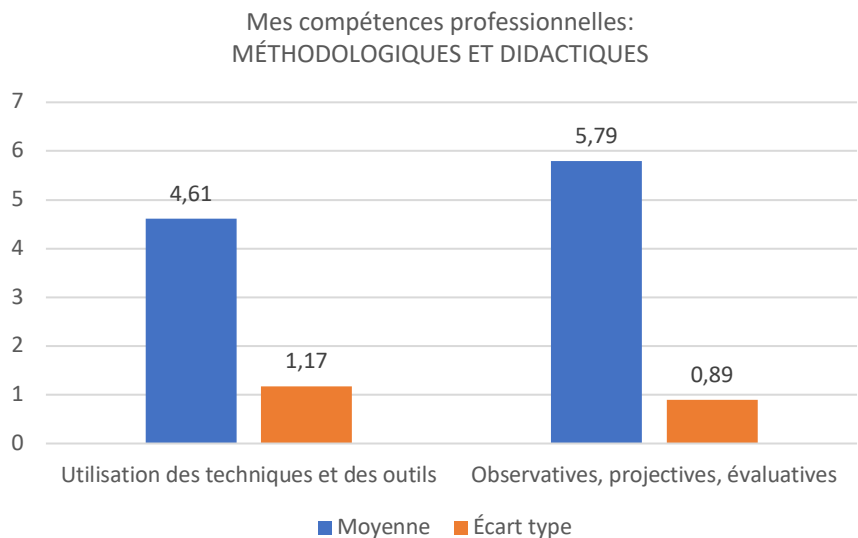


Fig. 3 - Auto-évaluation de compétences “Communicatives, relationnelles, réflexives, transformatives”

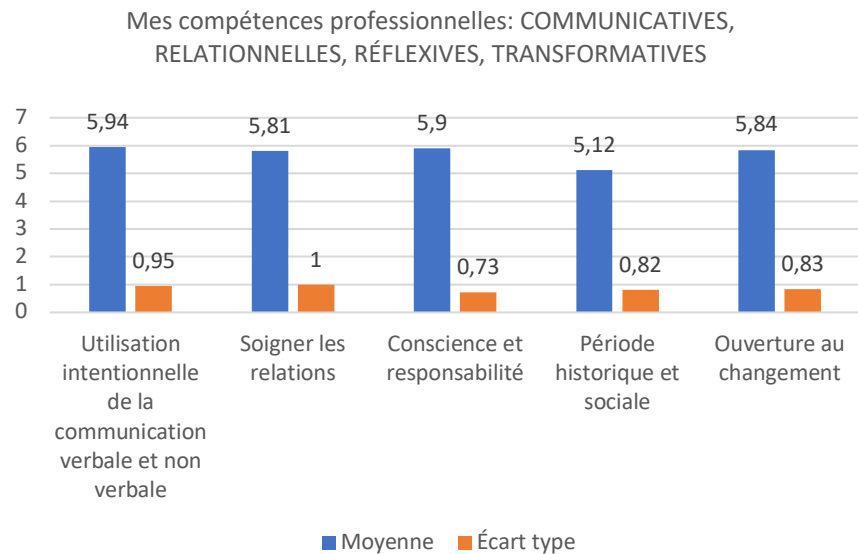
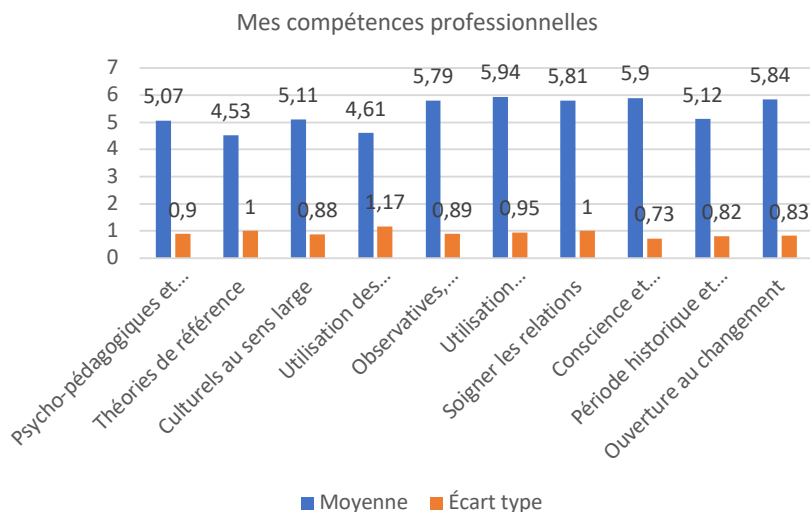


Fig. 4 - Auto-évaluation de compétences: comparaison des scores moyens



La valeur formative de ce type d'enquête est reconnue à la fois dans le retour de ces résultats quantitatifs mais surtout dans la *dimension procédurale* qui a conduit à la collecte des données: la confrontation constante au sein des groupes de travail, la présence participante du chercheur, la construction collégiale de l'instrument d'enquête et enfin, le moment de restitution collective des résultats avec le partage des différents points de vue et interprétations.

À cet égard, la discussion a porté en particulier sur les aspects qui ressortent des "auto-évaluations qualitatives" exprimées par les participants pour motiver les auto-attributions quantitatives. On trouvera ci-après un résumé des observations des éducateurs/enseignants, présenté à travers 5 regroupements (effectués *a posteriori* selon le critère de l'affinité sémantique-conceptuelle) qui mettent en évidence les domaines les plus significatifs sur lesquels il convient de porter l'attention.

1. *La gestion de la communication médiatisée*: réduction drastique des messages non verbaux, utilisation de deux sens seulement (vue, ouïe), traitement non naturel de l'information (uniquement séquentiel), surcharge cognitive et émotionnelle, nouvelle planification et recherche de "sens", maintien de l'attitude de crainte et d'émerveillement.

2. *L'accès aux nouvelles technologies et la "pédagogie de l'urgence"*: différences sociales, éducation aux médias, quelle inclusion ? Familles désavantagées sur le plan socio-économique et culturel, enfants handicapés, risques d'abus des nouvelles technologies, besoin de cours de formation.

3. *Le “Soi” personnel et le “Soi” professionnel dans l’“impact” avec les nouvelles technologies*: peur, anxiété, scepticisme, résistance, curiosité, enthousiasme pour la nouveauté, acceptation passive, saturation, équilibre, créativité, augmentation de l’estime de soi, sentiments ambivalents et contradictoires.

4. *Le groupe de travail et les échanges professionnels intergénérationnels*: cohésion du groupe, plus d’échanges et de comparaisons, plus grande reconnaissance des compétences de chacun et du groupe de travail, meilleure relationnalité.

5. *Éducation et soutien à la parentalité “à distance”*: nouveaux besoins, nouvelles modalités, nouveaux rôles, responsabilité parentale accrue, liens plus forts avec les parents, besoins des familles ou besoins des enfants? L’observation et le “regard de loin” médiatisé, la richesse des données issues de l’observation naturaliste involontaire, l’idée que les parents se font de leur enfant.

Tant en ce qui concerne les deux nœuds critiques qui ont fourni les scores moyens les plus bas dans les questionnaires (connaissance des “Théories de référence” et “Compétences dans l’utilisation des techniques et des outils”), que ce qui concerne ce qui ressort des auto-évaluations qualitatives, les participants ont reconnu et exprimé leurs *besoins de formation*, proposant la poursuite d’un parcours d’approfondissement et d’accompagnement pour l’année scolaire et éducative suivante.

### **3.2.3.2. Deuxième phase. Répondre aux besoins éducatifs: l’éducation aux médias comme vecteur d’inclusion dans les contextes éducatifs de 0 à 6 ans**

Sur la base des motivations exprimées dans le paragraphe précédent et en acceptant le défi de la complexité et de l’urgence éducative induite par la période pandémique, cette deuxième phase de la recherche a envisagé la conception et la mise en œuvre d’un cours de formation dédié à l’éducation aux médias dans une perspective inclusive.

Les nouveaux médias innovent à plusieurs niveaux les modes de fruição de tous les contextes existentiels, en induisant des réflexions profondes sur leur potentiel expressif innovant, afin d’éviter le risque d’une reproductivité simpliste homologuante et de stimuler, au contraire, la formation d’une pensée autonome, critique et créative (Falaschi, 2018).

L’utilisation des technologies dans une perspective d’inclusion place au centre des actions éducatives la valorisation des différences individuelles dans le contexte du groupe d’enfants en offrant la possibilité d’utiliser

différents codes communicatifs qui activent – dès le plus jeune âge – de multiples modes de pensée (Gardner, 2006), compris dans le sens piagétien d’“action internalisée”: le *problem solving* et les composantes du flux cognitif (les processus de compréhension, de représentation, de classification, de prédiction, de planification, de contrôle, d’évaluation), la pensée computationnelle et le codage (la base de la programmation informatique), la pensée inférentielle et intuitive (comprise comme une “cognition rapide” parmi les stimuli disponibles), la pensée divergente et créative (avec ses caractéristiques de synthèse holistique), la pensée métacognitive et décisionnelle (la pensée qui pense et exprime le degré de conscience par rapport au fonctionnement de ses processus cognitifs).

Le cours de formation à l’éducation aux médias s’est déroulé dans le cadre de réunions périodiques avec les participants, pour un total de 25 heures, et a été mené selon une méthodologie d’atelier. En même temps, les éducateurs et les enseignants ont expérimenté avec les enfants l’utilisation créative de certains nouveaux médias électroniques, technologiques et robotiques, tels que le stylo et l’imprimante tridimensionnels (pour “dessiner” non pas sur la surface mais pour “créer” du volume); la caméra endoscopique (pour explorer et observer les terriers de petits animaux, certaines parties du corps humain, etc.), les abeilles Bee-bot (pour inventer des parcours et “programmer” le robot en lui fournissant des commandes à l’avance).

Il est important de souligner que les différents outils ont été présentés et utilisés dans leur nature ludique, en concevant des activités structurées selon des méthodologies ludiques et exploratoires, pour stimuler la curiosité et l’intérêt des enfants, pour favoriser l’établissement de relations interpersonnelles positives, pour promouvoir le partage d’expériences et pour soutenir la construction de l’apprentissage.

Au cours de la formation, toujours axée sur les processus éducatifs inclusifs, la réflexion s’est focalisée sur quelques questions stimulantes, par exemple: *lors des activités avec les enfants, quels processus cognitifs sont impliqués et stimulés?* (Pensée conceptuelle, prise de décision, logique-causale, intuitive, critique, imaginative, créative, inductive, déductive, etc.). *Quelles composantes émotionnelles et motivationnelles?* (Curiosité, intérêt, motivation, désir, attention, implication, participation, plaisir, partage, etc.). *Quelles composantes communicatives et relationnelles?* (Communication verbale, communication non verbale, collaboration, échange, discussion, accord, etc.).

La réflexion sur le potentiel innovant des nouveaux médias et sur leur pouvoir transformateur peut permettre d’optimiser le système éducatif existant, à condition que l’utilisation de ces outils soit toujours soutenue

par une approche pédagogique consciente, de type déconstructif et critique (Mariani, 2008), seule capable de générer de nouvelles manières efficaces de connaître, d'apprendre et de penser.

A l'issue de la formation et des deux années de Recherche-Action, un questionnaire de vérification finale a été proposé aux participants, afin de comprendre l'efficacité des différentes actions menées et le transfert opérationnel dans les pratiques éducatives et pédagogiques.

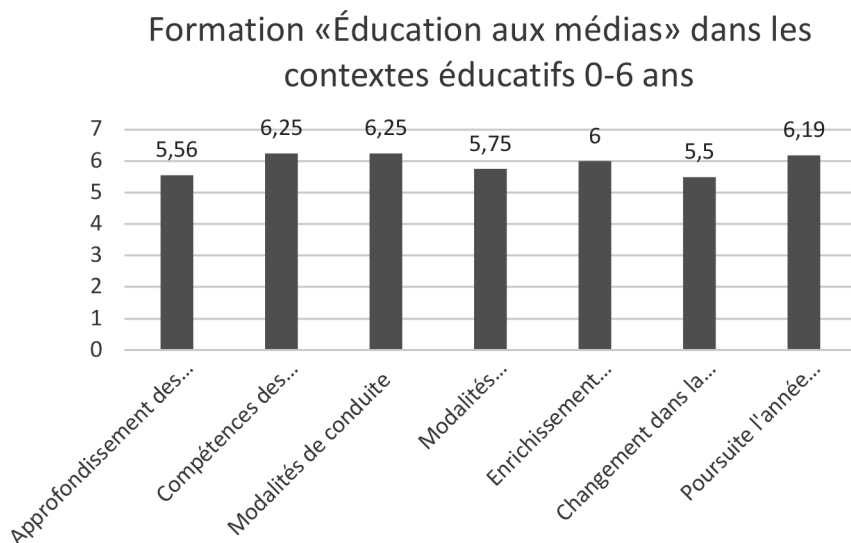
Le questionnaire comportait 7 questions sur lesquelles chaque participant exprimait son degré d'accord sur une échelle de 0 (= pas du tout) à 7 (= tout à fait), avec la possibilité d'ajouter librement des observations et d'exprimer, à la fin, son point de vue sur les "Faiblesses et suggestions d'amélioration" et sur les "Points forts et aspects à confirmer".

Vous trouverez ci-dessous: les questions présentées, le graphique 5 donnant les scores moyens des réponses fournies et un résumé de quelques observations concernant les points de faiblesse et de force.

#### *Questions :*

- 1: Par rapport aux objectifs du cours, les thèmes ont été approfondis.
- 2: Les responsables du cours étaient "compétents" en ce qui concerne: la connaissance des thèmes traités, la clarté de la présentation, la capacité à s'engager, l'activation des échanges communicatifs, la réactivité du feedback aux demandes des participants.
- 3: La manière dont le cours a été mené (présentation de vidéos, d'exemples concrets, de références bibliographiques, de résumé des minutes des réunions, d'éclairages conceptuels, etc.) a été utile.
- 4: Les méthodes d'organisation (nombre de réunions, travail en groupes/sous-groupes intégrés, entre crèche-école maternelle et entre public-privé, discussion et confrontation en grands groupes, activités en atelier, étude théorique/bibliographique approfondie, etc.) ont été efficaces.
- 5: Le cours de formation a produit un enrichissement de mon professionnalisme.
- 6: Le cours de formation a activé des processus de "changement" dans la pratique quotidienne (en ce qui concerne les méthodologies, le partage, les relations: plus d'échange/comparaison avec les collègues, processus d'expérimentation, sensibilisation accrue, etc.).
- 7: Je considère que la poursuite de la formation pour la prochaine année scolaire/éducative est utile et nécessaire.

*Fig. 5 - Graphique descriptif: scores moyens des réponses fournies*



*Faiblesses et suggestions d'amélioration*

- Commencer la formation dans la première partie de l'année.
- Offrir plus d'heures de formation.
- Plus de perspectives conceptuelles et méthodologiques.

*Points forts et aspects à confirmer*

- Travailler en sous-groupes.
- La découverte de nouveaux outils technologiques à utiliser de manière créative avec les enfants.
- L'échange entre collègues de différents services éducatifs.
- Avoir partagé des projets impliquant différents groupes d'âge d'enfants.
- La compétence et l'écoute des formateurs.
- Les contributions des formateurs et leurs méthodes de conduite.
- La clarté des aspects organisationnels.
- Le cercle vertueux entre théorie et pratique, à partir de la réflexion, de la comparaison et de la relation professionnelle.

Les points forts et les aspects à confirmer, mis en évidence par les participants à travers leurs réponses "ouvertes", corroborent ce qui a déjà été montré dans le graphique 5, puisque les moyennes des notes données sont très élevées pour toutes les questions proposées.

## Conclusions

A la fin du parcours de Recherche-Action, il est possible de confirmer la validité des actions et de l'approche méthodologique, en soulignant spécifiquement la nécessité de "prendre soin" du professionnalisme des éducateurs et des enseignants, d'être soutenus et promus à travers des parcours d'accompagnement formatif caractérisés par l'écoute de leurs besoins, la réflexion constante sur leurs actions et la comparaison collective, afin de favoriser la maturation de compétences d'auto-évaluation conscientes et authentiques et de pouvoir observer un réel changement transformatif à l'intérieur d'un cercle vertueux entre théorie et pratique, entre expérience directe et réélaboration collégiale.

En outre, il a été prouvé que l'efficacité de la méthodologie de la Recherche-Action est étayée seulement s'il est possible d'envisager des longues périodes, nécessaires à la réalisation d'actions, pour favoriser une participation concrète du personnel impliqué dans toutes les phases de la recherche, pour la consolidation des liens relationnels entre les participants et la co-construction de leur professionnalisme.

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### **3.3. 0-6 Educational Services and Schools in Covid-19: Challenges and Perspectives**

*Ilenia Marino*<sup>1</sup>

#### **3.3.1. Educating in an emergency: the evolving regulatory framework**

The Covid-19 pandemic recognised by the WHO in 2020 (World Health Organization) sanctioned the introduction of preventive and restraining measures in Italy, with a rather significant influence on the education and training system. From 4 March 2020, schools and universities were closed all over the country. This was followed by long months of lockdown, spent at home, during which distance became a form of “different proximity”, where the restrictions and the constraints of staying at home “took away space” from everyday life.

The emergency caused significant difficulties at social and relational levels, without counting the risks and the severe crisis in terms of both healthcare and the economy. On 4 May 2020, the so-called “Stage 2”, there was a gradual return to activities, accompanied by a series of re-openings and a reduction in social distancing after the previous lockdown.

In the context of the ongoing state of emergency and the numerous challenges currently being faced, it was vital to strengthen the socio-educational system. This period was characterised by significant relationship dynamics, socialisation processes, emotional education, and cognitive self-regulation.

On 19 May 2020, the government approved a new Law Decree with a series of provisions for families, children, and young people, without spe-

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cific indications as to the re-opening of schools of all levels. The decree's strong points included: the wish to economically support the education system for children aged between 0 and 6 years; a commitment to re-open schools through financial investments for materials, adaptation of spaces, preventive health measures, and teaching innovations; better support for social workers with early childhood. Moreover, the needs of the smallest children, in the 0-3 age group, were strongly underestimated since the Relaunch Decree and the Guidelines for 2020 did not include any specific action for them. Considering these indications and the emergency itself, it was necessary to address the new situations systematically: pedagogical thinking, health emergencies, and organisational priorities dialogued, albeit with difficulty and at different times, to guarantee the children's right to education (De Carli, 2020).

On the subject of the Relaunch Decree, the Work Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) pointed out the risk of cultural withdrawal, since «the children under the age of 18 were only mentioned in connection with school closures and, subsequently, in reference to the need to combine parents' work activities with the suspension of lessons, with little consideration being given to children in the 0-6 age group and not as holders of rights. Kids and teens were not considered as persons in their own right, but as pupils or students, and even as possible sources of contagion, without looking at the big picture and thus without planning any strategic action for children and adolescents» (CRC, 2020).

It was only from 11 June 2020, with the “Family Act Decree”, that children in the 0-3 age range were fully considered. Facilities suitable for leisure and recreation during summer were used for education and child-care, if they had green areas for outdoor activities and group play. The minimum child/adolescent-to-adult ratio was age-based: one teacher for five nursery/pre-school children; one adult for seven primary school children (aged 6 to 11); and one adult for ten adolescents (12 to 17).

Developments in the regulatory framework give us a partial picture of the complex needs of children and their families, and pedagogy is called upon to reflect and guide policies that make the most of growing identities, the differences among families, and the challenges faced at global level, as further highlighted by the pandemic.

At the beginning of the school year 2021-2022, the effects of the pandemic influenced the quality of life of children and adolescents. The reopening of schools and educational services required a revision of the organisation, without forgetting the educational experience implicit in the transition, to offer new opportunities and meaningful solutions (Guerra, 2020). This educational emergency called for interdisciplinary competenc-

es to prevent facilities from being reduced to mere custodial places or from being conceived as spaces in which to assess knowledge.

Safeguarding the well-being of the country's youngest generations was not to exclusively involve the return of classroom teaching, but it would also include, identification, understanding, and taking charge of the cognitive problems that emerged during the months that schools were closed. Many studies have shown a strong increase in the loss of schooling, referring to the percentage of children who leave school without acquiring essential skills, and with a high risk of limited prospects for integration into society. There has been an increase among young people, in symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and eating disorders, while younger children, however, have shown increased irritability, sleep problems, and symptoms of stress, such as restlessness and separation anxiety, as well as problems in processing the meaning of the pandemic and experiences of death in the family. Moreover, some researchers have pointed to the spread of *languishing*, i.e., the state of a lack of well-being, purpose, or joy (AIE, 2021).

In the academic year 2021-2022, the Ministry of Education, University and Research produced a document for the planning of school, education, and training activities in the national education system. The main challenge was to guarantee classroom teaching activities for all, dealing with catching up in school and enhancing learning, as well as relational and social aspects for young people.

In light of concrete situations, available space, and the needs of families, schools used flexible order structures based on their autonomy. These include, «for example, reconfiguring class groups into smallest groups; modular division of groups of pupils from the same or different classes or course years; school attendance in various shifts, including by changing solutions according to age range and school levels; grouping subjects into several areas; varying weekly division of school time, as decided by the competent boards and committees» (Ibidem).

In the last period of the Covid-19, the “Educational Co-responsibility Agreement” stipulated with families, schools, institutions, and socio-educational services was renewed with “Community education agreements” implementing the fundamental principles of the Constitution taking into consideration the principle of subsidiarity and co-responsibility in education. The aim of these agreements and “Deals” consists of making additional facilities or spaces, such as parks, libraries, cinemas, and museums available for teaching activities, both curricular and extra-curricular, as part of an integrated training offer. Local contexts, with their specific differences, must refer to community sustainability criteria, with an active spirit of governance among different subjects; in this sense, schools can be renewed, starting their orientation policies and committing to planning

new learning pathways. «After all, this is what education, in its best versions, has always done: continuously rethinking itself to evolve along with the contexts within which it develops» (Guerra, 2020).

### **3.3.2. From school to home: a direct line to “family” learning**

The sudden closure of kindergartens and nursery schools led to a prolonged interruption in the education of children, who suddenly found themselves spending their days at home with a limited number of adults and without contact with their peers (Deluigi & Marino, 2020). «This forced time spent at home deprived children of fundamental experiences: relationships; contact with other family (grandparents, aunts and uncles, other family members); social relationships; opportunities for growth, movement, curiosity, and play. The differences in family homes and settings also highlighted the notable inequalities in children’s living standards» (Commissione Infanzia Sistema Integrato Zero-sei, 2020). To prevent the risk of lengthy deprivation, new methods were put in place to maintain distance relationships. In primary and secondary school, “Distance Learning” (DAD) was introduced, while for the 0-6 age range: “Distance Learning Links” (LEAD) were used, since teaching at this age is mainly based on affective and motivational bonds.

The Commission for the Integrated Education and Teaching System from birth to six years issued a document entitled “Pedagogical orientation for remote learning”. The document’s primary aims were twofold: firstly, to raise professional awareness among teachers and educators; secondly, to boost teamwork in implementing care and education in several ways, and to make the most of the good practices widely used in many situations at National level (Ibidem).

During LEAD sessions, the experience of nursery children in services for 0-3 years and in primary schools, was felt differently since strategies and educational interactions needed to consider the co-presence of the family setting. The learning context was further extended, albeit remotely, with a new challenging chance for and critical nature of co-responsibilities.

Physical and social distancing led to the planning of virtual environments, where teachers and educators – with some initial disorientation – tried to find suitable tools, activating new visual and audio communication channels to remain in contact with families and children. The contact was no longer physical but included all the concerns of parents and the needs of their children “here and now”, maintaining a solid relationship between

socio-educational centres, kids, and their families. These hybrid strategies transformed relationships and spaces by extending their capacity and subverting some of the consolidated dynamics between school and family; if, when attending, the children would enter school bringing their cultural origins and background, with LEAD, schools came straight into their houses, into a space of unexplored privacy, and educators were able to interact via video-call, embracing parental care practices among new challenges and critical aspects of cohabitation, with joint methods to promote the child's independence.

At the same time, professionals were observed by parents as they related to their children and, in the case of small group activities, with their peers. LEAD inevitably needed the mediation of parental figures who had become the only point of reference for kids, and the direct interlocutors of teachers and educators, in the attempt to strengthen their shared links of trust and care.

Teachers were required to show sensitivity and openness to dialogue in the interests of guaranteeing a cooperative learning environment, while parents were asked to respect roles and collaborate actively. The adults' different educational perspectives and modes of interaction encountered their frailties, doubts, and uncertainties, seeking new competences. At the same time, the affective bonds were intertwined supporting the children in learning paths and the adults in the shared educational task.

The systematic approach of these relationships refers to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1986), which states that adults who take care of the same subject in different settings and at different times, establish an open, mutual, and continuous communication to develop a shared project together that will find its interpretation and specific realisation in their respective microsystems (Zaninelli, 2018). In fact, «it is not appropriate for teachers to think that parents must, can and want to reconstruct the day and setting of the nursery or school in their home; at the same time, parents cannot delegate the management of their children to the educator for the time the video link is working, as a remote entertainment. It is appropriate at this point to renegotiate spaces and times, to come into people's homes softly, respecting their privacy and the complexity that may come from parents having to work at home; to agree meeting and separation times, identifying together the tools and proposals that are most accessible and likely to be popular» (Commissione Infanzia Sistema Integrato Zero-sei, 2020<sup>2</sup>).

2. Pedagogical Guidelines on LEAD: Distance educational links a different way to do nursery and kindergarten. For more information: Nascono i LEAD: Legami Educativi a Distanza per la scuola dell'Infanzia. Cosa sono e quali scopi - Orizzonte Scuola Notizie.

Educators and teachers needed to aim for learning understood as the development of independence and identity, and this required dialogue within educational terms to agree on relating, communication, and teaching styles. It was vitally important to consider the feedback from children, through their experiences, and how they spoke about themselves and became involved.

One very important element in education planning was the inclusive nature of the LEADs, according to the principle of “not one less”, including children with socio-relational problems or special needs. The operational proposals considered the technology available to the families, the level of communication and language skills of the course recipients, and the disadvantages resulting from the different social and cultural contexts challenged by the pandemic and the other inequalities resulting from it.

To tackle poverty in education and family life, we needed a new way of working together. This would focus on care and relationships to help people and communities. It was thought that this would give people a sense of power to create their rights. In her return to the philosophical musings of Hannah Arendt, Senator and pedagogue Vanna Iori emphasises the role of sight and hearing in our responsibility towards the world and history. She also asserts that evasion of responsibility will make humankind complicit with evil (Iori, 2020).

The educational sense of these new responsibilities must translate as having care (Mortari, 2006) and I Care (Don Milani, 2017), which needs ethical and political responses, as well as new technical skills, since it takes care to observe disadvantage, to be able to learn about change, to create projects, and be able to act, finding the time to reflect on the consequences of individual and collective choices. Only with a conscious gaze, planning, and responsibility will it be possible to meet the great challenge of a world that has been changed by the virus (Iori, 2020) and building this perspective involves educational practitioners as well as new generations of educators, who will be dealing with increasing numbers of everyday situations that are more and more individualistic and unable to promote links within the community.

### ***3.3.2.1. The re-opening of educational services: experimentation, temporary arrangements, and territoriality***

The re-opening of schools and services in Italy for kids in the 0-6 age group was the source of some debate, since, as well as the organisation

methods followed – and ratified by law – education teams had an organic reflection to guarantee completely safe, quality interventions. On this subject, it is important to move in the direction of a shared thought characterised by an integrated and coordinated public perspective, where the keywords include experimentation, temporariness, and territoriality (Iori, 2020).

Experimentation and temporariness are linked by educational experience, which were modified in line with the emergency. Regarding the term territoriality, «(...) differentiation on a territorial basis should not be seen as an exemption to the necessary conditions of consistency at national level, but rather, as an opportunity to boost recovery where possible, differentiating in terms of choices, proposals, and investment on the basis of different local situations» (Iori, 2020).

To complete the recovery in such a complex situation, it was necessary to define strengths and weaknesses. First and foremost, it was necessary to set up a national healthcare protocol and to set out the pedagogical feeling, re-evaluating value-based choices, project aims, and educational practices and highlighting the importance of experiences of proximity with children and families during the months of lockdown.

Particular attention was paid to redesigning educational environments and to conscious synergy between outdoor and indoor spaces with a peculiar attention to eco-sustainability. Since eco-awareness needs to be cultivated with purpose, training for teachers and educators has become a vital element in guaranteeing children an education orientated in this direction. The adult who is “cultured by nature” can be responsible for «creating paths to revive the relationship between children and nature, to support the intelligence and language of children in discovering, experiencing, living, questioning, talking about, and interpreting nature in all its complexities» (Ibidem, 2020). This new approach to education has made it possible to expand our horizons, opening to different participatory and collective approaches.

### **3.3.3. Pedagogical actions and intervention strategies for 0-6 services in the Marche Region in 2020**

After providing a reference framework for the challenges that emerged in Italy, we will analyze the actions implemented in the Marche Region during the Covid-19 emergency. We will also look at the times and spaces that changed shape and dimension, often leaving children and parents unprepared in the face of events and requiring analytical skills and the ability

to respond and renew on behalf of educators and teachers (Save the Children, 2020).

To give an idea of the educational experience, we will share some results of a qualitative survey, using semi-structured online interviews with Pedagogical territorial co-ordination from a range of social territories (2020). Marche Region is a heterogeneous context in which every educational coordinator team tried, using different methods, to continue educational planning as established beforehand, adapting it to countless unexpected variables. Those interviewed stated the importance of listening first and foremost to the interests of the child and their family, creating a new concept in planning, and implementing unusual operating methods. Many of the educational services in the Marche Region created online rooms where educators and teachers held workshops or educational activities using video-tutorials. Later, educators invited parents to share routines with their children, to maintain regularity in the breakdown of daily routines.

The lockdown period has made it possible to rethink the organisation of educational services, requiring education professionals to expand their skillsets. Moreover, it has been necessary to define the effects of these new conditions on child development as well as to identify risk and resilience factors.

Thanks to the leadership of the Pedagogical territorial co-ordination, other services have drawn up a “guide” for teachers, educators, and school management to offer an integrated support system. This has resulted in an increased dialogue between reflection about the emergency and the good practices ongoing throughout the territory, bringing together words, perceptions, representation, thoughts, and concepts.

Considering the many difficulties that every parent must face, some socio-educational services sent children short audio/video messages to give them some motivation, maintaining active dialogue and interests; these small gestures were a guarantee of amusing and engaging moments that could reassure the younger children, as well as being a “light” way to integrate the significant presence of their parents. This online contact offered two different values: on the one hand, the educational staff was able to support each other through an inclusive network, on the other hand, the children received equal educational opportunities.

It was further noted that some of the educational teams were able to set up virtual notice boards using Padlet, with the aim of returning an institutional space to the kindergartens and sharing work tools, activities, and materials used during the pandemic period.

### 3.3.4. From the breakdowns of lockdown looking for continuity

The experience of the lockdown and all the challenges described above, coincided with the development of planning for an integrated system for 0-6-year-olds and in particular, as we have seen, with the circulation of ministerial documents (Orientation and Guidelines)<sup>3</sup>. The unexpected crisis did not create a static condition but, in the best sense of the term, it became a period for reflection, for planning and training. This has led to several movements at national, regional, and local levels, to make continuity for 0-6-year-olds feasible and sustainable, and to imagine dialogues between professionals and training and learning institution, as well as actions to be tested in the sphere of 0-3 services and pre-schools.

The first step was to carry out co-training with operators, which involved regional coordination of different areas, the promotion of initiatives by USR Marche (Regional Schools Office), management of initiatives by the different ATS (Social Areas) and ideas within the single educational services. An educational ecosystem needs to be created between the care providers, the adults who care for the children, placing them at the centre of educational and teaching relationships that bring out their potential and support their limitations.

«Education from birth to six years addresses each child in its entirety, consisting of its person, its relationships, its potential, the particular aspects of its development, its needs and its rights. Each child is unique and must be respected as a person and in consideration of his or her uniqueness [...]. Development does not move at the same pace for all children, and the education of children must not be based on a generic idea of the child; on the contrary, it must be based on each child and his or her different potentials, resources, and problems, which must be taken into account, providing competent help for his or her overall growth» (Miur, 2021).

The call to form participatory and inclusive continuity strategies starts from the intention and shared planning between educators and teachers who become promoters of active citizenship dynamics with children and families.

The development of joint training paths in educational and childcare contexts is a first and essential step to create a shared vision of quality and concerted priorities. In this process, the university's role is to design action-research and training pathways that intercept and enhance the skills of

3. Pedagogical Guidelines for the integrated system “zerosix”. For more information: Linee pedagogiche per il sistema integrato “zerosei” - Miur.

professionals covering the culture of education in the management of services for children aged 0-3 and pre-schools. It is essential to discuss a common language, valorising the existing territorial networks, recording existing experiences and planning new ones. The debate must be broadened in co-designed training, implementing exchanges between professionals who, through this reciprocity, can once again promote children's rights and, at the same time, be an active part of the local educational community.

The critical elements, ruptures, and distances generated by the pandemic have weakened the social and educational fabric, bringing out numerous deficiencies that require new shared responsibilities and educational alliances.

As we have seen, the Territorial Pedagogical Coordination is an active stronghold throughout the Marche Region, which calls for synergy among the educational services for the 0-6 year age group and plays a fundamental role in organising training and disseminating a shared culture of child care. It is an authentic community challenge, where the pedagogical architecture tends towards dynamism and listening to the specificities of the educational centres in search of a long-awaited closeness. And it is the desire to return to being together, to be community, and to participate in their realities, listening to the strengths, fears, and anxieties generated that we could use to relaunch the logic of "we take care", authentically oriented towards the well-being of all the subjects – adults and children – involved in the integrated 0-6 system.

The same training methods for educators and teachers working with children aged 0-6 can be applied at the community level to create a collective orientation with a significant impact on territories and to circulate new narratives in childcare. Innovation, through the promotion of a research-action-oriented approach, becomes a place to develop new practices. This reflexivity, shared during the training, is the basis of a platform to relaunch educational interventions linked to the territories, becoming part of the heritage of professionals where participants share a passion for what they do and learn to do it better, gradually, by interacting regularly (Wenger, 2006). In these times and spaces, where there is a gradual return to face-to-face teaching, teachers and educators are taken care of, facilitating meaningful interactions to improve working practices in a transformative way and, in this case, shape the integrated 0-6 system.

The passion for education and the subjective and team skills that each professional shares during an active training process can unleash new design energies, with the awareness of participating in the search for multiple forms of education, aimed at ensuring the well-being of children, also due to the strong impact of Covid-19 on relationships and learning processes.

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### **3.4. Families and pediatric hospitalization experience: the role of the hospital teacher and potential lines of inquiry for future research**

*Mosconi Germana*<sup>1</sup>

#### **3.4.1. Introduction**

A child's admission to hospital is often a traumatic and distressing event for families, regardless of the severity of the health condition responsible; it can prompt a range of different reactions from parents (Pariseau et al., 2020), depending on their personal life histories and particular socio-cultural backgrounds (Kanizsa, 2013; Capurso, 2001; Sourkes, 1995; Cousino & Hazen, 2013). The onset of the child's illness gives rise to a critical situation within the entire family unit (Gigli, 2007). The resulting level of stress depends on how the parents perceive and attribute meaning to what is happening and on their access to or lack of resources and tools for developing appropriate responses to the challenges posed by the disease and continuing to perceive themselves as capable of exercising their parental role in the complex and emotionally dense setting of the hospital.

The illness and consequent paediatric hospitalization are experienced by both the family and the young patient as a traumatic experience that needs to be accepted, "contained", and viewed in terms of its deeper meaning, with particular implications for the methods of communication deployed with patients and families by paediatric staff (Jankovic et al., 2008; Jankovic, 2018).

The aim of this paper is to examine issues that have received scant attention to date – concerning, specifically, how families relate to their children's hospitalization experiences and how school teachers in hospitals can help to mitigate the negative effects of hospitalization. The assumption

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underpinning this work is that parents and teachers (together with other paediatric staff) are active agents within a constructive alliance whose role is to design and implement a trajectory of growth and change for hospitalized children, and consequently for all the members of their families, despite the patients' illnesses. Based on the evidence reviewed, we indicate future lines of inquiry into the different factors that condition families' experience with paediatric wards and possible intervention strategies that might help them to find stability.

### **3.4.2. The hospitalization experience of children and their families**

Being the parents of a sick child is a complex and emotionally intense experience (Kanizsa, 2013; Sourkes, 1995; Cousino & Hazen, 2013; Hagstrom, 2017). It also presents conflicting characteristics, given that on the one hand the hospital is seen as the only solution to the child's health problems, while on the other parents find themselves having to "abdicate" their role and rely on adults who are health experts yet complete strangers. Initially, the paediatric ward is "an unknown frontier for each patient and each parent" (Jankovic, 2018, p. 53) and, especially in the case of serious disease, young patients must learn day by day to live a new life without knowing what awaits them; [...] they must adapt to doing schoolwork at home or with teachers in the hospital [...] when they have enough strength, so as not to miss out on the school year altogether; [...] They must learn to manage their new sick body [...] to recognize its messages, accept its frailties (Jankovic, 2018, p. 53), with the assistance of adult caregivers who have had to reorganize their lives at short notice. The aim of this paper is to examine issues that have received scant attention to date – concerning, specifically, how families relate to their children's hospitalization experiences and how school teachers in hospitals can help to mitigate the negative effects of hospitalization.

A diagnosis of a paediatric illness represents a risk factor that can significantly impact the psychological functioning of the subjects involved, making them highly vulnerable (Gigli, 2007). The subsequent hospitalization of a sick child is a traumatic and stressful event for the entire family and can elicit a range of different reactions in parents (Pariseau et al., 2020).

According to Capurso (2001), the process of reacting to the child's illness, especially if it presents as relatively severe, comprehends three phases: the shock of the early days, during which family members feel dis-

oriented and unable to face up to this kind of experience; denial of the illness as a defensive reaction to intolerable emotional suffering, leading family members to discount treatment proposals and to seek further medical opinions in the hopes that the initial diagnosis was mistaken; and finally, acceptance of the disease, which can never be said to be total, but which, albeit the presence of conflicting emotions and feelings, leads parents to gradually become more reconciled to the new situation.

For many parents, their child's admission to hospital may also be the first time they feel they "have no say" with respect to decisions and interventions affecting the child, matters which they had previously been used to managing themselves. Consequently, sick children may have the perception that their hospitalization has led to their parents losing some of their usual power to protect and alleviate difficult situations. The combination of all these factors can contribute to the emergence of latent vulnerabilities and difficulties on the part of family members; this heightened fragility can easily turn into a state of depression (Lizelman et al., 2011) and give rise to feelings of frustration concerning the sudden disruption of the child's development and the perception that the child is no longer able to express its full potential.

Parents' diverse reactions to their child's illness can undoubtedly be interpreted considering their personal characteristics, life history, and the socio-cultural factors that have shaped their family history.

A study by Formarier (1991, p. 25) identified three different types of parental response to a child's illness: i) parents may display a sense of responsibility and authority, which will be of great help to the child; ii) falling into a state of anguish, parents may become overprotective towards their sick child and, by failing to play their proper role, become a source of additional insecurity and fear for the child; iii) finally, parents can become totally and narcissistically focused on their suffering, failing to respond to the requests for help from the child, who begins to feel abandoned even when the parents' are physically present.

Pre-existing aspects of family functioning can influence parents' response to a diagnosis of a paediatric illness, especially if the health condition involved is severe (Smith et al., 2013; Pariseau et al., 2020). A model of family functioning developed by Miller and colleagues (2000) and subsequently revisited by other scholars (Pariseau et al., 2020; Alderfer et al., 2009) with a view to accounting for parental reactions to childhood cancer diagnoses examines six dimensions of family life that can influence parents' degree of acceptance of the illness and their ability to react responsibly: the style of communication that is habitually deployed within the family unit; the ways in which each member interprets his or her role

within the family; degree of emotional involvement; family members' degree of emotional competence in terms of their ability to offer differential responses as a function of the emotional states of the other members; family members' problem-solving skills; and, finally, the ability of the adults in the family to deploy appropriate patterns of response to the behaviours of individual family members (e.g., in relation to the reactions of sick child's siblings, who tend to be overlooked by both family members and health-care practitioners. Under certain circumstances, that the parents (or parent, in the case of a single-parent family) experience their child's illness solip-sistically, in the absence of emotional and practical support of the other members of the family, who in turn can become scapegoats for the family's misfortune (Mosconi & Zaninelli, 2022). In this regard, Van Schoors and colleagues (2017) showed that the family's degree of cohesion – in terms of the quality of the emotional climate characterizing family life, the quality of the affective bond among family members, and the family's capacity to be resilient and deploy appropriate and effective responses in a crisis – is related to its level of functioning in the face of a traumatic event, such as a diagnosis of childhood cancer.

Other researchers (Khorsandi et al., 2020) have investigated the numerous factors that help parents to adapt to their child's illness. Adapting to particularly critical situations is a dynamic process that depends on the personality of the individuals involved but also on the opportunity to receive support from professional figures at the hospital (doctors, nurses, observers, educators, teachers) and by relatives, friends or colleagues outside the hospital setting. All these aspects contribute to forming what Khorsandi and colleagues (2020) term family capability, namely the parents' ability to respond flexibly to the hospitalization and to develop coping strategies that help their sick child to experience less anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress. The authors also documented factors that do not help parents adapt to and accept their child's illness. These include: a lack of accurate information concerning the child's diagnosis and prognosis on the part of health practitioners; the mental stress that is generated when people outside of the nuclear family unit ask for details about the illness, prompting the parents to feel guilt, shame, and a sense of inadequacy; the nature of the disease, in terms of whether it is chronic or extemporaneous, severe and/or disabling or otherwise.

### **3.4.3. Doing schooling with the parents of sick children**

In the light of the background outlined about, the construct of illness may be interpreted and experienced in as many ways as there are families

who experience hospitalization, and the teacher's task will always be to understand how this experience is perceived by individual families, and ultimately to support each unique family through the difficult task of raising a sick child in a critical situation. Although there are motivated and committed teachers on paediatric wards, the setting in which they operate does not always facilitate their work (Jiliberto & Zarate Alva, 2025).

The encounter between teachers and parents takes place in a particularly complex context, which is emotionally intense yet characterized by a healthcare-oriented organizational approach and culture (Mosconi & Zaninelli, 2022), within which the teacher is obliged to carve out workspaces and times that often are limited and inadequate for their teaching mission (Kanizsa & Luciano, 2006). The length of hospital stay can also be a problem: in the case of short stays, contact with parents, as well as with children, is fleeting and the teacher lacks the time to establish a meaningful relationship with either party; in the case of long hospital stays, on the other hand, teachers often become key figures for parents and in this circumstance it is down to the skill of the teacher to be able to manage the relationship sensitively and at the same time in a balanced manner. In any case, contact with parents is more frequent and bears different characteristics than in conventional school settings, given that the focus of school in hospital is not solely on the educational activities to be carried out, but rather on the child's and the parents' need for kindness and support (Benigno & Fante, 2020), and on non-judgmental communication and an empathic attitude that can truly help the family to cope with the illness/hospitalization experience (Kanizsa, 2013). The relationship between a hospital teacher and pupil is never a one-to-one relationship but rather takes the form of a three-way relationship (teacher-child-parent). This triangular arrangement implies that the teacher must not only adapt his or her educational actions to the particular situation in which children find themselves in paediatric wards but must also be able to manage the numerous interventions of the parents, which can range from requests for a listening ear and support to requests for explanations regarding the teacher's educational offerings. What makes the hospital teacher's job peculiar is precisely, as Kanizsa (2013) argues, having to deal with "two students", the child and his/her family. While on the one hand parents can provide teachers with insights concerning how to approach their child and engage him/her in the educational activities, on the other hand the teacher can also experience parents as getting in the way of his or her work, in that having to support them at difficult times may mean having to neglect the educational side of the work. Thus, the hospital setting requires teachers to balance their input, leaving room for the needs and requests for help of parents and at

the same time enlisting parents to contribute to the success of the educational programme. This is certainly challenging and teachers' responses to the presence of parents in the school setting inside the hospital can vary according to their beliefs and personal characteristics, with evident implications for the relationship. There are teachers who spend much of their time listening to mothers or fathers who are anxious about their child's health condition; then there are teachers who dedicate a limited amount of listening time to them, with the aim of getting to know them well enough to be able to work effectively with the children; finally there are teachers who prefer not to have any dealings with family members because they view them as a serious hindrance to their effectiveness in their teaching role (Kanizsa & Luciano, 2006). Parents' ideas about the function of school in hospital can also influence the quality of their relationship with teachers: they may believe that school is secondary to the child's treatment with the result that, albeit unwittingly, they disrupt the educational process or interpret school time as an opportunity to give free rein to their moods; or they may believe that school is an essential component for the well-being of their children (Dellosso et al., 2021), a space of normality that recalls previous school experiences and a valuable learning opportunity which, although different from conventional schooling, caters for the interest and curiosity that the child has retained despite the challenges of being ill. Depending on how the parents view school in hospital, they may react to the teacher's educational offerings in one of two ways: by expressing the desire to be discreetly present during school time, offering help to the child and supporting the intervention of the teacher, or on the contrary, being excessively intrusive or too nagging in relation to their child and his or her performance, because they are afraid that schooling will suffer alongside the challenges associated with the illness *per se*. The age of the patients can also affect the relationship between teachers and parents: with very young children, who have not yet acquired adequate language skills, teachers see the parent as a privileged interlocutor; in contrast, when working with pre-adolescent or adolescent children, the presence of the parents requires the teacher to calibrate their approach to avoid paying too much attention to either party and to identify communication strategies that cater for both the children's need for attention and the parents' need to be involved. The frequency with which teachers have relational exchanges with parents also varies as a function of the age of the patients. As reported by Benigno and colleagues (2017), kindergarten and primary school teachers have more frequent formal and informal contact with families than do their secondary school colleagues, to whom parents seem to make fewer requests for support.

In any case, teachers' close relationship with sick children and their families always requires them to deal with their own emotions or else they may be unable to go on teaching (Hen, 2020). Only by overcoming their own anxieties will teachers be able to display genuine interest in their young patients and their families and therefore to be able to work with and for the children by approaching them in the "right" way (Kanizsa & Luciano, 2006). They need to find the "right distance" from their charges, such that on the one hand they avoid engaging in counterproductive rationalizations, denial, or repression of their own experiences, which they may perceive as excessively anxiety-generating and stressful, while on the other hand, they do not become excessively emotionally involved with the patients, with the result of offering an excessive level of help and preventing the children and families from exercising their own abilities and drawing on their own resources (Bruzzzone & Zannini, 2020). Only self-knowledge and familiarization with their own reactions to the pain and suffering that they encounter in their daily work will enable teachers to generate learning settings that leverage the capabilities of their individual students, while at the same time leaving a positive mark on the parents' experience of the hospitalization.

### **3.4.4. Role and functions of the hospital teacher**

As we have seen, the work of teachers on paediatric wards is conditioned by a context that is completely different from conventional school settings, whereby they must necessarily "invent something new" (Kanizsa, 2013, p. 61), in terms of periodically revisiting their methods and tools, as well as their ways in which they relate to the healthcare practitioners on the ward and to parents. The role of the hospital teacher translates into being a "bridge" between the healthcare staff and the family via the quest for a delicate balance that reconciles the need to treat a sick body with the need to care for the whole person (Ricci, 2018). The hospital teacher is therefore called upon to work on two fronts: the educational front, which includes designing teaching-learning programmes, and choosing appropriate teaching strategies, methods, and styles; and the relational front, which involves careful observation of the relational dynamics underpinning their unfolding relationships with the children and parents on the ward (Mosconi & Zaninelli, 2022). Only by means of careful and tailored observation will teachers be able to map out the factors that influence their work and plan effective interventions that are integrated into an extended care system, in which the healthcare sector (doctors, nurses) meets with

the educational sphere (teachers) and the family (parents). By carefully considering the peculiarities of each individual child-parent relationship, the hospital teacher can intervene to restore parental competence helping parents to go on exercising their parental roles and functions even at a critical juncture in their child's development (Perricone & Polizzi, 2008). Teachers can help the adults to “avoid abdicating” their parental role and to redefine their own educational approaches by adapting it to the hospital context. Only when parents are helped by the teachers to maintain or develop a positive self-image will they recover a sense of being able to fulfil their parenting role and stop abandoning themselves passively to the flow of events, waiting for someone else to take charge of the situation. When helped in this way to forge a new parental identity that responds to the peculiarities of the hospitalization experience, parents will once more be able to imagine a future for their children and consequently for themselves. In this educational task, which is aimed at enhancing the children's coping and agency skills, the parents can represent valuable allies for teachers, as long as the latter are able to flexibly adapt their communicative interventions and teaching activities to suit the parents' peculiar characteristics. The presence of the teacher on the ward, in conjunction with all the other members of the healthcare team, also helps both children and parents to settle down in hospital on arrival. Indeed, transitions from one life context to another can be challenging: leaving one's home and usual habits to be admitted to a hospital ward entails a series of difficulties that requires expert third-party support and information about how the ward is organized and the roles of the different health care practitioners (Currie et al., 2016).

### **3.4.5. Desirable and potential lines of inquiry for future research**

As we have seen, the work of hospital teachers can be highly stressful given the organizationally complex and emotionally fraught setting in which they operate. Although in recent years, researchers have displayed greater interest in the experiences of the parents of sick children and adolescents (Kanizsa, 2013; Mosconi & Zaninelli, 2022; Pariseau et al., 2020; Perricone & Polizzi, 2008; Jankovic et al., 2008; Hagstrom, 2017), these issues deserve to be further investigated to ensure that hospitalization is not solely a painful and frustrating experience for all those involved, but that on the contrary, it may prove to be an opportunity for growth both for sick children and teens, and for their families. Considering the review that we have just presented, some leads for future research have come to light, concern-

ing the potential for schools and teachers in hospitals to mitigate the negative effects of hospitalization on children and their families.

First, hospital teachers' own life experience and how these impact on their educational work merits further investigation: if teachers are to provide help and support to patients and their family members, it is important to investigate their own levels of well-being in relation to their work on paediatric wards. Few studies to date have examined stress in hospital teachers (Benigno & Fante, 2020), who may be at severe risk of burn-out, mainly due to the loneliness that characterizes their work and their constant contact with situations of pain and anguish. Unlike conventional schoolteachers, hospital teachers enjoy fewer opportunities for discussion with colleagues and in many cases, they only have sporadic exchanges with the medical-healthcare team. Although multiple studies (Kanizsa, 2013; Lanzetti et al., 2008; Ricci, 2018) have suggested the importance of a therapeutic alliance among all those who take care of children in hospital for various reasons (doctors, nurses, nursing assistants, educators, teachers, parents, psychologists, social workers), there are still many unresolved issues regarding how these figures can collaborate with one another in practice to alleviate the anxiety and anguish of hospitalized children and their families. Further exploration is required of the representations and experiences of healthcare professionals and teachers with respect to the families whose children are admitted to paediatric wards. This would on the one hand help to clarify their implicit theories, or the "unspoken" expectations, preconceptions and prejudices that can unduly condition practitioners' interventions; on the other, it would help practitioners to develop strategies that consider both the treatment of the illness and the care of children and family members from an integrated perspective and with respect to the diverse needs of sick children. In order for the interventions by hospital operators to be effective from both the medical and the psychological/educational perspectives, it would also be of value to investigate the perceptions and representations of the parents especially regarding the ideas they construct about school in hospital and the functions of the hospital teacher. This would allow those who work in paediatric wards to learn more about the needs of sick children and their parents and to respond to these needs more appropriately, enhancing the well-being of the hospitalized children and consequently contributing to more successful medical care.

Finally, research is needed with respect to the training requirements of teachers who for various reasons decide to work in hospitals (Capurso & Vecchini, 2010).

The work of the hospital teacher is extremely complex and cannot be reduced to mere educational programming or design, omitting the aspects

that are most crucial, and especially relational and communication skills along with reflexive and research competences. For these reasons it's necessary to develop different and more effective training models, stressing the recording of teachers' experiences and their reflections on the work they have previously carried out in schools in hospitals and starting from the assumption that schools in hospitals represent a true "laboratory of good practices" (Kanizsa & Mosconi, p. 109).

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### **3.5. Life skills promotion in hospital-based school**

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#### **3.5.1. Introduction. The emotional experiences of the hospitalized child**

Pediatric hospitalization is a complex experience for children, involving separation from key developmental contexts such as school, family, and sports clubs (Abela et al., 2020; Stremmler et al., 2017). Illness represents a biographical disruption (Bury, 1982), interrupting normal developmental processes and impacting both the psychological well-being of the children and their interpersonal relationships (Kish, Newcombe & Haslam, 2018). Prolonged illness is further associated with risks such as social and relational difficulties, psychological challenges (e.g., anxiety, depression, worry), learning difficulties, and an increased likelihood of early school leaving (Emiliani, Palareti & Melotti, 2010; Mullins et al., 2017; Phipps & Steele, 2002).

Hospitalized children must also face the unique challenges of the hospital environment, including medical treatments, examinations (Compas et al., 2012), as well as the need to feel “normal” (Lambert & Keogh, 2015) and remain connected to the outside world (Knecht, Hellmers & Metzger, 2015). They are required to develop autonomy in managing their treatments (Beachan & Deatrick, 2013; Friedman et al., 2009; Sawyer & Aroni, 2005) and learn to cope emotionally with their illness and related stressors (Olson et al., 1993; O’Connell et al., 2020).

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Given these challenges, it is essential for hospitalized children to participate in environments and projects that support their growth, foster autonomy, and develop critical and creative thinking (Beachan & Deatrick, 2013).

### **3.5.2. Hospital schooling and Life Skills**

Numerous services are provided for children with medical issues during hospitalization. Among these are clown therapy (Koller & Gryski, 2008; Vagnoli & Dionigi, 2019), pet therapy (Antonelli et al., 2019; Hinic, Kowalski, Holtzman & Mobus, 2019; Kaminski, Pellino & Wish, 2002), music therapy (Edwards & Kennelly, 2016; Gomez, 2021), and the hospital school (Lum et al., 2017; Steinke et al., 2016; Shaw et al., 2008). While the former services are designed to distract the child from pain and emotional distress, the hospital school primarily aims to promote relational and educational continuity (Capurso, 2014; Di Padova et al., 2024; Wilkie et al., 2012), fostering a sense of normalcy, notwithstanding it also promotes emotional wellbeing and a reduction of perceived pain (Tomberli & Ciucci, 2024). The hospital school is available for children and adolescents across all educational levels and it is present in numerous hospitals both nationally (in Italy) and internationally (more information can be found through the European HOPE network, [www.hospitalteachers.eu/](http://www.hospitalteachers.eu/)). Hospital schooling is unique in its flexibility, as it must adapt to the child's medical treatment schedule (Cheshire, Canto & Buckley, 2011; Poursanidou et al., 2008). Hospital schooling is delivered by hospital teachers or educational consultants (depending on the country) and ensures that children can keep up with their school curriculum with minimal learning gaps (Rager & Rhiannon, 2013; Shaw, Steven & Paul, 2007; Thompson et al., 2015).

The structure and functioning of hospital schools vary between institutions. However, lessons are generally conducted by hospital teachers, who are officially recognized by the Ministry of Education. These teachers deliver lessons either at the child's bedside or in dedicated classrooms. Lessons may focus on specific disciplines (e.g., mathematics, history, art) or address interdisciplinary topics that integrate subject-specific content, as seen in the implementation of certain workshops. Hospital teachers are not solely focused on fostering academic knowledge and skills but also aim to enhance students' participation in school life, curiosity, and self-esteem (Tomberli & Ciucci, 2023).

Scientific literature demonstrates that participation in both structured and unstructured educational activities, whether subject-specific or work-

shop-based, can foster the development of life skills in children (Buchert, 2014; Kirchhoff & Keller, 2021; Nasheeda et al., 2019). These skills not only support them in managing academic tasks but also help them cope life's broader challenges. World Health Organization (WHO, 1994) includes in "life skills": self-awareness, emotional regulation, stress management, empathy, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, and creative thinking. Developing life skills can help children build resilience, promote collaboration among peers, enhance self-efficacy, and improve self-awareness. An educational approach centered on life skills prioritizes tailored interventions and person-centered projects, going beyond the transmission of knowledge (Marmocchi, Dall'Aglia & Zannini, 2004).

Promoting life skills within educational settings contributes to students' psycho-physical well-being, cognitive and behavioral regulation, and overall adaptability. On a group level, it fosters a positive classroom environment and reduces aggression, anxiety, and depression. Additionally, equipping children with coping skills through life skills education prepares them to face life's challenges effectively (Marmocchi, Dall'Aglia & Zannini, 2004).

In hospital context, evaluating the child's academic progress within the hospital is a critical issue (Prevatt, Heffer & Lowe, 2000; Tomberli & Ciucci, 2024). Hospital schooling not only provides continuity in education but also offers a unique opportunity to cultivate life skills. Therefore, hospital schools must adopt assessment methods that recognize and value the child's experiences and development within the hospital setting.

### **3.5.3. Educational continuity and Belonging School: the significance of our specific terminological choice**

The literature on the illness experience of hospitalized children has expanded over the years, becoming more comprehensive and nuanced, also thanks to the birth of a new dedicated journal on the topic (see *Continuity in education* <https://continuityineducation.org/>). There is broad agreement in the literature emphasizing the importance of the hospital school serving as a bridge to life beyond the hospital (Avagliano, 2019; Benigno et al., 2018; Faraoni & Melchiori, 2024). The hospital school anchors children to something familiar and normal, a part of their everyday life, while also preventing the loss of months or even years of education by ensuring their school attendance is recognized during hospitalization.

Over the years, as we have focused on the topic of hospital schooling and the education of children with illnesses, we have reflected on how best to refer to the school children attended before hospitalization. After considerable thought and deliberation (partially summarized in our earlier work, Tomberli & Ciucci, 2021), we concluded that the most appropriate term is “belonging school” (or “school of belonging”). This aligns with recent literature that uses the same terminology as us, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging the school attended by the child before prolonged hospitalization as the one to which the student “belongs”. This perspective recognizes that the students remain “part of” that educational context, even in their absence (Baskaran et al., 2024; Cerqueira et al., 2024; Irwin et al., 2024).

Thus, hospital schools and belonging schools should maintain constant communication, as the former exists in relation to the latter. This relationship is not hierarchical but focused on enabling children to return to their belonging school environment once treatment is completed. In this work, for these reasons, we will refer to the school the child attended before hospitalization – and, ideally, will return to after hospitalization – as the “school of belonging” rather than using terms such as “traditional school”, “regular school” or “mainstream school,” which we and other authors have used in past discussions prior to this terminological reflection.

### 3.5.4. The research<sup>4</sup>

- *Aim and method of the study*

The present qualitative study focuses on the use of a *Personalized Learning Plan* (PLP) in hospital teaching; specifically, we intended to investigate three aspects:

- Drafting and programming *Personalized Educational Project*;
- Hospital teachers’ opinions about promoting life skills in hospitalized children;
- Assessment of school knowledge and life skills thorough the *Personalized Learning Project*.

These areas were investigated and studied through the use of semi-structured qualitative interviews addressed to hospital teachers.

4. Declaration of competing interest: this research has not received any specific grants from funding agencies in the public, commercial or non-profit sectors.

- *Sample*

Three primary schoolteachers of the Meyer pediatric hospital of Florence (Italy) participated in this study (female, 100%; 47.6 years old on average).

- *Procedure*

Participants were contacted by a psychologist, who provided them with all necessary documentation regarding privacy protection and obtained written consent for participation in the study and audio recording of the interviews. The interviews were conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic; however, the aspects explored pertained to the period prior to the lockdown. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Florence in February 2021.

The telephone interviews were conducted in quiet and private rooms to ensure the participants' confidentiality and to minimize distractions or external interference. The duration of the interviews was 70 minutes for Teacher 1, 50 minutes for Teacher 2, and 90 minutes for Teacher 3. Following the recordings, the interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researchers, who then proceeded with qualitative analysis.

- *Instruments*

A 17 open questions semi-structured interview was used. Investigated areas were: how hospital teachers' program and use the *PLP*; which are their opinions about promoting life skills in hospitalized children and how they manage school knowledge and life skills in hospital thorough the Personalized Educational Project.

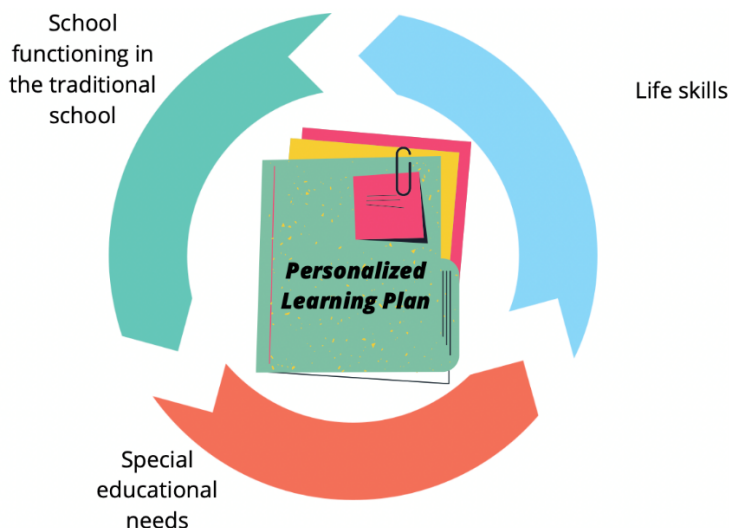
- *Data Analysis*

Interviews were transcribed, and a content analysis was carried out through the *Qualitative Content Analysis software (QCAmap)*.

### **3.5.5. Results**

Participants reported that PLP aims to integrate information regarding children's school functioning with information about their special needs, and to define both the children's learning goals and the development and promotion of life skills' ones. Therefore, PLP goes beyond the traditional teaching plan for children with special educational needs (e.g., disabilities, learning disabilities) to focus more on the educational rather than the didactic aspects (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 - Personalized learning plan's topics of interest



The educational aspect takes precedence over traditional teaching. For this reason, we use a personalized educational plan [in the hospital]. If you look at the document, you'll notice that only in the final section is there space to specify the didactic plan for each discipline. Otherwise, our approach as teachers is more holistic and cross-disciplinary, aiming to align our activities with the concept of a real-world task (Teacher 1).

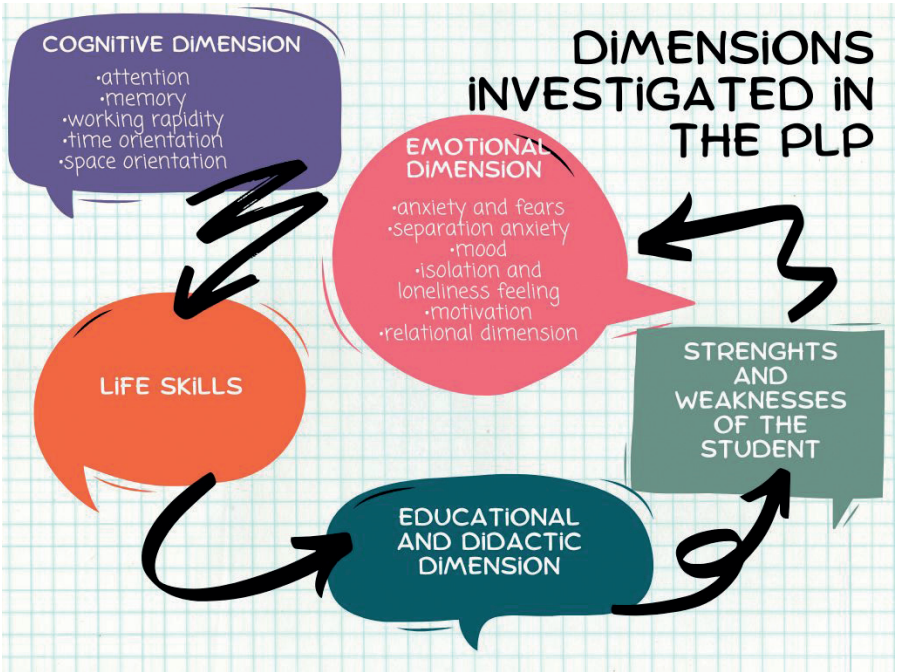
Teachers emphasized that the Learning Educational Plan (PLP) should be collaboratively developed by both the child's belonging school and the hospital school. This collaboration ensures that the PLP integrates the child's prior academic and psychological functioning with the specific requirements and characteristics of the new hospital context.

[Getting information from the belonging school] is not enough to get to completely know children and be able to understand them. Bear in mind that children who teachers met at school are different from whom they meet at the hospital... because places, people, and context change, so, therefore it is obvious that children change too (Teacher 3).

To address the children's functioning in the hospital setting, hospital teachers need to observe children during activities such as reading, writing, and performing real-world tasks. Participants highlighted that the Learning Educational Plan (PLP) focuses on multiple dimensions of the child's func-

tioning, including cognitive, emotional, motivational, relational, educational, and didactic aspects (see Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 - Dimensions investigated in the personalized learning plan



The various areas are assessed using a semi-structured grid, where hospital teachers document their observations. The grid is designed to be concise and streamlined, ensuring it serves as a practical tool for sharing information with other professionals involved, such as doctors, psychologists, and teachers from the child’s belonging school.

Additionally, the hospital teachers have compiled a list of real-world tasks to evaluate the child’s acquisition of life skills. All participants (N = 3) emphasized the significance of life skills in fostering abilities that are essential for the child’s future and applicable across various contexts, including family, school, and interpersonal relationships. Participants highlighted the importance of the concept of life skills to the extent that the Learning Educational Plan (PLP) includes a dedicated section specifically addressing this area.

In the final part we talk about the minimum goals for each class, in addition to these, I work on the desire to pursue the growth and support of the life skills that I consider fundamental. They are 10, neither one more nor one less (Teacher 2).

Participants reported that belonging schools place greater emphasis on the achievement of educational goals compared to the development of children's life skills.

[Life Skills] are very important, I think that in belonging school, teachers talk about them a lot, but they do little to promote them. Life skills are not learned like multiplication tables, they have and have no bearing on the disciplines. They are not taught during a specific year because they cannot be categorized, we cannot say "this concerns Italian and this is mathematics" but they have it because they concern all disciplines (Teacher 1).

Participants reported perceiving a lack of consideration and promotion of life skills in belonging schools, as these are often regarded as "ancillary" and not integrated into the overall assessment of the child's knowledge and skill acquisition.

One participant (N = 1) noted that, to date, there are few standardized tools available for measuring life skills. As a result, belonging schoolteachers tend to show limited interest in addressing life skills, as their primary focus is on assessing measurable outcomes within the classroom context. According to the interviewed teacher, the development of scientifically validated tools for evaluating life skills would be crucial to foster a greater recognition and emphasis on their importance among educators and other stakeholders.

In this regard, one participant (N = 1) emphasized the following:

I would appreciate it very much if someone could manage to find tools, checklists that are able to measure them [...] at this moment they are still too subjective.

According to hospital teachers, the only effective way to evaluate the achievement of life skills is through observation and real-world tasks. The Learning Educational Plan (PLP) is specifically designed for this purpose. Upon children's admission to the hospital, their skills, knowledge, and overall functioning are assessed (see Fig. 2). This baseline evaluation allows hospital teachers to compare changes in the child's abilities, knowledge, and functioning at the conclusion of the educational and didactic program. For example, has the child's ability to perform real-world tasks remained the same, improved, or deteriorated? Have children developed or refined their life skills?

However, it is important to acknowledge the challenges in evaluating a hospitalized child's progress. On one hand, designing and implementing appropriate real-world tasks within the hospital context is often complex for hospital teachers. On the other hand, hospital teachers reported that belonging schools are not always receptive to accepting the assessments conducted by hospital teachers ( $N = 3$ ). Evaluating both educational and life skills achievements provides hospital teachers with a comprehensive understanding of the child's functioning within the hospital environment.

We do not attribute school marks to children, we prefer a global judgment. When we have to give a school mark, belonging schools agree together on the basis of our observations and then they decide which school mark to give.

Or again:

Ours are well-founded school marks and judgements, but they have a completely different foundation from those of the belonging school. Often the teachers really need the numerical marks, for a bureaucratic matter, in order to insert them on the evaluation document, the marks must appear because in any case the children like to see those marks. We prefer judgments to votes because this allows us to pass a message to hospitalized children: we care about them, their growth and not just their knowledge.

### **3.5.6. Discussions and conclusions**

This study provided an opportunity to in-depth reflect on the concept of life skills and their application within the hospital context. Since the development of life skills positively influences students' behavioral, cognitive, and relational growth (Bharath & Kumar, 2010; Christian & D'Auria, 2006), it prompts reflection on the potential role of the hospital school. A sick child who demonstrates strong emotional and stress management, self-awareness, and positive interpersonal skills with healthcare personnel is likely to cope the hospitalization experience more calmly and positively. Such a child is also more likely to face future challenges adaptively, even after hospitalization or recovery (Capurso, 2014).

The Learning Educational Plan (PLP) appears to be a valuable tool for creating a comprehensive functional profile of hospitalized children. This approach prioritizes the educational aspects of the child's experience over the purely didactic ones. Rather than focusing exclusively on specific disciplines (e.g., mathematics, history) or school-related skills (e.g., reading, calculation, writing), the PLP emphasizes transversal abilities such as life

skills, highlighting the child's lived experiences and the unique context of the hospital environment.

This study is not without limitations. The researchers collected only the perspectives and experiences of hospital teachers without directly examining the structure of the PLP. The aim of the study was to explore the value of a dedicated tool for assessing life skills, rather than evaluating the PLP itself.

In future research, it would be beneficial to complement the narratives provided by hospital teachers with data obtained through direct observation of hospitalized children's life skills. Additionally, further exploration of the PLP's structure could help identify potential modifications or enhancements to better support the assessment and development of life skills.

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## 3.6. Regards des professionnel.le.s sur le confiage informel : rapport à la norme dans les discours sur les pratiques

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### 3.6.1. Introduction

Dans les sociétés dites traditionnelles, les enfants ne résident pas forcément avec leurs parents, mais ils peuvent circuler, changer de domicile et de pourvoyeurs de soin tout au long de leur enfance, voire au-delà. Ce changement impliquera rarement l'effacement des figures parentales primaires, mais entraînera plutôt un cumul : plusieurs adultes peuvent ainsi avoir le statut de mère ou de père (Goody, 1982). À l'inverse, les sociétés dites occidentales valorisent une norme d'exclusivité parentale et de cohabitation, intériorisée et considérée comme allant de soi (Alber, 2018 ; Bowie, 2004). Cette conception rend difficilement pensable, voire choquante, toute forme de séparation volontaire entre parent et enfant, que Suzanne Lallemand décrit en termes de « scandale affectif » (1993).

Les sociétés euro-américaines se démarquent de la sorte des logiques de circulation enfantine en valorisant la continuité de la cohabitation parent-enfant. En France, Gérard Neyrand (2018) qualifie cette orientation normative de *parentalisme* : un modèle qui attribue aux parents la responsabilité exclusive de l'éducation de leurs enfants. Ce principe est renforcé par les politiques publiques, notamment à travers les dispositifs de soutien à la parentalité, et s'ancre dans les dispositions légales françaises (Cadolle, 2007). Dans ce cadre, toute forme de partage ou de délégation de la fonction parentale soulève des tensions : soit les parents biologiques sont symboliquement effacés (adoption), soit les figures parentales secondaires peinent à être reconnues à égalité (famille d'accueil, beaux-parents) (Cadoret, 2011). Comme le souligne Agnès Fine (2014), le droit français

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reconnaît difficilement la coexistence de plusieurs figures parentales pour un même enfant. La cohabitation parent-enfant constitue ainsi une norme implicite (Neyrand, 2019), à laquelle il n'est dérogé qu'en cas d'incapacité parentale ou de mise en danger avérée (art. 375 du Code civil).

Bien que cette opposition binaire entre sociétés dites traditionnelles et occidentales doit rester nuancée (ces sociétés étant en constante transformation et en interactions réciproques et multidirectionnelles), on observe néanmoins des logiques culturelles et normatives distinctes qui orientent différemment les rapports à l'enfance, à la parentalité et aux configurations familiales. Il convient d'interroger ces logiques pas en les enfermant dans une lecture binaire (opposant tradition et modernité, ou pays du Sud et pays du Nord), mais comme un continuum dynamique de représentations que nos sociétés construisent autour de ce que devrait être une bonne enfance, de bons parents et, plus largement, de ce qui fonde ou non la famille. Les discours des professionnel.le.s intervenant auprès des familles constituent, à cet égard, un terrain heuristique privilégié pour analyser les manifestations, tensions et ajustements de ces représentations.

Cette intervention s'appuie sur notre recherche doctorale qui examine la façon dont les professionnel.le.s du social identifient et interprètent les pratiques familiales informelles consistant à confier des enfants à des tiers, pratiques désignées ici sous le terme de *confiage informel*. Elle vise à interroger les conditions dans lesquelles ces pratiques sont tolérées, soutenues, ou au contraire perçues comme problématiques, notamment au regard des normes parentales, des représentations de l'intérêt de l'enfant ou de la notion de danger. Dans cette communication, nous nous focaliserons plus particulièrement sur l'aspect normatif des représentations de la famille en contexte français métropolitain. Nous analyserons comment le confiage, en tant que phénomène, émerge dans les discours et comment les repères normatifs sont mobilisés pour appréhender et interpréter ces situations.

### **3.6.2. Les normes d'exclusivité de parents, de conhabitation et de proximité à l'épreuve du confiage informel**

La norme d'exclusivité des parents s'avère déjà solidement questionnée par les chercheurs en sciences sociales, notamment à travers les transformations de la famille occidentale : les ré-unions, les adoptions, les familles homoparentales impliquent toutes une multiplication des figures parentales (André-Simonet, 2005 ; Fine, 2002 ; Fine & Neirinck, 2009 ; Neyrand, 2018, 2019 ; Théry & Leroyer, 2014). Plus récemment, les recherches abordent cette norme au moyen d'exemples de l'accueil familial et d'autres

formes de placement tels les tiers dignes de confiance (Fabry, 2021 ; Mosca, 2019 ; Sellenet, 2015 ; Tillard & Mosca, 2019). Quant au confiage informel, il demeure peu visible : ces formes d'arrangements familiaux restent rarement mises en avant dans les débats universitaires et professionnels en France métropolitaine, bien que les expériences rapportées par les acteurs de terrain témoignent de leur présence. L'une de très rares études sur ces pratiques, menée par Monique Kamga (Kamga, 2014 ; Kamga & Tillard, 2013) concerne les familles bamilékes camerounaises résidant en France.

Face à ce constat, notre objectif est d'interroger la norme de cohabitation et de proximité entre parents et enfants à travers les représentations que les professionnel.le.s du social peuvent développer à l'encontre de ces pratiques. En sciences sociales, les normes sont « des ensembles de règles, plus ou moins explicites, adoptées par une société » (Dortier, 2008). Kheira Belhadj-Ziane et ses collègues remarquent que « la norme traverse les acteurs, les pratiques, les postures, les organisations et les discours du travail social » (2019). La norme est donc partout, transcendante, sans que l'on puisse la nommer ou penser : elle est intériorisée (Dubar, 2015). Une question centrale se pose : comment appréhender une norme, qui par nature n'est pas observable comme un objet concret ? Pour les sociologues, cela renvoie à un enjeu fondamental : comprendre comment se forment les valeurs auxquelles adhèrent les individus, dès lors qu'elles ne relèvent pas d'une simple observation empirique (Demeulenaere, 2006, p. 82). Ce questionnement s'avère très utile pour approcher notre sujet. Comment les normes d'exclusivité de parents, de cohabitation et de proximité s'expriment-elles dans les représentations, les actions, les prises de position des professionnel.le.s ? Comment évoluent-t-elles ? Michel Boutanquoi (2007) explique que la relation d'aide implique le fait de percevoir l'autrui : elle est ancrée dans un système de représentation. Essayer de comprendre les perceptions et représentations des travailleurs sociaux peut contribuer à expliquer « comment les représentations des acteurs, qu'elles soient morales, politiques, esthétiques, cosmologiques, etc., informent leurs pratiques et leurs stratégies (...). » (Cousin, 2020, p. 7-8).

### **3.6.3. Définir le confiage informel dans le contexte français métropolitain**

L'expression *confiage informel* désigne toute pratique par laquelle un enfant est confié, de manière temporaire ou durable, par ses parents ou d'autres membres de sa famille à des tiers, en dehors de tout cadre insti-

tutionnel ou juridique formalisé (tels que la délégation d'autorité parentale ou le tiers digne de confiance). Le confiage informel n'implique pas forcément un déplacement physique, mais il a pour conséquence la cohabitation et la prise en charge de l'enfant par des personnes qui ne sont pas ses parents, entendus ici comme responsables légaux. Le confiage informel se caractérise par la fluidité : il se fait pour un temps plus ou moins long, sans que sa temporalité soit nécessairement définie au moment du transfert. Ces éléments ne sont pas propres aux sociétés non occidentales : ils s'observent aussi dans des situations de confiage informel en contexte occidental, même si elles restent très minoritaires. Par leur écart de la norme, ces pratiques restent peu reconnues comme un objet social en soi et leurs contours sont peu définis.

Du point de vue légal, une question essentielle se pose : si de nombreux déplacements d'enfants en France métropolitaine se font de nos jours sous mandat et avec l'encadrement des institutions publiques, les transferts d'enfants effectués de manière informelle doivent-ils pour autant être considérés comme « hors-la-loi » ? En France, la notion juridique de l'autorité parentale consacre l'exclusivité des parents. Définie comme un « ensemble de droits et de devoirs ayant pour finalité l'intérêt de l'enfant » (Art. 371-1 du Code civil) l'autorité parentale octroie aux parents le devoir d'assurer la santé, l'éducation, la moralité et la protection de leur enfant (idem.). Le législateur ne précise à aucun moment que cette obligation doit s'exercer dans le cadre de la co-résidence des parents avec leurs enfants. De la sorte, le confiage informel reste une pratique familiale et interfamiliale qui relève de la sphère privée et ne nécessite pas d'encadrement juridique, tant qu'il ne contrevient pas à l'intérêt supérieur de l'enfant.

### **3.6.4. Méthode et population d'étude**

Notre recherche qualitative est basée sur l'analyse des discours recueillis lors des entretiens semi-directifs avec les professionnel.le.s qui œuvrent dans le domaine du travail social. L'analyse de discours correspond à la compréhension d'une « expérience vécue, passée et réorganisée dans le présent » (Guimond-Plourde dans Lavoie et Bourgeois-Guérin, 2021). L'enquête décrit et interprète ce qu'il a vécu et observé. Le moment d'entretien cumule ainsi deux réalités : le passé raconté et le moment même de le raconter, les deux liés intimement. Les analyses présentées ici reposent sur les 12 premiers entretiens réalisés dans le cadre de notre recherche doctorale<sup>2</sup>.

2. L'auteure tient à remercier chaleureusement toutes les personnes ayant accepté de participer à un entretien, et ce, dans un contexte pandémique particulièrement difficile.

Deux milieux professionnels sont concernés : l'Education nationale et la protection de l'enfance. Il s'agit uniquement des femmes : 8 parmi elles sont les assistantes sociales du service social en faveur des élèves (collège et lycée), 1 est assistante sociale dans un centre médico-social. 4 parmi elles occupent les postes de coordination (dont une qui le cumule avec l'accompagnement) : 1 responsable d'une Cellule de recueil des informations préoccupantes et 3 conseillères techniques auprès du recteur académique. Les professionnelles interrogées ont été recrutées dans 4 départements français différents, exerçant dans des territoires urbains. Leurs profils sont variés en âge et en nombre d'années d'expérience professionnelle. Les situations de confiage qu'elles évoquent concernent autant les situations en cours que celles repérées par le passé.

L'analyse des discours professionnels permet de mettre en lumière l'articulation entre les normes institutionnelles prescrivant les pratiques et leur mise en œuvre concrète. Dans cette perspective, les professionnel.le.s du social apparaissent dès lors non seulement comme agents de normalisation (Jaeger, 2018), mais aussi comme acteurs interprétant, ajustant et traduisant ces normes dans leurs pratiques quotidiennes (Berton et al., 2015). Ces premiers résultats de notre enquête révèlent une pluralité de références normatives en matière de parentalité et de conception de la famille.

### **3.6.5. La conscientisation d'un phénomène observé enfin nommé : sur la performativité de la recherche**

Le premier résultat original, révélateur du caractère minoritaire du confiage et de son écart par rapport à ce qui est connu comme pratiques de transfert d'enfants, est la méconnaissance du terme *confiage*. Certaines professionnelles interrogées nous ont questionnée sur l'existence même de ce mot, perçu parfois comme un néologisme. Différentes formulations émergent dans les entretiens, telles que *confiment* ou *confinage*. La totalité des enquêtées indiquent que le sujet du confiage d'enfants n'est pas abordé lors des formations initiales ou continues. Cela suggère que le terme *confiage*, contrairement à d'autres notions institutionnalisées comme le placement ou l'adoption, reste absent du vocabulaire professionnel du travail social. Pourtant, les pratiques qu'il recouvre sont fréquemment décrites et aisément reconnues par les professionnel.le.s interrogé.e.s.

Pro-07 : « Et c'est vrai quand ma chef m'en a demandé, je me suis dit, euh, est-ce que j'en ai... Et plus j'y pensais, plus je me disais «mais si, je connais untel, je connais untel»... Mais, pour moi ce n'était pas repéré en tant que tel.

Moi : Ce n'était pas une catégorie en soi.

Pro-07 : Non. Là quand on en parle, je pense que je vais avoir un peu plus de regards là-dessus, mais c'est vrai, je vous avoue euh, je n'étais pas du tout... Ce n'était pas un sujet pour moi. »

Cette professionnelle affirme connaître au moins dix jeunes concernés par des situations de confiage informel dans les deux établissements scolaires où elle exerce. Elle précise aussi qu'il existe très probablement d'autres cas non repérés ou non signalés. Le confiage est donc connu sans être nommé : « Ça m'a interpellé, je n'ai pas forcément posé des mots dessus, ou je ne me suis pas forcément arrêté dessus. Mais il est vrai que quand vous m'avez envoyé votre projet, fin quand j'ai reçu ça, je me suis dit «ah oui !» » (Pro-08).

À travers notre sollicitation pour l'entretien, nous « provoquons » l'usage du mot confiage auprès de personnes interrogées. Le confiage informel émerge ainsi dans les représentations en tant que phénomène, il devient une catégorie d'analyse dans leurs discours. En cela, proposer et faire employer par les acteurs un concept qui n'est pas d'usage dans le milieu du travail social s'avère performatif (Lemieux, 2018). Le confiage informel en tant que pratique familiale s'ajoute ainsi dans le répertoire verbal et conceptuel des professionnel.le.s, contribuant à un élargissement des conceptions et de pratiques familiales possibles. Par cette démarche, la recherche contribue à l'émergence d'une représentation sociale – à la fois un produit et un processus (Jodelet, 2019) – du confiage informel.

### **3.6.6. Deux registres de la norme d'exclusivité et de cohabitation entre parents et enfants**

La norme d'exclusivité et de cohabitation des parents avec leurs enfants apparaît sur deux registres :

- Registre de la règle légale. Le cadre légal de l'autorité parentale confère aux parents un ensemble de droits et de devoirs ayant pour finalité l'intérêt de l'enfant (article 371-1 du Code civil). Les parents sont reconnus comme interlocuteurs légitimes de l'institution, et leur absence dans la gestion du quotidien de l'enfant peut soulever des questions.
- Registre des valeurs. Il renvoie à ce qui est considéré « bon » et « bien » pour un enfant. Selon la logique normative dominante, l'éducation assurée au sein du foyer parental, dans une relation affective continue et stable avec ses parents de naissance reste un modèle de référence dans nos sociétés.

### **3.6.6.1. Registre de la règle légale : « être dans les clous »**

Certaines professionnelles accordent une attention particulière à l'encadrement administratif des situations familiales. Pour plusieurs d'entre elles, ce cadre constituerait une condition indispensable à la sécurisation du confiage informel. La régularisation de ces arrangements, par le biais de procédures légales, apparaît dès lors comme une étape essentielle pour garantir la protection de l'enfant et la reconnaissance des responsabilités exercées. Il est par ailleurs significatif de constater que cette préoccupation est davantage exprimée par des professionnelles occupant des fonctions de coordination. Sans nécessairement affirmer que cet encadrement est indispensable, elles sont plusieurs à reconnaître que le confiage informel peut interférer avec les cadres légaux qui régissent les déplacements d'enfants dans le contexte français, comme le souligne par exemple cette responsable d'une Crip :

Nous, on a un cadre légal qui dit que l'autorité parentale c'est le père et la mère. Dans plein de cultures, la famille élargie c'est très bien... Aller chez un oncle, une tante, une grand-mère, voilà, il y n'y a pas de problématiques là-dessus. Du coup ça se confronte à une certaine réalité en France, qui vient se poser. C'est-à-dire il y a un cadre légal, l'autorité parentale [les parents] qui du coup peuvent faire tous les actes usuels (Pro-01).

Certaines professionnelles expriment leur inquiétude face à l'absence du responsable légal, non en raison d'un manque de lien avec l'adulte accueillant, mais parce que cela peut engendrer des complications administratives. C'est notamment le cas d'une situation où une collégienne avait été temporairement confiée à une voisine. La jeune fille est ainsi restée vivre durant plus de 18 mois chez elle.

Le temps passe, je la revois en septembre, la maman toujours pas revenue. Et puis, en fait, ça a duré 18 mois en tout, entre le début où elle est partie et aujourd'hui elle est en première, ça a duré, duré, duré. Et, donc on s'est posé la question de faire une IP [Information préoccupante], parce qu'on se dit, la jeune elle et là, la voisine elle est gentille, mais en fait c'est... Il n'y a rien du tout, et puis les hospitalisations... (Pro-07).

« Il n'y a rien du tout » exprime en réalité l'absence d'un « papier », d'une signature qui remettrait les choses en ordre, au moins au niveau administratif. Dans cette situation, le collège ne possédait pas de numéro de téléphone de la mère (!), le seul numéro noté dans le dossier scolaire de la jeune était celui de la voisine en question. La mère est rentrée en France

après 18 mois d'absence, mais il s'avère que d'autres problématiques de cette famille n'ont pas pu écarter l'éventualité de signaler cette situation aux services de la protection de l'enfance.

D'autres professionnelles attachent moins d'importance au contexte administratif. Pour elles, les confiages informels qui n'impliquent pas de conflits ne nécessitent pas d'accompagnement vers la « légalisation » de la situation informelle. Dans le contexte scolaire, deux logiques peuvent entrer en tension : d'une part, l'obligation inconditionnelle de scolarisation ; d'autre part, les exigences administratives liées à l'autorité parentale, notamment la nécessité des signatures des titulaires légaux dans de nombreuses démarches scolaires. Dans plusieurs situations, les responsables légaux ne sont pas forcément identifiés et contactés par les professionnelles. Différentes raisons sont évoquées : parfois c'est « la barrière de la langue ». Pour la Pro-07, « appeler les parents à l'étranger ne changerait rien ». D'autres professionnelles parviennent à établir un contact avec les parents et obtiennent parfois un courriel dans lequel ils attestent d'avoir confié leur enfant.

Le travail de l'assistante sociale scolaire s'avère ici de faire en sorte « d'être dans les clous » (Pro-12) : assurer, quand c'est possible, un minimum de « papiers » qui n'entravent pas l'accès aux droits de l'enfant et de la famille concernés. Lorsque les signatures des responsables légaux ne peuvent être obtenues, certaines professionnelles « prennent sur elles » (Pro-12) les conséquences de l'écart à la norme (aux règles légales) :

Oui, on bricole ! On bricole, mais voilà, par notre travail, puis le lien avec le chef d'établissement – et donc là c'est aussi ça qui est parfois compliqué – c'est que le chef d'établissement étant responsable, c'est jusqu'où il est d'accord, sur des situations qui ne sont pas claires administrativement (Pro-02).

C'est le cas par exemple pour une sortie scolaire à l'étranger : le directeur d'établissement a pris la décision d'accepter la signature de la tante chez laquelle vivait le jeune (Pro-12). Pour d'autres encore, la question de signatures s'avère moins problématique : « Pour l'oncle au collège, c'est lui qui signait... Bon, le collège n'est pas forcément regardant sur ces questions-là, surtout quand les enfants ne posent pas de problème » (Pro-10).

### **3.6.6.2. *Registre de valeurs : ce qui est bon pour l'enfant. Le mal-être de l'enfant confié et l'adhésion de la famille à l'accompagnement proposé***

Si l'enfant exprime un « mal-être » (terme souvent utilisé par les professionnelles), le degré de danger est souvent conditionné par l'adhésion de la famille aux propositions de la professionnelle. Dans certains cas, la communication avec la famille accueillante se déroule de manière fluide : la personne qui accueille l'enfant devient l'interlocutrice principale des professionnelles et joue un rôle actif dans l'accompagnement et dans la recherche des solutions. Dans d'autres situations, face à « l'enfant qui exprime une souffrance » ou qui rencontre des problèmes d'absentéisme ou de comportement, certaines professionnelles évoquent une relation de confiance avec les familles qui est difficile à instaurer :

Je trouve ce qui va être compliqué c'est ça : c'est de pouvoir aborder avec la famille le fait que oui, c'était très bien pour lui, d'être venu en France. Qu'il est à l'école, qu'il a de la chance, parce qu'il a une chambre, parce du coup elle s'en occupe comme de ses propres enfants, parce que c'est souvent ce qui est dit. Il y a besoin, je pense, de reconnaissance de la part de ces familles, qu'en fait, qu'elles font tout bien. Qu'il n'y a rien à leur reprocher (Pro-02).

Ce verbatim illustre la position délicate de la professionnelle face à une famille qui, voulant valoriser leur acte d'avoir accueilli un enfant qui n'est pas le leur, semble exprimer un besoin d'être considérée comme légitime. La crainte de générer une conflictualité avec la famille accueillante peut freiner les professionnelles dans l'expression de préoccupations concernant le bien-être ou les difficultés de l'enfant.

Une autre assistante sociale scolaire (Pro-06) évoque la gêne que certains parents peuvent manifester lorsqu'ils expliquent avoir confié leur enfant à une tierce personne. Dans le cas mentionné, une mère d'origine française, contrainte de déménager dans une région éloignée, a confié sa fille collégienne à la mère du copain de celle-ci, afin de lui permettre de terminer son année scolaire. Selon la professionnelle, ce malaise provient de la crainte de la mère d'être perçue comme négligente ou désintéressée, en raison de l'éloignement géographique imposé par la situation.

D'autres professionnelles mettent davantage l'accent sur la qualité de la collaboration établie avec la personne accueillante. Bien que celle-ci ne dispose d'aucun droit ni devoir juridique à l'égard de l'enfant, son adhésion à l'accompagnement proposé est souvent jugée suffisante pour que la situation de confiance soit perçue de manière positive.

### 3.6.7. La norme du bonheur intime, la norme de réflexivité

Au-delà de la norme d'exclusivité parentale et de cohabitation, les discours recueillis laissent entrevoir d'autres références. Selon Marcel Gauchet (2014), on observe dans les sociétés occidentales l'émergence d'un « mythe moderne du bonheur intime » (cité par Berton et al., 2015, p. 161-162), qui valorise l'expression de soi et le culte des émotions. Cette tendance s'exprime par une quasi-injonction, adressée aux parents, à assurer le bonheur « ici et maintenant » de leur enfant. Or, dans les situations de confiage, les motivations familiales invoquent souvent l'objectif d'un avenir meilleur pour l'enfant. Certaines professionnelles interrogées soulignent ainsi une tension : cette perspective d'amélioration future peut peser sur l'enfant en le privant d'un épanouissement présent. Les motifs évoqués par les professionnelles s'inscrivent davantage dans une logique d'investissement à long terme : assurer à l'enfant de meilleures conditions de vie et de réussite scolaire, dans l'optique de soutenir la famille restée au pays.

Le motif principal ce sont les parents qui confient l'enfant à une sœur à un frère à un membre de la famille pour que l'enfant puisse accéder à une bonne scolarité, et puisse réussir pour aider la famille à s'en sortir aussi au pays. Je trouve que c'est un fardeau qui est assez lourd pour l'enfant (Pro-09).

C'est alors deux conceptions qui s'opposent dans les représentations : « le bon parent n'est pas celui qui prépare l'avenir de son enfant envisagé comme une intronisation dans le monde collectif, mais celui qui soigne son bonheur singulier, dans la sphère réduite de l'intime et dans le présent » (Berton et al., 2015, p. 162). La norme du bonheur intime s'étend également aux personnes accueillant l'enfant : lorsque le confiage est perçu comme une contrainte, notamment au nom d'une « obligation communautaire », et que l'accueil ne semble pas s'accompagner d'une volonté ou d'un engagement affectif manifeste, les professionnelles interrogées tendent à considérer que cela ne fait pas une « famille » (Pro-08, Pro-09).

Quant à la norme de réflexivité, elle s'exprime par une tendance qui appelle l'individu « à réfléchir à ses orientations, ses capacités, ses objectifs » (Rist, 2021). Cela s'illustre, dans notre cas, par le fait de parler, expliquer, verbaliser les pratiques familiales. Lorsque le projet de confiage apparaît comme réfléchi aux yeux des professionnelles, lorsqu'elles peuvent en identifier le sens, comprendre le contexte, et constater que l'enfant comme la famille ont pu s'exprimer, la perception de la pratique tend à être globalement positive. Dans ces situations, le confiage est moins perçu comme une rupture que comme une solution temporaire ou ajustée à un contexte

familial spécifique. Comme le résume une professionnelle : « Si ça a été expliqué et si les parents restent présents, ça ne doit pas être, je suppose, aussi dur à vivre » (Pro-04).

L'implication de l'enfant dans le projet de déplacement constitue un critère déterminant : lorsque les professionnelles constatent que la parole de l'enfant est prise en compte et qu'il exprime ses motivations, leur perception de la situation est généralement positive. Au contraire, certaines professionnelles évoquent « l'enfant déplacé comme un meuble », un transfert qui s'organise uniquement entre adultes, sans l'implication visible de l'enfant dans ce qui lui arrive : l'état de choses qui rend la perception du confiage plutôt négative. C'est ainsi la prise en compte de l'enfant en tant qu'un individu doté d'un droit de parole et d'expression qui est mise en avant. Il s'agit là d'un modèle relationnel qui met l'accent sur l'importance de la communication et d'un lien privilégié entre l'enfant et ses parents (Neyrand, 2018).

## Conclusions

Trois éléments principaux se dégagent en conclusion de cette intervention. *Per primo*, notre recherche permet d'interroger la place des représentations dans la compréhension des pratiques familiales : les représentations orientent les actions, tout en étant elles-mêmes façonnées par l'expérience et les contextes rencontrés. A ce sujet, Bonardi et Roussiau (1999, p. 25) précisent que les représentations prescrivent les actions que partiellement, tout en étant elles-mêmes en constante transformation au contact des réalités sociales. Comme le rappelle Boutanquoi (2007), il convient de ne pas tomber dans un déterminisme réducteur : « les représentations orientent les actions, mais à la condition qu'on ne cherche pas à expliquer les unes par les autres, autrement dit qu'on ne fasse pas des représentations sociales la seule détermination des pratiques. » L'analyse des représentations permet ainsi d'éclairer une partie de la réalité sociale, en offrant un accès au sens que les acteurs donnent à leurs pratiques, sans pour autant en épuiser la complexité.

*Per secundo*, tout en ayant permis d'observer la manière de mobiliser les représentations des professionnel.le.s, notre recherche ne permet pas de croiser les regards des différents acteurs de différents acteurs : les enfants et les familles directement concernés. D'autres recherches qui iraient en ce sens permettrait de comprendre les regards et attentes des enfants et familles quant à leur situation.

*Per terzo*, mieux comprendre les situations informelles permet d'éclairer et d'améliorer la réflexion autour des confiages formalisés. En France, la loi n. 2022-140 du 7 février 2022 relative à la protection des enfants prévoit, dans le cadre d'un placement décidé par le juge des enfants, une évaluation systématique de la possibilité d'accueillir l'enfant chez un proche ou une personne de son entourage. Cela souligne l'importance d'identifier et d'analyser les pratiques informelles déjà existantes. De plus, nos résultats suggèrent que le confiage informel dépasse les seuls contextes coutumiers : s'il concerne majoritairement des familles issues de l'immigration, il touche aussi des familles françaises autochtones.

*In fine*, dans une perspective d'école inclusive et de société plus juste, reconnaître la pluralité des configurations familiales, y compris celles issues de pratiques informelles, devient essentiel. Cela implique de penser des cadres éducatifs et institutionnels capables d'intégrer, sans stigmatisation ni invisibilisation, des enfants élevés dans des contextes de confiage informel. Cela passe par une meilleure reconnaissance et une meilleure compréhension de la diversité des expériences enfantines et par une réflexion sur l'adaptation des pratiques professionnelles aux réalités de ces enfants et leurs familles, comprises ici au sens large du terme.

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### **3.7. Développer les compétences émotionnelles chez les éducateurs : un défi pour une société inclusive**

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#### **Introduction**

Dans les sociétés contemporaines, de plus en plus marquées par la complexité, la précarisation et l'accélération des rythmes de vie, l'incertitude et la liquidité (Bauman, 1999; 2006), le rôle de l'éducateur prend une importance croissante. Que ce soit dans les structures de la petite enfance, les établissements scolaires, les foyers de protection de l'enfance, les structures médico-sociales, les centres de réinsertion ou encore les associations de quartier, l'éducateur est un acteur clé dans l'accompagnement des parcours de vie, souvent marqués par la vulnérabilité, le besoin de repères et la recherche de sens.

Mais que signifie exactement le terme de compétence dans ce contexte? Son étymologie, issue du latin *competere*, renvoie à l'idée de convergence, de cheminement commun vers un objectif partagé. Cependant, la notion de compétence demeure aujourd'hui encore ambivalente et polysémique, comme le souligne Le Boterf (2000), qui la qualifie de véritable « caméléon conceptuel ». Cela implique que les compétences ne peuvent se réduire à de simples aptitudes opérationnelles ou à un répertoire de connaissances : elles doivent être comprises comme un ensemble complexe, dynamique et contextuel, au sein duquel s'entrelacent des dimensions cognitives, affectives, sociales et axiologiques.

La littérature internationale fait remonter l'origine du concept moderne de compétence aux travaux de McClelland (1973). Ce dernier a vivement

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critiqué l'insuffisance des tests d'aptitude traditionnels et proposé de focaliser l'attention sur des traits personnels, des comportements observables et des ressources internes, perçus comme de meilleurs prédicteurs de la réussite professionnelle.

Des développements ultérieurs, notamment grâce à Pellerey (2004; 2010), ont permis d'adapter ce paradigme au domaine de l'éducation. Pellerey définit la compétence comme la capacité à affronter des tâches complexes, en mobilisant des ressources personnelles internes (cognitives, émotionnelles, affectives, volitionnelles) et en utilisant de manière efficace les ressources externes disponibles.

Cette approche s'inscrit dans une vision systémique et processuelle, qui met en lumière la dimension située et évolutive de l'apprentissage professionnel. Pellerey distingue ainsi le savoir, le savoir-faire et le savoir-être, en accordant une importance particulière aux méta-compétences, ces capacités réflexives qui permettent d'apprendre de l'expérience et de transformer cette dernière en connaissance transférable.

Avec le temps, la notion de compétence s'est enrichie, passant d'une conception purement performative à une approche plus globale, intégrant également les dynamiques relationnelles et contextuelles. À partir des travaux de Piaget (1970) et Vygotski (1969), l'attention s'est déplacée de l'individu isolé vers le sujet en interaction avec son environnement, mettant en évidence le rôle central du contexte socioculturel et des relations significatives dans les processus d'apprentissage.

Le Boterf (2000) renforce cette perspective en affirmant que la compétence ne peut être pensée comme une propriété individuelle abstraite, mais bien comme une construction située, qui émerge en lien avec des tâches spécifiques et des contextes concrets. C'est dans ce cadre élargi que s'inscrivent les compétences émotionnelles, désormais reconnues comme un socle transversal incontournable. Elles conditionnent la qualité de la relation éducative, la qualité de l'intervention, la prévention des conflits, la santé mentale de l'éducateur lui-même, ainsi que l'efficacité globale de toute action éducative.

Les compétences émotionnelles regroupent l'ensemble des capacités permettant à une personne de reconnaître, comprendre, exprimer, réguler et utiliser les émotions – les siennes comme celles des autres. Elles ne relèvent ni de l'inné ni du domaine privé : elles sont construites, influencées par le milieu culturel, les expériences personnelles et peuvent faire l'objet d'un apprentissage tout au long de la vie. Plusieurs chercheurs ont proposé des cadres théoriques permettant de les conceptualiser. Le modèle de l'intelligence émotionnelle de Mayer et Salovey (1997), par exemple, distingue quatre dimensions principales : la perception des émotions, leur facilitation

dans la pensée, la compréhension des émotions et leur régulation. Goleman (1995) a popularisé ces notions en les reliant aux compétences sociales et professionnelles, montrant que l'intelligence émotionnelle pouvait être plus déterminante que le Quotient Intellectuel dans la réussite personnelle et interpersonnelle.

Dans le champ éducatif, ces compétences prennent un relief particulier. L'éducateur est en effet confronté quotidiennement à des situations à forte charge émotionnelle : colère d'un enfant en crise, détresse d'un adolescent en rupture familiale, frustration d'un jeune adulte en échec, agressivité d'un parent en souffrance, tensions dans une équipe, conflits de valeurs. Ces situations, loin d'être anecdotiques, structurent profondément la réalité du travail éducatif. L'éducateur qui n'est pas en capacité pour comprendre et gérer ses propres émotions risque de réagir de manière défensive, autoritaire ou au contraire de manière évitante, créant ainsi des ruptures relationnelles ou aggravant les difficultés déjà présentes.

Au contraire, un éducateur émotionnellement compétent saura accueillir l'émotion de l'autre sans se laisser submerger, poser des mots sur ce qui se vit, proposer un cadre contenant, ajuster son comportement selon la situation, tout en restant fidèle à ses valeurs professionnelles. Il s'agit là d'un équilibre subtil entre l'empathie et la distance, la présence et la régulation, la reconnaissance de l'émotion et la capacité d'y répondre avec pertinence.

Les travaux de Stern (1985) sur le développement émotionnel chez l'enfant, ou ceux de Cyrulnik (2001; 2025) sur la résilience, montrent que les relations humaines sécurisantes – où l'émotion peut être exprimée, reconnue et contenue – sont des facteurs puissants de développement. L'éducateur, dans ce sens, devient un co-régulateur émotionnel. Il offre un espace où l'enfant, le jeune ou l'adulte accompagné peut faire l'expérience d'une relation stable, bienveillante, dans laquelle ses émotions sont prises au sérieux sans être amplifiées ni niées. Cela vaut autant pour les enfants placés en institution que pour les jeunes suivis dans le cadre de la justice des mineurs, ou les personnes en situation de handicap. Par ailleurs, les recherches en neurosciences affectives, notamment celles de Damasio (1995), ont définitivement établi le lien entre émotions et cognition. Penser, apprendre, se concentrer, prendre des décisions – toutes ces fonctions mentales sont affectées par l'état émotionnel.

Dans un contexte éducatif, cela signifie que le climat émotionnel d'une interaction, d'un groupe ou d'un lieu influe directement sur les capacités d'apprentissage ou de mobilisation des personnes. Un éducateur capable de créer un climat émotionnel positif, sécurisant, respectueux, facilite donc non seulement le bien-être, mais aussi le développement cognitif, comportemental et social.

Dans les pratiques de terrain, cela se traduit par une attention particulière portée à la communication non verbale, à l'écoute active, à l'authenticité du lien, à la reconnaissance des ressentis. Par exemple, un éducateur en foyer de l'enfance devra être capable de détecter une angoisse derrière une crise d'agitation, ou une blessure d'abandon derrière une attitude provocatrice. Mais cela suppose aussi de connaître ses propres déclencheurs émotionnels, ses limites, ses zones de vulnérabilité. Car un professionnel qui ignore ses propres émotions – ou les refoule systématiquement – finit souvent par développer des stratégies de défense peu adaptées : surcontrôle, évitement, usure compassionnelle, voire burn-out.

La prévention de l'épuisement (burnout) professionnel constitue d'ailleurs l'un des enjeux majeurs liés aux compétences émotionnelles. Plusieurs études (Maslach & Leiter, 2016) ont montré que les métiers de la relation – et en particulier les professions éducatives – figurent parmi les plus exposés au stress chronique.

La capacité à prendre du recul, à exprimer ses émotions au sein de l'équipe, à solliciter du soutien, à mettre en place des mécanismes de récupération émotionnelle fait pleinement partie des conditions nécessaires à une pratique professionnelle durable. Les compétences émotionnelles ne sont donc pas un simple supplément d'âme, mais bien une composante essentielle de la soutenabilité de l'engagement éducatif.

Dans les contextes d'éducation spécialisée, les compétences émotionnelles sont encore plus importantes. Par exemple, dans le champ du handicap sensoriel, où les codes émotionnels peuvent être différents, moins facilement lisibles ou exprimés, l'éducateur est appelé à développer une sensibilité fine à la communication non verbale, aux indices corporels et aux besoins d'adaptation.

Un programme comme “Emoti'Sens”, développé en Suisse (Chenaz, Valente et al., 2022), a démontré qu'il est possible de favoriser la conscience et la régulation émotionnelle même chez des enfants déficients visuels, à condition que les professionnels soient formés et attentifs à ces dimensions multisensorielles. Cette articulation entre émotion et inclusivité est également au cœur des travaux d'Éric Dugas (2020; 2023), qui souligne que l'éducation inclusive ne peut faire l'impasse sur les dimensions affectives des apprentissages.

Il plaide pour une reconnaissance pleine des émotions dans les pratiques pédagogiques, en insistant sur leur rôle dans la construction du lien, du sentiment d'appartenance, et dans la sécurisation des parcours éducatifs, notamment pour les situations les plus exposées au risque de fragilité psychosociale et d'exclusion. Dans cette perspective, former les éducateurs

à accueillir la diversité émotionnelle devient un levier fondamental pour construire des environnements véritablement inclusifs.

Malgré les avancées, l'intégration des compétences émotionnelles dans la formation des éducateurs est encore insuffisante. Trop souvent, la formation initiale se concentre sur les aspects juridiques, pédagogiques, ou organisationnels, laissant peu de place au travail sur soi, à la supervision, à l'analyse émotionnelle des pratiques. Pourtant, plusieurs expérimentations montrent que des modules de formation axés sur la conscience émotionnelle, l'empathie, la gestion du stress ou la communication bienveillante ont un impact direct sur la qualité de la relation éducative. Les travaux de Héber-Suffrin (2016) sur la coopération et l'intelligence émotionnelle dans les groupes éducatifs confirment l'importance de cette dimension. À ce propos nous ne pouvons ignorer que les processus d'alliance entre éducateurs et familles (Prévôt, 2023) exigent également des équilibres affectifs nourris par la confiance mutuelle, l'écoute, le dialogue et la syntonie affective (Pileri, 2024).

L'enjeu n'est pas d'attendre que tous les éducateurs deviennent des spécialistes des émotions. Mais plutôt de reconnaître que toute situation éducative est aussi une situation émotionnelle, et que la manière dont ces émotions sont accueillies, nommées, accompagnées, fait toute la différence. Cela suppose une posture réflexive, une formation continue, un travail d'équipe, mais aussi une reconnaissance institutionnelle de cette dimension. Les compétences émotionnelles devraient être intégrées dans les référentiels de compétences professionnelles, les grilles d'évaluation, les dispositifs de soutien aux équipes.

Il apparaît donc clairement que, dans une société traversée par de multiples tensions – économiques, identitaires, écologiques – il devient urgent de revaloriser la place de l'émotion comme ressource éducative. Il ne s'agit pas de promouvoir un affectivisme naïf, mais bien de reconnaître que l'humanité de l'éducateur constitue son principal outil de travail. Un éducateur capable d'écouter, d'accueillir, d'apaiser et de relancer sans se perdre lui-même est un professionnel qui participe activement à la construction de liens sociaux plus justes, plus solides et plus humains. Reconnaître ces compétences comme étant au cœur du métier éducatif, c'est ouvrir la voie à une refondation de l'action socio-éducative : plus incarnée, plus responsable, plus engagée. Former les professionnels à l'intelligence émotionnelle ne revient pas à les fragiliser, mais bien au contraire à les outiller pour affronter, avec justesse et discernement, la complexité du monde contemporain.

### **3.7.1. Politiques publiques européennes et reconnaissance des compétences émotionnelles dans les métiers socio-éducatifs**

L'Union européenne, à travers le cadre des compétences clés pour l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie, promeut depuis 2006 (actualisé en 2018) la compétence personnelle, sociale et d'apprendre à apprendre, qui inclut explicitement la régulation émotionnelle, l'empathie, la coopération, et la gestion des relations interpersonnelles. Ces orientations influencent progressivement les systèmes éducatifs des États membres, même si leur intégration dans les politiques de formation et de professionnalisation des éducateurs varie encore considérablement d'un pays à l'autre.

Dans des pays comme la Finlande, la France, l'Italie, les compétences émotionnelles sont pleinement intégrées dans les politiques éducatives, tant pour les élèves que pour les enseignants et éducateurs. La formation initiale des professionnels de l'éducation comprend des modules sur le bien-être mental, la gestion du stress, l'intelligence émotionnelle et la dynamique de groupe. Cette approche systémique permet une prévention plus efficace des troubles relationnels et une meilleure qualité des interactions pédagogiques.

En Espagne, certaines communautés autonomes comme la Catalogne ont intégré des programmes d'éducation émotionnelle dans les écoles et les centres socio-éducatifs, avec un soutien institutionnel clair. En Suisse, des initiatives locales (comme le programme Emoti'Sens cité précédemment) témoignent d'une attention croissante à l'émotion dans les pratiques éducatives, notamment dans les situations de handicap.

Cependant et malgré ces avancées, la reconnaissance institutionnelle des compétences émotionnelles dans les référentiels de compétences des éducateurs reste inégale. Elle dépend souvent d'initiatives locales, de la volonté politique régionale, ou du dynamisme des acteurs de terrain. Une difficulté récurrente tient au fait que les émotions sont encore trop souvent perçues comme relevant de la sphère privée ou informelle, alors qu'elles structurent profondément les pratiques professionnelles.

Plusieurs organisations internationales, telles que l'OCDE, l'UNESCO ou l'OMS, appellent à une prise en compte plus systématique des compétences émotionnelles dans les politiques éducatives. L'OCDE, dans son cadre "Future of Education and Skills 2030", insiste sur les compétences émotionnelles comme partie intégrante des compétences du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, au même titre que les compétences numériques ou linguistiques. L'UNESCO, de son côté, défend une éducation holistique qui intègre la dimension

émotionnelle et éthique de l'apprentissage. Ces positions internationales renforcent la légitimité de cette dimension dans les débats nationaux.

### **3.7.2. Régulation émotionnelle, bien-être professionnel et prévention de l'épuisement chez les éducateurs**

Le travail socio-éducatif engage profondément l'humain. Il mobilise quotidiennement les ressources affectives, morales et relationnelles des professionnels, parfois jusqu'à l'épuisement. Dans ce contexte, la régulation émotionnelle ne relève pas seulement d'une compétence utile à la relation éducative : elle devient une condition de la santé mentale, de la durabilité de l'engagement et du sens donné au travail. La régulation émotionnelle peut se définir comme l'ensemble des processus par lesquels une personne influence l'occurrence, l'intensité, la durée ou l'expression de ses émotions. Gross (2002), l'un des pionniers dans ce domaine, distingue deux grandes stratégies : la réévaluation cognitive (modifier la signification donnée à une situation) et la suppression de l'expression émotionnelle (retenir ou cacher une émotion). Les recherches montrent que la réévaluation a de meilleurs effets psychologiques et relationnels que la suppression, qui tend à générer plus de stress et de conflits internes.

Dans les métiers de l'éducation, de nombreuses situations mettent à l'épreuve la capacité à gérer ses émotions : colère face à une injustice, tristesse devant une souffrance répétée, impuissance face à un système bloqué, frustration liée à des tensions d'équipe, peur de la violence, épuisement devant la surcharge. L'enjeu n'est pas de ne plus ressentir ces émotions – ce serait illusoire et inhumain – mais d'apprendre à les reconnaître, les nommer, les partager et les transformer de manière constructive.

Les stratégies de coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) constituent un cadre théorique utile pour penser cette régulation. On distingue :

- Le *coping centré sur le problème* : agir pour changer la situation (demande de soutien, médiation, modification d'un emploi du temps).
- Le *coping centré sur l'émotion* : chercher à apaiser l'état intérieur (relaxation, expression émotionnelle, spiritualité, humour).
- Le *coping d'évitement* : fuir la situation ou minimiser le problème, ce qui peut parfois conduire à un désengagement ou à un épuisement latent.

Les professionnels qui n'ont pas accès à des espaces de régulation – temps de parole en équipe, supervision, accompagnement individuel – sont plus exposés au burn-out, à la fatigue compassionnelle ou à la déshuma-

nisation défensive. Les travaux de Maslach et Leiter (2016) ont montré que la surcharge émotionnelle, l'absence de reconnaissance et le manque d'autonomie sont des facteurs de risque majeurs dans les métiers de la relation. Le bien-être professionnel des éducateurs ne peut donc pas être réduit à une affaire individuelle. Il s'inscrit dans une dimension collective et institutionnelle. Une équipe qui partage une culture de l'expression émotionnelle, de la solidarité professionnelle, de la reconnaissance mutuelle, est plus résiliente face aux difficultés. Les organisations qui valorisent la qualité de vie au travail, qui offrent des temps de formation émotionnelle, des espaces de parole, des temps de ressourcement, contribuent à prévenir les risques psychosociaux et à fidéliser leurs professionnels.

Certaines institutions ont mis en place des pratiques innovantes : “cafés émotionnels” en équipe, rituels de clôture des journées, cercles de parole interprofessionnels, médiation artistique ou corporelle. Ces pratiques, inspirées parfois de l'éducation non formelle ou des approches systémiques, visent à renforcer la cohésion émotionnelle des collectifs de travail.

Il est donc essentiel de rappeler que la capacité à prendre soin de soi – dans et hors du travail – est un pilier du professionnalisme éducatif. Elle suppose un cadre éthique clair, le respect des limites, une autonomie dans la gestion du temps et une reconnaissance du droit au retrait émotionnel lorsque cela est nécessaire. Comme le souligne Winnicott (1965), “il faut être suffisamment en sécurité pour être capable de s'occuper des autres”.

### **3.7.3. Outils et méthodes d'évaluation des compétences émotionnelles dans les pratiques socio-éducatives**

La question de l'évaluation des compétences émotionnelles soulève une double difficulté : d'une part, ces compétences sont complexes à objectiver puisqu'elles relèvent en partie de processus internes, subjectifs et contextuels ; d'autre part, elles sont parfois absentes des grilles officielles d'évaluation ou des référentiels professionnels. Pourtant, dans les pratiques éducatives, savoir si un professionnel est capable de reconnaître, réguler, exprimer et mobiliser les émotions à bon escient est une donnée essentielle pour garantir la qualité de l'accompagnement.

Plusieurs types d'outils peuvent être mobilisés, en fonction des objectifs (formation, auto-évaluation, supervision, gestion d'équipe, recrutement), du niveau de professionnalisation et du contexte institutionnel.

Le premier levier est celui de l'auto-réflexion structurée, souvent utilisée dans les démarches d'analyse de la pratique. Il s'agit ici de proposer au professionnel un retour réflexif sur ses expériences émotionnelles, à partir

de situations concrètes vécues dans son travail. Cette méthode, inspirée des travaux de Schön (1983) sur le praticien réflexif, permet de prendre conscience des réactions émotionnelles automatiques, des effets de résonance, des interprétations affectives, mais aussi des stratégies de régulation mobilisées. De nombreux dispositifs d'accompagnement professionnel (carnets réflexifs, grilles d'auto-positionnement, journaux d'expérience) intègrent désormais cette dimension.

En parallèle, l'observation externe par un pair, un formateur ou un superviseur reste une méthode pertinente, notamment lorsqu'elle est menée dans un cadre non jugeant. Observer les attitudes non verbales, les micro-réactions émotionnelles, la capacité à ajuster sa posture ou à contenir les tensions permet de faire un retour constructif à l'éducateur. Cela nécessite toutefois une formation spécifique à l'observation des comportements émotionnels, souvent absente des cursus initiaux.

La supervision professionnelle, qu'elle soit individuelle ou collective, constitue un espace privilégié d'élaboration émotionnelle. Elle permet de travailler sur les affects en jeu dans la relation éducative, de différencier ce qui relève du professionnel et du personnel, et d'ajuster sa posture dans le respect de soi et de l'autre. De nombreuses équipes en protection de l'enfance, en insertion ou dans le champ du handicap recourent à des superviseurs extérieurs pour accompagner cette démarche. Il est essentiel que ces espaces soient reconnus, soutenus institutionnellement et intégrés dans les temps de travail.

Du côté des outils plus formels, plusieurs échelles de mesure ont été développées dans la recherche en psychologie et peuvent être adaptées aux contextes éducatifs. Parmi les plus connues, on peut citer :

- L'Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) de Bar-On (1997), qui mesure l'intelligence émotionnelle à travers cinq domaines (intrapersonnel, interpersonnel, adaptabilité, gestion du stress, humeur générale).
- Le Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) de Petrides (2009), utilisé pour évaluer les croyances individuelles sur sa propre intelligence émotionnelle (trait EI).
- Le Schéma de compétences émotionnelles de Mikolajczak et al. (2009), qui propose une lecture plus dynamique, en distinguant identification, compréhension, expression, régulation et utilisation des émotions.

Ces outils peuvent être utilisés en formation, dans une logique de développement professionnel, mais leur interprétation doit rester prudente : les compétences émotionnelles ne se résument pas à des scores. L'ancrage contextuel, la diversité des profils et la richesse des parcours de vie nécessitent une lecture qualitative complémentaire. Des approches mixtes, combinant outils quantitatifs et démarches qualitatives (entretiens, récits

de pratique, feedbacks 360°, auto-confrontation vidéo), offrent des perspectives intéressantes pour l'évaluation intégrée des compétences émotionnelles. Elles permettent d'articuler savoir-être et agir professionnel, dans une dynamique d'amélioration continue.

L'enjeu principal reste de légitimer ces évaluations au sein des institutions éducatives, en les reliant aux objectifs de qualité relationnelle, de bien-être au travail, et de prévention des risques psychosociaux. Ce travail passe par une culture de l'évaluation formative, bienveillante et contextualisée, loin des logiques de contrôle ou de performance.

### **3.7.4. Émotion, proximité et distance : un équilibre délicat**

L'intégration des compétences émotionnelles dans les pratiques socio-éducatives, aussi précieuse soit-elle, ne va pas sans soulever de questions éthiques profondes. Car dès lors que l'on travaille sur les émotions – les siennes, celles de l'autre, celles du groupe – on touche à l'intime, au vulnérable, parfois au fragile. L'éducateur, en tant que professionnel de la relation, est à la fois acteur émotionnel, témoin des vécus affectifs des personnes accompagnées, et gestionnaire des ambiances et climats relationnels. Ce positionnement requiert une attention constante à l'éthique du soin, à la juste distance et à la posture déontologique.

L'un des premiers défis est celui de l'équilibre entre proximité et distance professionnelle. Trop de distance peut produire de la froideur, de l'inhumanité, voire un désengagement émotionnel ; à l'inverse, une proximité excessive expose au risque de confusion des rôles, de débordement affectif ou de fusion relationnelle. La relation éducative, parce qu'elle s'inscrit dans la durée et repose sur la confiance, peut parfois générer des transferts émotionnels puissants (positifs ou négatifs). Il est alors fondamental que l'éducateur sache reconnaître ces mouvements internes, les nommer, et les travailler dans un cadre sécurisé (supervision, codéveloppement, régulation d'équipe). L'émotion en situation professionnelle n'est pas un tabou, mais un matériau à travailler avec prudence et lucidité. La formation des éducateurs doit donc inclure un enseignement sur les dynamiques affectives dans les relations d'aide.

### **3.7.5. Confidentialité émotionnelle et respect de l'intimité**

Travailler sur les émotions impose aussi de respecter la confidentialité émotionnelle des personnes accompagnées. Il ne s'agit pas simplement de

garder le silence sur ce qui a été dit, mais de protéger l'intégrité de l'expérience subjective d'autrui. Lorsque quelqu'un partage une joie, une peur, une douleur, une colère, il confie quelque chose de son histoire profonde. L'éducateur doit donc veiller à ne pas instrumentaliser ces émotions, à ne pas en faire un usage inapproprié dans des réunions, des bilans ou des discussions d'équipe. La discrétion éthique est ici un devoir.

De plus, certaines pratiques dites « émotionnelles » peuvent basculer dans des formes de manipulation ou de suggestion affective : forcer quelqu'un à « se livrer », insister pour qu'il exprime ses émotions, l'exposer sans consentement à un travail émotionnel trop intense. Ces dérives doivent être strictement évitées. L'éthique du respect de la personne implique le libre arbitre émotionnel, c'est-à-dire le droit de ne pas ressentir, de ne pas dire, de ne pas explorer.

Un autre enjeu est celui de la sur-responsabilisation émotionnelle des professionnels. À force d'attendre d'eux qu'ils soient disponibles, empathiques, bienveillants, calmes, ouverts, régulateurs, modérateurs... on finit parfois par les charger d'une mission émotionnelle trop lourde, voire impossible à tenir durablement. L'éducateur ne peut pas être en permanence le "gardien de la paix affective" de tous les espaces. Il a lui aussi droit à ses moments de doute, de colère, de tristesse ou de fatigue. Faire exister cette humanité émotionnelle dans l'équipe est une condition de la santé collective. De plus, certains dispositifs (ex : gestion de crise dans les structures d'urgence, tensions institutionnelles, manque de reconnaissance) mettent les éducateurs en position d'usure émotionnelle chronique. La régulation émotionnelle ne peut alors pas être uniquement une responsabilité individuelle : elle doit être pensée comme un enjeu organisationnel et systémique. Cela implique un devoir institutionnel d'offrir des espaces de soutien, de réflexion, de protection, et parfois de réparation.

Travailler avec les émotions nécessite un cadre clair, explicite, et partagé. Elles peuvent être des leviers d'apprentissage, mais aussi des lieux de désordre ou de souffrance. Il est donc essentiel que les structures éducatives posent des limites de sécurité émotionnelle, à la fois pour les professionnels et pour les acteurs impliqués dans le parcours éducatif. Cela passe par des règles de fonctionnement qui garantissent le respect et la non-violence; des protocoles en cas de conflit ou de débordement affectif ; une clarté sur les rôles, les attentes, et les espaces de parole. Dans cette perspective, l'éthique émotionnelle est aussi une éthique du cadre de confiance, qui permet à chacun de se sentir légitime, entendu, respecté dans son vécu.

## Conclusion et perspectives

Les compétences émotionnelles de l'éducateur ne relèvent pas d'un simple "plus" relationnel ou d'un trait de personnalité individuel ; elles constituent un socle professionnel fondamental, intimement lié à la qualité de l'accompagnement, à la prévention des risques psychosociaux, et à la capacité des institutions éducatives à répondre aux défis contemporains de la complexité humaine. Loin d'être accessoires, ces compétences sont le ciment invisible des interactions éducatives réussies, de la création de liens de confiance et de la construction de milieux sécurisants pour les personnes accompagnées.

L'ensemble des développements précédents montre à quel point il est nécessaire de former, soutenir, évaluer et reconnaître ces compétences dans tous les contextes socio-éducatifs : petite enfance, inclusion, accompagnement du handicap, protection de l'enfance, intervention de rue, insertion sociale, etc. Si ces compétences sont nécessaires dans des contextes d'intervention spécialisées, nous considérons qu'elles doivent également être mobilisées dans des contextes de droit commun : l'école, la famille, l'animation et l'éducation populaire, les activités sportives et culturelles. L'émotion est présente partout ; ce qui change, c'est la manière de la traiter, de l'écouter, de l'habiter. Ce travail ne peut reposer uniquement sur la «bonne volonté» ou la «sensibilité personnelle» des éducateurs. Il exige des cadres institutionnels structurés, des formations continues ancrées, des espaces de supervision protégés, et des politiques publiques ambitieuses.

Les comparaisons internationales, notamment, montrent que des chemins sont possibles : professionnalisation universitaire, reconnaissance dans les référentiels, intégration dans les dispositifs de qualité, évaluation éthique et contextualisée, mise en place d'analyse de la pratique et de l'accompagnement des acteurs. Il est désormais essentiel de favoriser une culture professionnelle commune à l'échelle européenne, où les compétences émotionnelles soient pleinement considérées comme un pilier de la qualité éducative, au même titre que les compétences techniques, organisationnelles ou légales. Pour l'avenir, plusieurs pistes de travail méritent d'être poursuivies :

- **Renforcer la recherche appliquée** sur les effets des compétences émotionnelles dans les pratiques éducatives : quels impacts sur le climat relationnel ? sur la santé des professionnels ? sur l'évolution des publics ?
- **Développer des outils de formation innovants**, intégrant les apports des neurosciences, de la psychologie culturelle, des pédagogies expérientielles ou de l'intelligence collective.

- **Créer des espaces mixtes** de co-formation entre éducateurs, psychologues, enseignants, infirmiers, afin de sortir des silos professionnels et de favoriser une approche intégrée des enjeux émotionnels.
- **Inclure les personnes accompagnées** dans la réflexion : comment perçoivent-elles l'émotion dans la relation éducative ? quelles attentes ? quels vécus ? quelles limites ?
- **Valoriser les pratiques de terrain** déjà existantes, souvent invisibles mais très puissantes, dans lesquelles les éducateurs développent des stratégies fines de présence, d'écoute et de régulation.

En guise de conclusion, l'enjeu est moins de «faire de l'émotion un nouveau dogme», que de reconnaître sa place centrale dans le vivant éducatif, et de lui donner les moyens de s'exprimer, de se penser, de se transformer. C'est à ce prix que les éducateurs pourront continuer à exercer un métier profondément humain, au service du lien, de la dignité de chacun. Les alliances et l'inclusivité ont les valeurs comme fondation, les savoirs comme pilier et les émotions comme ciment.

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## **Chapitre 4. Défis inclusives dans la société**



## 4.1. Promoting the Industriousness of Persons with Complex Employability

Patrizia Sandri<sup>1</sup>

### 4.1.1. A short premise

In the current Italian socioeconomic context, the labor market continues to face structural difficulties. Persistent regional disparities, long-standing issues such as youth and unemployment, and a slow pace of digital and ecological transformation compound the challenges for those experiencing fragile or vulnerable conditions. Consequently, there is a pressing need to rethink the meaning of work and the policies that foster inclusion (Bianchi, 2020). This endeavor should involve experts from various fields-labor law, management from both for-profit and non-profit sectors, pedagogists, psychologists and sociologists alongside persons with disabilities and their families. Only a systemic and participatory approach can redefine the practices needed to recognize the broad diversity of abilities and forms of industriousness. Such an approach aims to ensure that production chains align with the potential of everyone, moving beyond a restrictive focus on standardized skill sets.

Work is a powerful mediator of identity and adult role assumption (Montobbio & Lepri, 2000). By engaging in work, individuals internalize a social role that imbues their adulthood with meaning, enhancing self-esteem, strengthening their sense of community belonging, and improving their overall well-being. For those living in vulnerable conditions<sup>2</sup>, the opportunity to engage meaningfully in productive activities is essential for the effective exercise of citizenship rights. This fosters a positive “be-

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2. . *Vulnerability* could be defined as “a life situation in which the subjects’ autonomy and self-determination ability is permanently threatened by an unstable integration into the main systems of social integration and resource distribution” (Ranci, 2002, p. 546).

ing-with-others” (Lepri & Montobbio, 2000), reinforcing social bonds and personal agency.

Such a perspective challenges the dichotomy that pits the “employable” against the “unemployable.” Every person, regardless of deficit, possesses abilities that can emerge if we look beyond diagnoses and focus on everyone’s potential.

Industriousness, the capacity to contribute meaningfully according to one’s capabilities, can take many forms, from volunteering and community-oriented efforts to employment in traditional enterprises. The key is to acknowledge the wide spectrum of human potential and create conditions in which all forms of industriousness are valued.

Industriousness must have meaning within the life plan of the person: feeling industrious allows individuals to express their potential, and their capabilities, bringing satisfaction both to themselves and to the community, especially within the proximal context that supports them (Canevaro, 2016). However, a person can only express their industriousness if *production chains* offer the possibility to choose between varied tasks, which require different degrees of ability, ensuring compliance with contractual forms that absolutely respect their dignity (Nussbaum, 2013).

According to Canevaro (2020), industriousness is expressed on three levels:

- *Industrious learning* can be carried out during *training on site*, shadowing other workers, experimenting with languages and routines, and reflecting on both successes and mistakes. This training can motivate people to become increasingly active in determining their own life project.
- *Industrious production*: takes place in the “traditional” work environment, where industriousness must meet standard productivity parameters. People with disabilities can be hired if their productivity level is adequate: the matching of supply and demand can arise from internship experiences, placements, or “Vedo Curriculum”<sup>3</sup>.
- *Industrious productivity* is an alternative to inactivity for those who are no longer or not yet working and are often considered “rejects”. Here, industriousness manifests itself within a “context” (Bateson, 1972) of relationships grounded in strong inclusive values and is expressed in “doing” that has a use value, if not exchange-value, that is not merely time-filling, but has meaning and gratifies those who perform it, contributing to the community. The community can enhance

3. The “Vedo Curriculum” consists of a video through which the industriousness of a person with complex employability can be shown to a potential employer: [www.xfragile.net/progetto-vedo-curriculum](http://www.xfragile.net/progetto-vedo-curriculum).

individual potential through culturally and institutionally legitimized forms of “industrially productive” employment, activating productive chains in an “industrious ecosystem” that does not produce “rejects” people. With an awareness of its complexity, the aim is to create a solidarity-based and inclusive economy by integrating everyone’s contributions and generating empowerment for individuals, enterprises, and the entire socio-economic system (Sandri, 2015).

#### **4.1.2. The Research: finality, objectives and methodology**

The research<sup>4</sup>, conducted with third sector organizations in the Metropolitan City of Bologna (associations for social promotion, volunteering, social foundations, and cooperatives, etc.), adopted an exploratory approach and mixed methods, comprised two phases.

The first phase aimed to identify the most significant contexts for the enhancement of the industriousness of people with complex employability and took place through the distribution of a specific survey form to the representatives and coordinators of the organizations involved.

On the bases of the theoretical literature, the analysis of the collected survey and the experiences witnessed by the sectors experts, indicators were clarified to detect “good co-evolutionary practices” of industriousness.

In the second phase, in progress, we are proceeding as follows:

- to detect the perceptions of satisfaction of people with complex employability issues, as well as those of their of parents and of stakeholders, and
- to understand the ways in which they are supported to achieve their industriousness.

The final intent is to develop guidelines that will be shared with public institutions and for-profit and non-profit organizations.

#### **4.1.3. The organizations involved in the research**

The non-profit organizations involved in the research are 28 out of a total of 35 third-sector entities in the metropolitan city of Bologna. Be-

4. The research is supported within the Centre for Studies and Research on Disability, Education and Inclusion (CeDEI) of the Department of Education “G.M. Bertin” – University of Bologna with the particular contribution by Valeria Friso. There are numerous collaborators we wish to thank here, including: Leonardo Callegari, Maddalena Cornacchini, Mariacristina Stanchi, Valentina Iattici, Valentina Rizzi, Mario Mazzocchi, and all the people with complex employability and the cooperatives that have joined the survey.

tween these 28 organizations, a case study is in progress in the following social organizations:

Tab. 1 - Cooperatives participating in the research

| Cooperatives  | People with disabilities | Educators | Operators | Family members | Stakeholders |
|---------------|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|--------------|
| Anima         | 45                       | 8         | 10        | 45             | 35           |
| Csapsa        | 20                       | 6         | 0         | 20             | 24           |
| Solco Talenti | 19                       | 4         | 0         | 19             | 85           |
| Agriverde     | 50                       | 14        | 0         | 50             | 50           |

### 4.1.3.1. Research Tools

Reference was made to phenomenological and systemic relational approach so as to grasp the dynamic interaction between the person and the environment-work context, trying to highlight both the cultural and subjective aspects and the structural and organizational aspects.

The tools used, both quantitative and qualitative are:

- a data collection sheet relating to the projects and experiences of labor integration of people in situations of vulnerability carried out by third-sector institutions;
- 4 different Likert scale interviews, proposed to: people with disabilities, educators, operators, family members;
- 1 Likert scale questionnaire proposed to stakeholders;
- 1 interview for managers;
- focus groups with educators and family members;
- in-person “pen and paper” observations, videos, etc.

More precisely, we wanted to identify:

- *on the subjective level*, the perceptions of the person with disabilities regarding the improvement in their skills, agency, role, social recognition and sense of belonging to the community (through interviews consisting of 28 questions);
- *on the contextual level*, the educational proposals and strategies implemented by educators and operators to achieve inclusive objectives (interviews with 17 questions and focus group);
- *on the coevolutionary level*, the perceptions of:
  - *family members*, with regard to a change in the quality of life of the whole family (interviews with 8 questions and focus group);

- *customers and members of the local community* (professionals of the public services of the territory, etc.), with regards to both the quality of the products produced and the dissemination of inclusive culture (questionnaire with 11 questions and focus group).

The interview exploring the subject's perspective consist of 28 questions, is addressed to people with complex employability, and is divided into 5 sections:

1. *Subject's satisfaction*: composed of 8 items formulated on the basis of elements analyzed by Locke (1970), thanks to which we intend to identify the subject's emotional state in relation to work gratification, interpersonal relationships with colleagues and with referenced stakeholders, and motivation to carry out the activity and go to the workplace.
2. *Feeling of belonging*: composed of 7 items formulated in accordance with the theoretical framework of social identity<sup>5</sup>. The aim is to identify the degree to which the subject identifies with the group and the emotional meaning derived from belonging to the group itself, which is not neutral for a person's self-esteem<sup>6</sup>, and to what extent this sense of identification and belonging derives from organizational factors related to the activity and to the group in which one is inserted<sup>7</sup>.
3. *Perception of role and social recognition*: composed of 5 items formulated in accordance with the theory of the construction of identity and the concept of *valued social roles* (Lepri, Montobbio & Papone, 1999) through which we intend to identify the image the subject has of themselves and the perception of recognition from others.
4. *Empowerment/agency*: this section is composed of 5 items based on concepts of empowerment<sup>8</sup>, agency and self-efficacy<sup>9</sup>. The interview aims to measure to what extent the subject feels they can use their

5. Social identity is the conception of oneself that derives from being a member of one or more social groups (Tajfel, 1979).

6. Ashforth and Mael (1989) propose considering an organization as a social group with which members can identify by integrating their sense of belonging to the organization in the concept of self.

7. According to Simon and March (1966) the sense of belonging is influenced by the duration of the service, by the possibility to participate in organizational decisions, by carrying out a task that leads to the creation of a significantly different product to that of competitors and by the possibility to satisfy one's personal needs in the subgroup.

8. *Empowerment* is defined by Zimmerman (2000) as a process through which people acquire the awareness of having the power to change their conditions and of having the skills to participate. It promotes the tendency to use all capabilities in life and within the group one is part of.

9. Agency refers to the human capability to influence one's functioning and the course of events by one's actions (Bandura, 1982).

skills to achieve common results, how ready they feel for change or to propose change, to what extent they feel they can make improvements to their situation, and to what extent this is based on the enhancement of one's abilities and success in the activity.

5. *Dreams*: this section is composed of 3 items, it investigates the perception of whether they are doing a job or an activity that corresponds with their desires and dreams. It refers in particular to a study by Malcom Knowles (1996), which analyses the interacting factors underlying learning in adulthood, including the motivation to commit oneself to personal needs for job satisfaction, self-esteem and quality of life improvement.

The contextual-level interview, aimed at educators, consists of 16 items that are divided into four parts:

1. *hospitality and the relational availability* (4 items): this section aims to identify the degree to which the subject felt welcomed during the orientation phase<sup>10</sup> and how well they integrated into informal, unstructured moments within the context.
2. *Mediators and support* (Canevaro, 2008) (6 items) intends to highlight to what extent the subject had available help within the work context (people to refer to, aid, ergonomic adaptations, facilitating tools) in order to acquire new skills, overcome difficulties, and how the context organizes itself in order to present themselves as a proactive learning environment.
3. *Methods of carrying out the activities* (3 items). It investigates, while referring to socio-constructivist studies (Vygotskij, 1990), the importance of the horizontal transmission of knowledge between the members of the group and the strategies put in place by the educator to promote the learning of the person with complex employability (teamwork with people that have more advanced skills, etc.).
4. *industriousness* (4 items) examines the ways in which the abilities of each individual subject are valued in order to encourage industrious participation.

In order to identify the co-evolutionary dimension and the perception by parents and members of the services managed by cooperatives involved in the research of a change in their way of thinking and in their behaviors or attitudes, an interview with family members and a questionnaire with clients were used: in the first case for their children's experiences and in the second case for the interaction with people with disabilities.

10. The studies on *quality of life* by Schalock and Verdugo Alonso (2006) highlight the importance for caregivers to directly involve every person with disabilities in the choices of their Life Plan.

For Canevaro (2008), *coevolution* is at the center of educative care. From a coevolutionary perspective, the interaction with the person with disabilities is a harbinger of a double change: the growth of the individual through the context and the growth of the context through the individual.

Family members and clients, who provide the facilitating context, are not able to undo the deficit, but they help reduce or even eliminate factors that hinder the well-being and inclusion of the person with disabilities, in favor of changing personal and social representations. They help to weave a support network that facilitates the acquisition of knowledge about disability issues, and promote a culture of respect for individual differences, a critical awareness of stereotypes and prejudices, which help to overcome mistrust and discomfort in the encounter with the person with disabilities.

The questionnaire for family members consists of 15 items with pre-defined responses according to the Likert scale and one open-ended question. Through this questionnaire, it is intended to investigate whether and to what extent the parent observes a change in the child's abilities, whether and to what extent the parent-child relationship has changed since the child took on a job role, and how the respondent's feelings about the present and future have changed.

The questionnaire for clients consists of 15 items that measure the motivations that lead to the purchase of goods and services at the company workplace including people with disadvantages, the sense of satisfaction regarding the purchase, the decrease in eventual prejudices or stereotypes regarding disability, and the willingness to become a vehicle to promote the work and social inclusion of people with complex employability.

For the analysis of the results, a sufficiency threshold was calculated for each type of questionnaire by multiplying the number 2, which corresponds to the response "quite a lot", by the total number of items in the questionnaire.

#### **4.1.3.2. The first research results identified at the Anima Cooperative**

Here we will limit the analysis of the data relating to the *subjective perceptions* of people with complex employability issues who are active in the Anima Social Cooperative (Bo).

The Anima Cooperative aims to create job opportunities for people who have difficulty being considered employable in the current world of work. It creates the conditions for each person to be able to be part of a real work group.

The cooperative is inspired by Christianity and is based on the principles of cooperative movement, such as mutuality, respect for one another, the priority of people over money, the fair distribution of income, internal and external democracy, respect for the environment and ties to the territory.

The intent is to offer the community a product that has a double value: economic and social, promoting attention and sensitivity towards shared and supportive experiences. It carries out activities that refer to three areas:

- Catering activities, including management of the Locanda Smeraldi and a fresh pasta laboratory with on-site agricultural production of zero-kilometer products that are served at the restaurant or sold to customers. This is the leading sector, which involves about 30 people, in training or 10 inclusive internships;
- The maintenance of the Villa Smeraldi historic park and the cleaning and ticketing service of the Museum of Rural Life, with an additional bicycle rental service, allow the inclusion of 15 people;
- The Big Bang socio-occupational laboratory, which hosts up to 6 individuals depending on the period, and that support those who need a job path that is more supported by educational figures (activities are carried out on behalf of third parties, such as assembling pumps, animal care, or agricultural production, for example honey and vegetables).

The staff consists of educators with agricultural skills and technical personnel, particularly in the food service sector.

The people hosted are sent from different services and, depending on their educational history, their interests and the development of their skills, they are progressively encouraged to carry out different activities.

#### **4.1.3.3. A first analysis of the data related to subjective perspective**

45 individuals with complex employability were interviewed:

- 27 were male and 18 were female.
- 13 were between 20-25 years of age; 17 between 25-30 and 15 between 30-40.

Let's analyse the responses to the various sections of the questionnaire related to the *subjective perspective*.

Tab. 2 - Subject's satisfaction

| <i>Subject's satisfaction</i>                              | <i>A lot</i> | <i>Quite a lot</i> | <i>A little</i> | <i>Nothing</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| How much do you enjoy the activity you're doing?           | 30 (66.7%)   | 13 (28.9%)         | 2 (4.4%)        | 0 (0.0%)       |
| Are you happy with your colleagues and peers?              | 26 (57.8%)   | 17 (37.8%)         | 1 (2.2%)        | 0 (0.0%)       |
| Are you happy with your tutor?                             | 24 (53.3%)   | 20 (44.4%)         | 1 (2.2%)        | 1 (2.2%)       |
| Are you happy in the Company?                              | 30 (66.7%)   | 14 (31.1%)         | 0 (0.0%)        | 0 (0.0%)       |
| Are the employees (educators, etc.) kind to you?           | 29 (64.4%)   | 14 (31.1%)         | 0 (0.0%)        | 1 (2.2%)       |
| If you need help, are they able to help you?               | 30 (66.7%)   | 13 (28.9%)         | 2 (4.4%)        | 2 (4.4%)       |
| When you wake up in the morning do you want to go to work? | 29 (64.4%)   | 15 (33.3%)         | 1 (2.2%)        | 0 (0.0%)       |
| During your holiday, how much do you miss your job?        | 20 (44.4%)   | 17 (37.8%)         | 5(11.1%)        | 0 (0.0%)       |

In relation to the subject's satisfaction, the majority of people with complex employability seem to have positive perceptions regarding their experience of industriousness, as shown in table 2. In fact, over 95% of the individuals responded "a lot" or "quite a lot" to all questions except the question related to missing their job when they are on holiday. To this last question, 82.2% responded in any case positively, confirming a desire to return to work when they are away.

Tab. 3 - Feeling of belonging

| <i>Feeling of belonging</i>                                                       | <i>A lot</i> | <i>Quite a lot</i> | <i>A little</i> | <i>Nothing</i> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Do you feel part of your group at work?                                           | 22 (48.9%)   | 14 (31.1%)         | 2 (4.4%)        | 0 (0.0%)       |
| Do you think other people (e.g. your friends) also want to be part of your group? | 9 (20.0%)    | 17 (37.8%)         | 13 (28.9%)      | 1 (2.2%)       |
| Do you think it is important to name the group?                                   | 25 (55.6%)   | 14 (31.1%)         | 2 (4.4%)        | 1 (2.2%)       |
| How important is it in your life to be part of this organization?                 | 29 (64.4%)   | 15 (33.3%)         | 0 (0.0%)        | 0 (0.0%)       |

| <i>Feeling of belonging</i>                                                                          | <i>A lot</i> | <i>Quite a lot</i> | <i>A little</i> | <i>Nothing</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Do you consider the organization you work for to be “your” organization?                             | 24 (53.3%)   | 12 (26.7%)         | 5 (11.1%)       | 2 (4.4%)       |
| How much do you think the activity you are doing corresponds with what you have always wanted to do? | 17 (37.8%)   | 16 (35.6%)         | 3 (6.7%)        | 2 (4.4%)       |
| Do you believe that your work-colleagues collaborate with everybody?                                 | 25 (55.6%)   | 14 (31.1%)         | 2 (4.4%)        | 0 (0.0%)       |

Even with regards to *feeling of belonging*, the majority of people with complex employability seem to have positive perceptions, as shown in table 3.

By combining the responses “a lot” and “quite a lot”, the results are the following:

- 44 interviewees (97.7%) believe that being part of cooperative Anima is either very important or quite important in their lives;
- 39 (86.7%) believe that their work colleagues collaborate with everyone and that it is important to give a name to their work group;
- 36 (80%) feel part of their work group and the cooperative;
- 33 (73%) believe that the activity that they are doing corresponds with what they have always wanted to do;
- 26 (57.8%) think that others would like to be part of their work group.

*Tab. 4 - Perception of role and social recognition*

| <i>Perception of role and social recognition</i>                       | <i>A lot</i> | <i>Quite a lot</i> | <i>A little</i> | <i>Nothing</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Does the role you have given you satisfaction?                         | 31(68.9%)    | 11 (24.4%)         | 2 (4.4%)        | 1 (2.2%)       |
| How useful and important do you feel?                                  | 28 (62.2%)   | 14 (31.1%)         | 2 (4.4%)        | 1 (2.2%)       |
| How much do your family members recognize the importance of your work? | 30 (66.7%)   | 12 (26.7%)         | 1 (2.2%)        | 2 (4.4%)       |
| How much do your friends recognize the importance of your work?        | 21 (46.7%)   | 18 (40.0%)         | 3 (6.7%)        | 3 (6.7%)       |

| <i>Perception of role and social recognition</i>                        | <i>A lot</i> | <i>Quite a lot</i> | <i>A little</i> | <i>Nothing</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| How much do your work-colleagues recognize the importance of your work? | 25 (55.6%)   | 17 (37.8%)         | 2 (4.4%)        | 1 (2.2%)       |

With regards to *perception of role and social recognition*, by combining the responses “a lot” and “quite a lot” (table 4), we can see that:

- 42 (93.3%) believe their families and colleagues recognize the importance of the work they do;
- 39 (86.5%) perceive a recognition of the importance of their work by their friends.

*Tab. 5 - Empowerment/agency*

| <i>Empowerment/agency</i>                                                       | <i>A lot</i> | <i>Quite a lot</i> | <i>A little</i> | <i>Nothing</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| How capable to you feel of carrying out your job?                               | 26 (57.8%)   | 16 (35.6%)         | 3 (6.7%)        | 0 (0.0%)       |
| How capable to you feel of making choices in your job?                          | 16 (35.6%)   | 20 (44.4%)         | 4 (8.9%)        | 5 (11.1%)      |
| How ready would you feel to start a new activity?                               | 15 (33.3%)   | 13 (28.9%)         | 7 (15.6%)       | 10 (22.2%)     |
| Since you started working here, how capable and confident do you feel?          | 21 (46.7%)   | 17 (37.8%)         | 7 (15.6%)       | 0 (0.0%)       |
| Have you had the opportunity to help a colleague who is tired or in difficulty? | 14 (31.1%)   | 16 (35.6%)         | 11 (24.4%)      | 4 (8.9%)       |

Regarding *Empowerment/agency*, by combining the responses “a lot” and “quite a lot” (table 4), the results highlight that:

- 42 interviewees (93,3%) feel very (57.8%) or quite (35.6%) capable of carrying out their job;
- 38 (84.4%) feel as if they are very (46.7%) or quite (37.8%) confident since they started working at the cooperative;
- 36 (80%) feel very (35.6%) or quite (44.4%) capable of making choices regarding how to do their job;

- 30 (66.7%) have had a lot (31.1%) or quite a lot (35.6%) of opportunities to help a work colleague who is tired or in difficulty;
- 28 (62.2%) feel very (33.3%) or quite (28.9%) ready to start a new activity.

From the analysis of the data, it seems as if the majority of interviewees with complex employability feels capable of carrying out their jobs and mastering them to such an extent that they are able to make choices in their job, can help colleagues in difficulty, and feel ready to open themselves up to new activities.

Tab. 6 - *Dreams*

| <i>Dreams</i>                                                                                                    | <i>A lot</i> | <i>Quite a lot</i> | <i>A little</i> | <i>Nothing</i> | <i>NR</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------|
| To what extent have the managers taken your interests into consideration?                                        | 14 (31.1%)   | 14 (31.1%)         | 1 (2.2%)        | 1 (2.2%)       | 1 (2.2%)  |
| Do you feel like you are doing a job that corresponds with your dreams?                                          | 28 (62.2%)   | 18 (40.0%)         | 2 (4.4%)        | 4 (8.9%)       | 1 (2.2%)  |
| Have you had the chance to experiment in what you would like to do or what you think you already know how to do? | 20 (44.4%)   | 15 (33.3%)         | 6 (13.3%)       | 7 (15.6%)      | 0 (0.0%)  |

Regarding *Dreams*, by combining the responses “a lot” and “quite a lot” (table 5), we can see that:

- 42 individuals (93.3%) believe that the managers take their interests into consideration, allowing them to express themselves to their full potential;
- 38 (84.4%) feel like they are doing a job that corresponds with their dreams;
- 32 (71.1%) confirm that they had the opportunity to experiment in what they would like to do or what they think they already know how to do.

4.1.3.4. *Perceived satisfaction index by people with disabilities*

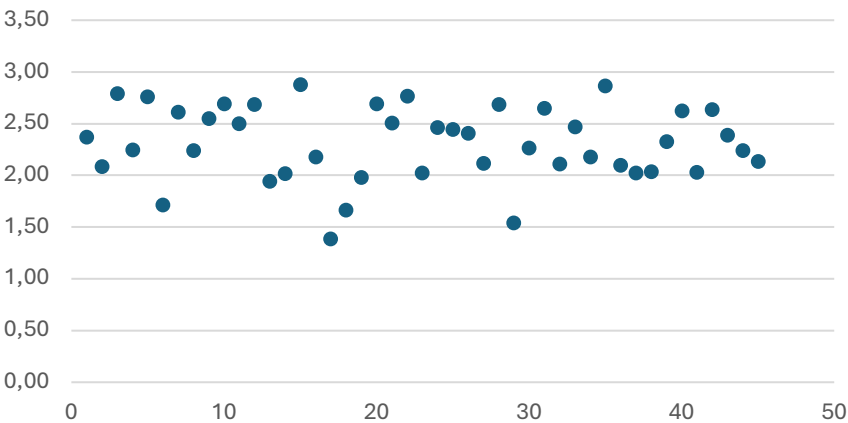
When analyzing the individual satisfaction indexes, calculated from the averages of the individual sections, regarding the 45 people with complex employability surveyed, it appears that (Tab. 7 and Chart 1):

- 39 (86.7%) show a satisfaction index above or equal to the sufficient threshold (2);
- 6 (13.3%) show a satisfaction index below the sufficient threshold (2).

Tab. 7 - *Perceived satisfaction index*

| Satisfaction index | Number of people |
|--------------------|------------------|
| ≥ 2.8              | 2                |
| ≥ 2.7 < 2.8        | 4                |
| ≥ 2.6 < 2.7        | 7                |
| ≥ 2.5 < 2.6        | 3                |
| ≥ 2.4 < 2.5        | 4                |
| ≥ 2.3 < 2.4        | 3                |
| ≥ 2.2 < 2.3        | 4                |
| ≥ 2.1 < 2.2        | 6                |
| ≥ 2.0 < 2.1        | 6                |
| < 2.0              | 6                |

Chart 1 - *Perceived satisfaction index*



Most of the interviewees seem to overall have a positive perception of satisfaction and feel recognized in their needs, interests and dreams. This confirms that they find the Anima cooperative a “context” that enhances their potential and exercises an *industriousness* that produces wellbeing according to the ICF’s biopsychosocial interpretation.

Regarding the 6 individuals that seem to show signs of dissatisfaction, 2 have an index just below the threshold (1.98; 1.95); while 4 have an index located at a greater distance from the sufficiency threshold (1.71; 1.66; 1.54; 1.39).

As was made clear by the educators and managers, the reasons for dissatisfaction detected are probably due to the fact that the 6 individuals were still in a phase of orientation because they had arrived only recently. In this phase, their personalized project foresees that individuals try a variety of experiences so they can identify their interests, capabilities etc., to progressively guide them towards forms of industriousness more in line with their dreams and their families’ expectations. Expectations that often determine choices and opinions of the work experience (Caldin, Scollo, 2018).

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## **4.2. Living the future. Residential centers for adult disability: the families' words<sup>1</sup>**

*Silvia Maggiolini<sup>2</sup>, Elena Zanfroni<sup>3</sup>*

### **4.2.1. Complex disabilities and adulthood: state of the art in Italy**

In recent decades, the topic of disability, as a multidimensional and complex construct, experienced an increased interest, both in terms of social and cultural attention and in terms of research and experimentation aimed at the full inclusion of people living with this condition. Nowadays, there is greater awareness of the multiple and complex aspects connected to the world of disability. The process of social inclusion contributed, on one hand, to improve the quantity and quality of interventions in the field of social and health policies and, on the other hand, fostered the spread of a culture that promotes the rights and dignity of the person living a condition of vulnerability. In the last years, the need and the importance of ensuring a transformation of the concept of integration from the application of legislative principles to the construction of a widespread mentality and philosophy has been understood. More specifically, particular attention has been paid to understanding all the elements necessary to ensure early educational interventions and appropriate teaching approaches that can effectively meet the needs of children with developmental disabilities. The contribution of studies that analyzed the condition of adults with disabilities is still rather limited (Goussot, 2009; Giaconi, 2020). In contrast, there

1. This contribution is the joint work of the authors. Silvia Maggiolini wrote paragraphs 1- 2 and 3, Elena Zanfroni wrote paragraphs 4-5 and 6.

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is a need to promote, in this field, a pedagogical reflection that considers the person according to an holistic approach, which is not limited to considering single aspects, but it is placed within a broader perspective, where the realization of a life project is a constant aim. The fragmentation of scientific production in this field has contributed to maintain a deep-rooted cultural heritage that has always conceived the person with disability as an eternal child, especially those presenting an intellectual one.

The idea of the eternal child to be protected and guarded, almost non-existent outside the bond with his or her caregiver, is one of the most common and recurrent images of the disabled person. In this preconception there is, potentially, a form of denial of both chronological age and individual identity, consistent with a social organization that does not consider, for these people, the possibility of active participation in the context, through a significant contribution to adults' world. Today, however, it is becoming increasingly urgent and necessary, also in view of the major social changes taking place, connected with the progressive ageing of the population and the increased life expectancy, to implement studies, to develop project ideas and above all to carry out practical experiences focused on an adult identity perspective of persons with disability.

It is therefore considered more and more essential to think and plan the construction, from the earliest years of life, of an educational process aimed at the progressive development of characteristics, skills and, more generally, of an adult identity. Undoubtedly, all the institutions participating in the person's learning and growth process, starting with the family, contribute to the achievement of this important goal. However, although there are some exceptions and regional differences, it can be observed that services for adults with disabilities have not received the same level of intervention priority that has been granted to the school system, even in the face of comparable levels of complexity. For many of these individuals, reaching adulthood may represent a shift from a protective and inclusive network of services and opportunities to a more rigid system, one that outlines a predetermined life path based on the degree of disability.

In practice, we have witnessed the reiteration of outdated models in the design proposal of such services, which for a long time focused on a caring dimension instead of a developmental and educational one. The need to review the nature of these centers and their daily proposals should be regarded as a social and cultural priority in order to fully translate into practice the evidence emerging from pedagogical research on self-sufficiency, autonomy, self-determination, and the life project of people with disabilities.

These services should therefore become not only the necessary point of reference for families but also an opportunity for the growth, the participa-

tion and the enhancement of the entire community. Specifically, nowadays there is a strong necessity to experiment project proposals aimed at balancing the care needs of persons with complex disabilities with actions that avoid the danger of segregation and self-referral and make it possible to connect with the community.

#### **4.2.2. Getting old: people with disability and (new) social challenges**

As known and clearly documented by the most recent reports, the world population is ageing according to unprecedented trends: between 2015 and 2050, the proportion of the world's population over 60 years will nearly double from 12% to 22% (WHO, 2021). It is evident how this phenomenon leads to multiple challenges for the social, health and economic system both internationally and locally (from health support to education, from social security and welfare dimension to a growing disproportion between the active and inactive segments of the population). There are, specifically, two aspects to be considered in relation to the topic of this paper. The first one: the related increase in health problems and healthcare issues. Together with the increased life expectancy, there has been an epidemiological transition in emerging disease: from a situation in which infectious and deficiency diseases were prevalent, to a preponderance of chronic-degenerative diseases (Galluzzo, Gandin, 2012). The second one: the ageing of the population also affects people with disability and their families. There are many implications – health-related, psychological, familial, social, infrastructural, and economic – that require in-depth and shared reflection aimed at identifying the most effective responses to improve the quality of life of those involved.

The ongoing social transformations and the peculiarity of the current historical period, linked to pandemic and post-pandemic scenarios, contributed to highlight some important considerations. The latter include the idea that vulnerability is a common feature for all people: it is part of the human nature and not a prerogative of someone clearly identified as different. There is, therefore, a growing realization that issues affecting human beings increasingly represent global challenges and characteristics of a complex and interconnected society. As such, they require collective responsibilities and shared answers. In this regard, the evolution of the concept of disability and the representation of the person living with it has to be considered: from being a characteristic of the individual's condition of life to being a matter of social concern.

Hence the need to implement structural and sustainable interventions, policies and actions that are part of a systemic logic and not focused on an emergency dimension. At the macro level, this statement is correlated with the need to consider two fundamental constructs such as active ageing and wellbeing in relation to the disability condition. In 2002 the World Health Organization defined active ageing as “the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security to improve the quality of life of people as they age” (WHO, 2022). In line with this perspective, it is fundamental to enhance the resources that the person with disability could have and to create opportunities to be recognized and supported. Alongside this concept, well-being should also be considered as “a state in which the individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (WHO, 2016). This statement is true independently of the presence or absence of a fragile condition.

More specifically, at a micro level, it is necessary to consider these constructs, together with guiding principles such as those of sustainability, flexibility, openness, accessibility, innovation, as essential for the design of services for complex adult disability.

In short, there is an ever-increasing urgency to start concrete actions of analysis and to rethink interventions and proposals for services for adults with complex disabilities, through the implementation of innovative tools for the planning, verification, and evaluation of activities. This is necessary in order to activate the inclusive process and to be consistent with the most recent scientific and cultural contributions, highlighted in recent decades. In particular, we can consider:

- the evidence from “Quality of Life” studies (Schalock, Verdugo, 2014; Navas, Gomez, Goode, Wehmeyer, 2001);
- the focus on the concept of human functioning, beyond the logic of commonplaces, prejudices and stereotypes that are still too often linked to the person with disability;
- the need to make any design and planning of interventions aimed at disability at all stages of life adhere to the perspective offered by the ecological model;
- the promotion, at the local level, of an authentic inclusive process, which interprets disability not as a dimension of interest of a few experts, but as a resource for every citizen.

### 4.2.3. The research project: “Living the future: inclusion between sustainability and collective responsibility”

Usually, when we think about the life of people with a condition of disability, we consider only the past or the present, the needs linked to everyday necessities, thus making the future dimension slip into the background. This criticality leads us to consider the individual with difficulties as an addressee of assistance and not as a developing person. Therefore, it is a matter of designing accompanying paths towards adulthood that do not stop where working autonomy is not possible, but which aim to develop social, relational, and personal skills through continuous training, the structuring of empowering contexts, and the creation of orientation pathways.

On the basis of these considerations, the Centro Studi e Ricerche per la Disabilità e la Marginalità (CeDisMa), in order to face the request of the Azienda Speciale Consortile Galliano of Cantù, in Northern Italy, carried out a research project aimed at investigating, identifying and defining the main aspects – pedagogical, architectural, organizational and managerial – of a scientifically grounded, innovative and sustainable design of daytime services for disabled adults (d’Alonzo, Maggiolini, Zanfroni, 2024).

Specifically, this study was developed within two epistemic macro-areas, each structured into different work phases and related purposes.

- *First macro area: the state of the art*

Study of the target audience.

Focus: to outline possible scenarios on a quantitative and qualitative level, regarding the possible users who will benefit from a day care center in the medium-long term.

Bibliographical and documentary research on excellent realities on the national and European territory.

Focus: to define the current situation drawing on information gathered through the identification of innovative structures present in both national and European contexts.

Documentary research on policies addressed to adult disability, both national and of the territory involved in the research/action

Focus: to define the status of the current situation on the basis of information gathered from the documentation on current regulations.

Bibliographic research on innovative pedagogical approaches addressed to medium-severe adult disability

Focus: to define the current situation drawing on information gathered from the bibliographic survey.

- *Second macro area: in-depth study*

The main pedagogical indications that should support the new service design.

Focus: focusing on the main lines for the realization of a daytime service aimed at welcoming adults with disabilities.

The structural attentions that guarantee the absence of architectural barriers and the creation of adequate spaces to enhance the skills of potential service users.

Focus: to identify innovative proposals to guarantee the principles of inclusive processes, by comparing and sharing good practices with experts operating in different professional fields (architects, neuropsychiatrists, psychologists, pedagogues, educators, service operators).

The new needs of people with disability, families, professionals and general guidelines for new services.

Focus: to identify, to define and to analyze the emerging needs of adults with disability who are currently accommodated within day care centers in the territory, of their families, and of the network operators.

In order to achieve the general aims of the project and the specific purposes for each work phase, the methodology of the research design was conceived in relation, on one hand, to the complexity of the object of investigation and, on the other hand, to the need to acquire the many elements considered fundamental for structuring innovative proposals, carefully adapted to the specificities and needs of the territory.

The research focused on all the details necessary to clarify the state of the art regarding the current and future scenarios in the field of care for adults with disability, with particular attention to a specific territorial reality in northern Italy.

The areas investigated are related to three key points:

- the planning of services for adult disability, which is still too often guided by emergency logics instead of educational ones;
- the planning of activities aimed at users;
- the individual profile of professionals and the definition of their identity.

Through a structured methodological framework, the survey, carried out between May 2021- March 2022, identified and defined important elements for the design of these services.

The emerging aspects highlight many points of interest on the pedagogical, managerial and structural level that can guide debates and actions in this field and open up further research areas.

#### **4.2.4. Educational perspectives for innovative inclusive approaches**

At the end of the research project, it is appropriate to outline the most significant findings, which can serve as a foundation for hypothesizing future directions and perspectives.

The first highly innovative aspect of the project is specifically linked to the multidisciplinary and multidimensional way in which it was conducted: pedagogical, technological and architectural contributions met the needs of the territory, professionals and experts, families and, even more importantly, those of the users. Designing spaces that meet the needs of people with disability is certainly not a simple goal, which becomes even more difficult to achieve without the contribution of people directly involved. Assumed needs do not always correspond to real needs, with the risk that the latter remain unrecognized.

In this regard, it is possible to find some useful elements for reflection:

- In northern Italy the disabilities with the highest incidence, also with respect to future prospects, are related to intellectual disability or to reductions in abilities caused by acquired, congenital or advancing age disability. The average age of day center users is around 42-44 years.
- The demographic analysis carried out in this area clearly showed that the typical users of day care centers are relatively young. The average age is around 42. The “life expectancy at birth” index is estimated, for the territory considered, at 81.7 years. This is a figure that particularly challenges experts and opens up future reflections.
- People with disability accommodated in the services examined represent only 0.4% of the population in the area living with similar condition.
- It is important to design services which, for these people, will represent their place of residence for a long time, even in the knowledge that, when they reach 65 years of age, it will be necessary to identify ways to encourage the transit to other types of housing.
- Young users require proposals appropriate to their age group, which can meet the need to consolidate skills, promote the protection of residual capacities and, also, take into account aspects of pleasure, spontaneity and fun.

With reference to the main indications concerning the innovative aspects to be implemented in building services for adult disability, we could point out:

- the definition of barrier-free and flexible spaces (open space, mobile walls);

- the use of “accessible” domotics (e.g. technology that promotes the greatest possible degree of autonomy);
- the need to structure services connected with the local territory, promoting greater integration between the various resources already present in the context;
- closely related to the previous point, we hypothesize the need to set up services that make the encounter between services for the disabled and the community concretely possible and sustainable, (e.g. INBook Service, Electric Car Charging, Amazon HUB, We Make Place);
- the creation of a common thread linking the needs of people with disabilities, their families, and all professionals working in this field, with the aim of creating the conditions for a concrete and sustainable smart city project;
- the need to create innovative and sustainable solutions, aimed at meeting the needs considered a priority by families (e.g. housing and working autonomy, support for leisure proposals);
- the promotion of opportunities aimed at satisfying the needs associated with all forms of disability (not only congenital, but also acquired);

Therefore, there are many different aspects that need to be acknowledged, when considering the actions to be implemented in promoting the growth path of the person with disability towards adulthood. Consistent with these considerations, there is a need to design an ‘expert’ system for taking charge of them, that recognizes the parental function as a dimension of active participation in the process of building the person’s life project. In fact, the creation of an inclusive network of services for persons with disability cannot disregard the real involvement of the family, conceived as the active protagonist in the process aimed at the well-being and quality of life of the child.

#### **4.2.5. About the future of disability residential centers: the families’ perspective**

The role of the family experiencing the disability of one of its members has gained increasing recognition. Understanding functions, needs and possible contributions that the family can offer means going beyond a care perspective, highlighting instead its qualities and skills, sometimes not immediately visible and that require to be enhanced. To do this, to assign a role or to see potentials is not enough, but it is essential, as Goussot states “to consider parents as experts on their children, to consider them as people with feelings, dignity and skills” (Goussot, 2013).

In light of these considerations, the families of adults with disabilities attending day care centers in the analyzed area, were also involved in the research project through the administration of a questionnaire. The aim was to offer them opportunities to intervene and share their needs, expectations and requirements.

A total of 20 people were reached. The sample of those who participated by providing answers to the questionnaire was composed as follows: 35% mothers; 35% brothers and/or sisters; 15% fathers; 15% mothers and fathers jointly. 75% of the participants stated that they always felt supported by the public disability services, compared to 25% for whom only partial support was noted. The latter were then asked to specify their reasons: "The social services are not very proactive but the day care center is very good"; "They should be more attentive"; "Sometimes it would be necessary to extend the hours beyond 4 p.m."; "Many difficulties during the school period"; "The institutions do not facilitate disabled people and those who have to look after them".

Family members were also asked to indicate, in their opinion, the main strengths that should characterize an adult disability service. Among the answers provided, the need for and the importance of the role of supporting the families' needs. Significant, in this regard, are some statements: "Lightening the workload of families by giving persons with disabilities many opportunities for fun stimulation and new friendships outside the private sphere"; "The well-being of the guests and the serenity of the relatives". Moreover, the issue of leisure time, considered by some parents as a potentially problematic moment for their son/daughter with disability: "I always find free time a big problem: when the center is closed we don't know how to manage free time of our son".

In addition to these aspects, family members emphasize the importance of the competence of the professionals working at the center, as well as the availability of suitable spaces and environments ("adequate building facilities with spaces for support in case of emergency"; "equipment for the different disabilities") and the proposal of individualized activities in relation to the person's various needs.

Among the main critical issues that parents attribute to the adult disability services there are: the lack of medical staff; the turnover of operators; the lack of rehabilitation staff; the progressive reduction of professional figures (physiotherapist, psychologist, psychomotricity); the management of emotional aspects and psychological problems; the lack of services for people with severe disabilities, conceived and planned in the perspective of the "After Us" Program; the absence of a single information office for issues related to severe disabilities; the presence of architectural barriers.

The answers given by the parents to the question “What, in your opinion, are the possible new specific needs for adult disability?” highlight a plurality of expectations, opinions and emotional dimensions. Among the answers provided, we can mention: to improve individual wellbeing; to foster friendship groups; to recognize and satisfy relational needs, including those linked to the affective-sexual sphere; to design housing solutions for the “After us” “different from those existing today for non-self-sufficient and very severely disabled people”.

Sense of protection, anxiety and helplessness are the emotions that parents experience most frequently about their child’s future. However, a sense of trust in services is also noted, with an important percentage (30%), along with a feeling of serenity (20%).

A high percentage of parents responding to the questionnaire consider themselves to be very (40%) or fairly (50%) involved in the planning of pathways concerning their child’s quality of life. They also perceive themselves to be listened to and involved in the choices inherent to the educational project (30% very; 65% fairly).

Lastly, for most of the sample (65%) it is very important that in the design of the new day care center there is a concrete possibility of establishing meaningful connections with the local area and the city community, also contemplating the presence of multifunctional spaces.

## **Concluding remarks**

The person with disability lives his or her evolution towards adulthood often without finding ‘adult’ answers to the mature needs emerging during the life course. In fact, “to include” means, as promoted by the bio-psycho-social model (ICF), to recognize the need to build bridges for the effective participation of all, against any mechanism of substitution by the adult educator towards the more vulnerable person. This does not only apply to practical activities, but to those proposals that enable the individual to choose for himself or herself how to manage his/her everyday life.

This is true at all stages of life, but it becomes even more important when the time for ‘staying’ – in the dual meaning of ‘staying/permanent’ and ‘knowing how to stay/learning how to stay’ – in an adult disability service is really extensive and prolonged.

From the ICF perspective, it has long been understood that disability exists only when individual’s characteristics meet a barrier-context. It is, therefore, recognized that the first major barrier may be the cultural one: a “closed” disability service that does not open up to the community is equivalent to a parallel reality that never meets the outside world.

The perspective of special education on the importance of moving beyond the concept of “integration” in favor of “inclusion” represents a necessary shift in approach and a key principle in designing services such as those previously described.

The creation of special spaces is functional in responding to special and particular needs; however, it is important that they fit within the territorial context, identifying necessary meeting points so that there is no risk of generating new forms of ‘territorial’ exclusion, first, and then more widely ‘social’.

For this reason, the innovations identified in this research project are linked to the idea of a service well rooted in the territory, that allows forms of active participation and becomes ‘educational’ in the strict sense.

Therefore, three keywords emerge related to the analysis of future services for adult disability: safety, understood not only in its standard meaning, innovation, sustainability.

The resulting positive aspects will have repercussions not only for the users, who will benefit from this perspective, but for the entire community. In fact, there is full agreement that “there can be no vulnerability without risk; there can be no community without vulnerability; there can be no peace, and finally no life without community” (Scott Peck, 1978).

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## 4.3. From motherhood to a caring community<sup>1</sup>

Chiara Bellotti<sup>2</sup>, Dalila Raccagni<sup>3</sup>

### 4.3.1. From motherhood to parenthood

The home is the most important environment for people. It is the place to both give and receive care and attention. It is here that educational care is aimed at the development and self-realisation of the person (Iori, 1996, p. 195). It is, therefore, easy to consider it the place where one feels welcomed and protected. There have been important transformations in family structures from the more rigorous atmosphere with defined roles and rules, where children had no say in family decisions, to the more modern family environment which encourages a more affectionate exchange between parents and their offspring. The parents' educative role, however, remains unchanged (Simeone, 2008, p. 1). Studies on the attachment and cognitive development of the child still point out the importance of parental care from birth, in particular maternal care (Bowlby, 1989). The possibility for everyone to fully become a person is rooted in the relationship with the mother. Historically, the recognition of others and the skills of care are performed by the female. In other words, the maternal care competence is traditionally handed down from one generation to the next.

At the beginning of everyone's life, it is the relationship of care and love between mother and child that contributes to human development.

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The potential of the individual is expressed thanks to acts of love which guarantee a welcoming environment from the moment of birth (Dusi, 2007, p. 65). Pedagogical reflection has given value to the relationship between parental care and the development of the child's autonomy. In the journey of exploration, a child requires guidance to be able to grow, develop, and become autonomous. The development of the self, of one's individuality, takes place in the relationship with others from the very first moments of entering the world; It is in the family that we discover relational subjects, a situation of balance between the desire for autonomy and the need for accompaniment (Dusi, 2008, p. 57).

Although in history it was women who were designated to care for the family, the device of care calls into question the ontological structure of a person's ability to interrelate. Real human existence takes place within interpersonal relationships. The relationship with others makes the growth of the person and the World possible. Upbringing and personal formation must allow for the Transformations necessary in the various stages of life (Fadda, 2002). The upbringing forms the child. Only with the presence of responsible adults guided by educational intentions, does the individual become the protagonist of his or her existential project. The role of transition of the women in society remains incomplete. Pedagogical reflection finds important solicitations in taking care of parents. Every child experiments the relationship with parental otherness, and the social context into which they are called to insert themselves within the family. According to a systemic-relational perspective of the domestic group, the division of the roles and duties of the parents appears today to be unfounded. The authoritative intervention of the father and the loving care of the mother can now be attributed to both parental figures. Love and authority can be conferred by the couple and both, by virtue of personal characteristics, express the actions of educational care. Father and mother are required to grasp their own specificities and mutually support each other (Macario, 2002). For a long time, up to the 1980s, socio-psycho-pedagogic analysis understood the maternal figure as fundamental for the maturation of the offspring, while that of the father suited to the economic sustenance of the household.

The entry of women into the world of work has changed the social roles of the two educational figures. Today, women are also asked to fulfil themselves professionally, while men are asked to be involved in the care of their offspring. In recent decades, the importance of the father's educational function in raising a child has been reconsidered. Such a position has benefited the development of a renewed interpretation of parental figures. It is now a common heritage that the child, to achieve full personality development, needs the presence of both parents. The educational function of parents goes far beyond the role attributed by their social status and

the rights and duties assigned to them by society. “We become father and mother” (Pati, 2014, p. 145) through the construction of the reciprocal relationship intertwined with each other and with the children.

In such a setting, the pedagogical and educational attention is no longer directed exclusively to the maternal function, but to the dyad. Father and mother reveal themselves to be directly involved in, and mutually interested in, the growth and education of their offspring (Pati, 2014, p. 146). Parenting is enriched by diversity; the methods and times of involvement are different, but the path towards parenthood starts from their relationship and mutual recognition (Simeone, 2021). This educational-relational modality clearly proposes the value of unity in diversity.

#### **4.3.2. Parental care as a necessary dimension of the household and of the entire community**

Care as the social capital of the entire community finds its origin in the family care given by parents to their children. Education by the mother must be traced to an essential element for improving the living conditions of everyone, both inside and outside the family (Delors, 1997, p. 175). When we speak of the term “*social capital*”, we are referring to the bonds and relationships that are created between people. This resource consolidates the socio-cultural heritage of a community, favoring the sharing of knowledge. This type of relationship often arises because of fortuitous contacts, which are the prerequisite for the formation of a relational network, formed by mutual respect and trust.

In moments of crisis and difficulty, relationships become a form of support for the family and a resource for the community (Jacobs, 1969). The economist G.C. Loury (1997) uses the term social capital to indicate the emotional resources generated by family and community relationships. Scholars, including P. Bourdieu (1985), J.S. Coleman (1988), R. Putnam (1993), trace as an essential element the values acquired by the person through internal and external relationships. G. Simmel (1984) identifies trust as the fundamental element for the construction of share capital. The feeling of mutual trust begins within the family, as a fundamental competence of parents who take care of the minor, helping to understand the importance of human relationships for the common good. The family plays a mediating role between the private and the public, between the interests of the individual and the community. The domestic nucleus is placed at the center of a network of relationships with the social institutions present in the community. These days, the family community needs more support

than ever, along with guidance to undertake the path of the regeneration of ties inside and outside their own private nucleus. A relational path, with the participants of the community for the humanistic formation of the social system (Pati, 1995). Taking refuge in one's private family can appear to be a renunciation of the personal educational commitment and social responsibility. Opening to other families belonging to one's community feeds the exchange of experiences and the construction of new values. The informal external networks, present in the community, are the fabric that supports widespread parenting, easing the weight of individual responsibility. With the family as the center of educational and social action, and active in building a sense of community, the neighbourhood becomes a reality in which to live and contribute to education in a widespread manner.

Through the care of the new generations, each community marks the path to guarantee its history and values in the future. Widespread parenting finds its context of action in the entire neighbourhood; in it the family promotes the well-being of all children, with the aim of building an educating society that considers parenting as a common good that concerns and belongs to the entire community.

#### **4.3.3. Caring in contexts of Elsewhere, beyond motherhood**

Talking about “caring actions” does not mean referring only to the maternal register, generally understood as a sort of map useful to define the world of the mother's relationship with her child, from when she conceives him to when she experiences his fetal life up to his birth and intimate daily attendance (Ferrara Mori, 2006).

Within a certain differentiation of parental roles and, within the framework of the integration of their specificities, diversity and complementarity of the female and male figures are evident. From the perspective of equal cooperation in collective social life, both have a responsibility to care for their offspring. Different functions that “translate into verbal and non-verbal behaviors, gestures and affective expressions that represent how care is carried out and that not only vary from person to person but also register great variations in individual care relationships even though the concept of “(...) care inevitably coincides with the representation of the parental relationship insofar as care is the specific object of the primary relationship between parent and child” (Bastianoni, 2009, p. 38).

In this respect, *parenting* is a multidimensional construct – which therefore considers personal characteristics but also the influence of the context – that although transmitted through the generation's changes dynamically,

incorporating elements of tradition and novelty that do not change a parent's conception of parenting. It is founded on educational sharing between the two parents, it involves both figures and "implies a 'thinking together', a 'caring' together, a sharing of experiences, a reciprocal sharing of hopes, fears, expectations of which the educational concern is built.

Parental sharing *provokes* (calls out) both genders to come out of the citadel of their traditional roles and to meet each other, to share projects and expectations, concerns, and joys" (Iori, 2005, 138). The relationship between parents and children is thus the playing field of education. In these terms, Bellingeri (2011) emphasizes how parental functions should however be articulated according to adherence to the maternal code, referent to the affective pole, and the paternal code, referent to the ethical pole.

The first is traditionally identified as unconditional love and care, while the latter is the transmissive capacity of ethical ideals so that the child appropriates them and thus gives meaning to his or her existence. The reference is to both the real and symbolic father and mother since other educational figures can also adhere to one or both codes, to respond to the original need for intimacy and dignity (Bellingeri, 2011, pp. 178-181).

Parents and children are involved in a joint evolutionary task, in which they are both protagonists and interconnected, and in which the achievement of the goal depends precisely on the quality of their relationship and their ability to cope with change. In this regard, however, it is believed that the multi-ethnic presence invites family pedagogy to offer new insights, without distinguishing between maternal and paternal, since the concept of 'caring' opens to a more communitarian and widespread vision. Therefore, interesting to be able to grasp its good practices and opportunities for transformation.

#### **4.3.4. The African context: a field for reflection**

From a specific pedagogical perspective, this contribution aims to highlight the value of the concept of motherhood, understood as the *capacity to care*, an expression of the ability to foster relationships for the common and social good. We thus speak of widespread motherhood. Our reflection is enriched by an exploration of African contexts, where the care inherent in widespread motherhood is manifested through various practices and modalities.

The first form of care is the relationship with those who are older. In this regard, Onwauchi recalls how "African indigenous societies (Ghana and West Africa) have educated their children through a continuous learning process in their traditional customs and values. Through their tradition-

al tales and myths, elders taught children oral codes of behavior and social relations [...] and through some form of apprenticeship and cultural participation, children acquired the techniques of communication and earning a living, as well as creative expressions within the culture” (1972, p. 242). In African contexts, the concept of family transcends both time and space, extending across generations. It encompasses relatives who are both near and far, those who are still living and those who have joined the ancestors, as well as the ancestors themselves, who continue to play an active role in the lives of the living.

This perspective is particularly significant in light of the current generational gap. Today, there exists an ambiguous relationship with tradition, and often, the ancestors and grandparents are no longer seen as bearing a supportive role. This contrasts with family pedagogy, which has repeatedly highlighted the vital role of these figures in fostering family harmony and the development of children (Iozzelli, 2013).

Another context for thought comes from the fact that in the African context, the family’s educational function is not isolated from the rest of family life.

The latter embodies in its traditions the concept of *widespread motherhood*. Through acts of care, one contributes to the construction of a *community of diffuse care*, in full respect of the diversity of individual family units. In this regard, children in Ghana are said to belong to two families: their nuclear family (consisting of their mother, father, and any siblings) and the extended family (which in turn includes grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles living together). In contrast, within the context of the Western family, from the 16th to the 18th centuries and continuing into the contemporary era, there has been, on one hand, a reinforcement of the centrality of the nuclear family, accompanied by a diminishing influence of the extended family circle. On the other hand, there has been a strengthening of the affective bonds that solidify the conjugal unit. However, *parents* continue to play a significant educational role in many cultural contexts, despite the presence in contemporary families of other figures who often serve a predominantly utilitarian and functional purpose, to the detriment of the relational and formative role traditionally held by parents (such as babysitters, tutors, or coaches). This shows us clearly how the educational function is a task that is not limited to parental figures but can be entrusted and shared. An Akan proverb, an ethnic group in West Africa, states that “*Ebusua Ye Dom*” (Salm, Falola, 2002), i.e., that the family is a crowd, emphasizing just how much its role is expanded up to the third, fourth generation.

This expansion is then even more so to the extent that an educational role.

Is also assumed by other adult figures. Other adults are called upon to play important roles in the upbringing of children and one can speak of *social parenthood* (Richter, 2010). It is therefore interesting to recognize such parenting, acknowledging that every “adult of reasonable age in families or communities can contribute to the way another’s child is raised” (Therborn, 2004). In *social parenthood*, one can also recognize the same idea of the extended family, with established ties, that participates in the direct education of minors in which friends and acquaintances also have this educational function. It is evident how the concept embodies the promotion of relationships and the development of informal relational networks. In this context, one can also speak of widespread parenting, which occupies a significant place in society and contributes to the social good of all children through co-responsible actions aimed at ensuring well being. Socially shared parenting thus stands in contrast to the privatization of the family and is instead oriented towards a communal vision. In the contemporary Western context, this communal aspect has been increasingly absent, leading to a more privatized view of parenting. However, the management of related issues requires social action and is a collective responsibility.

#### **4.3.5. Towards a widespread caring community**

In taking on the pedagogical commitment of caring, family relationships in such a horizon takes on value for the whole of society. A community capable of expanding family boundaries and welcoming the others. In this respect, the Faure Report (UNESCO, 1972) is interesting, which explicitly defines the concept of “City of Education” whereby all groups, associations, trade unions, local communities, intermediate bodies, must take responsibility for education instead of delegating powers to a single, vertical and hierarchical structure, as a separate body concerning for to society.

The call is for a significant alliance between adults and educational contexts, working towards the growing presence of an educational community a conscious and responsible educational *polis* (*from the Greek*), promoted by various social components. The educational focus represents an opportunity to revitalize the network of relationships that is often lacking between different institutions and social realities.

The concept of community, as embodied in all these representations of the context of Elsewhere, evokes the idea of shared belonging and postulates a social relationship that conveys values, customs, and symbolic heritages. The community educates precisely because it is a space for participation; it fosters the exercise and promotion of generative attitudes, but above all, it oversees the educational task entrusted to all members.

The educating community, therefore, constitutes a socio-political and cultural space within which the full realisation of the individual can be achieved, in an increasingly globalised context. This is a prerequisite for the development of active, democratic, and planetary citizenship.

The crux of the matter lies in the awareness that, particularly through educational practices in other contexts, society must recognise its educational responsibilities in caring for future generations. Caring is synonymous with widespread motherhood, which encapsulates society's capacity to intentionally transform itself into an "educating subject" (Agazzi, 1965, p. 26).

## Conclusions

Regardless of the weakening of the meaning that the concept of care is having in the contemporary context, reflecting on the good practices of the contexts of Elsewhere, it is appropriate to recognize the key role of the community, as a subject capable of '*taking care*'. This supports the subject in his/her personal growth, but also in his/her path of participation in the community and search for the common good. This is because caring

always creates self-care or care about and, in so doing, unravels the potential of the subject. It is always situated between the conforming action of an educational model for the subject and the motivating action of a personally interpreted educational path. [...] Care lies in human action: it is the praxis of human knowledge. It addresses man's crisis and well-being, it cares for him, it invents him, and it creates him. Care determines the human person in his unique unrepeatability (Cambi, 2010, p. 12).

It is interesting, therefore, to see how these care practices originate in the family context since it is in the history of the family (different in the various socio-cultural contexts) that something universal can be grasped, in which '*taking care*' is a transversal category, which in its expression transcends all space-time particularities. The act of giving oneself educationally is, therefore "the condition that can only be in the qualitative place of trust, of the compossibility of differences, of the full assumption of each as a plenary subject" (Mottana, 2017, p. 40).

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## **4.4. Participatory pedagogical strategies during the Covid-19 lockdown for university students**

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### **4.4.1. Introduction**

The debate, accentuated during the Covid-19 pandemic, on how to use technologies without them replacing real relationships and negatively affecting social and relational skills is more alive and current than ever. In the experience of the project “S-POT: design workshops” at the University of Macerata (Unimc) - Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, presented in this article, technology has become a necessary tool for rethinking participatory teaching, creating proximity despite closure.

The main results that are examined below are the relational dynamics that were established and strengthened in this course, the cooperative and participatory dimension, the pedagogical opportunities offered by technological means, and the educational strategies that emerged from the meetings and dialogue with the territory. Participation and positive feedback from students highlighted the importance of going beyond school and university buildings, also seeing themselves as part of a fluid human community, where strategies of meeting and listening to each other can give rise to professional paths and strategies “from below”.

### **4.4.2. How the idea was born**

The “S-POT design workshops” were born during the 2020 lockdown, during a health emergency. Following the disruption of face-to-face

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teaching in universities and schools, the Unimc team for the SUPER/POT project - “Orientation and Tutoring Pathways to Foster University and Professional Success” launched at the beginning of the 2019/2020 academic year sought strategies and initiatives to provide continuity in tutoring and orientation, including remotely.

The project, funded under the MIUR Orientation and Tutoring Call 2017-2018, had so far developed its actions along three main lines/trajectories: orientation activities for students in the final year of secondary school; support for students of the three-year degree course in educational sciences (L-19) and the master’s degree course in pedagogical sciences (LM-85); and development of events and activities to encourage dialogue between students and professionals from the world of work and associations in the area working in the social and childcare sectors.

POT tutors, students in the LM-85-degree program, have been prepared for peer tutoring activities through training meetings and workshops on readiness and active, non-directive listening, to better support their bachelor colleagues in facing the academic path. Faced with the vulnerability created by social distance and global emergency, the first online initiative was “S-POT: relationship points.” A “relaxed” meeting space for L-19 students offered in two slots: the “morning brunch” and the “evening aperitif” to encourage greater participation and inclusion. The goal of the initiative was to create moments of sharing and contact among people who, before the closure, had lived in those same university spaces.

Following a line of active listening, these moments were created as a stimulus, to dialogue and address uncertainties and difficulties, working together on creative strategies to generate connections and participation, even from a distance. In the first meetings, a small group of bachelor female students, thanks to an informal and listening atmosphere, began to share stories and experiences that brought to light the problems and needs that emerged in this period of crisis.

The sudden and overall change in the first months of the emergency led to a great sense of disorientation, even within the university environment (Cinque & Culcasi, 2021): teachers who, within a short period of time, had to deal with new tools and technologies in adapting and redesigning their lessons and teaching strategies (Arduini, 2021); students who were suddenly deprived of their learning spaces and opportunities for dialogue and socialization with their peers; and the interruption of more practical and experiential activities, such as internships and workshops (Deluigi, 2021). In this period of uncertainty and general adaptation to e-learning and smart-working, some relational and practical aspects were penalized and it appeared that quite a number of students were lost in dealing with this precariousness on their own. The absence of face-to-face teaching or other cultural initia-

tives that could have allowed them to get in touch with work and professional scenarios, led some students to develop doubts and questions about how their educational and professional futures would shape up (ibid., 2021).

The shared digital space for brunches and aperitifs (“S-POT”), managed by tutors, allowed for recreating connections between students and the university, as well as for engaging students in facing the challenges posed by the health emergency: rethinking and imagining strategies of participation and involvement to overcome uncertainties and drops in motivation. From the reflections that emerged during the discussions, the POT team took up these challenges and planned training meetings to overcome the obstacle of distance and bring community workers for minors, third sector entities and associations working to support families and children closer than had been possible in face-to-face meetings. The training strategy included problem solving, simulation, and peer cooperation activities to make the experience as practical and dynamic as possible. From the first informal contacts, we moved on to a more organic project, the “S-POT Design Workshops,” which we’ll analyze in terms of creation, development, and impact.

#### **4.4.3. S-POT design workshops: the experience agenda**

The “Design Workshops” were developed through four workshops, each lasting six hours. Each workshop was divided into four meetings open for up to 30 people. They were aimed at bachelor’s and master’s degree students. Each student could register for a maximum of two workshops to guarantee a place for more people. A total of 53 students from the L-19 courses and 56 students from the LM-85 were involved; four POT tutors were coordinating and supporting the three-year degree students in the planning phase; and a professor, responsible for the whole project, was in charge of supervision, organization, and the creation of links and networks among the different realities and figures: eight professors from the pedagogical, psychological, philosophical, and legal areas of the degree courses were involved (Deluigi, 2021).

To give an idea of the complex social and educational situation, we looked at four distinct territorial services, considering the students’ curricula.

The first workshop, called “A coffee at the end of the shift,” saw students “enter” the Lella<sup>2</sup> educational community, which cares for unaccompanied foreign minors (MSNAs)<sup>3</sup> to listen to the team.

2. Lella 2001 is a ONLUS Social Cooperative that founded ‘Casa Lella’, a residential and daytime Educational Community for minors.

3. [www.lella2001.it/](http://www.lella2001.it/)

“When Babies Sleep” was the name of the second workshop, in which the pedagogical coordinator and two educators from Macerata’s municipal nurseries shared remote interventions implemented with parents and children<sup>4</sup>.

The third workshop, “Crossing Precarious Thresholds,” gave voice to the territorial and home-based educational team of Nuova Ricerca Agenzia Res, which used home-based work to strengthen the educational relationship with its recipients<sup>5</sup>.

To conclude, the invitation to the fourth workshop went to the Scarabò association for “A Cup of White Tea” with students, to tell about the initiatives it launched during the lockdown to remain active in the field of community development and the educational city in the Macerata area<sup>6</sup>.

The first two meetings, held with students of the two university courses, focused on dialogue, listening to the direct experiences of professionals in the field, with analysis and reflections by faculty.

In the first meeting, “Face to Face with Services,” students were able to engage with operators and professionals from the area involved in the management of the health crisis in their area of intervention. The style of the meeting was rather informal, based on sharing, where students were able to interact with the professionals, with the tutors as facilitators and moderators of the discussion, under the supervision of the faculty. Hearing direct statements from frontline Covid-19 practitioners in highly fragile settings with educational complexities was extremely interesting for the students. Participation in the discussion, curiosity, and interest in learning more and listening to the stories of professionals provided students with much reflection, both from a personal point of view, because of the shared history and experience of the emergency, and from a professional point of view, for the operators who find themselves dealing with this situation, called as never before to bring their skills and professionalism into play in educational and creative contexts.

In the second event, “Critical Reflections with Unimc Teachers,” teachers shared analyses and reflections on the themes that emerged in the meetings with the professionals engaged with the students. Students were able to reflect on the difficulties and critical elements from the evidence, taking an interdisciplinary stance, in a guidance process. The process of identifying critical elements and formulating innovative strategies and trajectories in response to challenges is an integral component of educational

4. [www.comune.macerata.it/servizi/scuola-e-nidi/#1570612868208-dec9dea4-08a1](http://www.comune.macerata.it/servizi/scuola-e-nidi/#1570612868208-dec9dea4-08a1)

5. <https://coopres.it/>

6. [www.scarabo.it/](http://www.scarabo.it/)

work. Such endeavours are meticulously planned and executed, rather than being spontaneous or haphazard (Deluigi, 2012). This reflective and design phase is developed in the context of a continuous and dynamic dialogue between practical experience and analysis/reflection on theory.

The gaze offered by university faculty was able to create moments of reflection and sharing in which to develop change through the educational relationship imposed by the pandemic. Facing the lack of physical contact and adapting to new dynamics mediated by screens and technologies with an interdisciplinary attitude brought students back to their own professional prefiguration. This was also done encouraging them to seek problem solving strategies to face the future creatively and with reasoned planning.

The last two appointments focused on cooperation and planning among students. At this stage, the heterogeneous group was divided and specific meetings were proposed for students in the three-year course and those in the master's course. The students were asked to simulate group work and to plan, in a small group of 5-6 members, educational actions from the challenges that emerged from the statements of the professionals in the area.

The third meeting "Shaping Ideas" was the most practical and active. Through an initial brainstorming session, students were able to identify the main challenges and trajectories on which to focus their educational proposals. From this point, they independently created self-organized working groups. A shared format was provided as a starting point for drafting the educational action, and each group had access to its own Teams classroom where members could work together. Technological support was essential for cooperation. The tutors (two for each meeting) supported the creative and design processes of the L-19 students, encouraging the exchange of ideas and reflections on the feasibility of the proposals developed by the groups.

Master's students, on the other hand, given their greater autonomy in the preparation and drafting of projects, were directly supported by the project's reference lecturer in some methodological issues related to the coordination of the groups.

The specificity of these activities was the collaboration among peers: some of them had a strong creative ability in imagining unusual actions and paths to be then applied to practical situations with the help of those who had a more concrete and analytical vision. There were those who formulated ways to develop networks and nurture connections and communications, despite Covid-19, those who supported the group in drafting and shaping the project, and those who mediated group interaction or facilitated dialogue. Each participant was able to experience their personal and

professional attitudes and find themselves in new roles within the group's work.

The last meeting, "Giving Voice to Ideas," was dedicated to a plenary presentation of the work done. At the end of each presentation, the tutors and/or teachers highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of each action and, together with the group, discussed them constructively and proactively. With L-19 students, we found a great eagerness to create innovative paths and activities, drawing on distinct skills, including personal ones, sometimes partly separated from real feasibility for the context analyzed, but addressing the problems encountered. A focus on targeting the recipients of educational activities emerged, considering the dynamics mentioned by the operators, such as commitment to teamwork. Skills that still need to be refined and developed through field experience and practical activities. The master's student groups demonstrated a «critical, operational and practical maturity, capable of taking up challenges and contextualizing them in an organic and thoughtful way» (Deluigi, 2021, p. 28). Of note is the presence of several student workers from the LM-85 course with experience in an educational setting.

All the socio-educative services involved in the workshops received the materials produced and provided their feedback, emphasizing feasibility and criticality of the different proposals.

#### **4.4.4. Student voices**

At this point of the contribution, we consider important to include the feedback received from the participants at the end of the project to offer the views of the main recipients of this educational activity. Taking time for feedback and reflection is essential in participatory and democratic learning (Deluigi & Fedeli, 2021). This allows trainers, educators, and tutors to assess the actual learning and educational effects of planned activities with students and to identify, in their own words, unexpected skills achieved and awareness of the path taken (Laurillard, 2014).

The transformative process triggered by sustainable assessment places the student in a position of autonomy and "learning to learn". Feedback takes a generative approach of collaboration and co-construction of meaning (Boud & Soler, 2016) and was collected at two levels: orally throughout the process, thanks to the dialogic dimension and in the final return phase; and at the written level, through an online questionnaire with multiple-choice and open-ended questions focused on the evaluation of the experience in professional and formative terms.

First, it is worth noting the general appreciation that emerged from the multiple-choice questions. 100% of participants stated that if more “design workshops” became available, they would participate again.

In addition, 82,5% expressed the highest satisfaction rating regarding the open dialogue with professionals in the field, and 14,3% gave a positive rating. Regarding the second meeting, in which dialogue was held with lecturers from Unimc, 81% of the students stated the highest satisfaction rating, while 14,3% confirmed very high ratings. Regarding the work in small groups, the rating was slightly lower, probably because, as stated in the recommendations, “it would have been useful to have more time to work together”; however, the satisfaction index is high as 65,1% expressed the highest level and 22,2% gave a very high rating. Regarding the design phase and the possibility of structuring a shared idea, 72% of students were completely happy and satisfied, while more than 20% expressed a high level of satisfaction. Finally, regarding interaction and mediation with tutors, 69,8% gave a high rating, while 25,4% percent said they were satisfied.

In addition to stating their level of satisfaction, participants answered a series of questions in terms of quality, highlighting some macro-themes that we will analyze below to provide a more detailed picture of learning processes and outcomes.

#### **4.4.5. Seeing things through professional eyes**

One of the main aspects that emerged from student feedback was the opportunity to “enter, albeit virtually,” into distinct socio-educational services and into the daily lives of professionals. This meant “coming together and further immersing themselves in the situation, in educational practices” and observing how professionals had to deal with the health emergency and its consequences in their relationships and daily work. Being able to “listen to their typical day, but also their emotions, insecurities and fears,” encouragement to “reinvent themselves every day” and face the difficulties of educational work allowed future educators to take the position of the educators and pedagogists and reinterpret the global context of Covid-19 from a different point of view than their own. Being able to identify with the practice, thanks to the direct testimony, led to a greater awareness of the skills required: “They opened my eyes to many things that I had not considered before” – and again, “the direct experiences allowed us to ‘broaden’ our horizons and see perspectives that had remained in the shadows until then”.

Entering the context also meant encountering the difficulties and fragilities caused by the pandemic, especially from the relational and affective point of view in educational services. This was true at Casa Lella, where the frustrations of the pandemic added to those from the setting and adolescent stages of the guests, and in the supportive relationships that Res Agency workers experience with youth and children with disabilities or attention deficit disorders. The challenge taken up by children's services of maintaining contact at a distance and "finding strategies to strengthen relationships with children but also with parents, despite the emergency," encouraging and "stimulating an educating community" with "networks of relationship and solidarity between services and separate settings".

#### **4.4.6. The practice of planning**

Another feature that was highly appreciated, according to participant feedback, was "the opportunity to participate in the development of a project, evaluate it and present it to the mentor in question". Being able to experiment in this way "means putting into play all the theory we have studied over the years and translating it into practice". "Facing challenges", turning book learning into something practical and evaluating it, is a need that many students have expressed in light of teaching that is still too "theoretical" and detached from practical work: "During the course of study there are very few planning opportunities that are actually essential", and "I realized how much I need to experience what I have learned so far".

Translating this into direct, personal experience, the use of a simple simulation triggered students' processes of self-assessment of their own learning, along with problem solving, and stimulated great curiosity and interest in the proposed areas of study. "Thanks to direct feedback from colleagues and faculty, I was able to learn that the quality of design ideas is not taken for granted, and this boosted my confidence in myself and in my possible future professional skills". "This experience helped me develop thoughts to try to consider the variables, contexts and participants, an idea that is at the heart of design".

#### **4.4.7. Cooperation and sharing in remote meetings**

For many students (26%), the aspects of cooperation and discussion among peers are what most valued the workshop experience. "The opportunity to discuss with other colleagues, future professionals, who were in

some ways ‘unknown’ was a great learning experience because being able to exchange ideas, impressions and thoughts allowed me to grow a lot in my relationship and communication with the team”. In an era characterised by the near-extinction of peer-to-peer relationships within university settings, and the concomitant diminution of opportunities for dialogue and confrontation, the utilisation of technology has emerged as a significant opportunity.

The advent of technology has facilitated the formation of unexpected bonds that would not have been possible in a physical environment. A notable illustration of this phenomenon is the case of student workers, who, for the first time, were able to engage in hands-on activities with their peers. “Group work helped me develop and strengthen relationships with colleagues I did not know before this experience. Being able to make comparisons, even critical ones, allowed me to learn alongside them and increase our closeness despite the physical distance”.

Relating with colleagues to create a coherent product and perform a task within the team brought several skills into play: “Being able to be with others, even if through a computer, was a very important opportunity. Being able to talk to older students, being open to others, these are all aspects that are sometimes underestimated when teaching face-to-face”. Discovering that such collaborations and relationships are possible, even at a distance, was like a breath of fresh air that “reactivated my curiosity and passion for studies”, and “gave me strength, like a lifeblood”.

The re-establishment of interpersonal connections and the facilitation of interactions between individuals served to reinforce the perception of a sense of affiliation with a more extensive collective entity. This, in turn, engendered a sense of communal belonging among the student body, specifically within the context of the University of Macerata: “Today I am prouder than ever of my university, of its ability to create ‘living communities’, even at a distance. This is something every student should be able to feel”.

For many, it has been a starting point: “It made me feel part of something at a time when our lives were like frozen”. “Creating a project as part of a group and being able to work on it with colleagues was the most important experience of this period and, in general, of my college experience”.

In order to get involved with some competence, it is necessary not only to equip oneself as an individual professional, but also as a member of working teams, experiencing group dynamics through simulations, case studies, open discussions, and the development of project ideas that find space for development in the workshop to give impetus to shared reflection, addressing social challenges and changes (La Gioia, 2018; Stramaglia et al., 2020).

## Conclusions

Although it was a brief experience, the workshops revealed some directions that need to be taken and explored in order to address the challenges of education in isolation, distance learning, and the renewal of training and learning methods and activities.

We identified the importance that the students themselves recognized in cooperative group work and peer-education, as well as in listening to live testimonies. These are activities that nurture and awaken curiosity, enthusiasm and inquisitive attitude, essential foundations for living, well-placed and complex knowledge. It is the responsibility of the trainer and educator to identify how to channel these strengths towards the fundamental problems of our era (Morin, 2000, p. 16). This is particularly pertinent when the action is directed towards those who will subsequently find themselves working in educational settings.

We can see that the effectiveness of small group activities was also influenced by the opportunity to interact with teaching staff and tutors, who were able to provide feedback and observations on an ongoing basis during the activity. Such close interaction becomes more difficult during classes with large groups of students, but the presence of tutors from the master courses, who act as facilitators in the practical or simulation activities of what was learned in class, can be an interesting methodology.

Another aspect to highlight is the great opportunity offered by technology when it comes to shortening the distance between practitioners and the local social context. Technology has become an interesting tool to consider for getting out of the academic classroom and meeting professionals. In fact, educational action is «to be understood as a social and cultural practice» (Deluigi, 2012, p.85), which is why the educational function that testimonies and stories from those in the field is a useful support tool for future educators. In this way, students become accustomed to «moving in multiple reference contexts». Consequently, in the future, they will learn to create links and networks with different environments and contexts, both formal and informal, institutional and associational (Deluigi & Fedeli 2021, p. 95).

It is evident that the advent of the novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) has precipitated sudden and drastic changes to the global educational system. The absence of physical interaction and proximity has the potential to erode the relational dimension of education, with online teaching often reduced to a mere replication of face-to-face classroom instruction. Accordingly, knowledge risks becoming «increasingly anonymous» (Morin, 2000, p. 11) and detached from its contextual and real-world foundations.

To meet the challenge and maintain the interconnections of a complex and “volumetric” knowledge, distance learning must inevitably transform into the identification of strategies and tools to reconstruct relationships that, face to face, had been taken for granted (Baldassarre, 2021). The transition scenario caused by the health emergency can be transformed, as pointed out by the European Association of Service-Learning in Higher Education (EASLHE), into an opportunity to unite and bring about a course transformation. (Albanesi et al., 2020).

The relational aspect of teaching has become a focal point for educators, presenting an opportunity to rethink and revitalise pedagogical practices in a more participatory and democratic manner. There is a significant opportunity to renovate practices and the educational system itself, aligning teaching methods more closely with the learning styles of the contemporary generation. In this context, the design of teaching and learning activities that extend beyond the mere transmission of theory and information becomes imperative. These activities must be crafted to facilitate the formation of connections and intersections that not only enrich the complexity of life and experience but also nurture the skills and competencies that are essential for the 21st-century (Morin, 2015).

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## 4.5. Adoptive families as an example of good practices of social inclusion

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### 4.5.1. The background

The family is a vehicle for an educational culture and contributes to the construction of the wider social culture. The person, alongside a biological and genetic heritage, inherits a complex system of knowledge, beliefs, values, customs, and traditions that tie a group of people together and are acquired socially (Tylor, 1881). In this perspective, the socio-cultural environment impact the growth of new generations.

In adoption, we can see a unique complexity. There is a history prior to adoption, which adoptive parents and children did not share and which is marked by unfavourable early experiences, disruption of emotional ties, educational or health needs and time-place transitions. Sometimes, adoptive parents and children also have a different cultural affiliation.

This reference framework shows how the adoptive family is called to build its own identity, through an original and creative synthesis between multiple belongings. This means that adoptive parents must be aware of the need to provide the child with the necessary tools to strengthen their roots and to support integration pathways within the family, community, and social context (Santerini, 2012). Adoption requires unprecedented skills in understanding cultures (Favaro, 2012), and the adoptive family becomes a laboratory of interculturality; against the risk of denying differences or opting for assimilatory drifts.

For these reasons, the paper brings to the attention some experiences that help to highlight key elements for promoting the adoptive family context as a model of integration.

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### 4.5.2. Inclusion: adoptive families' strengths and needs

The data presented in this paper are part of a larger research project about educational support for adoptive parenting (Tabacchi, 2021a)<sup>2</sup>. In this context, it was possible to deepen some key issues on parents' perception of inclusion and stigma about their family and children.

Specifically, adoptive parents are asked to reflect on the resources and critical issues encountered in family life, regarding the topic of inclusion in the field of parental or friend network, school, educative services, and local community.

a) *Parental or friend network*. Adoptive parents recognize the difficulty of friendly and neighbourhood networks to understand adoption. A recurrent mistake is the tendency to normalize the experience. "The trend – when you adopt a very small child – is to forget their history" (4.35f)<sup>3</sup>. It is difficult to recognize the specificity of adoption and the importance of considering the story of the child in its uniqueness.

They told me: Oh look, all adolescences are like that. And I answer: 'Yes, but she is adopted, it's different'. They say, 'No, no. It is so for everyone!' (3.36f).

This undermines the possibility of a real debate and dialogue: "It is very difficult to confront each other, because there is also a basic attitude to simplify the situation" (2.34f). Many parents detect the lack of sensitivity and preconceptions of false beliefs towards adoption.

You can explain a thousand times the context in which you live, the fact that you do not feel less mother than her [*the reference is to a biological mother*], but she will always see you as inadequate (1.37f).

Not infrequently, adoption raises indiscretions and curiosities, and the inappropriate questions also involve adoptees.

I feel very open to dialogue if someone asks me some questions. But when I see that the questions are asked only out of curiosity, I close or I answer sarcastically (1.38m).

2. The sample of the survey consists of six couple of adoptive parents, involved in qualitative interviews.

3. The narratives are classified on the basis of the number assigned to the interviewed couple and the question of the semi-structured interview, followed by the indication of the gender of the interviewees: m/f.

At the beginning of school, a woman turned and said: 'Ah, what a strange name, but why do you call yourself that?' And he said: 'Because I was adopted'. And she looked at him and ran away. I was shocked (2.35f).

It is therefore necessary to protect themselves from inappropriate messages and communications, because these words hurt and feed feelings of discomfort in the child and in the parents. In these situations, parents provide adequate support in the process of construction of self-identity.

We will try to do everything possible to make him grow by understanding that adoption is not a diversity to be ashamed of or uncomfortable with, but a part of his life (2.35f).

Likewise, it becomes necessary not to stumble upon the error of claiming.

From someone who has no experience, who says the sentence in the right way and at the right time. We also make a lot of mistakes if we talk to other people about some experiences that we have not lived or we do not know in depth. You must also be a little tolerant and you must also take some observations with a smile on your face (5.35f).

Taboos, halos, and shadows do not allow understanding of adoption. These elements ask adoptive parents also to tolerate the lack of knowledge and to develop a proper culture of adoption.

b) *School and non-formal education.* There are many cultural gaps encountered by teachers and educators, such as an English teacher who "in primary school for the interculture week proposed: All foreign children sing a song in their own language" (3.35f), or another teacher who asked to a child: "Would you like to tell us something about your country?" (3.35f). They do not consider the fact that, in intercountry adoption, the children forget their mother tongue and, often, they do not have many memories of their homeland and traditions. In other case, an ethnocentric perspective emerged, which combines different Countries with an image of poverty or cultural backwardness.

Another risk, at school, can be to normalize adoption.

The teacher tells me: 'I no longer notice that she is adopted'. No, you must keep it in mind every day because when something happens you must know that there are words that must be used in a certain way. And it is not an element that must frighten or that must be secreted or forgotten (4.35f).

An inclusive and comprehensive approach to the real needs of pupils is urgently needed, respecting the elements of each student's background. For this purpose, the good practices consolidated over time summon school staff to handle the issues related to story-telling with great care and to do this jointly with students' parents (Guerrieri & Nobile, 2016; Guerrieri, 2024), through a process of co-responsibility and participatory design between school and family (Tabacchi, 2021b).

We can consider some examples of joint responsibility.

The first days of school, the teacher said: 'Well, there are a lot of problems with your son's reactions. He was fighting, he could not contain himself. Now we roll up our sleeves, the psychologist, you and me, and we face the situation. Look, remember that your child will be a treasure for the class. So, we will succeed'. And this we did. Every week, on Friday, she came first to work and she dedicated me an hour of her time (5.36f).

This synergy creates the premises for building a profitable relationship, where the needs of the child are considered and accepted with empathic understanding, offering a help to overcome a critical situation.

Her Italian teacher is very good. She says: 'I feel when she stiffens her hand. At that moment, maybe I take a turn: Everything okay? The word comes?' When she told me so I thought: Thank you Lord that you gave me a teacher so, that she saw her, that she has a glance that goes beyond the spelling mistakes (3.36f).

Adoptive parents also monitor educational contexts, to better suit the children's needs and to consider whether the context is sufficiently protective and suitable for the child:

At the oratory she clashed the first times with the children who teased her. And there sometimes she was sent down, sometimes she learned to defend herself (3.34f).

We have sought a summer camp *ad hoc*. Clearly not the oratory, with 500 children, with animators who are little older than him, but a service with the presence of educators. He attended three days a week. Gradually, he tried to increase the frequency (5.34f).

Inclusion in life contexts, therefore, involves parental mediation, which supports the process of socialization, even in situations of discrimination.

c) *Local community*. The public's awareness of adoption is also marked by stigma and prejudices.

In my opinion, social media are really a double-edged sword, because they give the opportunity to talk to people who have no idea what they are saying (2.34f).

I believe that there is a real difficulty in disseminating information. There is a basic attitude of remarkable simplification of the situation (2.34f).

Society does not accept diversity, but in all its forms. It can be the diversity of the skin colour, the diversity of culture, the diversity of religion, the diversity of coming from a biological mother rather than from an adoptive mother, and therefore society is frightened by diversity. In my opinion, we should work at 360° to disseminate a culture of inclusion (5.35f).

There is just ignorance, because it is not yet a widespread culture, and we play an important role as popularizing (4.35f).

There is a critical link in the diffusion of correct information. This prompts adoptive parents to reflect on how to build a different culture on adoption.

We must speak and explain. In many cases, our talk of adoptive culture has taken root; we have been heard and understood (2.34f).

For complex topics, however, it is also utopian that you can find so many people eager to deepen the subject, to know it, to understand it. So, it is important to find effective tools to easily convey some themes (5.36m).

The most appropriate tools must be found to convey messages of welcome and openness, as well as to promote a dissemination by people competent on adoption themes. At the same time, it is noteworthy to identify policies that encourage a positive vision of adoption. Parents emphasize the need for top-down political efforts:

If you want to affect information, you have to start from the top. Because if there is no political access, there will never be a proper dissemination of correct information (2.35f).

When the child has somatic features or skin colour different from those of the host community, parents highlight the perception of a not welcoming society.

In the current Italian society, the greatest difficulty is for children of different ethnicities. There is indeed an attitude of rampant racism (2.35f).

I feel the pain of my daughter. You must learn to carry her pain (3.15f).

We recognize two levels: parent's perceptions of the suffering and injustice inflicted on the child; and a level of involvement that is specific to the adoptee.

In this moment, he suffers so much because he has dark skin. 'I'm ugly, I'm gross because I have dark skin'. I tell him that everyone has different skin, hair or eyes colours. I tell him that he is not disgusting, indeed his skin is beautiful. But he always feels outnumbered. Then I tell him that we understand. Even when we were in his country of origin, we felt like minority (5.33f).

It is, moreover, difficult for an adoptee to accept his own diversity and consider it as a resource.

In Italy there is a standard of beauty, and she says: 'I want to be white; I want to have blue eyes'. This continuous search for acceptance and to please the other" (3.33f). 'She always tells me: Do you like this one? Is this one beautiful? Do you prefer blonde women?' (3.33m).

There are also worries for the future and potential racist consequences.

I am afraid that something wrong will happen and that his skin colour will penalize him. Because the same thing made by someone with white skin has a weight; while it takes on a different weight if done by a person with dark skin. So, I am afraid this could penalize him (5.33f).

Not rarely, a person who is somatically different automatically is perceived as a foreigner. The language conveys contradictory messages, underlying simplifications and legitimizations of racism or educational inequalities (Gillborn, 2008). For this reason, it is important to educate children to grasp possible discrimination.

She wants to be a doctor. It might also be that there you will find one who says: 'I don't want you to touch me!' You must leave the freedom of a person to have a smaller brain and not to be able to accept (3.35f).

These attentions are crucial, as mental closure and prejudice are obstacles to inclusion but also to the development of equality and Social Justice. In this, however, the family cannot act alone. How well a couple highlights:

If you want to affect information, you must start from above (2.35m).

Exactly, because if there is no way to access at the political level there will never be a way to have also a dissemination of information correct for what it must be.

Unfortunately, that is true. Yes, I think and hope that the only way to go is that and thank goodness, there are these associations, this coordination... But in my opinion, they are still few, too few, too undervalued, not heard (2.35f).

From the adoptive parents' narratives, we come to an interweaving with the surrounding reality and the need for friendly policies of adoption and cultural actions that can have a significant impact on the widespread culture surrounding adoption. In this political action, according to the interviewees, family associations play a key role, as they carry out an advocacy action.

### **4.5.3. Discussion: good practices for inclusions**

According to an abductive approach, the parents' personal experiences and the literature is sought to better understand the phenomenon in question and to develop correlated scientific knowledge (Pierce, 2014). The intertwining of narratives and literature allows us to categorize the main topics to better understand inclusion and adoption, while identifying strengths and problems highlighted by the parents in different fields.

Literature from the past 30 years shows how adoption intertwines continuously with the theme of stigma: "a combination of misinformation, assumptions, stereotypes, judgmental outlooks, and biases culminate in actions, comments, or attitudes" (Baden, 2016, p. 6). Starting from the studies related to micro-aggressions, a concept coined in the late seventies (Pierce et al., 1978), it is possible to examine some forms of stigma, typical of the modern age, in the adoptive field (Wegar, 1997, 2000; Garber & Grotevant, 2015). This stigma, linked to several dimensions, involves, in different ways, all the actors engaged in the adoption process, interweaving adoption-based (Baden, 2016) and, in some cases, ethnic-based discrimination (Lee, 2003; Coakley & Buehler, 2008; Morgan & Langrehr, 2019)<sup>4</sup>.

In accordance with international studies, the narratives of adoptive families show that adoption is marked by stigma and prejudice, and by critical issues related to cultural and somatic difference.

Lorenzini (2013) emphasizes the dangers of ineffective integration processes, in association with a political and cultural climate hostile to diversity, which can lead to attitudes of racism and intolerance. There is a widespread climate of mistrust and hostility towards diversity, and epi-

4. The Anglo-Saxon literature speaks about race-based discrimination (Steward & Baden, 1995). In this paper, we prefer to use the term ethnicity, as we do not share the cultural background of the concept of race, since from the scientific point of view there are not races, but only one human race.

sodes of racism and discrimination against the adoptive identity (Ferritti & Guerrieri, 2019). This means drawing attention to the importance of fostering processes of socialization and integration within the family and of promoting truly inclusive environments.

It is essential to provide intercultural competences training. However, adoptive parents, not experiencing adoption, and cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity themselves, might opt for a *color blind* approach and not perceive their children's identity needs (Caballero et al., 2012). It is necessary to implement a cultural receptivity (Coakley & Buehler, 2008) and a cultural competence (Vonk, 2001) in adoptive parents, revisited in the light of Pylypa's studies (2018), which affirm the importance of vigilance against stereotypical cultural views.

Cultural receptivity (Coakley & Buehler, 2008) means the willingness to seek educational opportunities to understand the needs of children, with respect to different backgrounds. Cultural competence (Vonk, 2001) is defined as an interweaving of knowledge, attitudes, and skills that equip adults to help children to develop a positive identity and to cope with any discrimination.

In this perspective, it could be interesting to investigate the theme of the promotion of intercultural education within adoptive family.

- i. *Educational communication.* The dialogue between parents and children benefits from addressing issues related to adoption, with a view to *openness in communication* (Wrobel et al., 2003). It is important that children can consider adoption as a resource and feel that the person has a value of their own, beyond their origins, skin colour, or physical features. It consists of deconstructing the language behind adoption and racism, in all its forms (Obasuyi, 2020).
- ii. *Preparing for adoption-based discriminations or racism.* Children must be prepared for the micro-aggressions that they may face in society, related to adoption-based or ethnicity-based discrimination. They must be aware and equipped to defend themselves or to seek help. This is fundamental in order not to endure episodes of bullying or reiterated discrimination.
- iii. *Supporting the construction of an intercultural identity.* Everybody should have the possibility to feel to belong to different and plural elements, which could interact and mix with to each other in an original way (Lorenzini, 2019). From an intercultural perspective, people have the right to express, maintain, reshape his own identity, through dynamic and creative processes, which promote unity in the discontinuity (Ricoeur, 1990; Pati, 2016).

- iv. *Fostering inclusion.* Adoptive parents play an important role in integration within life contexts. On the one hand, they position themselves as social mediators, establishing positive relationships with the outside; on the other hand, they identify experiences of socialization and affiliation, which can prove sustainable paths on the emotional, social, and cultural levels (Paradiso, 2015).

It is precisely the adoptive families, in their constitutionally open-mindedness towards others and diversity, that contribute to the construction of educational co-responsibility and the humanization of the environment (Tabacchi, 2021b). They bear witness to the value of dialogue, of promoting different visions of the world, and at the same time, they recognize the continuous enrichment that comes from society. They feel part of a wider relational network, which can be a protective factor for adults and children. For this reason, families interviewed report their attempt to make a cultural impact, promoting different narratives about adoption, within daily exchanges with people, teachers, and educators.

This encourages families to rediscover their leadership and to contribute actively to solving community problems. In this way, the domestic system is increasingly emerging as a centre of humanization and a primary source of social collaboration and responsibility (Pati, 2014).

Nevertheless, the complexity of the phenomenon calls for urgency cultural renewal to overcome this stigma and to provide access to a more mature vision of adoption. How can inclusion and integration be foster within the living environment? Educational agencies are responsible for supporting the dissemination of a correct vision of difference and uniqueness. Equal policy should begin in the family and continue at school and in the wider community.

Some help in this direction comes from adoptive family associations, which exalt the interinstitutional subjectivity, the empowerment, and the operational competence of the family. Furthermore, they have an important role of advocacy and they promote proper adoption culture and inclusive family policies.

## Conclusions

How emerges from the essay, there are critical issues in the widespread adoptive culture and related family policy. We can argue that “the invisibility of adoption stigma may be even more profound given the lack of formal attention adoption is given in clinical training and society as a whole” (Baden, 2016, p. 21). For this reason, collective action is required to

recognize and validate adoption micro-aggression: “increased understanding will facilitate improved pre-adoption placement practices and more effective post-adoption services and will increase awareness of adoption sensitivity among community members” (Ibidem).

The family should be considered a privileged interlocutor of institutions, to be involved in the development of educational and social policy. In this regard, family associations are valuable resource, in promoting a widespread culture of adoption and in soliciting targeted interventions based on the needs of those involved. Locally, associations are active in offering training for families and group settings, contributing to the construction of social cohesion against individualistic drifts.

In this viewpoint, adoptive families are examples of intercultural environments, where cultures interact with each other (Ouellette et al., 1999). They embody a broader vision that promotes sustainable opportunities and new forms of community cohesion through education.

Based on the considerations made in this paper, it is necessary to disseminate a well-informed adoption culture, rooted in intercultural education. Institutions and educational services must foster a more sensitive and appropriate climate regarding adoption, while investing in a welfare system that supports families in all their forms. The educational awareness developed by adoptive parents becomes a heritage for all families and for building a culture that respect children’s rights. These good practices should be replicated and extended within the wider social context to foster the development of inclusive communities.

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## 4.6. New educational paths of social citizenship. Towards a relational welfare

*Vito Balzano*<sup>1</sup>

### 4.6.1. Introduction

Our epochal crisis profoundly affects the field of education, urging pedagogical reflection to address a dual challenge: the need to investigate the emerging demands of the person, and the urgency of translating critical issues into educational opportunities (Bauman, 2010). A relevant and complex issue theme, that arises, aims to analyze the increasingly important relationship between social policies and educational policies, in the perspective of renewing of the Welfare State which, in the light of the current economic crisis, has generated the emergence of new vulnerable social categories and growing inequalities. Today it becomes necessary to rethink the very concept of the welfare state, or rather it is good to try to draw up a reform of the Welfare State that aims, as has happened for other sectors, to the indispensable contributions of social pedagogy, to make a new welfare of real support of the person. As Pati reminds us, the epistemological role of social pedagogy, lies in identifying what is happening across various areas of human experience, and then offering possible pathways for change, development and progress toward ongoing personal and collective improvement.

The founder of modern welfare and the notion of social citizenship, T. H. Marshall, believes that welfare protects against economic fluctuations ensuring citizens the “universal right to a real income regardless of the market position of individuals” (1964, p. 64). Welfare, rethought as a social investment, is particularly suitable for education, which requires long

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times, generational intervals, and is a universally recognized public benefit. Indeed, it can be said that “Education, in this perspective, takes on a completely new historical role, as the first pillar – and not the last – of the modern welfare system in Western societies” (Colombo, 2015, p. 40).

As Bertolini writes, in the places in which individuals find themselves, and in the roles they perform, they must continually reflect on what their political responsibility can be, which is at the same time a responsibility towards both them and others (2005). In the relationship between politics, welfare and educational planning, the urgency concerns both the educational and political commitment aimed at removing the motivations that have contributed and contribute to alienating people from politics, and to addressing the deficit in public ethics that, in the recent past, has led to the waste of environmental, economic, and even moral resources, to the detriment of future generations, both to the reception and attention to all the attempts made by many young people to rebel against the lack of a sense of injustice and the lack of respect for those rights, such as study, work, welfare, security, in part better guaranteed to the generations of the past (Bertolini, 2003).

The pedagogical contribution is already effective in the world of work where, for example, those concepts that the pedagogy of work first, and then economic policy, have renamed as “personalization of work” and “humanize work” are taking root, that is, starting from an exquisitely social and cultural profile, they try to reaffirm the human value of work, going beyond the assumption in a purely instrumental sense (Elia, 2012, pp. 123-124), today it becomes necessary in order to rethink the very concept of the welfare state, or rather it is good to try to draw up a reform of the Welfare State that aims, as happened for other sectors, to the indispensable contributions of social pedagogy, in order to rethink a new welfare of real support of the person.

#### **4.6.2. Authority and power in the media society**

The question of education’s responsibility for the condition of contemporary humanity emerges from multiple perspectives and converges on various themes. One of these pertains to the concept of authority and to that crisis that has already affected it for a long time. Another interesting aspect is power, in the educational sense, and its management by man within the media society (Felini, 2019).

Citizenship education, today, includes the intercultural perspective, necessarily incorporated because it is the backbone of a plural society.

This new citizenship represents a horizon of life and a higher level of co-existence, more open to the future than what we can meet if we take the in-volutionary and twisted paths of particularism, privileges, moral and political disorder (Corradini & Refrigeri, 1999, p. 175). An education to citizenship that must be affirmed as an education that does not prevent us from cultivating humanity, as Nussbaum would say, to form citizens who are able to reflect critically, respect the differences of others and recognize themselves in a common humanity: show students how beautiful and interesting a life open to the world is, how much satisfaction one gets from being citizens who refuse to accept uncritically the impositions of others, how fascinating the study of human beings in all their real complexity is, and how important it is to live based on reason rather than submission to authority (Nussbaum, 2013, pp. 199-224).

Power and authority are particularly complex issues in adult education. There are clear guidelines for how to educate young children and teenagers in elementary and secondary schools with the use of power and authority, however there is comparatively little research that has been done regarding how an educator should position himself or herself with regards to their control of the classroom. It is generally considered that the educator in an adult education course should take a step back and allow for more autonomy among the students. The questions that this research paper will seek to ask and subsequently explore are: What is power? What is authority? How have power and authority been implemented in other classrooms? What might be an ideal, general way to implement these elements in adult education and why?

According to Michel Foucault, a great 20th century thinker, power is a relationship. That is, people with power could modify the behaviors of other people through the threat of violence, economic clout, or political/social authority. Power is not the actual enactment of whatever capacity that the stronger party in the relationship holds because the elements of your relationship no longer check the actions of another, but rather it is your gun, the shackles that bind them, or some other form of physical, corporeal inhibition that blocks their freedom. Furthermore, power cannot exist without some measure of freedom. The two must go together. If there is not freedom, then you do not really have any behavior to modify in the first place (Smith & Hains, 2012).

An example of power as it is described by Foucault would be in the relationship between a professor and his students. The professor has the power by which to grant grades, and that will modify the relationship that he has with his students. The students who seek to take advantage of their professor's position of power by winning his good grades will do the

assignments that he assigns. Certainly, the students have all the freedom in the world to not do the assignments, but they will not win the future credibility of the institution nor the professor when they seek to find a job or perhaps apply to other schools in the future. Thus, we see here that the professor has a position of power that is vested in him by the university to allot grades and judge the performances of students.

Max Weber takes a different position on power, whereby he defines power as the actual enactment of violence and/or the violation of a person's physical space by another. So, an exercise in power would be the forcible restraint of a student in a school. This differs from Foucault's definition of power in that Foucault sees things a bit more abstractly. As was stated before, in the Foucaultian definition of power, if a child at a school were to be restrained, that would have meant the power relationship failed. What was now enforcing power against the child would be the actual restraints (i.e., handcuffs, security guards, other teachers), and not the person or people with whom the power relationship was established (Merriam, 2014). Weber has a negative view on power, stating that it is what occurs once authority has failed. Authority will be discussed in detail in another section, although it is essentially the same as Foucault definition of power where people fall into line within a hierarchy because of the potential of the exercise of power by the authority. In Weber's view, power yields negative results in an organization and its exercise will likely lead to much more insubordination somewhere down the line.

Erika Kitzmiller (2013), who studied power and authority in classrooms in detail, describes three types of power: abdicated power, autocratic power, and relinquished power. Abdicated power describes a situation where the teacher lacks authority with their students and thus they do not respect his directives. In this scenario, the behavior issues have gotten so far out of control that the teacher has essentially ceded power to the students themselves who take the responsibility of regulating classroom behavior while the teacher essentially looks on and collects a paycheck. This is viewed as an extremely cynical position and is generally seen in extraordinary circumstances.

Autocratic power is essentially the opposite of abdicated power where rather than compensating for their lack of authority through a state of hypo-vigilance, the teacher assumes a state of hyper-vigilance whereby they micromanage and obsessively try to control the actions of students in the classroom in a desperate attempt to get them to behave. Essentially the teacher will quash any behavior that they see as a potential threat to their authority in the classroom and this can lead to several innocent students seeing themselves being accused of intentions that they never had. In the

long run, this only leads to a lack of respect and a degraded learning environment.

Relinquished power is like abdicated power except for the fact that the teacher has handed over authority to another person within the organization because they are essentially unable to assert either authority or power on their own. This usually comes in the form of having some sort of security personnel, administrator, or another teacher sit in on the class to ensure that students are not misbehaving.

The difference between power and authority has already been touched on from Weber's perspective and it is essentially the same as Foucault's definition of power. It is a relationship whereby people accept a subordinate position to another institution or person because of their potential to launch an exercise of power.

Weber also follows up with the assertion that "where there is authority, there is resistance". In essence, he is saying that the reason why authority is necessary is because there is a resistance in the environment towards the infliction of authority upon certain individuals in the society (Kitzmiller, 2013). People do not want to be controlled unjustly, which makes perfect sense. Deferring authority to somebody places a population within a position of immense vulnerability, and people do not want to expose themselves to this potential threat.

Given these facts, the responsibility of institutions and individuals who have assumed authority is to try and establish the legitimacy of their authority and this has required the expenditure of enormous resources. Universities, for example use enormous resources to establish and maintain their authority by acquiring competent professors, building world-class facilities, and spending money on advertising their programs.

#### **4.6.3. The educational value of communication: rethinking the concept of dignity**

A decisive element within the educational relationship is, without a doubt and, above all, communication, particularly in one of its forms constituted by dialogue. In addition to verbal communication, however, the implicit dimension also plays a fundamental role and within it the emotionality that often takes on an intangible character, yet decisive in the relational process. Empathic listening, therefore, becomes an essential element to offer to every person, as Ricoeur recalls (2005): relational existentialism, in fact, affirms that the person cannot subsist in isolation and independently of the other. The other thus becomes the fundamental term of reference to

allow the person to exist as such. The other is the means of confrontation, the place within which to allow everyone to discover themselves, to know each other and to act.

This represents an important first step, but it does not exhaust the continuous search for educational models useful for the construction of the citizen and the foundations of social pedagogy which, of course, require distinctions of gender and age. There is, in fact, a gender issue that, although analyzed as a sociological datum, affects both pedagogy and the politics themselves – interdisciplinary, transversal – and which repeatedly makes use of communication and its significant contribution (Kanizsa & Mariani, 2017).

Man, person, and dignity are the three terms that intrinsically enclose the macro problem of reading and deciphering pedagogy, within a history of resemanticized expressions precisely on the level of pedagogical planning, interpreted in relation to the original meanings of the many empirical, pragmatic, and utilitarian forms of man and his relational life (Elia, 2016). Today we are living in a time proper to humanism, a time in which the dignity of the human person plays a primary role in social life and more than yesterday demands to be recognized and respected in all forms of expression. On the social level, sensitivity to violations of fundamental human rights is growing and spreading, together with the need to safeguard or promote goods such as peace, development, the integrity of nature, solidarity, the identity of a social group, an ethnic group, a people. Hence the need to rethink the very concept of dignity in a pedagogical key, in a daily life that too often neglects reflection on the person, on his civic sense, benefit favoring summary and superficial readings that lead to the crisis of values repeatedly denounced by the sciences of education.

Pedagogy, therefore, has the dual task of strengthening the idea of humanism and of elaborating matrices of connection between person and education, moving with conscious comparison between the different rationalities that cross the human sciences and working so that the fundamental conflicts between a man who cannot be treated empirically are not reproduced, outside any horizon of value and meaning and a teleological tension within education and the sense of respect for man. It is here that the personalistic characterization of education becomes the fundamental pivot of the most current pedagogical reflection since it can respond on the level of theoretical argumentation and in the design matrices, correctly based on the value of the person and on respect for the dignity that embodies and concretizes the value. It should not be forgotten, in fact, as Flores d'Arcais points out, that the use of the term “person”, and the characterizations with which it is accompanied (dignity, value, right to life, etc.), through widely

used in common language, is often used within pedagogical-educational issues without rigorous attention to its meanings and without being supported by a logically coherent organic discourse, theoretically founded and/or legitimized. What is needed, therefore, is the coherence with which to look at problems, highlighting the centrality and primacy of the person, as “the fine subject of educational action, as well as the willingness to eliminate any pre-established assumption or a priori and start from personal experience and from the questions that each person is able to feel” (Flores d’Arcais, 1994, p. 140).

A new pedagogical dimension, therefore sees with particular attention the problems related to the question of dignity in order to be able to outline educational paths that ensure recognition and respect; personalistic pedagogy is a candidate for a place of confrontation and dialogue with other theoretical fields, such as those of bioethics, economics, law, politics, in which criteria and principles inherent in the idea and exercise of dignity are being further developed, with the possibility of seeking meeting points, coherent and shared responses to the challenges that dignity poses with respect to diversity and dialogicity, to political and social ideologies, to the specificity of man as compared to other beings, which radical positions want to consider people. One could speak of a heuristic requirement that is guided by the hypothesis that pedagogy is not only interdisciplinary knowledge or even self-referential knowledge; in both cases the critical-interpretative direction of the complex forms of attention to dignity and of the equally composite perspectives of attention to the centrality of the person in social and political reality would be weakened (Santerini, 2019). We do not intend to grasp the theme of dignity through forced lines of interdisciplinary convergence, because it is not possible to reduce to uniqueness principles and categories belonging to specific and differently structured knowledge and we do not want to arrive at a reading of the question oversimplified in the light of problematicity and complexity with which the same dignity is proposed in the practice of human behavior and relationships, because pedagogy is not self-sufficient knowledge and sufficient in itself. Instead, we want to emphasize the formation of man as the core content proper to pedagogy and its legitimizing and founding problem, understanding the breadth of the semantic field within which attention to the person and to the exercise of his humanity is being built, identifying conditions and limits for the enhancement of human dignity, directions of meaning of the design character of education.

#### **4.6.4. The sense of a social citizenship today. New scenarios for the Welfare State**

In light of the foregoing analysis, pedagogy can – or perhaps it is better to say must – propose a possible new educational path, equal to and at the same time different from the past, oriented towards the socio-cultural evolution of the community but, at the same time, anchored on the foundations of the category of responsibility, to the sense of responsibility and to that broad and debated hypothesis of social citizenship (Chiosso, 2002).

Education, in this perspective, is configured as the natural terrain in which the person-value grows luxuriantly with multidimensional, integral, total digits: due to the interactivity and transversality of its dimensions of development (Donati, 2000). In the wake of this idea of person, therefore, the representation of the generational ages that inhabits the pages of the most accredited pedagogy in the old continent is decidedly far from what populates today's consumer civilization, precisely because it prints children and young people transformed into a humanity of mannequins: created and set culturally for market reasons by today's commercial industry (Donati, 2006). The pedagogy that is emerging from our analysis reflects theoretical assumptions oriented to broad consensuses that come from the old continent but, at the same time, is oriented to combat both the mercantile culture that denies the historical-social identity of young people and, consequently, their rights of citizenship, and the Ptolemaic pedagogies ideologically at the service of today's society of globalizations (Elia, 2014).

Educating for citizenship in the post-truth era represents one of the great themes of social pedagogy that can contribute to reworking a new idea of social citizenship starting from the main contexts such as school. The path that must be traced, therefore, will have to outline a new idea of democracy, useful and functional to the construction of a social citizenship, which “does not aim to be only a form of government, linked to the political-economic dimension, but become necessarily a form of thought, a thinking with and for the community, starting from the individual, respecting the diversity, the characterizations of each one, aiming at that broad and always current concept that sees education engaged in the construction of a path of democratic citizenship” (Balzano, 2020, p. 73).

The recognition of citizenship rights is not to be interpreted as the automatic result that is achieved through the simple belonging to a nation-state as a citizen, but “the concept of citizenship bears in itself the history of the path of recognition of civil and political rights, which has seen in the State, in citizens, and in the relationship between rights / duties

established between them, the affirmation of social rights and, with them, the constitution of the ideological and practical presuppositions for the birth of the Welfare State” (Balzano, 2017, p. 50). Therefore, the concept of social citizenship, coined by Marshall, sees in welfare the measure that resolves economic situations, guaranteeing citizens the universal right to a real income regardless of the market position of individuals (Marshall, Kiffin-Petersen, & Soutar, 2012). And the practical application of strong active participation in the life of the community is certainly represented by volunteering, as an action of gift-giving in a new idea of a helping relationship capable of promoting and building a community capable of making people participate in that widespread sociality that nourishes the ethics of responsibility.

The traditional relational welfare system, based on increasingly strong interpersonal relationships, has laid the foundations for the evolution of the modern idea of community welfare, where the educational space, the place where the educational project develops, becomes fertile ground for understanding and interpreting, in a pedagogical key, the modern relationships characterizing the liquid society (Bauman, 2011). The so-called targeting has become, in the last decade, a key element in the elaboration of social policies and has crossed, with different intensity, all the models previously exposed. The exception is the Scandinavian welfare welfares which, by virtue of a robust scaffolding of historically consolidated universalistic type, manage to be almost completely immune to it. Thus, was born the idea of community goods, collateral to community welfare, which become an integral and essential part for the development of the new idea of well-being, being the logic of welfare defined precisely in offering support to conditions of individual fragility through collective mediation (Gherardi & Magatti, 2014).

This perspective converges in the concept of relational welfare (Sechrist, 2019), anchored to the constitutive traits of social pedagogy, it becomes fertile ground for a new idea of community to sprout, different from the classical vision that the modern world has developed, especially in the second half of the twentieth century. To act in a practical sense, therefore, to give oneself both materially and ethically to one’s neighbor, to the other, to the different. The very idea of community, which has become central to the evolution of social and welfare policies, indicates the space of relations between the different social actors who are called to exercise the collective responsibility of building the local system of care and promotion of social well-being (Annacontini, 2019). At the helm of the community, of every good community, there are educators, in the new professional guise, responsible for guiding, according to the participatory and

relational dynamics of pedagogy, the educational practice of building the identity of the responsible citizen within the fragmentation of the present.

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## 4.7. #Oracomesto<sup>1</sup> Covid-19 Survey: Social epidemic fatigue and mental health impact

*Mariella La Forgia<sup>2</sup>, Maria Agostina Bucci<sup>3</sup>, Luigi Starace<sup>4,5</sup>*

### 4.7.1. Scenario and Rationale for a Longitudinal Study

The Covid-19 pandemic, spanning from 2020 to 2021, stands as one of the most significant social and health events in recent history. According to the World Health Organization's 2020 recommendations, it became crucial to investigate the pandemic's social impact, the phenomenon of pandemic fatigue, and related mental health issues. Our research group chose to focus on an extended observation period, concentrating on three critical phases of the pandemic in Italy. The first phase analyzed the initial national lockdown through the #Oracomesto1 (OCS1) survey. This was followed by a second survey, #Oracomesto2 (OCS2), conducted during the second wave of the pandemic emergency. With the renewed lockdown during this second wave, we carried out a third survey, #Oracomesto3 (OCS3), to compare the two Italian lockdowns. This longitudinal survey deals with not only a critical moment for the Italian population but is one of the few long investigations comprehending the two strange years: 2020-2021. It is one of the few longitudinal Italian survey with 3 assessments. In few details the #Oracomesto survey (Starace, La Forgia, Bucci, Altamura, 2020) is a semi-qualitative, mixed-method questionnaire developed using Google Forms. The survey collected responses at three different time points, reaching a total of 1,665 answers from across the country.

1. Oracomesto means "How am I now?".

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3. University of Foggia.

4. Stigmante Art Media and Psychiatry - Center for the study of Fragile Diversities, Mental NCDs and Medical Humanities.

5. University of Foggia.

The longitudinal #Oracomesto survey aimed to address several crucial questions regarding the Italian population’s psychosocial experience during the Covid-19 pandemic:

- What did Italians experience during the first national lockdown?
- How did individuals react during the summer reprieve, when restrictions were eased?
- What were the psychological and social responses to the return of a familiar, yet distressing, lockdown condition during the second wave?
- How did perceptions of personal well-being change across these phases?
- Which daily and domestic habits gained relevance in shaping a sense of stability or comfort?
- How were institutions and the healthcare system perceived in terms of trust, communication, and responsiveness?

These questions guided the mixed method’s multi-phase analysis: emotional adaptation, behavioral shifts, and the broader societal impact of prolonged health emergencies.

Tab. 1 - Major Covid-19 Italian Studies with 3 assessments

| Study                                            | Institution/<br>Organization                                             | Sample<br>Size | Main Objectives                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Study on Covid-19<br>Related Stress              | Catholic University<br>of the Sacred<br>Heart                            | 4,185          | Assess the impact of<br>Covid-19-related stress<br>on well-being and future<br>anxiety                    |
| #Oracomesto                                      | Stigmamente<br>Study Center for<br>wellbeing.<br>University of<br>Foggia | 1,67           | Monitor well-being,<br>stigma, mental health,<br>and communication<br>during different<br>pandemic phases |
| Study on Mental<br>Health in Italian Adults      | University of<br>Padua                                                   | 1,258          | Monitor<br>psychopathological<br>symptoms and<br>psychological well-being<br>longitudinally               |
| Study on Sleep<br>Disorders and Mental<br>Health | University of<br>L'Aquila                                                | 1,062          | Analyze longitudinal<br>changes in sleep,<br>anxiety, and mood<br>during Covid-19                         |
| COVID-BioB Study<br>(Post-COVID Patients)        | IRCCS San<br>Raffaele, Milan                                             | 495            | Assess prevalence of<br>post-Covid fatigue and<br>its trajectory over time                                |

Social distancing measures implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic had a profound impact on individuals' daily habits. According to reports by the World Health Organization (WHO), a widespread state of pandemic fatigue emerged globally, characterized by reduced motivation to adhere to protective behaviors and increased psychological distress (WHO, 2020). Despite efforts to find resilient ways to maintain positive feelings, there was a marked increase in escapism toward 'other' or 'new' realities, as people sought suitable narratives in media, virtual environments, and gaming worlds. In this context, digital technology offered alternative forms of connection, entertainment and new craving patterns (La Forgia, Ferretti, Starace, 2022).

The emergence of Covid-19 as a global phenomenon marked a remarkable intensification of both biological-neuronal and informational exchange within the infosphere (Floridi, 2014). This accelerated flow has contributed to a rapid ontological redefinition of human identity. In response, individuals increasingly seek new forms of meaning – new 'mythologies' – to navigate a radically transformed social and existential landscape.

A large body of multidisciplinary literature has investigated the reference heuristic model, considering it similar to a complex multi osmotic processes, whereby two compartments are connected by an extended exchange interface/surface (Bawden, Robinson, 2016). Furthermore, the challenges of postmodernity have revealed that social research no longer deals with fixed or simple societal outcomes (Cianconi, Sacco, Starace, 2019). Mental health is one of the fields in which this complexity is most rapidly and clearly evident (Cianconi, Tomasi, Starace, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic has deeply affected social bonds and significantly limited the possibility of being together. Numerous studies have analyzed and provided evidence on the tremendous impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on society and individuals (Holmes et al., 2020; Pfefferbaum & North, 2020; WHO, 2022; Eurofound, 2021).

#### **4.7.2. Pandemic fatigue and social impact of Covid-19 on the Italian population**

According to WHO Pandemic fatigue is a complex of emotions that includes sadness, boredom, loneliness, anxiety, fear, anger, frustration and resentment. Pandemic fatigue is an expected and natural response to a prolonged public health crisis – not least because the severity and scale of the Covid-19 pandemic have called for the implementation of invasive mea-

asures with unprecedented impacts on the daily lives of everyone, including those who have not been directly affected by the virus itself.

As said our research group decided to focus on a long period of observation (2020-2021) so to compare the two Italian lockdowns and the free phase: a critical moment for italian population.

Tab. 2 - Timeline of the OraComeSto Surveys: Pandemic Phase, Timing, and Sample Size

| <i>Covid-19 Phase in Italy</i>                               | <i>Survey Period</i>   | <i>Survey Code and Notes</i>                                                | <i>Number of Questionnaires</i> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| First lockdown (Lock1: March-May 2020)                       | May-June 2020          | #OraComeSto1: Administered shortly after the end of the first lockdown      | 424                             |
| Free movement phase with mask mandate and regional red zones | November-December 2020 | #OraComeSto2: Administered 6 months after the first survey                  | 635                             |
| Second lockdown (Lock2: March-April 2021)                    | April-May 2021         | #OraComeSto3: Administered during the second lockdown, 12 months after OCS1 | 606                             |

4.7.2. Global consideration about the Onlife Copying Strategies: adaptation of human agents to a global digital environment

During the last decade we have become accustomed to conceptualizing our life online as a mixture between an evolutionary adaptation of human agents to a digital environment. ICTs are as much re-ontologizing our world as they are creating new realities. The threshold between here (analogue, off-line, etc.) and there (digital, online, virtual, etc) is fast becoming blurred, but this is as much to the advantage of the latter as it is of the former. The digital is spilling over into the analogue and merging with it (Robinson, Bawden, 2017).

The increasing digital and AI rewriting the reality (a new ontology between real/maybe and fake) of artifacts and of whole, social, environments suggest that soon it will be difficult to understand what life was like in

predigital times and, in the near future, the distinction between online and offline will become blurred and disappear.

In pre-Covid-19 years screen-based entertainment has evolved beyond TV and movies. Streamers and studios are challenged to attract and retain younger generations who have grown up with smartphones, social media, and video games, which deliver finely tuned experiences that are social, interactive, and immersive. People and companies are being accelerated into digital life, setting the stage for the current excitement about the metaverse where virtual spaces become common destinations for work and play. But these shifts were already in place before Covid-19.

With millions recording themselves doing the latest viral dance moves, influencers driving sudden demand spikes for products, top musicians delivering other-worldly concert experiences to global gaming audiences, and virtual goods becoming with non-fungible tokens (NFTs) and cryptocurrencies, digital life may be gaining on so-called real life. During the pandemic phases video games or streaming series offered people an outlet for self-expression, immersion and copying old and new strategies. The lockdown kept them at home and they could digitally go out via the tv series mostly.

As demonstrated in our other survey, *Seriequest (Social impact of infohybrids and effects the mythopoiesis processes in the Covid Occidental Society and Cultural Industries)*, during the Covid-19 pandemic, a strong demand for reality, or for a dimension of verisimilitude, emerged. There was little interest in science fiction, fantasy, or erotic content when it came to the choice of TV series.

This suggests not an attempt to escape or transform/ transmute reality, but rather an intensified desire to remain close to it, following its trace through the consumption of documentaries, comedies, and other ‘realistic’ genres.

#### **4.7.2.1. What was the reaction to the pandemic social stress?**

Where did the Italians take refuge during the lockdown to face the anxiety? In our analysis emerged that they have created an “alternative virtual reality” in which to continue living their daily lives. There was an increase in “on demand services” such as Netflix platform (Netflix Reverse), Amazon Prime Video, Spotify, movies, films, etc.

People have begun to identify themselves with characters of the series. A new set of “virtual relationships” emerged: a mixture between an evolutionary adaptation of human agents to a digital and immersive environ-

ment. In the near future, the very distinction between online and offline will become blurred and then disappear.

### 4.7.3. Creation of #Oracomesto survey

While numerous studies have focused on psychological illness, health-care professionals’ burnout, and post-traumatic effects, very few have examined the personal resources that the Italian population relied upon during the total lockdown phase. We believed it was necessary for the scientific community to continue monitoring well-being and psychological distress related to Covid-19 even after the lockdown phase, according to the dictates of social psychiatry, the known studies on stressful effects on populations and groups as well as on the health of individuals, moreover after a certain latency time and the return to everyday life. The survey made on a google module was proposed in many social media groups dealing with Covid-19.

#Oracomesto is a semi-qualitative questionnaire composed of multiple modular sections. The first part collects demographic and contextual data, including age, residence, education level, self-description of social and cultural activities, and beliefs about the pandemic. The second part includes internationally standardized scales: the WHO-5 Well-Being Index, GAD-7 for anxiety symptoms, PHQ-9 for depression and suicide risk, AUDIT for alcohol use, and CD-RISC for psychological resilience. We also included several of our own measures related to domestic habits, trust in institutions and health-care systems. Our work shows few inter and intra variations and differences in the stressed Italian population, according to pandemic fatigue studies.

*Tab. 3 - Psychometric Measures and Their Relevance to Pandemic Fatigue used in Oracomesto survey*

| <i>Instrument</i>                                | <i>Construct Assessed</i> | <i>Relevance to Pandemic Fatigue</i>                                                                                                                                                                  | <i>Reference</i>     |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>GAD-7</b><br>(Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7) | Anxiety symptoms          | Pandemic fatigue is often accompanied by sustained worry, nervousness, and hyperarousal in response to ongoing uncertainty and threat perception. GAD-7 provides a rapid screening for these symptoms | Spitzer et al., 2006 |

| <i>Instrument</i>                                           | <i>Construct Assessed</i>                     | <i>Relevance to Pandemic Fatigue</i>                                                                                                                                                                                       | <i>Reference</i>        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>PHQ-9</b><br>(Patient Health Questionnaire-9)            | Depressive symptoms and suicide risk (item 9) | PHQ-9 detects symptoms such as demotivation, low energy, and loss of interest, core elements of pandemic fatigue. Item 9 specifically screens for suicidal ideation, which may increase under chronic stress and isolation | Kroenke et al., 2001    |
| <b>WHO-5</b><br>(Well-Being Index)                          | Subjective psychological well-being           | A decline in well-being is a key marker of pandemic fatigue. WHO-5 offers a positive measure that reflects vitality, cheerfulness, and daily satisfaction                                                                  | Topp et al., 2015       |
| <b>AUDIT</b><br>(Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test) | Risky or harmful alcohol use                  | Increased alcohol consumption is a documented maladaptive coping mechanism during prolonged stress. AUDIT assesses risk patterns in substance use                                                                          | Babor et al., 2001      |
| <b>CD-RISC-24</b><br>(Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale)     | Resilience                                    | Resilience buffers the psychological toll of the pandemic. Assessing resilience helps understand interindividual differences in fatigue response and adaptive capacity                                                     | Connor & Davidson, 2003 |

Research was born on the initiative of the no profit Italian association *Stigmamente Art Media and Psychiatry about Stigma and Diversity* (which has been involved in the prevention of psychological distress for 20 years) within the support of the Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery of the University of Foggia and was developed together with several social media channel like PsichiatriaSociale.it and AMIGAY, Italian Medical Association for LGTBI health professionals.

#### 4.7.4. Timing of the three calls and summary report

After the first survey call (Lock1) we realized that the phase of social reopening of summer and autumn 2020 presented an apparently similar context to the postlockdown months, but much more disrupted both in the capacity of personal judgment and in the aggressiveness of denial, the result of a complex mix of political polarizations, social discontent and functional scientific illiteracy: we decided to propose the second survey, #OraComeSto2. At a first look not differences emerged, except for the increase of suicidary risk (PHQ-9). As coming the second lockdown (Lock2) we realized that a third call was necessary. Therefore from april 2020 to may 2021 we have administered 1.665 questionnaires. After a first part of respondents general data, our research group have investigated a series of personal's factors by the survey, to understand Covid-19 social impact on italian population, their well-being perception and pandemic fatigue.

*Tab. 4 - Diagram showing the three Italian phases of the pandemic, the time period and its duration and the number of questionnaires administered online per phase*

| <i>Variable</i>                    | <i>OraComeSto1<br/>(May 2020)</i> | <i>OraComeSto2<br/>(Nov. 2020)</i> | <i>OraComeSto3<br/>(April 2021)</i> |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Number of respondents              | 424                               | 635                                | 606                                 |
| % Female                           | 67%                               | 73.2%                              | 83.4%                               |
| Age range                          | 20-70 years                       | 20-70 years                        | 20-70 years                         |
| % Residents in apartment buildings | 62%                               | 63%                                | 56.7%                               |
| % Residents living with family     | 64.1%                             | 69.8%                              | 67.1%                               |
| Geographical distribution*         |                                   |                                    |                                     |
| – Northern Italy                   | 35%                               | 35%                                | 35%                                 |
| – Central Italy                    | 25%                               | 25%                                | 25%                                 |
| – Southern Italy                   | 40%                               | 40%                                | 40%                                 |

We have investigated the following items by our statistic sample: Covid-19 social impact on italian population; well-being perception of people; WHO's Pandemic fatigue; the grade of trust in institutions during the Covid; if respondent people have had a Covid experience; increase in the alcohol consumption; increase of suicide risk. We have also investigated

whether after lockdown they kept their job, if compared to the pre-Covid period, their interpersonal relationship have changed (affections, family, friends, etc.) or if they spend more time on social media, too. We have analyzed how the perception of free time, during the Covid period, has changed and whether daily habits have changed (for example if alcohol consumption has increased among the respondents).

Finally, we have asked what emotions respondents felt during the lockdown (demotivation, stress, anxiety, fear, anger, etc.).

### Brief surveys results and conclusion

For all standardized questionnaires administered, no significant differences were observed when compared to pre-pandemic reference data. Responses followed a Gaussian distribution. This suggests that, despite the global stress context, the Italian population appeared to manage and mitigate mental health stressors during lockdown periods with relative success. About the suicidary risk, it increased to 12%, while the normal rate in Italy is 8%. In conclusion, to the stress of the lockdown, a digital friendship with high social and above all family appeal was sought, just as years ago we looked for characters from the books that were an example. We were aware of our weaknesses and of the fact that not all questions could be solved at that moment. Following some detailed report tables.

*Tab. 5 - Trust in Institutions - Percentages refer to the proportion of respondents who answered “Yes” or the indicated affirmative responses*

| Question | Question Text                                           | OCS1<br>(n=424) | OCS2<br>(n=635) | OCS3<br>(n=605) |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1        | Do you trust the National Health Service?               | 37.3%           | 86.5%           | 91.6%           |
| 2        | Are you confident in the health institutions?           | 57.5%           | 85.9%           | 90.7%           |
| 3        | Do you believe government communication is reliable?    | 16.0%           | 10.1%           | 6.6%            |
| 4        | Do you trust the media coverage on the epidemic?        | 37.4%           | 80.7%           | 80.0%           |
| 5        | Do you think the epidemic will be overcome soon?        | 26.7%           | 32.3%           | 36.7%           |
| 6        | Are you worried about the economic crisis due to Covid? | 21.5%           | 26.8%           | 26.0%           |

| Question | Question Text                                                       | OCS1<br>(n=424) | OCS2<br>(n=635) | OCS3<br>(n=605) |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 7        | Are you concerned about job security?                               | 26.1%           | 19.8%           | 32.8%           |
| 8        | Do you think social distancing rules will continue for a long time? | 21.0%           | 28.1%           | 26.7%           |
| 9        | Do you believe vaccination is the solution to the epidemic?         | N/A             | 60.7%           | 68.5%           |
| 10       | Do you think the epidemic will resolve on its own?                  | N/A             | 16.5%           | 16.7%           |
| 11       | Do you believe the coming economic crisis will be severe?           | N/A             | 88.6%           | 92.5%           |

*Tab. 6 - Pandemic Fatigue - Percentages refer to the proportion of respondents who answered “Yes” or the indicated affirmative responses*

| Question | Question Text                                                         | OCS1<br>(n=424) | OCS2<br>(n=636) | OCS3<br>(n=605) |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 12       | Do you feel in full physical shape?                                   | 44.3%           | 38.7%           | 42.6%           |
| 13       | Do you suffer from chronic illnesses (even mild) predating Covid?     | N/A             | 12.3%           | 17.1%           |
| 14       | Have you experienced psychological problems (even mild) before Covid? | N/A             | 36.3%           | 24.0%           |
| 15       | Do you fear losing your job?                                          | 63.9%           | 73.0%           | 64.6%           |

*Tab. 7 - Interpersonal Relationships and Subjective Well-being - Percentages indicate the proportion of respondents who answered “Yes”*

| Question | Question Text                                                | OCS1<br>(n=424) | OCS2<br>(n=635) | OCS3<br>(n=607) |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 16       | Do you like spending more time at home?                      | 38.9%           | 40.9%           | 57.1%           |
| 17       | Do you dedicate more time to cultural activities or hobbies? | 51.0%           | 61.1%           | 56.6%           |
| 18       | Do you feel the need to drink alcohol?                       | 32.0%           | 28.6%           | 23.2%           |
| 19       | Have you felt anxious, nervous, or tense in the last weeks?  | 53.4%           | 64.6%           | 67.4%           |

| Question | Question Text                                                       | OCS1<br>(n=424) | OCS2<br>(n=635) | OCS3<br>(n=607) |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 20       | Have you thought it would be better to be dead or to harm yourself? | 15.4%           | 10.4%           | 11.7%           |
| 21       | Do you often wake up feeling fresh and rested?                      | 16.7%           | 11.2%           | 11.7%           |
| 22       | Are you a person who loves challenges?                              | 42.5%           | 55.0%           | 47.7%           |
| 23       | Is there someone who can help you in case of need?                  | 43.2%           | 45.0%           | 47.8%           |
| 24       | Fate or God can help me when I see no solutions                     | 69.1%           | 82.0%           | 87.8%           |
| 25       | I always try to find the humorous side of situations                | 34.3%           | 23.1%           | 23.0%           |
| 26       | Do you feel in full physical shape?                                 | 46.0%           | 40.7%           | 42.6%           |
| 27       | I suffer from chronic diseases, even mild, from before Covid        | 22.1%           | 15.7%           | 6.4%            |
| 28       | I have experienced psychological problems, even mild, before Covid  | 42.0%           | 39.5%           | 47.5%           |
| 29       | I fear losing my job                                                | 36.1%           | 27.0%           | 35.4%           |
| 30       | The prohibition of physical contact due to distancing bothers you   | 69.0%           | 71.5%           | 74.6%           |

An attempt has been made to keep family morale high without exposing them to further emotional stress, even if they come from fiction. WHO definition of Pandemic fatigue is a complex of emotions that includes sadness, boredom, loneliness, anxiety, fear, anger, frustration, and resentment.

In our study, according to classification proposed by Brad Russell and others Harvard Medical School researchers, in which there are four stages of crisis fatigue:

*Tab. 8 - Classification of Pandemic Fatigue by Harvard Medical School*

| Stage of Pandemic Fatigue | Description                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Heroic Stage              | Individuals band together at the onset of a crisis to determine how to survive                                                                                         |
| Honeymoon Stage           | The reaction to initial success that occurs when individuals feel that they are “in the same boat” as others who are also taking the same steps necessary for survival |

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Disillusionment Stage | Individuals begin to feel physically and emotionally exhausted. Cue the onset of the allostatic overload. Hypervigilance now turns into irritation, rage, or despair                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Fatigue Stage         | By design, the human body cannot sustain high levels of cortisol and adrenal for long periods. This results in burnout, which can cause a person to be easily triggered or completely withdrawn. It is also the stage when people are more likely to engage in risky behaviors that are detrimental to themselves or others hence the onslaught of alcohol abuse, drug overdoses, and suicide |

At last, for comparative interpretation, we can propose the following association between the three phases of the survey and the stages described by Harvard Medical School:

Tab. 9 - Pandemic Fatigue by Harvard M.S.and Oracomesto (OCS) survey

| OCS Phase | Period        | Harvard Stage   | Key Evidence                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------|---------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| OCS1      | May 2020      | Honeymoon       | Sense of personal and proximity cohesion («we'll come out better!»), trust in science and health mandatories. No trust in governmental actions. Absence of stealth istitutional opposition                    |
| OCS2      | November 2020 | Disillusionment | Emotional overload bad trust in government actions (no vax effect relevant), increase in anxious thoughts and financial worries, first signs of physical fatigue                                              |
| OCS3      | April 2021    | Fatigue         | No trust at all in government, not only due to no vax effect. Symptoms of burnout, daily anxiety, more frequent suicidal ideation, decreased motivation, loss of interest in hobbies and social relationships |

The longitudinal analysis conducted using data from *OraComeSto* survey confirms the progressive development of Pandemic Fatigue as described by models from Harvard Medical School and WHO. From the initial phase of social cohesion and trust (the “honeymoon” stage), the process

evolved into a phase of disillusionment marked by emotional exhaustion, declining trust in institutions, and increased psychological stress, eventually leading to the emergence of symptoms of burnout, generalized anxiety, and high-risk behaviors typical of the “fatigue” stage.

From a bio-psycho-social perspective, this phenomenon can be understood as the dynamic interaction of three levels of vulnerability and response:

- **Biological:** Chronic exposure to stress and stress hormones (e.g., cortisol) results in allostatic overload, compromising physiological regulation and negatively affecting immunity and neurochemical balance.
- **Psychological:** Mental fatigue, persistent anxiety, feelings of hopelessness, and increased risk of depression and anxiety disorders are intensified by prolonged restrictions and ongoing uncertainty.
- **Social:** Reduced social interaction, isolation, loss of trust in institutions, and a growing sense of alienation contribute to the worsening of both mental and physical health conditions.

WHO data collected between 2022 and 2025 confirm an alarming rise in mental morbidity and related physical comorbidities, with a documented increase in cases of depression, anxiety disorders, the worsening of chronic illnesses, and – of particular concern – suicidal risk. These findings underscore the urgent need to reconsider existing models of primary prevention and community-based intervention, advocating for a more integrated and participatory approach. To describe this contemporary condition, we propose two new interdisciplinary concepts: the first concept is that we live now in an “Idiopathic Society”, where social and psychological distress emerges without a single identifiable cause, but rather as the result of complex, multidimensional interactions. The second concept is “fragile diversity” which means that people may experience or enter a state of fragility whose etiology is not easily defined but which constitutes a state of social and psychological discomfort and unintentional isolation that can lead to new forms of alienation from the context in which one lives. Fragile diversity is therefore highly dependent on the context and the extent to which this can directly or indirectly create forms of discrimination against individuals. We definitely live all in a different society exposed to new psycho social risks.

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## **Chapitre 5. Défis numériques**



## 5.1. Numérique et Communauté Éducative Inclusive: d'un projet facultaire à la question des parents face à l'école à la maison en contexte de confinement lié au Covid-19

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### 5.1.1. Introduction

Dans le cadre du projet facultaire “Communauté éducative inclusive” mis en place à la Faculté d'Éducation et de Formation de l'Institut Catholique de Paris depuis 2019, nous mettons au travail la question des institutions inclusives, qu'il s'agisse de l'université, de l'école, de la famille, au regard tant de ses enjeux que de ses perspectives. En posant la question de la place et du rôle de chacun pour bâtir une communauté de vie, de valeurs, de travail, d'études et de recherches, nous nous appuyons sur des fondements qui sont l'éducation pour tous, la diversité des besoins d'apprentissage, le développement intégral de la personne, la coopération entre ses membres.

Dans le cadre de ce projet, la question du numérique s'est invitée lors du premier confinement de mars 2020, plaçant au cœur de nos préoccupations l'inclusion numérique, pour nos étudiants, nos élèves, nos enfants. Pour les parents, le confinement n'aura pas été sans conséquences. Entre la fermeture des écoles, l'émergence du télétravail, l'interdiction de sortie sans autorisation, le confinement s'est conjugué avec l'introduction d'un mode de vie exclusif pour les familles du monde entier.

Après avoir exposé les lignes directrices du projet facultaire “Communauté Éducative Inclusive”, nous proposons de revenir sur des éléments

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d'enquête concernant la question de la parentalité face à l'école à la maison en contexte de confinement lié au Covid-19. Les résultats préliminaires en lien avec la dimension École à la maison seront présentés.

La communication que nous proposons dans le cadre du XIXe Congrès International de l'AIFREF présente une recherche en cours dont l'objet est de penser le numérique dans le cadre de communautés éducatives inclusives, en posant en regard la question de la parentalité face à l'école à la maison en contexte de confinement lié au Covid-19.

Nos propos s'articulent autour de deux axes principaux, le premier correspondant au projet facultaire "Communauté Éducative Inclusive" mis en place à la Faculté d'Éducation et de Formation de l'Institut Catholique de Paris depuis 2019, le second reprenant des éléments d'une enquête réalisée par le Centre MyPsy – Casablanca – et le Centre Grandir – Fès – et concernant l'expérience des parents au Maroc pendant le confinement dû au Covid-19.

### **5.1.2. Communauté Éducative Inclusive**

Le concept Communauté Éducative Inclusive – CEI – est mis au travail dans le cadre du projet facultaire de la Faculté d'Éducation et de Formation de l'Institut Catholique de Paris depuis la rentrée 2019. Il s'agit de questionner comment penser et construire des institutions inclusives, que ce soit l'université, l'école, la famille, au regard tant de ses enjeux que de ses perspectives. En posant la question de la place et du rôle de chacun pour bâtir une communauté de vie, de valeurs, de travail, d'études et de recherches, nous nous appuyons sur des fondements qui sont l'éducation pour tous, la diversité des besoins d'apprentissage, le développement intégral de la personne, la coopération entre ses membres (Mutuale, Serina-Karsky, Parayre, 2022). Notre engagement se porte tant sur le bien-être de chacun que sur celui de la communauté, ce qui suppose de prendre en compte dans un cadre éducatif, qu'il soit scolaire ou universitaire, la tension entre le bien-être individuel et le bien commun (Serina-Karsky, 2019).

Dans ce projet, la question du numérique a émergé dès le premier confinement de mars 2020, faisant de l'inclusion numérique un enjeu majeur tant pour nos étudiants que pour nos enseignants et formateurs. Il s'agit dès lors de penser au-delà d'une éducation inclusive, qui s'entend habituellement comme étant pensée pour des publics en situations de handicap ; une éducation inclusive destinée à construire un environnement susceptible d'accueillir tout public, dans une communauté d'accueil et d'études permettant à chacun de trouver sa place pour approcher au plus près sa propre excel-

lence en dépassant les contraintes et les freins qu'il rencontre. Or, le numérique est apparu lors de la pandémie à la fois comme un outil de survie permettant de poursuivre le fonctionnement de nos différentes communautés éducatives, et comme un frein en excluant les membres de la communauté non familiers de ces nouvelles technologies.

Afin d'entrer plus avant dans ces nouvelles problématiques d'inclusion numérique, nous avons mis en place dans notre institution trois axes de travail à partir de chantiers reprenant les trois verbes d'action suivants : accueillir, enseigner, évaluer. Les questions qui se sont posées ont tourné pour chacun des chantiers autour de cette problématique : en quoi les événements venus bouleverser notre quotidien nous permettent-ils de penser et construire notre faculté en tant que communauté éducative inclusive ? L'organisation a été la suivante. Chaque chantier avait à sa tête un comité de pilotage constitué de trois personnes, membres de la faculté, qu'il s'agisse de personnel administratif, d'enseignant chercheur, de formateur, qu'il soit intégré ou vacataire. Chaque comité de pilotage a pu organiser son chantier de la manière qu'il le voulait, en termes de calendriers, d'axes de travail, d'intégration de membres pour former une équipe de travail élargie, d'échelle également.

Il est ainsi rapidement apparu que le chantier **accueillir** allait s'inscrire à l'échelle de la faculté dans son ensemble. L'équipe a engagé une réflexion sur le thème « comment accueillons-nous au sein de notre institution universitaire ? ». Le mot « accueillir » ne doit pas être réduit au premier sourire ou bien encore se limiter à la mise en place d'un kit de « bonnes pratiques » qui a par ailleurs, certes, toute sa place. Mais il s'agit d'interroger et de répondre en ce qui concerne l'état d'esprit de la maison commune ; c'est-à-dire le fait d'accompagner dans un temps court ou long ceux qui viennent nous rejoindre, qu'ils soient étudiants, stagiaires, enseignants, formateurs ou administratifs.

Le chantier **évaluer** quant à lui s'est concentré à l'échelle d'un cycle, celui du Master. Les différents axes du chantier s'intéressent ainsi à l'évaluation de la formation MEEF<sup>6</sup>, à l'évaluation des enseignements, avec les étudiants de première et deuxième année du parcours cadres d'éducation, et à l'évolution de l'évaluation vers une évaluation par compétences, en impliquant les enseignants et les formateurs.

Enfin le chantier **enseigner** s'est développé à l'échelle de l'université, en s'adressant aux six facultés de l'Institut catholique de Paris. Après une enquête exploratoire auprès des membres de la Faculté d'Éducation et de Formation, ont ainsi été mis en place à l'échelle de l'université un espace

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dédié à l'EAD sur la plateforme d'environnement numérique de travail regroupant différentes ressources : tutoriels, vidéos, forums..., ainsi que des ateliers-rencontre autour de cette question de l'enseignement en distanciel. La question du numérique qui s'est imposée à nous a permis de dépasser la question de l'EAD versus l'enseignement en présentiel en mettant au jour les éléments à l'œuvre dans toute relation d'enseignement-apprentissage au cœur de laquelle se trouve la relation éducative (Mutuale, 2017).

Ces questions, travaillées dans un cadre universitaire au profit des étudiants mais où les familles sont malgré tout peu présentes, prennent une autre dimension lorsque l'on se tourne du côté de l'école, où la communauté éducative ne peut s'entendre sans les parents. Or le confinement n'a pas été non plus sans conséquences pour les parents qui ont dû conjuguer télétravail, vie de famille et école à la maison dans un contexte de cohabitation constante entre les différents membres du foyer, et ce, pendant plusieurs semaines ou mois. Les parents ont ainsi vu leurs repères, leur quotidien et leur dynamique familiale se remanier alors qu'ils se sont trouvés privés des structures de soutien dont ils disposaient auparavant (Spinelli, 2020).

### **5.1.3. Enquête: expérience parentale en contexte de confinement dû au Covid-19**

Émergeant du désir de mieux comprendre l'expérience parentale en contexte de confinement lié au Covid-19, Kettani, Ouazzani (Centre MyPsy - Casablanca) et Lepage (Centre Grandir - Fès) ont mené conjointement une enquête concernant le vécu des parents dans ce contexte au Maroc. Le recueil de données a été réalisé au printemps 2020 par questionnaire auto-administré auprès de parents tout-venants d'enfants âgés de moins de 18 ans. Le questionnaire a été conçu sur *Google Form* et a été partagé via les réseaux sociaux – essentiellement Facebook et WhatsApp –.

Dans cet écrit seront présentés quelques résultats préliminaires issus des données extraites de l'enquête concernant la dimension de l'école à la maison. A cette fin, seuls les parents ayant au moins un enfant scolarisé ont été retenus dans l'échantillon. Nous analyserons ici les données concernant trois variables:

- le sentiment de compétence du parent pour accompagner ses enfants dans les apprentissages scolaires;
- la satisfaction du parent quant aux mesures d'enseignement à distance – EAD – mises en place par l'école;
- les raisons évoquées par les parents pour expliquer leur degré de satisfaction des mesures d'EAD mises en place par l'école.

L'échantillon est composé de 182 parents âgés de 28 à 61 ans ayant entre un et cinq enfants. Plus de la moitié d'entre eux (58,24%, n = 106) font partie de la tranche d'âge de 35 à 44 ans tandis que plus d'un quart (28,02%, n = 51) sont dans la tranche d'âge de 45 ans et plus, et seulement 13,74% (n = 25) ont entre 25 et 34 ans. Il faut noter que l'échantillon comprend une forte proportion de mères (78,02%, n = 142; contre 21,98% de père, n = 40), de parents mariés (91,76%, n = 167), de parents ayant un niveau d'instruction Licence ou Master (73,62%, n = 134; contre 13,19% doctorat, n = 24; et 13,19% Bac et moins, n = 24), de familles peu nombreuses ayant 1 ou 2 enfants (71,98%, n = 131), de parents résidant en grands centres urbains (82,32%, n = 149) et de parents ayant des enfants uniquement au primaire (23,63%, n = 43), uniquement en maternelle (17,03%, n = 31), à la fois au primaire et au collège (15,38%, n = 28) et à la fois en maternelle et au primaire (13,19%, n = 24).

Un quart des parents (24,86%, n = 45) sont peu ou pas satisfaits des mesures d'EAD proposées par l'école, moins de la moitié (45,30%, n = 83) en sont moyennement satisfaits, alors qu'un peu plus du quart restant (29,83%, n = 54) en sont beaucoup, voir tout à fait satisfaits. Enfin, environ 40,68% des parents considèrent qu'ils n'ont pas les compétences pour accompagner leurs enfants dans les apprentissages contre 59,32% qui s'estiment compétents.

Sur les 182 parents de notre échantillon, 108 ont répondu à la question ouverte évaluant les raisons des parents quant à leur degré de satisfaction des mesures d'EAD mises en place par l'école. Nous avons effectué une analyse de contenu thématique des réponses à cette question. Neuf catégories sont issues de cette analyse. Elles sont classées ci-dessous par ordre décroissant de fréquence d'apparition :

- A. investissement pédagogique des enseignants et de l'établissement scolaire;
- B. degré d'exigence pour les parents;
- C. rythme et la charge de travail pour les enfants;
- D. difficultés d'adaptation de l'enfant à l'EAD – école à la maison;
- E. qualité du contenu;
- F. pertinence des supports numériques;
- G. difficultés d'accès à l'outil numérique;
- H. manque de socialisation pour l'enfant;
- I. atmosphère tendue à la maison.

Nous détaillerons ici les trois thématiques les plus représentées dans les réponses des parents.

La catégorie la plus représentée est la catégorie relative à l'investissement pédagogique des enseignants et de l'établissement scolaire avec une

fréquence d'apparition de 35%. Cette catégorie a été évoquée par 50,92% des répondants (n = 55) avec des différences interindividuelles dans le discours des parents concernant l'implication et le suivi des enseignants et de l'établissement scolaire certains parents étant insatisfaits « *Très peu d'engagement de la part du groupe scolaire et enseignants* » (S110), d'autres étant satisfaits « *Tout le corps professoral fourni des efforts monstres pour faire passer les informations et l'apprentissage aux enfants* » (S107).

La deuxième catégorie qui occupe le plus d'espace avec une fréquence d'apparition de 17%, est relative au degré d'exigence pour les parents. Cette thématique est évoquée par 25% des répondants (n = 27) qui expliquent que les mesures mises en place par l'école impliquent une charge de travail et un investissement en temps importants de la part du parent difficilement conciliable avec les autres tâches – professionnelles, ménagères... –, certains estimant ne pas avoir les compétences pédagogiques nécessaires pour accompagner les enfants dans leurs apprentissages: « *Le suivi me consomme du temps et de l'énergie* » (S104), « *C'est à moi d'expliquer à mon fils pour les faire, donc ça demande plus d'efforts en plus de mon travail et mes tâches ménagères* » (S87), « *Sachant que nous parents n'avons pas ni formation ni technique de pédagogie afin d'expliquer les leçons... en plus du suivi des exercices ainsi que la correction* » (S21).

Vient ensuite, la catégorie relative au rythme et à la charge de travail qui occupe 17% de l'espace et qui a été mentionnée par 27,78% des répondants. Parmi eux, certains se plaignent que le rythme et la charge de travail n'étaient pas suffisants: « *Travail moins soutenu, ... retard programme* » (S128). En revanche, pour d'autres le rythme et la charge de travail étaient trop importants ou les horaires étaient inadéquats « *Trop de leçons et devoirs envoyés semblables au rythme en temps normal de l'école* » (S20), « *en plus les plannings et les horaires changent à tout moment* » (S95).

## Conclusions

Presque la moitié des parents estime ne pas avoir les compétences pour accompagner leurs enfants dans les apprentissages scolaires. En effet, beaucoup de parents estiment que les mesures d'EAD mises en place par l'école exigent d'eux du temps et une charge de travail difficile à concilier avec leurs autres tâches – travail, ménagères... – et pour laquelle ils ne se sentent pas nécessairement qualifiés.

Par ailleurs, les réponses des parents quant à leur satisfaction des mesures d'EAD mises en place par l'école sont hétérogènes avec une propor-

tion à peu près équivalente de parents satisfaits et de parents insatisfaits, beaucoup ayant des avis mitigés. On retrouve cette hétérogénéité dans les raisons invoquées pour expliquer leur degré de satisfaction. Les parents sont ainsi partagés concernant l'investissement de l'enseignant et de l'école ainsi que le rythme et la charge de travail, ces deux thématiques étant parmi les trois raisons les plus invoquées par les parents pour expliquer leur degré de satisfaction.

La principale limite de cette étude est liée à la non-représentativité de l'échantillon. En effet, le mode de recrutement a écarté de fait les franges de la population marocaine les plus démunies, les moins instruites et celles issues des campagnes. En revanche, un des points forts de cette étude est qu'elle est la seule étude sur l'expérience des parents en contexte de confinement lié au Covid-19 au Maroc.

Une des suites que nous souhaitons donner à ce travail est de réaliser d'autres analyses statistiques des données visant à différencier le sentiment de compétence du parent pour accompagner ses enfants dans les apprentissages scolaires ainsi que la satisfaction du parent quant aux mesures d'EAD mises en place par l'école en fonction de l'âge du parent, du sexe du parent, de son niveau d'instruction, du nombre d'enfants et du niveau scolaire des enfants.

Bien que le confinement dû au Covid-19 au printemps 2020 ait été une situation inédite, elle n'est pas exceptionnelle. Nous serons possiblement amenés à connaître des situations semblables à l'avenir. Ainsi pour être inclusives, il est indispensable que les mesures d'EAD mises en place par les écoles prennent en compte les besoins particuliers des parents pour accompagner leurs enfants dans les apprentissages, ceux-ci étant des acteurs clés de la coéducation, d'autant plus en situation d'école à la maison.

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## **5.2. Reinventing prison schooling in the Third Millennium. Digital inclusion and social sustainability<sup>1</sup>**

*Francesca De Vitis<sup>2</sup>, Marcello Tempesta<sup>3</sup>*

### **5.2.1. Introduction**

Schooling in prison is both a right and a valuable asset recognized and shared by all EU Member States. Digital culture should not be reduced to mere technological competence; rather, it constitutes a multifaceted form of knowledge that contributes to the re-educational process of imprisoned persons. It plays a key role in fostering a civic consciousness necessary to live in the complex society, enabling individuals to perceive themselves as active citizens and agents of social change. The gradual inclusion of technology and digital innovation in prison schooling contributes to a general renewal of the educational and reeducational processes for confined persons. For the achievement of social sustainability, declined in the various goals, the United Nations 2030 Agenda calls for a systematic reflection on adult learning processes, considering both the physical and virtual environments where education takes place. Nevertheless, schooling in the prison faces some pressing issues. General issues, already identified in the European Commission's Memorandum on Lifelong Education and Training of 2000, now appear as symptoms of long-predicted educational neglect.

1. This article is a joint and synergistic effort of the authors. For the sole purpose of recognizing personal contributions, where required, it is clarified that paragraphs 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 are attributed to Marcello Tempesta, paragraph 5.2.3 and 5.2.4 to Francesca De Vitis.

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### 5.2.2. The pedagogical profile of the school inside Italy

Created by the will of the legislature, recognized in the Prison Ordinance, the school still represents the intentional environment of formal education even within the prison world. Opportunity, opportunity, favorable condition: article 19 of the Prison Ordinance is completely dedicated to it.<sup>4</sup>

Just like the school outside, the *school inside* has also participated, though in different ways, in the profound transformations of society. However, the dynamics of surveillance and control of the prison system have continued to constrain efforts toward the re-educational investment: the specific need for the formative reciprocity (teacher-prisoner learner) typical to the teaching and learning processes and necessary for the recovery of the human condition in an ever-increasing social complexity has been most often neglected (Morin, 2012).

According to Scurati (1996), the school has built its identity around specific paradigms that tend to define it as a place where education from spontaneous and unreflective becomes increasingly specific. From this idea of school is not excluded the *school inside*.

The expression *school inside* is intentionally used to highlight the pedagogical indeterminacy that, until recently, characterized the role of education within the penitentiary system. This indeterminacy manifested in three key ways: (1) the general ambiguity surrounding the learning environment, understood as the physical and symbolic space where educational activities take place; (2) the lack of a clearly articulated investment in the educational and formative dimensions of inmate well-being, despite the availability of specific pedagogical tools within the penitentiary treatment framework, such as schooling, vocational training, and volunteer programs; and (3) the particular difficulty in designing tailored professional development initiatives for educators working within the prison school system.

The *school inside* represents a significant social challenge. In 2020, something concrete is underway. The Ministry of Education (MI) and the Ministry of Justice (MG), following the pandemic event, which is still on-

4. Article 19 of the Prison Ordinance of July 26, 1975 states, “c.1. In penitentiary institutions, cultural and vocational training shall be taken care of through the organization of compulsory school courses and vocational training courses in accordance with current guidelines and with the help of methods appropriate to the condition of the subjects; c.2. Special care shall be given to the cultural and vocational training of inmates under the age of twenty-five; c.3. With the procedures set forth in the school regulations, schools of second level education may be established in penitentiary institutions; c.4. The completion of university and equivalent studies is facilitated and attendance at correspondence, radio and television school courses is encouraged; c.5. Access to the publications contained in the library is encouraged with full freedom of choice of readings.”

going, renewed and signed a protocol agreement, where the idea of a possible systemic change of the *school inside* begins to be feasibly glimpsed.

In 2016, again through the signing of a protocol between MI and MG, had begun key developments:

- legitimize from the normative point of view the introduction of technology in the *school inside* (an example is the possibility that is given to deliver training courses in mixed mode - FAD and presence);
- encourage reflection on the redefinition of educational and training pathway, in line with models and theories specific to adult education and the principles of *life-long and life-wide learning*;
- promote the training of school staff, prison administration personnel, voluntary, third sector personnel and juvenile justice, in order to optimize educational interventions and spread transversal skills as much as possible;
- recognize the school as a valuable tool for a critical review of the crime and, for this reason, rethink and redesign the school curriculum also in terms of developing the skills known as soft skills;
- emphasize the need to invest in an Individualized Training Pact which, starting from the condition of imprisonment, guides and supports the individual along a path toward social life reintegration (Fratini).

These principles are further developed and expanded in the 2020 protocol, with places added emphasis on the physical and virtual spaces of learning. As part of prison renovation plans, the redesign of both physical and virtual spaces intended for teaching-learning processes is now being considered. Within the prison context, the association between re-education and learning space is a relatively recent development. This concept was first articulated by architect Giovanni Michelucci during the design and construction of the “Garden of Encounters” in Florence’s Sollicciano prison in the 1990s. His vision has subsequently been the subject of reflection by other architects who, in their mostly technical but educational-edged reflections, have questioned whether the architecture of prison space should be considered as an essential part of the sentence or, whether, instead, its design should aim at “good living.” Regarding this, Michelucci argued that punishment and control are two categories that should be considered not as appendages of the city, of social living, but define the very form of the city and society. Therefore, according to Michelucci, building the prison away from the city reflects the idea not only of removing places of punishment from the city – as places of deviance – but also of removing from its environment the problems that can somehow disfigure its image (Marcetti, Solimano, 1993).

Unlike the relationship between the prison and the city, the school is experienced inside the system, primarily for reasons of control and security. Despite this, the *school inside* appears decontextualized: an environment that does not care for its pupils except for the purpose of teaching reading, writing and counting.

Change is needed, which can begin by recognizing that being inside the prison system, while enriching and improving it, also allows the school to take the lead in driving change and building a new life project for the imprisoned person. By aiming at the “rediscovery of oneself” and one’s potential through access to knowledge and know-how, through new ways of learning, and by increasingly fostering the rediscovery of a social and conscious knowing way of being, the school inside, from a non-place, is transformed into a space of sharing for a new educational and social project.

### 5.2.3. Training “active adults” in the knowledge society

In Italy, since 1948<sup>5</sup>, prison has become a pedagogical issue, drawing increasing the attention at both the Italian and European socio-political level to prison system.

Documents of major significance include:

- the Resolution (n. 20 of 1990) of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESCO) concerning access to education for prisoners, including programs in literacy, basic education, vocational training, creative, religious and cultural activities, physical education and sports, social education, higher education and library facilities. This was followed in 1995 by the publication of an important document *Basic Education in Prison*;
- the Recommendation (2006) of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the European Prison Rules (Part II, Art. 28(1) and (2)), which states that: “Each institution should strive to provide inmates with access to educational programs that are as comprehensive as possible and that meet the individual needs of inmates and take into account their aspirations” and that “Priority should be given to inmates in need of primary literacy and to those who lack basic and vocational education”;

5. Art. 27 of the Italian Constitution: “Criminal responsibility is personal. The accused is not considered guilty until he is finally sentenced. Punishments may not consist of treatment contrary to the sense of humanity and must aim at the re-education of the convicted person” (1948).

- the publication of *Basic Education in prison* – a literature review (2020), which represents an opportunity to critically reflect on the educational problem of prison and, at the same time, to initiate concrete pedagogical proposals.

The issue of school inside and, more generally, of educational processes within the prison, has been a significant concern for over thirty years at both the Italian and European level.

The normative proposals are all oriented toward promotion pedagogical action aimed at the formation of “active adults in society”, by investing in the axiological dimension to fully restore the sense of humanity. The revalorization of feelings and attitudes at the cognitive, emotional, relational levels – often clouded by deviant forms of behavior – is necessary for reorganizing the prisoner’s life project, starting from what can be achieved through school inside and oriented to social life outside.

An outside that today is strongly permeated by digital culture – something from which the school inside cannot remain excluded. Some important questions emerge such as:

- a) how to implement technology in the *school curriculum inside* so that students attending the same school do not suffer further exclusion from the digital world?
- b) how can the training of teachers working in correctional institutions be improved, in light of innovations in teaching methodologies with technology understood both as a mode to be integrated with the traditional curriculum and as a means of maintaining a sense of “closeness” when physical presence is not possible? (This reflection can begin with the school experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic or in situations such as the transfer of an inmate to another institution);
- c) how can the school within, currently an anonymous and depersonalizing space, be transformed into a true “place of learning,” capable of guiding educational practices and professional actions toward the construction of a new life project for the learner-prisoner?
- d) how could digital inclusion concretely become an added value for the school within?

In the school inside, regaining and maintaining a sense of humanity remains the fulcrum around which to think about initiating the spread of digital culture as well. Digital culture contaminating itself, when it is infused with “humanity,” becomes part of educational processes aimed at developing and promoting skills that profoundly influence our behaviors and ways of relating to one another.

## 5.2.4. Requalifying learning spaces and times in the school inside

Mario Lodi, reflecting on school environments and the motivating value of space in the learning process, wrote:

There is a terrible similarity between old prison cells and school classrooms: there is the same obsessive fixity of perceptual structures (colors, shapes, surfaces), the same psychological monotony. In the mid-morning stop, when schoolchildren descend into the greenless courtyard, guarded by teachers, you get the impression that you are among inmates taking the air. With one difference: that while the prisoner in the cell is left alone with his thoughts and in a sense enjoys the ‘freedom’ to think about his own business, in the classrooms there is a teacher whom neither the children nor the families have chosen, who takes the children and accustoms them to repeat what he says, rewarding those who best comply. [...] For me, those who invented prison-like schools were certainly not thinking about the freedom of their neighbors [translation by the author] (Lodi, 1970, p. 15).

Lodi’s words, although designed for the youngest and for a general concept of school, are pertinent and stimulating when applied to the *school inside*. Dispute being forced to improvise in spaces and environments that have little or nothing in common even with the monotonous and stifling idea of the of a traditional classroom – and without knowing what a green “backyard” is – the *school inside* continues its mission, despite many difficulties, thanks to the professional actions of teachers.

Faced with such a reality, what might it mean to pedagogically redevelop school spaces inside? We remember well the important insights of Montessori and Malaguzzi on the concept of the environment as the third educator. Starting from this perspective, we can affirm that, for the school within, investing in architecture and designing environments thoughtfully adapted for distance learning (digital inclusion) would mean concretely rethinking educational paths in the penitentiary. These would be based on models grounded in the logic of transformation and change (Mezirow, 2003) to ensure educational accessibility and equitable educational paths.

Redefining of the physical space of learning, together with the progressive inclusion of technology, would contribute at a global socio-political level to the achievement of social sustainability (United Nations, 2015): reducing inequality and poverty through actions capable of building an equitable society involving various institutions, including those of justice, and incorporating lifelong education (*lifelong education in prison*).

This is a process of profound innovation that does not end in a form of technological literacy (although this is important and necessary), nor at

simple masonry renovation of school facilities. The school within is called to form “active adults in society”. From this perspective, in accordance with Oblinger’s statement (2006), the design of the learning represents a key factor in promoting change.

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## **5.3. Digital communication between family and school: teachers' insights to encourage virtual family participation**

*Teresa Linde-Valenzuela<sup>1</sup>*

### **5.3.1. Introduction**

The wide range of possibilities for the use of ICT in the out-of-school educational context is accentuated in the case of secondary school students in the instrumental use of ICT to interact with their peers through mobile phones (Plaza, 2017). However, the benefits and risks of the use of technologies range from being a support for the completion of school tasks or interaction with peers, to excessive dependence (Engel et al., 2017; Gairín & Mercader, 2017; Ruiz-Palmero et al., 2021), so both family and school should guide this process to promote responsible use.

In this context, families are not always able to accompany their children's learning to use technologies from home, so the educational centre can promote this learning, addressing their concerns through family-school communication and encouraging mutual support (Kong, 2018; Linde-Valenzuela, 2019; 2022). Experiences developed to foster family participation for the integration of ICT show the positive attitude of families towards be trained and involved in the learning process of students, making contributions to define strategies for the integration of ICT and recognising the mediating role of teachers to establish family-school digital communication and promote their participation at all educational levels (Bricero-Pira et al., 2019; Ceballos-López & Zaiz-Linares, 2019; Snell, 2020).

Among the media used, text messages have become one of the main means of interaction between family and school. WhatsApp is one of the most widely used tools, as it is considered fundamental for fostering participation and communication between the family and the school, as well

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as for improving student outcomes (Cascales-Martinez et al., 2019; Snell, 2020). Therefore, the work on the different functions and use of this tool requires considering how it is used in schools, in order to reformulate the purpose of its use and optimise its educational possibilities. These new dynamics require training families in digital competences that, beyond the technical use of applications and platforms, including the attitudinal factor in order to provide this support at home (Macià & Garreta, 2018).

The real incorporation of technologies into the dynamics of the educational community has been a challenge for teachers, of which they have been fully aware, more after the pandemic. This situation forced them to adopt the remote virtual model of teaching, with all the adaptations (personal and professional) that had to be developed for this regarding their teaching digital competence (Arufe-Giráldez et al., 2020; Devitt et al., 2020; Ostemberg et al., 2020; Sanrey et al., 2020). Because of that sort of experience, it is considered that the point of view of teachers can be particularly interesting, to know their perception about the digital communication between family and school.

As the aim of the study is to show teachers' perceptions of family-school digital communication in a specific context, the design of a focus group is proposed. This consists of a form of a team interview where the reliability lies in the interaction with peers. A topic was introduced by the researcher, aiming to provide a collective vision rather than an individual point of view (Cohen et al., 2018). In focus group, participants interact more with each other than with the interviewer, so their opinions can emerge, and their agenda prevails over that of the interviewer. As data emerge from the group interaction, group dynamics become particularly relevant.

With this technique, each participant is encouraged to express their perceptions, comment on their interactive experience with the families through these media, establish a personal approach with them and encourage their virtual participation (Aguilar-Ramos & Hijano-del-Río, 2012).

As previously stated, the main purpose of this work is to show the development of the methodology and the content of the categories studied for the case under study. So, the secondary objectives of the research, addressed with this technique in this work, are to analyse the contents of each category, which contributes as following:

- To specify actions put into practice at the centre to train families and encourage their active virtual participation.
- To identify the informal social media used between family-school-pupils that are used in the centres.
- To define the factors that favour or hinder teachers' use of ICT to inform families and encourage their virtual participation.

- To find out the teachers' perception of the need for training to inform and train families (promoting their virtual participation at the educational institutions).

Finally, the significance of this work is to point out the relevance of the focus group design as an instrument of analysis and the qualitative nature of the information that can be collected as part of a research.

This work aims to demonstrate the relevance of the discussion group in research focused on recognizing and promoting innovative practices and edu-communicative strategies that enhance families' digital media literacy and encourage their virtual participation in educational centres. The objective of this study is to explore teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and use of informal social networks for communication with families, as well as the actions they implement to promote families' virtual involvement in the school's dynamics, using a qualitative methodology and the discussion group technique.

The study framework is organized around four categories: the measures and resources provided by the educational center to train families; the informal social networks used in schools; the factors that support or hinder virtual participation; and the need to train teachers. Through this technique, each participant is encouraged to share their perceptions, comment on their experiences, and reflect on their interactions with families through these media. This fosters a personal connection with families and encourages their virtual participation.

The findings of this work present the development of the methodology and the content of the studied categories for the analyzed case.

### 5.3.2. Method

#### *Sample selection*

Two factors were considered in the selection of the sample: the number of people to be included in the focus group, and the profile of the members of the focus group. Regarding the first factor, the number of people who would make up the group, Morgan (1996) suggests that they should be "between four and twelve" (p. 143), and Fowler (2009) suggests "between six and eight" (p. 117). The number that has been decided in our research has been determined following the existing literature and based on the second factor, the profile of the people who make up the group.

According to a study, those who participate in the group are "preconscious representatives of the different social groups to which they belong" (Gabriel-Esteban, 2001, p.494). Thus, the aim was to ensure that all the school levels of the centre were represented, which is why it was finally

configured with teachers who carried out the tutoring functions in each of the educational stages offered by the centre, and it is made up of six teachers: 4 women and 2 men, aged between 29 and 53 (table 1).

*Tab. 1 - Characteristics of the participants in the focus group application*

| <i>Individual</i> | <i>Educational level</i>          | <i>Grade</i> | <i>Age</i> | <i>Gender</i> |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|------------|---------------|
| 1                 | Early Childhood Education         | 2nd year     | 30         | Woman         |
| 2                 | Primary School                    | 4th year     | 32         | Woman         |
| 3                 | Compulsory Secondary Education    | 3rd year     | 51         | Woman         |
| 4                 | Baccalaureate                     | 2nd year     | 46         | Man           |
| 5                 | Intermediate Level Training Cycle | 2nd year     | 29         | Woman         |
| 6                 | Higher Level Training Cycle       | 2nd year     | 53         | Man           |

Source: Own elaboration

*Tab. 2 - Categories of analysis in the focus group and indicators*

| <i>Category</i>                                                            | <i>Indicators</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Measures, actions, and resources offered by the centre to educate families | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops, courses, seminars, meetings, circular discussion groups, tutorials</li> <li>• Learning communities, literary gatherings</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Family-school-pupil social media used informally in schools                | Virtual communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, ...</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Factors favouring or hindering virtual participation                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in digital training courses to promote virtual interaction with families</li> <li>• Participation in family education courses (face-to-face or online)</li> <li>• Conducting virtual tutorials</li> <li>• Conducting workshops, seminars and learning communities</li> </ul>                                      |
| Perceived need for training                                                | Need for courses in computer resource management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for ICT specialisation courses on digital communication channels</li> <li>• Need to update computer resources</li> <li>• Need for digital skills to interact with families</li> <li>• Need for specific family education courses on the education of children</li> </ul> |

Source: Own elaboration

Finally, the questions posed served as a reference, and room was made for other themes that emerged during the conversation between the participants (González-Fernández et al., 2018). The questions proposed were the following:

- What measures, actions, and resources are offered by the centre to train families? Which ones do you use?
- What social media or other informal communication channels are used between family-school-pupils and which ones do you use for this?
- What factors favour virtual participation, and what factors do you think hinder it?
- What is your perception of your need for training to engage with families virtually, and to get them involved?

Basically, the dynamic develops in three moments (Gabriel-Esteban, 2001):

1. Presentation of the facilitator.
2. Open-spontaneous phase, in which the dynamic is promoted, and it is open to each subject to build their own map of associations.
3. Delimited phase, with greater intervention by the coordinator.

### **5.3.4. Results**

For the content analysis of the responses and the dialogue generated by the participants' interventions, the Atlas.ti v8 programme was used to analyse the listening sequences.

The analysis of audio content is carried out by isolating significant concepts present in the audio, which can be expressed through words or groups of words, Sánchez et al. (2021). To do this, a general list of concepts-expressions and individual lists of the concepts used by each interviewee are drawn up. The review of the list generated makes it possible to separate the conceptual categories that underlie groups of specific concepts. Thus, the lists of categories make up the data that have been processed by Q-analysis or connectivity analysis, which consists of the affinity of one individual with another using a common repertoire of categories. Hence, connectivity between two individuals can be determined by the number of categories they share, and connectivity between categories by the degree of individual affinity that a category maintains with the others through the people who use them.

The categories extracted from the content analysis are, in order of frequency of citations:

- School measures to educate families.

- Social media and informal family-school-pupil communication.
- Difficulties and support for virtual participation to identify training needs.
- Teachers' social media and their use (professional or personal).
- The following topics were discussed in each category (tables 3-6).

*Tab. 3 - Category 1: School measures to educate families*

| <i>School level</i>               | <i>Indicators</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Early Childhood Education         | Workshops: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy hygiene habits</li> <li>• Computer science</li> </ul> Association of Mothers and Father of Students (AMPA)                                            |
| Primary School                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation through the AMPA</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                |
| Compulsory Secondary Education    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtual platform "Gestión Aula"</li> </ul>                                                                                                                               |
| Baccalaureate                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT and Social Media workshop</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                  |
| Intermediate Level Training Cycle | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) have more communication with teachers</li> <li>• Classroom support teachers on a case-by-case basis</li> </ul> |
| Higher Level Training Cycle       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic computer workshops</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                      |

Source: Own elaboration

*Tab. 4 - Category 2: Social media and informal family-school-pupil communication*

| <i>School level</i>            | <i>Indicators</i>                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| All levels                     | Corporate social media (managed by teachers from Pedagogical Coordination Technical Team, ETCP):<br>- Facebook - Instagram - YouTube - Twitter -   |
| Early Childhood Education      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WhatsApp (class group with families)</li> </ul>                                                           |
| Primary School                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WhatsApp</li> </ul>                                                                                       |
| Compulsory Secondary Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WhatsApp</li> <li>• SMS messages using "Gestión Aula"</li> </ul>                                          |
| Baccalaureate                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More direct communication with the students</li> <li>• WhatsApp (teacher-family communication)</li> </ul> |

| <i>School level</i>               | <i>Indicators</i>                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Intermediate Level Training Cycle | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WhatsApp</li> <li>• E-mail</li> </ul>                                                                      |
| Higher Level Training Cycle       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is not necessary because it deals directly with the students (because they are of legal age)</li> </ul> |

Source: Own elaboration

*Tab. 5 - Category 3: Difficulties and support for virtual participation to identify training needs*

| <i>School level</i>               | <i>Indicators</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Early Childhood Education         | <p>Difficulties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the non-specific use of WhatsApp for school matters</li> <li>• the low digital competence of families as a barrier to their involvement which requires school to facilitate their training on technologies</li> </ul>                                                       |
| Primary School                    | <p>Difficulty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• families' poor digital literacy (need to be trained in ICT usage)</li> </ul> <p>Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accessibility to mobile devices (especially with WhatsApp)</li> </ul>                                                                   |
| Compulsory Secondary Education    | <p>Difficulty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the digital profile of families</li> </ul> <p>Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• training actions and workshops, satisfaction of participants in previous activities</li> </ul>                                                                            |
| Baccalaureate                     | <p>Difficulty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the digital profile of families</li> </ul> <p>Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• encouraging the use of the school's media with interesting topics (photos of pupils or activities carried out) so that they can interact with the technologies</li> </ul> |
| Intermediate Level Training Cycle | <p>Difficulties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feedback from families low, from pupils high</li> <li>• if there is not more family involvement it is due to lack of knowledge, not lack of interest</li> </ul>                                                                                                             |

| <i>School level</i>         | <i>Indicators</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                             | Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• through the student body to reach families so that they become more involved and participate actively in the centre</li> <li>• the families of SEN pupils get involved. It should also be taken into account that many of them have a medium-high socio-economic profile</li> </ul> |
| Higher Level Training Cycle | Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• easy mobile access for families, accessibility for citizens, they can be interested in learning how to use it and develop its possibilities, of which there are many of them</li> </ul>                                                                                             |

Source: Own elaboration

*Tab. 6 - Category 4: Teachers' social media and their use (professional or personal)*

| <i>School level</i>               | <i>Indicators</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Early Childhood Education         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instagram</li> <li>• Facebook (personal profile). Facebook page of the centre, sharing photos on it</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                            |
| Primary School                    | His social media are usually silent, he has profiles on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instagram</li> <li>• Facebook</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Compulsory Secondary Education    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facebook</li> <li>• WhatsApp (social use, beyond communication)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Baccalaureate                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facebook</li> <li>• LinkedIn</li> <li>• Twitter</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Intermediate Level Training Cycle | Through these, he also observes how students move in the digital sphere. Profiles on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instagram (most active)</li> <li>• Facebook (most active)</li> <li>• Twitter</li> <li>• YouTube</li> <li>• Fanpage of the centre on Facebook, sharing photos on this one</li> </ul> |

| <i>School level</i>         | <i>Indicators</i>                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Higher Level Training Cycle | Personal profiles on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instagram</li> <li>• Facebook</li> <li>• Twitter</li> <li>• YouTube, but I use this one for my classes</li> </ul> |

*Source:* Own elaboration

From the teachers' point of view, there is a need for training in the effective use of social media and the promotion of good use in families, through training activities to encourage virtual participation. Furthermore, communication between colleagues is important to see how to approach this issue, with patience and listening because "every family is different", as one teacher said during the focus group. How to generate the need to use social media to communicate is also seen as a challenge, although the main issue would be the use of social media when working hours are incompatible with face-to-face communication. Some of the training suggested by teachers has been in the field of interpersonal communication strategies, family literacy and positive parenting, especially regarding having guidelines for effective communication in social media and netiquette, since the protocol of socialization on social media and interaction in virtual environments is different from how it develops in the real context. There is still a perception that habit weighs heavily on some members of the teaching staff, who prefer the use of physical notes and diaries as the only way, so there is a need to retrain teachers who have had less contact with technology because of their age. With this point, although the digital migration of teachers is not the conditioning factor, part of the teaching staff considers face-to-face communication the only suitable way to deal with specific issues. Likewise, they understand virtual participation and the use of social media should be limited to the dissemination of information or news.

### 5.3.5 Discussion and conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from the results of the focus group regarding the difficulties and supports encountered in the use of ICTs to inform and involve families virtually. In pre-school and primary education, the aforementioned messaging application, WhatsApp, is a sup-

port because it facilitates instant communication with families, although it is also an obstacle due to the “noise” generated by the non-specific use of this media for non-school matters. This is consistent with the conclusions of Snell (2020) on the importance given to text messaging and with what Macià and Garreta (2018) point out in relation to the need for training that goes beyond the instrumental part of computational competence, but rather training in attitudes towards technology. Also, the contribution of Cascales Martínez et al. (2020) on WhatsApp as a fundamental application for family-school communication is confirmed. In secondary education, training actions and digital literacy workshops are valued as support for using ICT and promoting the virtual participation of families, based on the satisfaction of mothers participating in previous activities. In contrast, in post-compulsory education, what hinders or facilitates this participation through technology varies according to the level: in vocational training, teachers perceive low feedback from families as a difficulty, while student feedback is high; although the fact that families can be reached through the students is understood as support, encouraging them to become more involved and participate actively in the school. It is also considered that if families do not participate to a greater extent, it is because of a lack of knowledge, not a lack of interest. In addition, it is noted that teachers perceive that families are interested in the use and incorporation of digital resources in the classroom, as well as in receiving training from the same educational centre to learn digital skills (Briceño-Pira et al., 2019; Ceballos-López et al., 2019). Furthermore, the results also show that families of students with SEN are more involved through digital media, so this can be considered as a factor that favours virtual participation. In general, at all educational levels at the educational institution, the greatest difficulty perceived by the teaching staff is the low digital competence of families, and it is considered that the use of ICTs for the virtual participation of families is encouraged with the use of school’s social media with updates on their areas of interest: photos of the students and the activities carried out during school hours and in extracurricular activities, promoting interaction through these publications.

Hence, one of the lines to follow is to consider improving the training of teachers in initial training in digital competences to favour the relationship between family and school. Additionally, to propose training courses for the families of students so that they can develop positive parenting skills through the digital media.

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## **5.4. Children and digital media: an online survey. Digital Citizenship Education in family**

*Francesco Pizzolorusso*<sup>1</sup>

### **5.4.1. Introduction**

Children's use of digital technology has rapidly increased over the past decade, raising important questions about how time spent on digitally mediated activities may affect them in either positive or negative ways (Putnam, 2000; Turkle, 2011; Bell et al., 2015). Some studies show that digital devices offer many potential benefits to children, enabling them to connect with peers, access educational resources, or engage with entertainment (Livingstone & Bober, 2006; Valkenburg & Peter, 2009; Boyd, 2014). However, there are legitimate concerns about how digital technology may jeopardize the social development of children and their well-being. Other studies suggest that children and adolescents spend significant amounts of time using digital technologies, and these experiences can lead to several problems such as low psychosocial well-being (Caplan et al., 2009; Lemmens et al., 2011), boredom (Lin et al., 2009), stress, and family conflict. During the Covid-19 pandemic, as a result of physical distancing measures that were implemented, society was compelled to use digital connections and devices to continue to be part of the world. In particular, educational institutions shifted to an emergency online learning format, and distance education became widespread (Grubic et al., 2020; Kim, 2020).

The digital age has introduced new challenges for parents, who face the difficult task of striking a balance between allowing independent exploration and providing appropriate limitations and oversight (Pew Research Center, 2016). The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents limit exposure to most types of screen time before the age

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of 18 months (Reid Chassiakos et al., 2016). The Italian Pediatrics Society (Bozzola et al., 2018) has imposed an absolute ban on smartphones and tablets before the age of 2, during meals and before going to sleep; According to the document, screen time should not exceed one hour per day for children aged 2-5, and two hours for those aged 5-8. It further discourages the use of smartphones and tablets as tools to regulate children's emotions or attention.

Media usage could be governed by parental decisions; however, parents seldom heed these recommendations and often introduce infants too early and excessively to the digital world. More recently, researchers have considered the family media ecology, focusing on how media are used by all members of the household and whether these media patterns promote or interfere with the cognitive and social development of children (Law et al., 2023).

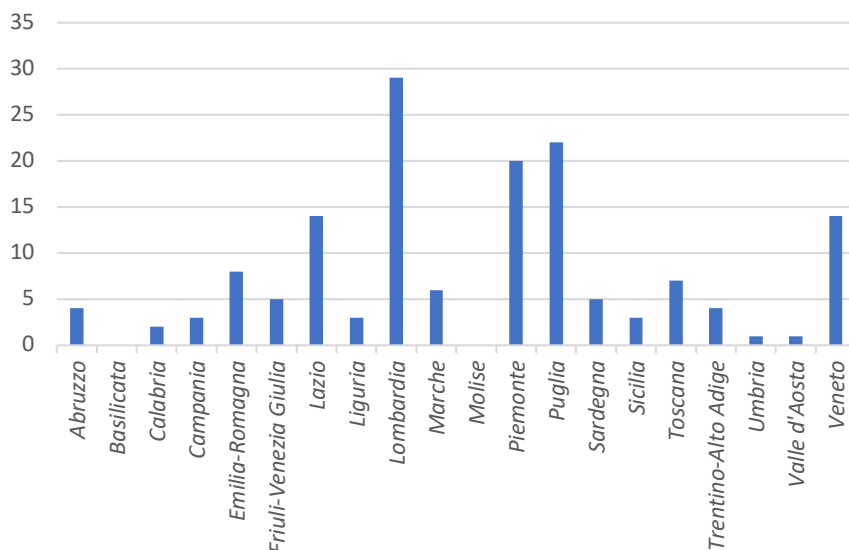
The increasing pervasiveness of digital connectivity calls for a pedagogical reflection grounded in the quantitative analysis of children's screen time and its consequences – particularly with regard to the quality of their digital experiences and the parental role in mediating these interactions (Balbinot et al., 2016). The key challenge today is to develop and promote models for positive, shared digital engagement. Given that parents are the primary mediators of children's digital experiences at home, pedagogy must emphasize the importance of parental training – supported by educators and researchers – to effectively navigate this ongoing transformation.

#### **5.4.2. «Digital media in the family»: an online survey for Italian parents**

The aim of the research was to collect the opinions of parents about the use of new media within family contexts. The survey «Digital Media in the Family» was structured using an online questionnaire divided into three sections. The first, socio-demographic section analyzed the frequency and types of digital devices present in the household. The second explored parents' level of agreement with various statements about the role of digital media in children's development. Finally, the questionnaire examined family rules on device use, opportunities for parent-child dialogue about the virtual world, and parents' views on the school's role in children's digital education.

The online questionnaire was targeted at Italian parents of children aged between 3 and 10 years (Fig. 1) and it received a total of 151 responses (98.7% of mothers, 1.3% of fathers).

Fig. 1 - Online survey «Digital media in family» - Participants by Italian regions



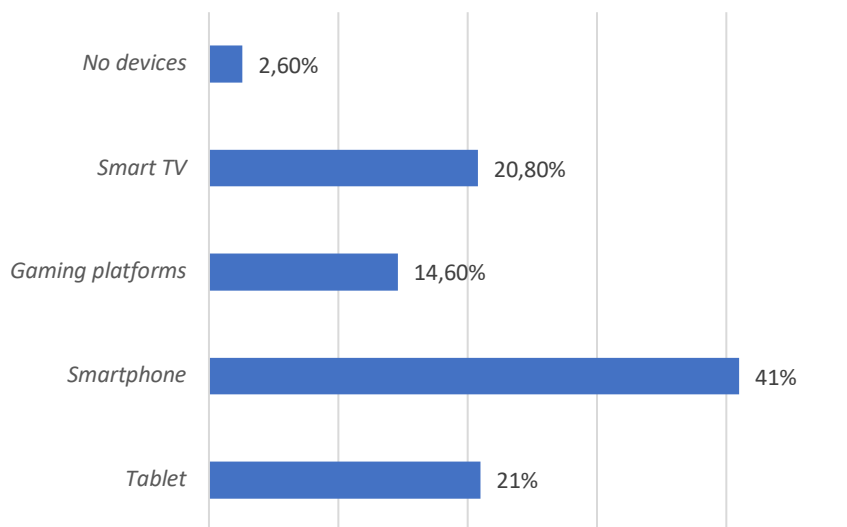
Regarding age, the highest incidence was in the age group between 31 and 40 years (57.6%), followed by 41-50 (33.1%), 20-30 (7.9%), and 51-60 (1.3%); no responses were detected in the under-20 age group.

Concerning the first section of the questionnaire, about the presence of digital devices in the house (Fig. 2) and children's digital experience – whether alone or with parents – it was found that the devices chosen by children appear to be smartphones and tablets, with 62% of responses. Gaming platforms (such as PlayStation, Nintendo Switch, and Microsoft Xbox) were used by 14.6% of children, and only 2.6% of parents reported that their children did not use any digital devices.

Regarding digital activity, 42% of parents indicated that children prefer to use digital tools to watch videos and cartoons, 16% like to use educational applications, and 15% choose to play video games. About the shared use of digital devices between parents and children, 75.5% of parents said they use digital media with their children for less than an hour a day, and only 13.9% said they use digital media for over 2 hours daily.

The items about how often parents observed their children from a distance – because they were engaged in other activities – while using digital devices showed that 68.2% of parents supervise their children for less than an hour a day, or not at all. Regarding the use of digital tools in total autonomy and without any supervision by parents, over 20% indicated a use

Fig. 2 - Children's experience with Digital Devices at home



of more than two hours a day. Compared to the level of parents' concerns perceived about their children's use of digital media, 35.8% indicated that they were not worried at all, while only 5.3% expressed significant concern about their children's digital use.

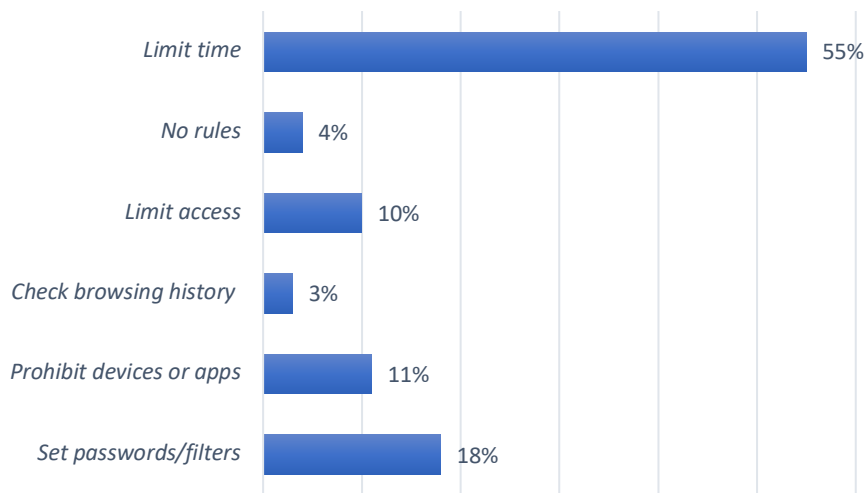
These initial data show important use of digital media by children at home, often without any kind of adult supervision; moreover, there seems to be no correlation with a level of worry regarding the risks associated with the Web and the autonomous use by children.

As for the second section of the questionnaire, a high agreement emerged among parents with the statements related to the negative aspects of the use of digital devices, including video games and apps on Smart TV (*«online games can make children irritable and violent»*; *«video games can encourage negative thoughts, contribute to anxiety, and lead to insomnia in children»*; *«the excessive use of digital devices during childhood has become a public health concern»*; *«prolonged exposure to digital media has negative effects on children»*). On the other hand, an important agreement was found regarding the presence of parents in the use of technologies by children (including sharing as a form of support to avoid dangers and to understand the correct use of the Internet); additionally, significant disagreement emerged regarding statements highlighting the educational potential of digital applications and their benefits for children's development. The analysis of the levels of agreement and disagreement

deviates from actual use and real family dynamics, constituting an ideal image of digital education between fear and permission.

Concerning the third section of the questionnaire, in relation to the strategies used by parents to moderate children’s use of digital devices, it emerged that 55% limit the amount of time children can spend on digital devices, 17.9% set passwords, filters, and protection software, 10.6% prohibit the use of some devices, while 9.9% limit access to specific times of the day. Lastly, 2.6% of parents only check the browsing history later, while 4% do not impose any type of restriction (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3 - Strategies used by parents to moderate children’s use of digital devices



With regard to household rules, parents indicated which activities are permitted in digital environments. Activities such as instant messaging, chatting, browsing social networks, sharing personal information, or uploading photos and videos are generally allowed only under adult supervision. In contrast, for online gaming and watching videos on platforms like YouTube, Vimeo, or Twitch most parents (58%) permit these activities without supervision.

Parents were invited to report whether they had discussed digital media use with their children; the responses showed that only 19% had discussed with their children what is appropriate or inappropriate to do online. Investigating the role of the school, it emerged that 79.7% of parents believe that the school does not do enough and should do more; for 2.6% of respon-

dents, the school's actions regarding digital rules are already sufficient and 17.7% of parents said they did not know if teachers were dealing with these activities at school. Regarding the topics parents would like to see addressed in school by teachers, 94% believe they should focus more on the web risks and show children strategies on how to avoid dangers (chatting with strangers, cyberbullying, threats).

The analysis of this final section highlights the lack of educational dialogue at home about digital media, which tends to be delegated to the school environment and teachers. However, even in this context, the focus remains on the risks and dangers of the Web, emphasizing the negative aspects of the digital world while overlooking its positive potential and failing to encourage children's personal and responsible agency.

#### **5.4.3. A new school-family educational agreement based on Digital Citizenship Education**

Research concerning the role and the influence of digital media in children's development is affected by both theoretical and methodological limitations, which make the evidence gathered divergent. It is possible to assert that the long-term impact of using digital media remains relatively unknown (Kardefelt-Winther, 2017; Graber, 2019; Guedes et al., 2020). Technology is a fascinating and attractive world, full of positive possibilities, but children lack sufficient cultural readiness that would make them aware of the digital world and its dynamics. If the challenge is to learn how to use these tools constructively, the survey emphasizes the need to reaffirm the active role of parents, who must guide children to approach the digital world and its use with a critical and reflective mindset. Therefore, the role of families is crucial in facilitating children's access to information and helping them interpret the messages they encounter, thereby enriching their experience (Bianculli et al., 2018).

The modern challenge affecting the educational system in the digital growth and evolution of children is evident. As frequently mentioned, the family environment is where first contact with digital devices occurs; the educational involvement of parents becomes essential. Nowadays, in a social framework marked by the omnipresence of digital media, children increasingly rely on digital platforms, services, and online tools – often ahead of their regular development stages – to learn, stay engaged, participate, play, and socialize. Unfortunately, alongside all these opportunities, new and ever-evolving risks may compromise the well-being of both adults and children in the *onlife society* (Floridi, 2014). The survey highlighted

that the current debate on family education regarding digital media use predominantly focuses on the risks associated with children's use of digital devices. This pushes families to adopt an approach centred on protecting them; however, a sole focus on risks and digital dangers can negatively impact children's participation, hindering their attempts to discover digital worlds.

This is why a non-restrictive approach is essential: it should empower parents to be competent, protect their children, and guide them in developing critical awareness and the skills needed to use digital tools responsibly. *Digital immigrants* (Prensky, 2001) should be aware that neither demonizing nor idealizing technology helps digital natives cultivate a balanced and critical approach. Digital tools now shape key areas of life, from learning to civic involvement.

In this context, Janell Hofmann (2014) offers a valuable framework for fostering a healthy and responsible relationship between parents, children, and the digital world. The author addresses digital education within the family by defining an educational contract at home, a real agreement established between parents and children that outlines what can and cannot be done in relation to responsible, critical, and mature use of technology. This tool – both fun and empowering – allows parents and children to engage in discussions about digital responsibility and the proper use of social media. In her contract, Hofmann outlines eighteen behavioural rules that concern not only digital devices (like iPhones, iPads, or PlayStations), but also the socio-relational experience and, therefore, life as digital citizens.

Parents are encouraged to integrate digital tools into their lives rather than forbid or prohibit them, involving all family members in constructive discussions about the virtual world, its risks and its potential, through the sharing of passions and interests in an intergenerational exchange of ideas and mutual growth.

The guiding role of parents must be cultivated through availability and support, offering a safe foundation for developing critical thinking regarding actions in the virtual world and their consequences in the analog world (privacy, reputation, self-image, respect for others). More than any other suggestion, the foundation of an effective parenting relationship lies in building dialogue and in parents' willingness to listen to their children's thoughts and concerns related to their digital experience. Children must feel confident that, especially at home, they will find attentive and non-judgmental interlocutors, even when they make mistakes. As Hofmann's (2014) *iRule #18* states «You'll mess up a few times, I'll take your phone away. We will sit down and talk about it. [...] The two of us will never stop learning. I am on your side. We are allies» (p. 204). This

encapsulates the true meaning of digital education within the family: being together, helping one another, making mistakes, and then learning and improving.

Beyond efforts at home, reflections lead to a parallel renewal of educational institutions, such as schools, which – together with families – bear responsibility for children's education. Therefore, an alliance between school and family is essential to manage shared digital rules from home to school with a vigilant yet confident approach. Children need to know that adult allies stand beside them – recognizing the enormous potential of these new tools while understanding the importance of responsible management. Families and schools must learn to collaborate by sharing knowledge and experience, setting ambitious goals. In this regard, it seems useful to establish a new concept of co-responsibility that transforms attentive listening into concrete action, placing as its primary objective the protection of children and young people within the digital ecosystem without restricting their exploration (Telefono Azzurro, Doxa Kids, 2020). Ensuring children's well-being, security, and digital participation requires an educational approach that not only promotes digital literacy, but focuses on cyber-wisdom and a critical digital mindset, as outlined in the concept of Digital Citizenship Education (Ribble, Bailey & Ross, 2004; *DigComp 2.2*).

DigCit Education represents the third axis of Civic Education, as promoted by *Law n. 92/2019* and recently by *D.M. n. 183/2024*. According to Rivoltella (2013), digital citizenship is not a secondary way to be a citizen, but rather one of the dimensions to inhabit the *Mediapolis* (Silverstone, 2009), as digital media have profoundly altered how we communicate and build relationships, even from a digital standpoint. Digital citizenship is understood as the right and duty of every individual to engage competently and critically with new digital environments, shaping them to reflect personal identity, social, and political needs, while inhabiting them with responsibility and ethics. It also involves actively contributing to making these environments as inclusive, safe, and participatory as possible for oneself and others (Fabbri, 2020). Given the complexity of the modern world, educating children early in digital citizenship means equipping them with the tools to navigate media environments and fostering the critical use of digital devices. This empowers them to select and share information and interact with others, all while remaining aware of the consequences of their actions in both digital and real-world contexts.

In this direction, educating children about digital citizenship – from school to home – is an essential epistemological foundation for defining, designing, and building the democracy of the XXI century, which must be rethought through the lens of social and political inclusion.

This idea of *shared* Digital Citizenship Education, therefore, appears necessary to offer students, teachers, and parents the opportunity to reflect on children's online rights and responsibilities as adults and digital citizens, as well as critically rework their lives, both online and offline. Schools, collaborating with parents, should promote *a new pedagogical humanism* that outlines digital citizenship in its main aspects: as a set of rights, a set of responsibilities, as identity, and as participation. The goal of fostering a culture of responsibility from school to home – helping to bridge the gap between children's inherent digital literacy and their limited ability to critically interpret change – could be a concrete and achievable objective.

To enhance the transversal teaching of civic education and raise students' awareness of responsible citizenship, schools are tasked with strengthening collaboration with families, integrating the educational co-responsibility agreement and developing educational programs that involve and engage parents. In this sense, possible themes could be habits of using screens in the developing age and the correlations with health aspects (in particular in the 0-6 years age group), educational approach to digital media management in the house, consequences and impact of early screen use on mental and behavioural functioning, role of digital environments in exercising citizenship, internet addiction and cyberbullying.

Parent training on digital citizenship could help reach a consensus on the best ways to build an open digital world – ensuring equal access, security, participation, and civic engagement. These are key elements of what is known as E-awareness, a form of digital awareness that underpins the responsible use of new digital media and represents the transition from Media Education to Digital Citizenship. To achieve this goal, the main task of pedagogical researchers is to return to *inhabit school contexts*, supporting educators, teachers and parents, addressing doubts and uncertainties and structuring an educational agreement that acknowledges the significance of children's digital experiences at home and at school for their integral development.

## Conclusions

In recent decades, families and schools have drifted apart; in Italy, as in other European countries, there is often a gap – *sometimes close to an abyss* – between these two educational institutions (Ronci, 2010; Cadei et al., 2016). In this scenario, the primary cost of this detachment falls on the child, who often struggles to balance the demands of growth with ed-

educational approaches that are frequently incompatible. It is crucial for the future that educational efforts from both families and schools converge and focus on children's digital well-being: families need to trust the leading role of teachers, while schools must also engage with the extracurricular spaces (both at home and beyond) to build an educational project centered on critical and active citizenship.

Based on insights from this survey, it is crucial to rethink the forms of education and collaboration between family and school (Pati, 2019; Dusi & Pati, 2014; Cardinali & Migliori, 2013), especially to improve Digital Citizenship Education from home to school (Zbigniew, 2018).

Children – citizens of the present – cannot plan their futures without integrating offline and online experiences; this integration is possible through a pedagogical and didactic vision that fosters a truly democratic idea of school (Fabiano, 2020), one that is integrated into life at home and the interconnected society.

Operational forms of shared responsibility for Digital Citizenship appear essential (Zbigniew, 2018) to equip not only students but also teachers and parents with the intellectual and cultural tools necessary to build inclusive and democratic communities (Elia, 2019) in both real-life and digital environments.

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**CONNECTIONS**  
**IN LEARNING**  
**CONTEXTS**

Directors:

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The collection "Connections in learning contexts" assumes as its object of research and study learning and the necessary connections that are able to support it on the basis of shared and coordinated actions. The reference to the systemic-ecological perspective, in line with the ICF biopsychosocial model (WHO, 2001) is therefore crucial.

The collection emphasizes the vital role of fostering connections when addressing the needs of students with disabilities and their families. Connections dependent on skilled and passionate teachers. These connections are essential for coordinating individualized and personalized learning that are crucial for guiding life trajectories. Teachers who can educate all students, enable social achievement, and support families, create an environment where all students, regardless of ability, can thrive.

The collection will therefore host also research - both national and international - focused on the learning experience in from nursery to secondary school: reference is made to contexts where the effort to implement planning and teaching actions aimed at all boys and girls, at all pupils, is inescapable because they are able to pay attention to the fertile synergy between their specific participation and their success in learning and in life, present and future.

Inevitably intertwined with the themes of training, perceptions and skills of school operators (managers, teachers, practitioners), with collegiality, by using multiple and innovative tools, including technological ones.

The collection intends to focus attention on the inevitable impetus that learning must take on in relation to a continuous orientation for all, by offering a space to resonate with multiple scientific reflections, research and projects that recall their relevance and pedagogical-didactic commitment.

With reference to students with disabilities, the connections indicated as necessary for the coordination of the actions structured within the framework of the individualised and personalised projects that need coordination indispensable for the accompaniment of the life project appear crucial. These connections are intended to coordinate care and rehabilitation actions, personal services, social participation initiatives, possible support for the family unit, as well as school-family community collaboration.

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La passione per le conoscenze

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## FrancoAngeli

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Ce livre s'inscrit ainsi dans une perspective critique, engagée et interdisciplinaire. Il vise à mettre en lumière les tensions, les résistances, mais aussi les leviers possibles pour faire de la Cité de l'Éducation un véritable espace de coresponsabilité, d'apprentissage mutuel et de justice sociale. La société dans son ensemble est appelée à repenser ses représentations de la réussite, de la normalité et de la valeur de chaque individu. L'inclusion éducative ne peut être effective sans un changement culturel profond, qui valorise la diversité comme une richesse et non comme un obstacle à contourner. Cela implique une mobilisation collective, un dialogue constant entre les institutions, les citoyens, et les acteurs éducatifs, pour bâtir une cité où chacun trouve sa place et peut s'épanouir. En croisant les regards des familles, d'experts, de praticiens et d'acteurs de terrain, cet ouvrage plaide pour une éthique de la coéducation fondée sur la reconnaissance, l'équité et la participation. À travers ce travail, nous espérons ouvrir des pistes de réflexion et d'action pour que l'émancipation inclusive devienne, enfin, une réalité partagée, en sachant que rien ne se construit sans une passion collective, celle du partage des ressources afin de créer une véritable éducation émancipatrice.

This book adopts a critical, engaged, and interdisciplinary perspective. It seeks to illuminate not only the tensions and resistance encountered, but also the potential levers for transforming the City of Education into a genuine space of shared responsibility, mutual learning, and social justice. Society as a whole is called upon to rethink its notions of success, normality, and the intrinsic value of every individual. True educational inclusion requires a profound cultural shift—one that embraces diversity as a strength rather than a barrier to be overcome. This calls for collective mobilisation and sustained dialogue among institutions, citizens, and educational stakeholders, to build a city where everyone can find their place and thrive. By bringing together the voices of families, experts, practitioners, and field actors, this book advocates for an ethic of coeducation rooted in recognition, equity, and participation. Through this work, we aim to open pathways for reflection and action, so that inclusive emancipation can finally become a shared reality—knowing that nothing can be achieved without a collective passion for sharing resources and fostering truly emancipatory education.