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**Education for the future:
Epale Italia and the challenges of learning
in adulthood**

edited by Giovanna Del Gobbo

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Editorial

This issue of the Epale Journal follows a reflection that started at the Epale National Conference, held from 4 to 6 November 2020 at the end of the Epale Italy National Unit's first five years of activity.

The theme of the issue, "Education for the future: the challenges of learning in adulthood", recalls the title and the focus of the conference, i.e. adult education in Italy from a European perspective. This is seen as a strategic area for the development of the country, but it is still founded on a system that struggles to take root and become a priority in the national political agenda. The growing need for lifelong learning and training, also in light of the dramatic and unique challenges we are currently facing, would actually require innovative solutions, new synergies and forms of inter-sectoral and multi-level governance as well as interventions capable of being effective and incisive.

Adult Education is addressed, through the various articles, in a systemic way, focused on lifelong - lifewide learning, taking into consideration the complexity of the levels (macro, meso and micro), areas (formal, non-formal and informal), types of action (orientation, recognition of skills, ...), professionalism and professionalisation processes, as well as plurality of audiences. In fact, one could run the risk of evaluating the system by limiting it to the ways in which it can be organised, to the set of organisations (both public and private) that provide services and to the course forms with which answers to new training questions are provided. It would be a question of defining the problem by misinterpreting it and considering the "networks" in purely summative (and at best functional) terms of institutions, structures and bodies. The building of an integrated lifelong learning system needs to be considered for its dual value: on the one hand, a tool for the activation of democratic and participatory governance processes, through networks, to allow local communities (in the institutional, associative and non-profit, productive areas) to be responsible for their own growth and, on the other, a tool to demonstrate the possibilities offered by the concept of lifelong learning through the various education channels, vocational training, non-formal education and continuous training, and orientation. In a systemic framework, every single activity or event must be an expression of the different levels that preside over the operation, up to the policies and strategies, to which their own activities and events give implementation and the regulations that preside over institutional sustainability.

Although the integration of the various players in lifelong learning policies has been a central theme since the 1970s in the debate on adult education and training, the European Commission's Communication of 21 November 2001, *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*, was an essential starting point for the interweaving of theoretical reflection, strategies, policies and subsequent implementation measures. The document identified active citizenship, self-realization, employability and social inclusion as the four essential pillars of training policies that the European States should have developed, also thanks to the integration of various public and private players (local authorities, schools, employers, trade unions, voluntary associations) and school, vocational training and employment subsystems. The document foresaw

an integrated, participatory territorial system as a cornerstone on which to base the strategy for implementing lifelong learning in the various Member States of the Union. The lifelong learning model must necessarily combine with the local dimension and the local community through an autonomous, flexible and expanded network system. This is also the case in the well-known Lisbon Memorandum.

In Italy, despite excellent regional experiences, only in 2012 did an explicit regulatory reference to the topic of lifelong learning come out, through labour market reform law; Law no. 92 of the 28th of June 2012, Article 4 (paragraphs 51-68), affirms the right of every person to lifelong learning at every stage of life, within a shared and territorially integrated system of education, training and work. Law 92/2012 also represents the starting point for the national system of certification of competences (paragraphs 64 to 68): on 16 January 2013, Legislative Decree no. 13 was issued, which defines the new national system of certification of competences, which was then completed with the recent Decree of 5 January 2021 adopting the Guidelines (Official Gazette no. 13 of the 18th of January 2021) making the National System operational.

Following this Law, in the Unified Conference of the 20th of December 2012, the general criteria for the promotion and support for the creation of territorial networks were also established as a tool to ensure the integrated offer of documentation, recognition, validation and certification services to the citizen, also through the optimization and development of systems for detecting professional needs and skills; to ensure lifelong guidance services; to strengthen integrated education, training and work systems by increasing quality and efficiency. Promoting and supporting the creation of territorial networks implies the recognition and the need to enhance all public and private education, training and work: the CPIA (Provincial Centres for Adult Education), training agencies, universities, companies, chambers of commerce, industry, crafts and agriculture, the migration observatory (Article 4 paragraph 56, Law 92/12).

While the regulatory basis is the first sustainability element for an adult education system, another element is undoubtedly represented by its “operational” sustainability. The regulatory framework at a national level establishes the “substance” of the right to learning by providing the parameters for the implementation of the right itself. It is this regulation that, based on strategies and policies, determines the measures needed to assert the right and identify the beneficiaries, as well as the service providers establishing roles and functions.

The regulatory framework can also legitimise and add value to the experience gained over time, in which “operational sustainability” elements can probably already be seen. In the light of this experience, what are the elements that currently characterise or could characterise an integrated system for lifelong learning that can be implemented at a national level? If networks, guidance services, skills certification services, educational processes aimed at marginalised audiences or those at risk of becoming so, are already present and have been consolidated thanks to past experiences, can they be enhanced to give the system a stable foundation? On which theoretical and methodological assumptions are they based?

It is in this context that the articles of this issue offer both theoretical reflections and innovative and transferable experiences.

The issue opens with an article by Paolo Federighi with an analysis on public policies that can have an impact on the propensity of individuals to access any type of training course and thus exercise their right to education. This analysis, after a detailed examination of the measures, focuses on the potential risks of strategies aimed at favouring educational investments that benefit high skilled individuals and the limited impact it can have on low-skilled adults. A scenario that could anticipate a return to the origins of adult education, focusing on mutual education and networks of relationships capable of promoting their free intellectual development.

Giovanna Del Gobbo and Vanna Boffo introduce new perspectives of work-related learning, based on the integration between learning and research. Their reflection illustrates the importance of work-related learning in higher education when integrated with research activities, with particular reference to the training of adult education professionals with regard to new professional roles that are likely to rapidly evolve.

Laura Formenti's article addresses adult education in Italy as a "systemic challenge", which calls for coordinated responses at micro, meso and macro levels, rediscovering the deep connections between learning, education, information and training. The article focuses on the need to go back to social and cultural adult education roots, through the establishment of territorial networks and the active participation by the universities.

If on the one hand there is great potential in lifelong learning, on the other hand it seems difficult to imagine practice transformation models capable of becoming the backbone of the adult education system: this is the topic addressed by Piergiuseppe Ellerani, Mara de Blasi and Hanna Hurbanovich. The analysis, starting from the short-sightedness that emerged in the pandemic period regarding agency policies for the "over 65" population, shows the results of the Erasmus Plus project and describes how intergenerational learning can be an extension of the post-pandemic educational ecosystem.

The challenges of promoting access to education and tertiary education systems for young as well as adult refugees is the subject of the article written by Marianna Colosimo and Fausta Scardigno.

The article, also regarding lifelong learning systems, offers an overview of the experiences and results achieved by the Service Centre for Lifelong Learning of the University of Bari, which has been operating since 2015 to support the academic integration of people with a migration background. A consolidated experience in response to the growing demand for the evaluation of previous formal educational credentials and the recognition of professional and transversal skills to support the process of cultural integration and active participation in refugee territory.

The relationship between adult education, social justice and equity when it comes to the accessibility of opportunities is also the subject of Iole Marcozzi's article. The urgency for effective measures to prevent and compensate for the disadvantages of groups that are either under-represented or at risk of discrimination, as well as the

need to support professionals in responding to this challenge, are analysed, starting from the results of the European project “Social Justice in lifelong guidance services for low-educated adult migrants” (SoJUST). The focus of the analysis is on guidance services for low-skilled migrant adults through the increase of educators’ specific skills aimed at promoting contexts and guiding practices, inspired (by) and directed (towards) social justice.

Paolo Di Rienzo also focuses on the need for continuous training and the development of specific skills by adult education professionals. Drawing attention to the renewal of the organisational structures of the adult education system in Italy, he stresses how important the role of the CPIA (Provincial Centres for Adult Education) is within the National Competence Certification System when it comes to recognising the need to reshape the professionalism of teachers, who must receive and accompany students, recognise their previous education and prepare customised training. The article, based on research on the practices of CPIA teachers in the Abruzzo Region, confirms a specific training need and the importance of adopting, in addition to standard techniques, narrative-biographical and qualitative methodologies.

Philipp Botes also offers an in-depth analysis on the training of teachers who work in the Provincial Centres for Adult Education, focusing on these specific educational institutions with particular characteristics in terms of their organisational structure as well as the users to whom they provide educational services. The article analyses the lack of specific initial training that is a hindrance for the improvement of the system, also in terms of the appeal of this specific profession.

The organisation of the CPIAs is also the subject of Giovanni Di Pinto’s article in which, on the basis of a qualitative-quantitative survey, the need to introduce an ad hoc System Figure with specific research skills into the staff of the CPIAs is highlighted, thus guaranteeing innovation processes in a sector, such as lifelong learning, which is constantly evolving.

The professionalism and skills of teachers, with particular reference to digital and L2 skills, are at the heart of the article by Héctor Rubén Ríos Santana and Matteo Mura.

The aim is to define in a clear and contextualized manner the teacher’s digital competences, to then deepen the characteristics and merits of L2/LS teaching and learning contexts on a professional and educational level. The article ends with functional training suggestions for the development of linguistic, digital and soft skills.

Two articles on prison schools take us back to the issues regarding the most fragile audiences or those at risk of social marginalisation.

Mariangela Pugliese explores the issue of education in prison schools and the need for a change, also in light of the difficulties that emerged due to the pandemic situation. She highlights the need to place the person, as a microcosm, at the centre of the educational relationship, and the opportunity to rethink the skills of teachers called to act as trainers and educators (re-educators) in prisons. Annaletizia La Fortuna analyses prison school from two points of view: that of a group of experts and that of the detained students. The two points of view are compared to elaborate a reflection

capable of identifying strengths and weaknesses in the system in order to come up with possible improvement strategies.

The section ends with an article by Letizia Gamberi, Debora Daddi and Estrella Luna in which the subject of entrepreneurship education is addressed, which has begun to play an increasingly important role in the international pedagogical-educational debate in recent years. The theoretical framework is completed by the analysis of two good practices, presented in a comparative way, to help reflect on the meaning of entrepreneurship on a personal development level and the acquisition of life skills.

The section dedicated to “Practices” presents two very particular and interesting experiences.

The first, by Natascia Curto and Silvia Stefani, is dedicated to the Erasmus+ project “HOOD-Homeless’s Open Dialogue”, whose objective is to develop the necessary skills to use Enabling Co-planning methodologies, developed to help people with disabilities cope with adult life, in approaching homelessness. Referring to the “capacity to aspire” reflection, the article discusses the feasibility assumptions of the project, which aims to adapt the Enabling Co-planning methodology to the approach towards homeless people.

The second experience, reported by Ada Maurizio, leads to a Residence for the Execution of Security Measures (REMS) where offenders with psychiatric diseases are put up and where, in 2019, upon the proposal of the Guarantor for the persons subjected to measures restricting personal freedom of the Lazio region, a Provincial Centre for Adult Education was involved for the first time in Italy, following an experimental and pioneering path, without prior theoretical references and practices.

The issue ends with the case study of Maurizio Battaglia and Daniela Ferrarello on the teaching of mathematics to adult inmates. The path of reflection starts from the possible role of a teacher within a prison, and ends with the possible role of the student in prison, dwelling on the analysis of teaching practices in general, and the teaching of mathematics in particular, which according to the authors’ experience have proved to be effective: horizontal and laboratory-based teaching.

Giovanna Del Gobbo

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Individual rights and adult education in Italy

Paolo Federighi¹

Keywords

Public Policies for Adult Education, Demand for Training, Adult Education, Right to Learning, Measures in Support of Individual Rights

Abstract

This article discusses, through an analysis of the measures, the topic of public policies that can have an impact on the propensity of individuals to access any type of training course and thus exercise their right to education. The theory is that, public policies, or public systems in which the supply of training and demand takes place, have a role in incentivising the demand for training even when they do not provide answers themselves. The article raises the following question: if one decides to train in preparation for interprofessional or interdisciplinary transitions, or for their own personal interest, can they rely on the support of public policies? This analysis, after a detailed examination of the measures, focuses on the potential risks of strategies designed to favour educational investments that benefit high-skilled individuals and the limited impact it can have on low-skilled adults. A scenario that could anticipate a return to the origins of adult education, focusing on mutual education and networks of relationships capable of promoting their free intellectual development.

1. Introduction

“In Italy, 38.8% of people aged 18-74 (corresponding to 16,918,000 individuals) have participated in at least one training activity - whether formal or non-formal -” (ISTAT, 2018).

This is the starting data. Is that a lot? Too few? Fewer than we'd like? Are citizens in other countries better off? These are all legitimate questions, however, the famous education experts who decades ago predicted the disappearance of adult education are fondly remembered. We need to move on from this data and reflect on this increasingly important situation. There are almost 17 million people who do not make use of public adult education systems, but who are probably favoured by public policies that act in their favour as individuals. This is regardless of whether they belong to specific target groups (immigrants, entrepreneurs, women, etc.) which are subject to specific measures or specific programmes. This means that this positive contribution does not exist or is not in place for other sections of the population.

This article analyses those public policies which can have an impact on the propensity of individuals to access any type of training course and thus exercise their right to education. The theory is that public policies, or public systems in which the supply of training and demand takes place, have a role in incentivising the demand for education even when they do not provide answers themselves.

The following question is raised: if one decides to train in preparation for interprofessional or interdisciplinary transitions, or for their own personal interest, can they rely on the support of public policies?

Therefore, we do not deal with measures taken by the State or by employers to educate citizens and workers in response to objectives they themselves have set. We want to know whether there is an individual right that recognises the power of citizens and workers to be self-directed learners who can determine certain educational components. We therefore limit the concept of individual rights to the

measures that can be taken in order for individuals to decide their own educational process. We therefore exclude “freedom to learn” from our analysis as it is dealt through methodologies and teaching methods. Instead, we focus on the idea that the prerequisite for “freedom to learn” is the possibility to access self-directed educational processes even for those who do not have the required financial resources. The individual right to education is not just a financial issue, although the economic and financial factors are crucial in terms of access to existing opportunities. It entails specific challenges in terms of governance, financing, infrastructure and support services, including the guarantee of supply quality, guidance and validation, and therefore requires an analysis of the possible instruments that can foster such results.

2. Measures in support of individual rights

The general strategy that guides public policies in Italy aims to strengthen policy areas where delays in human capital education/development, productivity and infrastructure persist, supporting them with appropriate macroeconomic incentives. Therefore, adult education policies are determined by instruments other than the management of training systems and, in general, the provision of education. This highlights how the distribution of opportunities depends not only on the availability of infrastructure and services, but rather on the type of incentives implemented by public policies.

In Italy, this approach is guided by a kind of double strategy of adult learning. On the one hand, for vulnerable groups, the achievement of learning objectives is postponed until economic growth resumes, and the resulting negative effects are mitigated with the strengthening of social policies. On the other hand, initiatives aimed at developing and increasing the skills of highly qualified individuals are supported by the State both through opportunities to deduct the tax paid and through public interventions in support of research and innovation. This strategy is explicit and can be obtained from the analysis of the Economic and Financial Documents (DEF and today in the PNRR) that contain the economic and financial policies decided by the Government (MEF, 2021).

In the field of adult education, the implementation of this strategy is primarily entrusted to policies and measures of a financial nature that favour - or do not favour - the expression of individual demand for education by certain social groups. These measures can be summarised as follows:

Financial instruments	Vouchers
	Individual learning account
	Tax incentives
	Subsidised loans
	Financial incentives for enterprises
	Interprofessional funds
	Payback clauses
	Unpaid time-off to study
	Paid time-off to study

Tab. 1 Financial measures to promote individual demand for training

A brief description of each measure follows.

Vouchers

Vouchers are a form of expense that allow citizens to purchase certain services or goods. This measure is widespread throughout the country and in many policies.

There are two types of vouchers:

- education vouchers to be used to attend education activities
- service vouchers that promote access to education activities by financing, for example, the transport and accompaniment of disabled people and by supporting the reconciliation of family and work life (reconciliation vouchers).

Funds can be:

- disbursed to the beneficiary directly
- assigned to the organisation providing the goods/service, in the name and on behalf of the direct beneficiary.

The problem with this measure is that it is highly conditional and regulatory because, as a rule, the supply of goods/services by the beneficiary can only be selected for specific groups determined on the basis of often inaccurate quality criteria.

Individual learning account (ILA)

The ILA card was introduced in 2004 by the Region of Tuscany. Since 2014 it has been replaced by vouchers. It was launched as an alternative to vouchers. It consisted of an individual prepaid and rechargeable credit card with a maximum amount of €2,500, which allowed inactive, unemployed, first-time job seekers, redundant and mobile workers - provided they were enrolled at an Employment Centre - to receive a financial contribution to cover all or part of the costs incurred for educational activities both for the actual participation in a course as well as for the related costs (Anpal, 2008).

Today, a similar measure has been introduced by the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research provided for by law 107 of the 13th of July 2016 ("*La Buona Scuola*"), art. 1 paragraph 121, which establishes an electronic card to be used when updating and training official teachers at educational institutions.

Tax incentives

In the 2020 tax returns (tax year 2019), taxpayers can deduct 19% of adult education expenses.

The benefit is recognised on the basis of expenditure standards that may vary according to the work position of the parties involved (self-employed, employee, etc.). A maximum amount of €10,000 per year is established for everyone. The eligible costs are the following:

- Registration for training courses, including online ones, conferences, congresses, seminars, specialisation courses and master's degrees;
- Travel expenses, as well as those relating to travel to the event or course;
- Board and lodging expenses (catering and accommodation facilities in general) when attending the event or course.

Obviously, this measure is only accessible to those who have an income that allows an expenditure of €10,000 per year.

Subsidised loans

Honour loans are a form of financing granted by banks without having to provide other guarantees. They are intended for deserving students who need financial support to complete their studies and for young entrepreneurs who want to start their own business. To apply for an honour loan applicants must be between 18 and 35 years old (a limit that can be exceeded in specific cases) and must have held Italian citizenship for at least six months.

The maximum amount that can be obtained and the duration of the repayment vary depending on the bank and the reasons why it is granted. The honour loan is regulated by Italian Legislative Decree 185/2000 and may also be non-repayable, i.e. the beneficiary may not have to reimburse the amount.

The honour loan for those who study generally does not exceed €5,000 per year. Reimbursement usually begins one or two years after the completion of the studies and can last for a period between 1 and 15 years.

Finally, there are honour loans granted by municipalities and regions for both unemployed people and students.

Clearly, this measure is only suitable for those who also have other sources of funding and who are engaged in courses that will guarantee sufficient income in the future.

Financial incentives for enterprises

Incentives for companies refer to a regulation introduced in 1986 for the expenses to attend conferences, congresses and the like as well as professional refresher courses, including travel and accommodation expenses that are deductible up to 50% of the total amount (TUIR Chapter 1 D.P.R. 22/12/1986 no. 917, OJ 31/12/1986, article 54, paragraph 5). Over the years, financial laws have changed these rules, specifying them in relation to certain types of companies. For professionals, for example, the costs of training, as well as the costs of registering for conferences and congresses, including travel and accommodation, are fully deductible within the annual limit of €10,000. The expenses incurred for personalised services for the certification of skills, guidance, research and support for self-entrepreneurship are fully deductible within the annual limit of €5,000.

The 2021 Budget Law confirmed the incentives in favour of training carried out by companies aimed at innovation and digitisation. In particular, this measure provides for the tax credit for education 4.0.

Interprofessional funds

Joint Interprofessional Funds are associations promoted by the social partners representing both employers and employees. They operate with the authorisation - and control - of the Italian Ministry of Labour and finance educational programmes set up by companies for their employees. The adherence to Interprofessional Funds allows companies to allocate a fixed share of 0.30% of the social security contributions paid to INPS for the professional growth of their employees. Employers have the option to transfer this contribution to one of the Joint Interprofessional Funds. This measure may give rise to the financing of individual training courses, but it is up to the entrepreneur to decide whether to authorise it or not.

Time-off to study

The legislation (Article 10 of Italian Law no. 300/70 of the so-called "Workers' Statute") recognises the right of student workers to take paid leave. The use of this measure is widespread and is part of every collective labour agreement.

In addition to study leave, the law (Articles 5 and 6 of Law no. 53/2000) recognises:

- Leave for lifelong learning;
- Leave for non-work related training.

For the former, workers have the right to take leave for courses promoted by competent institutions or by the company. The number of hours, the remuneration due and the criteria for identifying workers is delegated to collective agreements.

Leave for non-work related training is granted to those who have been working in the company for at least 5 years. They may request unpaid leave to:

- Complete compulsory schooling;
- Obtain a secondary school leaving certificate, a university diploma or a degree;
- Participate in training activities other than those financed by the company.

Leave may not exceed 11 months, whether continuous or otherwise, throughout the entire working life.

During leave, employees are entitled to keep their job but their length of service is interrupted.

This is a fundamental measure for the individual right to education, but the percentage of employees who take advantage of it is low. It is also limited to employees only.

In addition, in Italy, on 1 January 2017, the subjective right to study was introduced in mechanical engineering companies too. The agreement between the Social Partners provides for the right to at least 24 hours of training per year. In the absence of company training courses, the worker has the right to participate in external courses, with contributions from companies up to €300 per worker. In this case, the company will pay 2/3 of the 24 hours paid (16 hours) while 1/3 of the hours will be paid by the worker

Payback clauses

Payback clauses are a legal tool that can encourage companies to invest in training by allowing them to bind employees for a certain period of time after training in exchange for paying the direct and indirect costs of that training. This type of measure has not yet been introduced in Italy.

3. Elements of expenditure evaluation and its distribution by the professional position of individuals

Now let's take a look at the analysis of the ability to exercise the right to education based on professional position. First, we provide some essential information (updated in 2016: the latest data currently available on Eurostat) relating to the amount of expenditure on adult education and its distribution between individuals, entrepreneurs or the State. As far as public expenditure is concerned, we limit ourselves to investments in active employment policies, since it is in this area that it is easier to allocate funding directly to the free choice of individuals.

As can be seen (see Box 2), public expenditure accounts for less than 30% of the total.

Individuals (AES)		Private entrepreneurs (CVTS)		Active labour market policies, public	
2011	2016	2010	2015	2010	2015
2.554	3.025	3.896	4.514	2.341	2.761

Sources: Eurostat, [EU Adult Education Survey](#) (reference years: 2011 and 2016), special data extraction for DG EMPL; Eurostat, EU [Continuing Vocational Training Survey](#) (reference years 2010 and 2015), special data extractions for DG EMPL; DG EMPL [Labour Market Policy \(LMP\) Database](#) (reference years 2010 and 2015). Note: the figure is expressed in millions of euro at current prices, so inflation should lead to small increases over time even if the real financial resources remain constant. CVTS employer expenditure includes indirect costs due to time spent training, but excludes expenditure on employee training by micro-enterprises or public sector employers. This data only refers to non-formal education and training.

Box 2. Total expenditure for adult education by funding source

It should also be taken into consideration that low-skilled adults are underrepresented in terms of participation in education and training. They constitute more than 40% of the Italian population and only 27.7% of participants in education and training activities (MLPS, 2015). This phenomenon must be linked to the fact that participation requires a certain investment by those concerned and that intervention by public expenditure is marginal.

However, even private expenditure has its weak spots.

The average expenditure per participant paid directly by individuals is €229 (2016) and has increased by €7 over 5 years (compared to an increase of €62 in the EU28). The company per capita expenditure decreased (from €1,215.00 in 2010 to €1,149.00 in 2015), positioning itself (-€269) below the European average (ECORYS, 2019).

Given this premise, the analysis of the distribution of opportunities based on the professional position of the interested parties is developed by taking into account the main groups:

a. Employees in the private sector

The private sector is the most favoured. Employees have the opportunity to participate in non-formal training activities financed either directly or indirectly by the employer. Training is, however, often limited to compulsory training. In-company training is aimed at the professional growth of the person with respect to the specific production context in which they operate, and the skills acquired are not necessarily transferable or meet an individual demand for personal development.

b. Employees in the public sector

The public sector has to deal with public administration reforms and in-depth modernisation processes. In addition, anti-corruption and transparency regulations would require a frequent rotation of tasks and organisational position of workers. This increases the potential demand for training. The rigorous policies followed in recent years in Italy to ensure the stability of public accounts, with the consequent drastic reduction in financial resources for training policies, have had a negative impact on staff training policies, and thus financial resources have been drastically reduced. The decrease in training expenditure per employee compared to 2010 is widespread: to a lesser extent in the central administrations (-18.8%) and in the regions (-39.1%), but in a much more serious way in the Chambers of Commerce (-60.1%), in the provinces (-62.9%) and in the municipalities (-56.7%), where there is also a significant reduction in the structures dedicated to manage training activities and a reduction in evaluating programming activities. (*Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 2018*)

c. Self-employed individuals

Professional associations promote training activities on technical and specialist topics. Tax benefits pay up to €10,000 per year of expenditure. This type of measure allows training for those with a high income. Adequate supply broken down by sector is lacking.

d. Unemployed individuals

Measures are in place, but they do not create jobs and participation takes place only when it is mandatory. Passive measures prevail. Training methods are available through internships, but numbers are limited, and with on-the-job training under the guidance of a tutor. We refer to internships and work integration or reintegration aimed at placing, or relocating people without employment into the working world (job seekers and the unemployed) or with particular disadvantages (the disabled or asylum seekers).

e. Inactive individuals

The inactive working-age population exceeded 13 million in 2019. For this target group, funding is available mainly for short-term training activities (around 300 hours), aimed at a limited number of people, offered through groups and aimed at overcoming the mismatch regarding labour demand. Regarding the inactive poor population, the interventions are mainly of a welfare nature.

f. Workers with low levels of education and qualifications

More than 40% of the Italian population lacks a high school diploma (Isced 3 a, b, c) and the average Italian citizen's alphabetical and numerical performance are among the worst in Europe. There is no social mobility, on the contrary, it is getting worse (ISTAT). Participation of low-skilled workers in training activities is extremely limited.

g. Workers employed in micro-enterprises

Some types of financing are available in this context, however, training financed through the Interprofessional Funds manages to cover these types of enterprises marginally in order to offer opportunities to the workers employed there. In these cases, mandatory non-formal training (e.g. safety courses) and on-the-job training (the level of which depends on the organisational and technological content of the individual production companies) prevail.

4. Conclusions

Public policies over the last two decades have progressively introduced different forms of financing of individual demand for training (of which we have highlighted the main limits). All the measures listed, used either alone or in combination, are potentially capable of supporting medium-term individual training courses aimed at an individual training plan. However, we have seen that public expenditure on education also constitutes private expenditure (individuals, families and businesses, associations). We also know that financial facilitation requires, however, a commitment by the individual to invest their time and take on the costs of said opportunities (having to forgo other activities that generate income or help with the expenses). Therefore, without decisive public intervention in favour of low-skilled adults, the gap between the high-skilled and the low-skilled is bound to increase. But this would entail a change in public strategies. Budget laws are all based on a strategy that tends to favour investment in education for the benefit of high-skilled individuals, those who can drive the economy towards new scenarios. This strategy leads to the postponement of investments in favour of low-skilled adults and to their containment through limited welfare measures. Compulsory training, although aimed at "disadvantaged" targets (e.g. low-skilled workers), is a compensatory measure rather than a measure for individual growth and development. It favours those who have an income that makes tax concessions possible and those who have a job that offers learning opportunities. These are the boundaries within which the current measures are effective. The private market (including the growing public university offerings) will never be able to ensure greater equity as it constantly expands only where the demand for training is already strong. As a result, the potential demand for low-skilled adult education is lacking because:

- its offer is concentrated in metropolitan areas and large cities in the most developed areas of the country,
- it is unable to cover every training need and is mainly oriented towards the demand of high-skilled individuals,
- only providers addressing the most qualified training demand practise methodologies and teaching methods that facilitate learning,
- almost no provider has adult learning professionals, and this role is now filled by anyone with any level of professionalism. Training low-skilled adults requires high professionalism.

Extending the individual right to education within a framework of public policies aimed at promoting the strengthening of the population groups in strategic positions in relation to economic growth and, at the same time, in a context characterised by the constant growth of the private education market is a difficult challenge.

The risk is that the current balance based on the de facto acceptance of the educational exclusion of large population groups and the concentration of opportunities on equally large population groups (referring to the 17

million certified by ISTAT) will become the standard in Italy. If this were the case, low-skilled adults would return to the origins of adult education, focusing on mutual education and networks of relationships capable of promoting their free intellectual development.

Notes

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Work-related university training for future adult education professionals¹

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Keywords

Work Related Learning, Employability, Transition to work, Adult Learning, Adult Education

Abstract

The demand for work-related learning in universities is increasing and the reasons for seeking it are not only linked to the future employment needs of graduates, even if absolutely significant, but also to a broader development and openness of the academic system (Magnell and Geschwind, 2013) which is required to train professionals capable of bringing research for innovation processes to the workplace. The working world is recognised as being able to convert high-level scientific production into an activator of change. In this context, this article illustrates the importance of work-related learning in higher education when integrated with research activities, with particular reference to the training of adult education professionals with regard to new professional roles that are likely to rapidly evolve.

1. Adult education professions: an evolving framework

The choice of a university and the related educational path certainly represent an important component in a person's "professional self-construction" process. The choice intersects a rational plan, based on information regarding the path and employment opportunities, and an often more unconscious plan, related to what one imagines their future work will be and what they expect when it comes to their future professional identity (Erickson, 1964). Thus, the representation of oneself when it comes to the entry phases is anchored to two components: personal and social. The first concerns that set of characteristics that the person thinks of possessing in terms of attitudes, abilities, behaviour and potential. It is a continuous evolution of personal experience which is constantly reworked through subjective interpretive schemes. Social representation, on the other hand, derives from the awareness of belonging to a certain social group with the related rights, duties and resources and where professional identity is an important component (Castelli and Venini 1998; Mancini, 2001a; 2001b). Work, in fact, characterises and structures most of a person's daily life and is one of the main sources of identity and a sense of personal value (Bandura, 1995a; 1995b; 1995c): consequently, decisions regarding the educational path (and therefore professional choices) interact in a particularly significant way with the perception of one's present and future identity (Varani, 2004).

The choice of any educational path in adulthood is placed in this structured dialectic that, in the case of the educational and training professions, is further complicated by the fact that the universe of these professions is extremely varied and not immediately attributable to a consolidated social image.

The non-teaching educational and training professions, "other" from that of the teacher, over the last century appear to be affected by profound transformations: a new social demand for education and training and new public policies (health, labour, the environment, cultural, etc.) have led to the development of a set of activities aimed at the growth and development of people's skills, not attributable to the area of formal education and the school system. In some cases, these activities have seen a consolidation and legitimacy that has led to the definition of a profession characterised by specific conduct in terms of actions, codes and expectations of social stakeholders (for example, the professional educator in the health sector, and secondly, the socio-educational

sector). Other educational professions still have an initial level of structuring and development, with few standards shared and often exercised by professionals united by the activities carried out, but not by training, status, skills acquired and the type of employment relationships (Del Gobbo, Federighi, 2021).

This framework is also found among the many professions in adult learning, with the exception of those engaged in the formal system associated with school teachers or trainers in continuous training, which however constitute only a limited part of the adult learning staff as a whole. The majority of these professionals perform activities and functions focused on three macro-levels - 1. Operative, 2. Managerial, 3. Strategic - and are related to the following professional categories: adult training (management and development of curricula and training programmes); management of professional and business training (and related programmes, curricula and activities); management and development of human resources (HRD) with the detection of needs and planning when it comes to worker growth; development of the workforce (planning, research, development and implementation of policies and activities) (Federighi, 2021a).

However, the situation may change considerably in the coming years, with the emergence of different professions or areas of activity that are not yet part of a specific profession.

The pandemic that still characterises this historic moment has highlighted, in fact, an absolute need for investment in the overall growth of the skills of the adult population. As highlighted by Federighi (2021^b):

Reinforcing the educational quality of adult learning, however, has an issue to resolve. During the pandemic, much of the public funding was directed towards income support measures. The end of the pandemic must coincide with the progressive transition to active policies that provide opportunities for adult learning above all. In order for this not to result in new and additional forms of exclusion, it will be necessary to create an institutional capacity to increase educational interventions that can generate educational well-being. For this reason, we need political interventions that can generate a new institutional culture of education and learning based on the immediate empowerment of adult learners.

All this will require adequate and in part unprecedented professionalism that is flexible and capable of changing with regards to new social needs and possible political pushes. Students are not yet aware of such professionalism with regards to their future identity and they are not clearly present and defined socially. It is possible that some areas of educational work already present in the field of adult education will be professionalised. "Professionalisation" is, moreover, a dynamic process that leads to the evolution of essential characteristics in certain jobs. Those who intend to preside over specific activities in their future work need to keep this phenomenon in mind. They must gain experience, but also be ready to do their research. There are some interesting points of view when it comes to "training at work" that combine research and training; a kind of "research-based work-related learning" with experiences "in, on and for" the working world concentrated on the research needed to interpret the present in order to anticipate a professional future.

2. Research-based work-related learning

The interest of researchers and the business world for Work-Related Learning (WRL) has certainly increased since the early nineties and research in this sector is now transdisciplinary (Brennan and Little 1996; Tynjälä, 2008; Lemanski, Mewis and Overton 2010; ETF, 2012). The rapid and unprecedented change in society and working life in recent decades is at the root of this increase in interest. The development of information and communications technology, the emergence of a knowledge-based economy, the strengthening and expansion of globalisation processes, increased competitive pressures at national and international level, as well as changes in organisational structures and professional tasks have led to the need for an increasingly competent workforce capable of

responding to the needs of a constantly changing production system: a more skilled and better trained workforce, but also one that is more flexible and adaptable to change (OECD, 2015; 2017).

Since the 1990s, the university system has strongly felt the need to transform its educational offer in response to profound changes in the global socio-economic and cultural system (Oblinger and Rush, 1997).

The more consolidated definitions consider work-related learning as A “planned activity that uses the context of work to develop knowledge, skills and understanding useful in work...” (QCA, 2003) [convolved] “students learning about themselves and the world of work in order to empower them to enter and succeed in the world of work and their wider lives” (Moreland, 2005).

However, while universities were initially encouraged to respond to labour market changes by ensuring degree courses and curricula relevant to the wider needs of the economy and society, in recent years there has been greater recognition of the need to better prepare graduates for employment in terms of giving them more general (“soft”) skills than specific skills, but also guidelines to help them in their career decision and, above all, in early transitions.

At the same time, awareness of the fundamental importance of innovation processes has increased:

Moreover, one of the important lessons of the past two decades has been the pivotal role of innovation in economic development. The build-up of innovation capacities has played a central role in the growth dynamics of successful developing countries. These countries have recognised that innovation is not just about high-technology products and that innovation capacity has to be built early in the development process in order to possess the learning capacities that will allow “catch up” to happen (OECD, 2012).

While the first university reforms were, therefore, focused on an improvement from the point of view of the efficiency and quality of processes, with mainly internal repercussions of the system, the most recent reform agendas are focused on the inclusion of innovation in terms of the link between training and innovation, research and innovation (Kwiek and Maassen, 2012; OECD, 2012).

Crucial is the integration between education, research and innovation, the three summits of the so-called “knowledge triangle” (Maassen and Stensaker, 2011), due to the implications that derive in terms of employment, social cohesion, economic growth and global competitiveness. It is a kind of contained script, since the Lisbon strategy (Larédo, 2003), in the basic political buzzwords such as “knowledge-based economy”, “knowledge institution” or “New Economy”, despite their continuous shaping and redefining (Maassen and Olsen, 2007). The objective shifts from improving the supply system to taking into account the impact it must have in terms of contributing to the transformation of contexts: a system that asks to be increasingly open and, necessarily, in communication with the outside world. It is precisely the “knowledge triangle” that requires collaboration between universities and the different parties that are outside the academic world, to promote innovation and the ability to predict needs and build responses in advance, also in terms of professionalism. In this way, the demand for work-related learning has necessarily increased and the motivations are not only linked to the future employment needs of graduates, although relevant, but also to a broader development and openness of the academic system (Magnell and Geschwind, 2013). The working world is linked to the ability to convert the strength of high-level scientific production into a rich generation of innovations: it is a kind of extraction of the university’s potential to contribute to innovation in the public and private sectors and economic growth.

This need is increasingly linked, in the European context, to the recognition of an undelayable “modernisation” of the system (Olsen, 2007; European Commission, 2013, 2014), so that it is possible to overcome what has been defined as the “European paradox”, namely the consideration that Europe plays a leading role in terms of high-level scientific production, but the ability to convert this force into innovation that generates wealth and employment is delayed (Kwiek and Kurkiewicz, 2012).

This model is strictly “work-related” rather than “work-based” because work in terms of experience or practice is not the only basis for learning (Aarto-Pesonen, Tynjälä, 2017). Instead, one should move towards curricula and programmes that are able to closely integrate practical work experience with theoretical knowledge and research “in, for and in the workplace” in order to introduce research into the work experience, formulate hypotheses and foreshadow scenarios, problems and hypothesise solutions: the worlds of higher education and work are getting closer and the integration of formal and informal learning (linked to prefigurations and propensities) becomes an essential prerequisite for developing the necessary skills in response to changes in working life (Tynjälä, 2008a; 2008b).

3. Professional identity as a process

Work-related learning has a lot to do with building professional identity processes. Traditionally, professional identity models, within a professional environment, constitute a qualification for “professionals” as these models are at the basis of an image on which one’s own identity is constituted. They constitute the reference point of a collective imagination; they historicise typologies and also indicate the guidelines for incoming training.

For a long time, individuals were considered professionals after having completed the necessary educational course, acquired the required certifications and internalised the rules of the profession (Wilensky, 1964). The current situation in the working world and the related research have, however, highlighted how reductive it is to consider professionalism (and consequent employment) purely as education-based (Ibarra, 1999).

It is important to note the complexity and plurality of professional roles that often coexist in the different areas of work and many professions assume a multiform and dynamic physiognomy, in which professional roles previously considered distinct coexist. Moreover, workers with high levels of education are often engaged in multiple forms of work, either sequentially or simultaneously. In the case of the educational professions, as mentioned in previous sections, professional identity today appears to be characterised by a strong dynamism and is closely related to three main aspects:

- the emergence of social needs that are in constant transformation and definition,
- the presence of services related to new needs,
- the development of the private sector (for both socio-educational services as well as continuing training services) as the main area of demand for educational professionalism and the supply of educational and training services.

The expansion of intervention spaces is leading to a consequent change in educational professions and an idea of open, dynamic professionalism that is able to respond to the needs of different contexts is increasing, together with a value component as an integral part of the specific pedagogical professional competence (Xodo, Bortolotto, 2011; Del Gobbo, Federighi, 2021)

For students, rather than looking at professional identity as a goal or a state, identity must be acquired, built upon and determined by subjective, contextual factors and influenced by interpersonal interactions, to recognise the role of agent in the process of creating one’s professional self-image. Work-related learning experiences should contribute precisely to this and to help the student mature their awareness of the process through which they have developed meaning (Cohen-Scali, 2003; Slay, Smith, 2011) and critical-reflective awareness of the facilitating and hindering educational actions that have occurred and that could intervene (Pratt, K.W. Rockmann, J. B. Kaufmann, 2006; Tomer, Mishra, 2016).

4. The supply chain: from the three-year degree to master's degrees in education

Questioning the educational and training professions necessarily implies referring to the training processes preparing these professions. It is not possible to think, reflect, even plan, new professions without fully understanding the education spaces. In this sense, a university's responsibility in the construction, design and development of adequate courses of study is certainly extensive and demanding. Research has been going in this direction for a few years now. The first works between 2000 and 2009 (Orefice, 2006; Calaprice, 2011) can be attributed to a pioneering value that was only consolidated in the 2020s, giving rise to a reflection that, on the one hand, invests in new professions, and on the other hand considers the effects that the education offer, proposed by the three-year and master's courses of study in the pedagogical-education field, were able to promote.

As we know, the AVA-ANVUR system, starting from the beginning of the 2000s, built a didactic-education architecture within which the courses of study must be designed. A central point of this architecture concerns the relationship between the professions for which a course of study prepares those who follow it and how the stakeholders welcome the graduates of the course that these stakeholders should have helped to create. This is the nerve centre on which the future of the University in Italy will be based.

We know, in fact, that the quality system, previously referred to as AVA-ANVUR, imposed a turning point in the construction of the university training offer, but anyone who has experience of academic teaching or course coordination is well aware of the difficulty of moving away from an educational system based on teaching the discipline. In recent years, we have begun to talk more about the relationship between education and the working world, the need to carry out work-related teaching and to create categorical relationships with the professions to be carried out after graduation. Twenty years ago, Italian educational research for schools focused on skills, on vertical curricula, on the need to connect school stages. At the time, universities remained out of the debate. In reality, even the attempts developed with the support of educational research institutes, the regional IRRSAE, did not lead to a cultural transformation and the subject has continued to go in a didactic-educational school direction in Italy. Universities have not distanced themselves from this model and today we are talking about transversal skills and professional skills without a clear idea of how to develop these skills.

The AVA-ANVUR system, based on quality, directs the didactic architecture of the courses of study starting from the necessary skills when the courses of study are finished. The Bologna Process (Sorbonne Joint Declaration, 1998) founded the system of the common area of Higher Education and created a grid based on the Dublin descriptors that represent the reference point of this architecture. Therefore, even if there are clear indications of the development of the courses of study, it is necessary to deepen the best teaching methods for the development of transversal and professional skills. Courses must provide students with a transparent offer and must provide the widest possible tools necessary for entering the working world. Another important point to consider concerns the transition to graduation with well-structured and, above all, concrete work-oriented projects. We are therefore facing a substantial change regarding the way of doing didactics. It is not just about teaching with skills in mind, teaching must be organised using all the necessary tools to facilitate an adequate transition to work, through the achievement of learning outcomes that prelude solid, usable skills in line with the development of the future.

In this sense, the TECO-D Pedagogy 2018-2020 research (Federighi, 2018; Federighi, Del Gobbo, 2021) has precisely highlighted the need to identify learning outcomes which are consistent with the professional skills required once courses are concluded. Research has shown that there is an urgency to establish such coherence not only within the course of study, but also among various courses of study. To this end, this is needed for the supply chain; from the Education and Training Sciences course of study to the Adult Education course of study as well as Continuing Education and Pedagogical Sciences.

5. Internship, internationalisation, transition to work

In a time such as this, faced with such a substantial opportunity, in economic terms and unique in cultural terms, represented by the implementation of the PNRR (EU Regulation 2021/241), the National Recovery and Resilience Plan approved by the Italian Parliament in spring 2021, we must strive to make the university a place of the most advanced education even more so, a place that prepares the future management classes of our country and offers the necessary research to face the next twenty years with courage and certainty. We mention the PNRR because the context in which we will be quickly called upon to modify and shape education processes will be as sudden as it may be disruptive. Within the study courses of the education chain, the drive for educational innovation has begun, now we need to strengthen and expand the concreteness and awareness of the task that universities are going to face.

We started from the reflection on the topic of work-related learning, we want to underline the importance of some measures such as internship and internationalisation. Both these formative dimensions can be strongly declined according to a work-related movement and, in fact, can support and direct it. The request of the PNRR to Italian universities is precisely this: build work-related processes, build virtuous pathways for the inclusion of transversal skills starting from the existing education offer. We can now assume that all this will result in a change that also involves didactics. On the one hand, it is necessary to reinforce services that support the implementation of skills, both internally and externally, such as communication skills, creativity, flexibility, reading one's own emotions as well as others' emotions, self-knowledge, teamwork, leadership; on the other hand, it is necessary to offer internship activities, development of actions in the workplace, listening to testimonies, in international as well as national contexts. Erasmus programmes are one of the many activities that can and should be facilitated. The study course, LM 57&85 Sciences of adult education, continuing education and pedagogical sciences has, for some years now, been committed, through specific programmes, to the care of the transition to work of its students and graduates. Specifically, there are three actions that we would like to highlight: 1. the drafting of the SUA 2020 and 2021 data sheet following the criterion of the definition of learning outcomes, coming out of the various courses that make up the training offer, which can be combined with the Dublin descriptors indicated by the quality project (Boffo, 2021); 2. a sustained and broad push to take advantage of programmes to follow training activities abroad, in particular the course of study has been offering, for eight years now, intensive weeks at the University of Wuerzburg with specific courses on adult learning and education in a one-of-a-kind winter school in Europe (Egetenmeyer, 2020); the internationalisation programmes are recognised in terms of CFUs and also extend to further offers with non-EU countries; 3. the internships are built in collaboration with the steering committee and the companies concerned have participated in a programme called "quality internships" which has provided for prolonged internships over time and aimed at drafting the degree thesis in the field. The actions developed over the years have made it so that the course of study constantly and persistently prepares graduates for entry into the professional world. We know from the course quality data that these guidelines are improving the experience for graduates, but above all the most important factor is the transformation of teaching methods with the consequent improvement of the training offer. Regarding the first point or the explicit declaration of learning outcomes to be achieved, this involved the adoption of the skills structure prepared with the TECO-D Pedagogy matrix (Fabbri, Torlone, 2018; Federighi, 2018) to build courses that could develop the skills provided by the matrix. The disciplines have been put at the service of competences to achieve a comprehensive reference framework with respect to six key competences: 1. Learning theoretical models and the re-development of professional identity in fields that provide for a second level degree, on the one hand, and the assumption of managerial responsibilities, on the other; 2. Learning research methodologies aimed at supporting complex educational-training actions; 3. Learning tools for didactic-educational-training plans; 4. Learning

communicative-relational dynamics and processes; 5. Learning didactic-educational methods for training contexts; 6. Learning organisational-managerial plans. The TECO-D Pedagogy framework identifies specific skills for professionals in training and second-level education, analysing work in a master's degree.

As far as internationalisation is concerned, we know how much the implementation of these strategies favours entrepreneurship, knowledge, creativity and, in general, the sense of other. We must continue to insist on the importance of going abroad to learn languages, to open up to the world, to move, to communicate, to relate to others. Finally, when it comes to internships, educational action still needs to be discovered and reinforced. Internships are a window on the working world and are an integral part of a graduate's education. The practical-reflective knowledge gained during an internship can change ideas and the path and studies. Each study course should devote time and energy to an internship.

The reason why it seems so important for us to insist and influence the university education offer for the future development of the country is the firm belief that a pivotal point to make Italy grow depends on the way in which universities can transform and shape themselves on the needs based on the creation of decisive human capital. In this sense, welcoming the increase in the construction of skills established by ANVUR since 2017, with monitoring the learning outcomes of the courses of study, has favoured the acquisition of awareness regarding the teaching process. What to teach, how to teach, why to teach, but above all, the relationship between disciplines and, in fact, learning outcomes has been deepened. This commitment has allowed us to understand the evolution of the labour market and the professions that, particularly in the field of training and the social economy, have evolved and been innovated. Likewise, it counted towards the effort on internationalisation and internships. Offering opportunities to understand the professions of the future, the work processes and the cultural approaches differentiated by national states creates the work-related paths that we started talking about at the beginning of our reflection. It is no coincidence that part of the PNRR funding will flow into Teaching Learning Centres, which will have to set up a system for preparing researchers for university teaching and training. We are talking about fragile axes of the Italian academic system, neglected more than any other segment of public schooling. Creating work-related learning models and applying them on a large scale is complex if we do not move towards sharing an innovative teaching and education culture.

5. Conclusions

At the end of these reflections, we can point out some courses of action for university training policies that are crucial for the professions of the future.

First of all, we conclude with certainty that change and transformation, now underway, can find its own course and can start a new way of producing knowledge, building skills and creating the necessary bridge to the world of work. This is a pact to which Italian universities must adhere to if we want to see the educational innovation referred to in the PNRR. This is a challenge that can be won. Training people and training graduates who will work in training contexts, represent the nerve centre to truly transform a country and to produce inclusive innovation. We have an important responsibility as adults, for adults and with adults (PNRR). The bridge must be built with the strength of cultural commitment, of a formative transformation. Universities must train professionals who know how to recognise, renew and reprogramme skills in the future, this is the purpose of a place that produces knowledge and know-how.

Secondly, training, education and teaching research is central to the development of programmes and projects in every context of the most varied professions, which is another point of reference. Too often, research in training is underestimated, it must be conducted with the tools and methods of fully recognised scientific research. The last decades of the Grundtvig, Erasmus and Erasmus+ programmes have taught us to cross national bor-

ders in order to develop good common and community practices. These have been fundamental activities and actions to broaden our horizons and confront others. Adult education and research in adult learning and education can go further and become guiding research, research that guides the transversal processes that concern educational systems, business processes, public institutions and the work that takes place there. An important task that needs thorough, methodologically supported research.

Thirdly, any transformation must be supported by a civil process. Sustainability, ecological transition, social innovation are terms that manifest the ethical commitment to the other, to the environment, towards a togetherness that can change the starting conditions for everyone. While not wanting to address a generic discourse, the civil commitment to recognising others passes through the recognition of the formation of the self, of one's own identity, of one's own culture, of one's own roots.

"We" instead of "I" will be what, in the end, will allow us to achieve the transformations that we desperately need if we want to prepare for a better world.

Notes

¹ The article was written with the joined efforts of Giovanna del Gobbo who drafted sections 1, 2, 3, Vanna Boffo sections 4, 5, and the Conclusions. The Abstract and Bibliographic references are shared parts.

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Adult education in Italy: a systemic challenge

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Keywords

Adult Education, Lifelong Learning, System, Complexities

Abstract

Adult education in Italy and in institutions represents a “systemic challenge”, which calls for coordinated responses at micro, meso and macro levels, rediscovering the deep connections between learning, education, information and training. The proposed perspective is complex and procedural: the systems evolve based on their own self-organisation, not on top-down solutions. Adult education has social and cultural roots, to be recovered in the establishment of territorial networks for lifelong learning. In them, the university also has an active role to play in supporting changes that affect us culturally, politically and practically.

“In a world in motion and with multiple and sudden influences, unexpected power, with an intense urge to change habits, there is a much greater need for education that makes man capable of resisting and carrying out the changeability and influences of the environment for his own benefit” (Capitini, 1959, p. 209).

1. Introduction

The words of Aldo Capitini inspire us, more than sixty years after their publication, to a complex thought on adult education. In an Italy which was prey to authoritarianism and illiteracy, the “Italian Gandhi” warned his contemporaries against the risks of simplified pedagogical thinking. In rereading it, the reference to contrasts is striking: systemic *ante litteram*, Capitini detects the spontaneous movements that protect adults from alienation, such as openness “to what lives”, silence and calm, art, play, imagination. The adult is motivated to cultivate their ability to live the changes of their time, this is what has always profoundly characterised adult education.

But today, what do we mean by adult education? How do we make sense of these two words full of history and meaning, in a system in constant change that – even more so in the last year – seems disoriented and disorienting for individuals, services and institutions alike? The path that I suggest connects two authors similar in age, sensitivity and ability to go beyond the obvious: Aldo Capitini (1899-1968) and Gregory Bateson (1904-1980). I will be accompanied by them in reflecting on the systemic challenge of adult education in Italy.

At the micro level, the individual – learner, teacher, professional, educator, administrator – develops a self-awareness as a *learner*, and recognises the value of lifelong learning for himself and for others, integrating it into daily life. However, this is not a foregone conclusion: we must learn to adapt previous learning to new situations; learning to think like an adult (Mezirow, 2016), that is, to reflect critically, to demand one’s rights, responding to power if necessary and making deliberate choices. This movement is tiring for those who, as adults, have already structured a habitus, an identity, values, through oppressive life experiences and contexts. Transformative learning, says Mezirow (2016), arises from dilemmas and involves disturbing emotions, resistance and losses, not just acquisitions. It is also for this reason that the adult cannot be left alone to learn, but the self-reflective and critical dimension must become a constitutive part of any educational programme.

At the meso level, the analysis moves to the organisational, relational and practical dimensions that build a culture of learning in organised contexts, setting up space and times, creating procedures, leadership and gover-

nance models. The system looks at interactions and processes, rather than at regulations or roles. The different organisations that, in a given territory, offer education, teaching, various training, but also services, work, support, are called today to work in a network, as we'll call it. The concrete interactions that shape these networks are processes to be monitored and interpreted in order to understand how to orient them towards diversity and collaboration, avoiding the risks of linear, reductive and competitive interventions. It is the process that tells us if the system works: the ethnographic study of network processes (Marchi, 2015) can suggest how to interpret, support and possibly promote them.

Finally, at the macro level, we will have to examine social, political, cultural, historical, but also economic and ecological processes, if we want to understand the complexity in which we are immersed. Technical knowledge, political choices and cultures are closely intertwined. If we look at what happens at the level of institutions, civil society and the country, we see different movements, dominant discourses, political choices not always inspired by what is useful, but also a slow progress towards an integrated system for adult education and learning.

2. Imbalances and reorganisation: education, learning, teaching and training

“Time is out of joint” (Bateson, 1978/1984, p. 290).

In a letter sent to the regents of California University in 1978, Bateson denounced the risks of the disconnect between education and learning. In the paper, published in the appendix of *Mente e natura* (Mind and Nature), he focuses on the intertwining between those learning mechanisms that manifest themselves as “spontaneous” processes and obey the laws of nature, and those that occur under the pressure and the “whims” of the environment. Thus, learning and education. Or even natural selection and social pressure. Dualism is a necessary component of change and, as a general principle, a lens for interpreting mental, social and political processes. Bateson's intention was to underline the need for a systemic composition between concepts that are too often opposed (Formenti, 2017).

Faced with a dualism, one pole is often chosen and the other is denied, but reality is dialectical: there is no life without death, form without function. Rigour and imagination, content and process, theory and practice are deeply entangled dimensions in living and knowing. If the educational system separates them, it generates obsolescence, or – as Bateson says - the inability of individuals, groups and organisations to live in the flow of time. The inability to change, to adapt, generates deep imbalances, discomfort, illness and death in the system.

“It is evident that if any part of a cultural system is ‘lagging behind’, there must be some other part of it that has evolved ‘too quickly’” (Bateson, 1978/1984, p. 291). These ideas can help us understand the imbalance between learning and education which is evident in Italy today. The imposition of the concept of lifelong learning (Field, 2006) has overshadowed, in policies and research, a tradition rich in studies, interventions and educational practices. Don't get me wrong: lifelong learning is important, it can transform lives, give access to career advancements or new jobs, offer a second opportunity to those who have been marginalised or who have had to interrupt their education and it strengthens social capital (Tuckett, 2017). It is even good for physical and mental health, it increases life expectancy and the ability to heal. In a salutogenic approach, therefore, cultivating learning as a human activity which is self-directed, motivating and spontaneous is highly desirable.

The contrast between the two terms is harmful when the idea of lifelong learning is grafted into a neoliberal context, where functionalism and individualism reign (Zarifis & Gravani, 2014). The individual is thus left with his ability to self-motivate and self-finance, with the need to adapt to an increasingly competitive and disorienting world and the privatisation of educational services that become increasingly expensive and inaccessible for those who need them the most. When learning is at the centre, and not education, the commitment

of the State is lacking and we see, in all countries, a disinvestment of public policies, increasingly evident since the 2000s (Tuckett, 2017).

A further imbalance arises from the disconnection between education and teaching: where formal, school-based options leading to a degree are dominant, we often forget that only a minority of adults take this course of action. In Italy, access to education for all is not sufficiently promoted or facilitated, despite it being a principle enshrined in law. In addition, informal experiences are the natural context of adult learning; using the term “spontaneous”, Capitini and Bateson, albeit with a different meaning, emphasise that it is a learning that is born from living, from having specific experiences. The informal dimension of everyday life shapes us and, as the sociologists of the curriculum (Bourdieu, Giroux) have shown us since the 1980s, develops a “hidden curriculum” that teaches us who we are, how to learn and what is useful or desirable for us. Therefore, education, with its curricula written by default, is obsolescent, “dropped from the team”, inadequate to respond to the real needs of adults. Dolci (1987) goes further by saying that every form of education contains the “virus of domination”, of oppression.

Once again, don't get me wrong. Education is a necessity, a right, a way to connect the needs of citizens and society. In Italy, the tail-end of Europe, there is a need to increase the number of graduates, but this effort must be balanced with education, not expand it. Bureaucratisation, institutional language, the organisational system and the structures of adult education, which are too bogged down on the school model, block expected intervention and learning and limit its liberating and transformative scope.

Finally, there is a disconnect between education and training. Today there is a very wide range of learning experiences: training courses of all kinds and for all tastes, self-organised groups, exchanges of practices, even popular schools have drastically changed in the past ten years, especially in large cities (12 in Rome), as a response from below to a growing need for education to which the institutions do not always respond. We have little data on these realities, which represent a “hothouse” of actions, ideas, experiments, but also an underground economy, managed from below, self-regulating through demand-response mechanisms all to be deciphered. It is difficult to say whether, in these offers, there is a balance between training and education.

Education mostly takes place in silence: at work, in the family, by the media, in professional refresher courses, in online communities, in the constant search for courses, tutorials, information and the various experiences towards which the adult is motivated to learn, because he is driven by a need or interest. Follow your passion! We are in the realm of the informal and the non-formal, a pillar of learning in adult life, a composite, fragmented and by definition unclear field.

The systemic approach invites us to look for concrete connections - in practice, in the organisation of services, in the lived experience of adult learners - between words, practices and contexts that belong to an interconnected totality. Thus, we see that university students mostly learn informally, in the concrete relationships they form with classmates and teachers: they orientate themselves, discuss, co-build knowledge, they fall in love (even with ideas) and form a group. Or, in CPIAs, we can sense the deep connections between school activities and the educational and training needs of enrolees.

One of the most debated problems in recent years is how to give visibility and recognition to all skills, including those developed in informal and non-formal areas. The political and technical debate on the processes accompanying the recognition, validation and certification of previous learning and skills acquired has been discussed since Law 92/2012, which attributes to lifelong learning broad characteristics, in which education, teaching and training converge.

3. The Processual and Genealogical Vision: A Brief History of Adult Education

The roots of adult education are intertwined, throughout Europe, with the birth of democracies, the recognition of rights and the awareness of identity, which initially concerned the working class, then expanded to all categories for which education becomes a way of social redemption, full participation, liberation (Formenti, 2021). This is not the place to reconstruct the history of adult education in Italy, but the knowledge of the past illuminates the present and allows us to question the political meaning of education. Loss of sense is one of the evils of contemporary society; ignorance, misinformation and disorientation result in highly dysfunctional and violent methods. Transforming a deeply disoriented society requires space, times and methods to define the needs and actions to be taken. Adult education was born and developed as a social experiment to design a new and just society that goes beyond the needs of individuals.

For the generations that emerged from the war, the need to give everyone the opportunity to live well and contribute to democratic life was a virtue. Think of the relationship between literacy and voting: in the post-war period, educators were fighting in campaigns to teach and raise awareness. Capitini (1959) was a herald of that season, very clear in denouncing the backwardness of people, the risks of demagoguery and the unawareness that had led to fascism, of a bigoted and traditionalist religiosity. The vote was led by the “two Churches”: the Roman Catholic Church and the Communist Party. How can we guarantee true democracy on this presupposition? How can citizens be enabled to “control the direction of society” (p. 207), if not by investing in adult education? Capitini gave impetus to the Centres for Social and Religious Orientation, to the march for peace in Assisi; in his writings, which today appear prophetic, he analyses the damage of management from above and the manipulation of consensus, criticises the excesses of institutionalisation and proposes an open education aimed at freedom. He was marginalised, like Danilo Dolci, Don Milani and many educators who tried to give an authentic representation to our nascent democracy (Formenti, 2021). Strong power does not like education.

The seventies marked an important regulatory step with the recognition of the right to study and the “150 hours” in the metalworkers’ contract in 1973. This norm opened a season of pedagogical experimentation and created new spaces to develop new forms of knowledge that saw the involvement not only of workers, but of women, immigrants, students and committed intellectuals. In those years, adult education was intertwined with movements, first of all, feminism. Rallies, assemblies and study groups become places of learning among peers. But Italian society did not know how to make use of this lesson on libertarian, dialogical and feminist pedagogy. The approach was ideological, abstract and violent. Political extremism and state repression are two sides of the same polarisation process. Today, the 1970s are remembered for terrorism, anonymous kidnappings and heroin. Yet, some seeds of those years are still visible in a culture of subjectivity, difference and rights, karst but indomitable.

4. Territorial networks for lifelong learning: a systemic concept

The implementation of the territorial networks for lifelong learning, indicated by Italian Law 92/2012 as a key instrument of an integrated system, can be read in a systemic way. This territorial dimension involves all public and private educational agencies, services, local administrators, the third sector, entrepreneurs and even private citizens: starting from different agendas (often contradicting each other), all these “issues” should be able to relate, agree on concrete objectives, activate educational processes/services, raise awareness and promote a culture of learning that enhances and includes education, teaching and training.

Creating synergy between realities that appear separate, distant, even ignorant of each other, is far from easy. It requires a cultural change that relies on the availability and ability to work in a network (which is not a given), on the sharing of working methods and governance models that allow the social, economic and organisational sustainability of the processes to be activated. Often, networks in Italy stop at the formal dimension; there is too

much attention for representation, which leads to formulating partnerships that are too broad to be able to function effectively and efficiently; moreover, the protectionism of roles and hierarchies prevents real collaboration. Those who participate in network meetings are not always the ones who do the work on the field.

It is therefore a question of building, step by step, a widespread systemic culture that focuses on relationships and not on individuals, that connects form and substance and recognises imbrication, that is, the non-linearity of the processes, the uncertainty and impossibility of controlling the system from a single point. Diversification is, in networks, a guarantee of resilience, just as biodiversity guarantees the integrity of ecosystems. Therefore, knowing and recognising the social, cultural and productive diversity in the territories is part of the method that allows networks to find answers to complex problems. A network is a third-order system, a system of systems, which must be understood and interpreted in its operation, analysing the interactions between its different parts (Marchi, 2015). Collaboration, in the network, is aimed at an objective, at a project that justifies and supports the synergy of actions on the basis of common interests and different competences.

Law 92/2012 attributes to the CPIAs, Provincial Centres for Adult Education, the role of public reference point for the establishment of territorial networks for lifelong learning. However, the school connotation of the CPIA, specifically when it comes to education, and the difficulties it already encounters in coordinating with high schools for adults who provide secondary courses, highlight a fragility of these centres in interfacing with the complexity of the territories.

5. The role of universities in territorial networks

By participating in territorial networks, universities support the virtuous interconnection between formal paths (connecting the entire “supply chain” of education, from CPIA to PhD), in addition to the integration with informal and non-formal contexts. Some initial steps have been taken in this direction, but there is a lack of mapping and systemisation, to disseminate, enrich and diversify good practices. Through its three “missions” - research, training and public engagement – universities should pursue a policy of lifelong learning and participate in territorial networks, allying with all other agencies.

Research on adult education (Federighi, 2018) is a lively and highly differentiated sector, but marginalised in funding and social recognition, when instead it should be strengthened to offer models and tools to increase the quality and quantity of significant learning experiences. All forms of pedagogical and interdisciplinary research – theoretical, empirical, quantitative, qualitative, historical, participatory - are driving forces of innovation, good training practices and knowledge building. Research is an indispensable component of recovery, the basis of transformative resilience, that is, the ability of systems to evolve in response to a crisis instead of just coping with it.

As far as training is concerned, Italian universities are not yet fully recognised as places for adult education. It is still problematic for the university system to see and treat all students as adults, even modifying teaching towards this direction. Even more problematic is recognising the diversity of the student population, specifically “non-traditional” students (Galimberti, 2018), that is, mature individuals, workers, individuals who go back to finish their studies, those engaged in care tasks, those who enroll in university courses for various reasons, and who therefore have different participation strategies, but who are rarely included in programmes and offers. The systemic approach would suggest a diversification of supply, methods and levels in close synergy with the territories. Training experiences that combine knowledge with specific, general and transversal skills are needed. The co-design of training courses (specialisation courses, Master’s degrees, PhDs) with local agencies, with civil society, with the third sector is already a reality, which can be further enhanced and enriched.

Finally, it must be recognised that universities already interface with the territories, agencies and companies through public engagement, which is not only the ability to attract funding, generate patents and start-ups, or disseminate scientific knowledge, but is an explicit policy of grafting on the territory, aimed at promoting conscious and informed citizenship, sensitive to social and cultural issues, motivated to learn and participate, overcoming the sense of exclusion that many citizens experience towards academia. Technological and ecological innovation must also be social, respecting rights and in particular the right to lifelong learning.

6. Policies, knowledge and cultures of adult education

The systemic perspective suggests that change should not be lowered from above, with the imposition of new rules, but that it should follow the ecological principle of self-organisation. Each system – cell, ecosystem, individual, organisation, society – exercises a capacity for self-care, constantly seeking new balances, when put in a position to learn. The work to be done, therefore, lies in removing obstacles to the autonomy of systems, providing them with resources for new adaptations.

On the political level, there was undoubtedly a great legislative effort: Law 92/2012, the establishment of the CPIA and Piano Nazionale di Garanzia delle Competenze (National Skills Guarantee Plan) were important moments, an expression of a vision. However, the laws are not always applied as intended, nor are they known to citizens. There are weaknesses – for example, putting the CPIA at the centre of territorial networks without giving them the tools needed to put them in action. The implementation of laws and the enforceability of rights are slow. On the political level, it is difficult to understand who should have the ownership of adult education: in the fragmentation described above, different Ministries and Regions manage fractions of the whole, thus contributing to division. At the territorial level, similarly, everyone “cultivates their own garden”.

How do we build a widespread culture of adult education? Each institution involved and the actors operating within it should first of all be made aware of the issue and invited to co-build a shared practice, which can accommodate within it a set of diverse but interconnected cultures. Reflecting on disconnections is an obligatory step in order for technique, culture and politics to be able to unite. This is simpler when interests are united on a real object or a shared project; the culture of doing, co-designing and creating together requires appropriate leadership and governance models. Networking requires alliances, but also cultural knowledge, and therefore the training of decision-makers to counteract traditionalism and resistance to change. Networks need objectives, actions and working methods. Among the many cultures that we will have to implement for recovery there is, therefore, that of networking, which has been talked about for years but of which there are still too few signs.

7. In conclusion: what can be done?

I have suggested a complex approach to the problems of lifelong learning, learning from the history and past political lessons of adult education. The goal is to move everyone - individuals, communities, institutions - towards an integrated but not incorporated system. It is about bringing together different skills, creating connections, networking: these are processes which take place over the long term, which require an investment of personal (micro), practical-organisational (meso) and political-cultural (macro) efforts.

At the micro level, we need to train decision-makers, educators, service professionals, and not only adult students, in the transformative skills which the OECD Learning Compass (2016) refers to: listening skills, relationality, reflexivity, creativity, solidarity...

At the meso level, the educational, training and guidance aspects must be reconstituted in the practices and organisation of services; one area to be developed is that of the acknowledgement and transparency regarding previous learning, aimed at the recognition, validation and even the certification of skills. These are moments of

great educational and formative value when properly executed. Here too, the training of operators is essential; in every agency and in territorial networks there is a need for good practices, dedicated time and space, all supported by clear, open, democratic and reliable leadership.

Finally, at the macro level, the dominant narratives must be changed. Civil society and the public are not very aware of this matter; it is only discussed occasionally, without touching on hegemonic models. Yet, many men and women choose – or are driven – to take courses and paths, to inform themselves, to learn. As long as their identity as learners is not socially recognised and celebrated, they cannot become a lever for transformation and innovation. It is just a small or great experience, perhaps important for the individual, but not enough to generate a more just and sensible future for everyone. Therefore, we have to work with the media to have more communication regarding these issues and for more thorough information. The average citizen has learned that competence does not pay, that you can say anything in public, without having to provide proof or demonstrate facts. This is bad manners.

At present, the country is focusing its attention on education, training, adult teaching. Passionate, motivated but not always adequately educated men and women: giving them tools, greater visibility and recognition and collaborative work spaces is one of the priorities to implement these practices.

Capitini and Bateson had both come out of World War II deeply tried. The former from violence, the latter from the distorted use of communication. Education's goal is to improve humanity, to train it in coexistence (Capitini, 1967, pp. 43-112) and in systemic wisdom (Bateson, 1976, pp. 145-147): if there is a hope for the future, it lies in the awareness of being part of a larger system.

Notes

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Intergenerational Learning: an emerging educator profile?

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Keywords

IGL; Educational Ecosystem;
Adult Learning,
Transformative Learning

Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic is showing a certain short-sightedness when it comes to the policies regarding the over-65 population. If on the one hand there is great potential in lifelong learning, on the other hand it seems difficult to imagine practice transformation models capable of becoming the backbone of the adult education system. The hypothesis described in the article - in presenting the results of an Erasmus+ "Age-Wise" project - describes the possible space that intergenerational learning can express as an extension of the post-pandemic educational ecosystem.

1. Introduction: changing the way

The UN (2020) reports that, globally, the average age of confirmed cases of COVID-19 is 51 (UN, 2020) while mortality rates for the over-80s was five times higher. In Europe, the cause of death from the pandemic affects 95% of adults over 60, in the United States 80% of adults over 65. In Italy, the joint INS and ISS report on mortality of the resident population due to COVID-19 (2020) records a differential of 52 points of excess mortality in the pandemic period – in men aged 70-79 years and 80-89 years - compared to the same period of the 2015-2019 average. Overall, the data shows the emergence of an age that is obviously more fragile. On the one hand (WHOa, 2020) it was expected that in the "2020-2030 Decade" there would be 34% of people aged over 60 on the planet, on the other, the interventions favouring the protection and strengthening of an intergenerational culture and practice have not found a systemic consideration in the policies. For example, there are policies for strengthening places in RSAs (nursing homes) resulting – at least in Italy – in outbreaks of contamination and very high deaths tolls, as a result of experiences and research that indicated alternative paths and the enhancement of community services (SIG, 2020). The pandemic – amplifying the demographics of generational differentiation – poses, among many other things, the rethinking of cities and territories, increasingly thought of as learning cities and lands (UNESCO, 2020), a metaphor for the educational ecosystem. This perspective recalls the image of the networks of relationships that weave inhabited places, where the intergenerational weave appears to emerge as co-essential to the very idea of citizenship. That is, only by reconstituting a fabric imbued with relationships, reciprocity, solidarity, acceptance and memory is it possible to transform a thought into an urban recomposition of intergenerational experience. In which the reticularity of the different experiences is possible rather than the adapted concentration – which in the case of RSAs, emblematically, has represented an example of wasted lives. The recomposition of learning cities or lands, with services extended and scattered in urban places useful for the expression and maintenance of vitality, represents a further possibility of making active ageing not a slogan, but an idea of learning throughout the life cycle. A cycle in which all ages are involved, also agreeing on learning and ageing in good health, thus ensuring that the elderly can achieve their potential in dignity, equality and in a healthy environment (WHOb, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the seriousness of the existing gaps in policies, systems and services; on the one hand, emphasising the inattention to policies consistent with research into adult education in general (Federighi, 2018) particularly *intergenerational learning*. And on the other hand, intensifying pockets of exclusion and stereotypes, the re-emergence of dormant and hidden phenomena such

as ageism (Butler, 1969) which, paradoxically just started at the beginning of the launch of the Decade for Healthy Ageing 2020 – 2030 by the WHO (Baker & Fink, 2020).

Pedagogical and educational research had also pointed out paths and experiences that indicated other avenues with respect to the normalisation and standardisation of services. Connecting Generations (Galeotti, 2012) intended to involve the young and the elderly in training activities focused on the co-construction of experience, outlining the aspects of reciprocity in the acquisition of skills and knowledge, sharing values, understanding and strengthening respect for others. In a lifelong learning perspective, a new need for skills emerges that is able to manage the continuity and meanings of attributes. It is therefore essential to reflect on the generational passage of meanings, where the need for a dialogue perspective in which knowledge can be shared and placed in continuity with a future under construction is evident (Del Gobbo, 2012).

A representation of place emerges as an interdependent context, in which different generations have the opportunity to manifest talents, to recognise their own existential projects, in the freedom to express themselves and communicate, in relation to otherness and context. The beauty of the place is not only an aesthetic issue, but it becomes a culture of vitality, it nourishes transformationality, it is an alternative to the reproducibility and anaesthetisation of experiences. An approach that makes the place-as-dialogical, or context of abilities that allows through a learning mix - between non-formal and informal – widespread and continuous learning to mature and develop. If we multiply the pedagogical meaning of the place, the whole becomes a learning city, co-participating in the reduction of inequalities. A human regeneration that feeds urban and social regeneration, the outcome of which is the overall result of more cohesive communities. Hillman (2007) represents in an exemplary way this tension to intergenerational reciprocity in learning, inviting young people – together with the elderly – “to recognise the value of the aged character, and to enter into the labyrinth of the soul, of what remains in each and every one when the existential farewells are fulfilled” (p.260).

2. Re-vitalising intergenerational learning

Walsh et al. (2016) highlighted the areas of social exclusion of the elderly. Interestingly, the analogy with the pandemic, in which it was noted that among the indirect factors that affect well-being, constraints and limitations - more so for the elderly population - have interacted with the social exclusion already partly in place. The results have been new forms of marginalisation, a decrease in autonomy functions, lack of independence, a sense of initiative (agency). It was evident how “social distancing” weakened and prevented participation in social and recreational activities/commitments and opportunities for integration at the community level (WHO, 2020).

It is therefore a question of re-vitalising the network of intergenerational opportunities, as a prospect of continuous learning. Interpreting intergenerational education in the classic definition (Mannion, 2012), it is evident how it can become, from a pedagogical point of view, a direction in the meaning of the educational ecosystem. It generates learning outcomes, even if they may or may not be the main objective of the activities. Learning can therefore happen both when places are formal and when they are non-formal or informal. In this perspective, those involved in inter-generational-learning (IGL) are enriched by a broader, formative dimension, since it moves towards the recognition and experience of fundamental values for human life and social cohesion. In summary, IGL activities educate and train coexistence and citizenship and express forms of tutorship or facilitation for “co-learning”.

Some elements can contribute to the re-vitalisation of IGL practices, highlighting how social interaction assumes a role of intentionality, becoming itself a “context” of observational learning and dialogue:

- a. IGL as the generative nature of educational relationships. The creation of relational value is generated by the sharing and knowledge of experiences between past and present, providing a historical and cultural memory. From the point of view of learning, intergenerational learning was (is) considered informal (Hat-

ton Yeo & Newman, 2008) and is increasingly a process that occurs in territorial contexts. In fact, however, mutual learning emerges, as a result of which knowledge and experiences are shared, highlight the modernity and updating of the theories of socio-cultural learning (Varisco, 2005) as methods for the cultural, social and human growth of every individual and citizen;

b. IGL as generative relational social capital. The principles of solidarity and reciprocity, which develop the recognition of every other person, are formed in heterogeneous contexts. Intergenerational learning is therefore an effective strategy for a deep development of emotional and affective aspects, which allow quality relationships between generations to be supported and understood as a global dimension, not just a local one. The strong correlation between intergenerational education and the formation of social capital emerges: according to Pierpaolo Donati (2003), social capital is that form of relationship that works to give value, enhance goods or services through exchanges that are neither monetary, nor political, nor patronage, nor donation - pure gifts - but is expressed through social exchanges of reciprocity.

c. IGL as transformative learning. Intergenerational learning is one of the lifelong learning methods that can be used in different places, in different cultures and historical contexts - schools, families, associations - and above all as a new perspective of adult education. Storytelling and listening become pedagogical practices and a way to reflect on existence. We could say that the narrative is legitimised by and typical of IGL, since it sees all people - of all ages - as a paradigm of completeness, of complete acceptance, able therefore to represent not just the ideal of the expected or the formalistic, but also that of making itself into a complex reality, into being, which is still incomplete. In this perspective, IGL learning is transformative.

3. Elder Trainer. The qualification of the educator

If intergenerational activities take on the sense of strengthening the educational ecosystem and improve relations between generations, it is interesting to observe how research on the qualification of elder trainer, in places with an IGL perspective, can become socio-educational innovation. On the one hand, knowing how to relate to a world of adults - including motivation, learning, communication - offers the opportunity to improve the experiential and memory encounter; on the other hand, orienting places as "IGL centres" supports and increases the educational meaning of the nodes of the network on which a community can count. This perspective was investigated by the European project "AGE: WISE - Across Generations at Eye Level: Ways to Integrate Seniors by Education", of the Erasmus+ programme, which involved five dedicated and experienced partners in IGL. Among the project objectives is the search for a profile of educators in IGL and the identification of guidelines aimed at defining training courses for educators in IGL. The attempt to give value to an age that is destined to extend over time, is a good opportunity to recognise the qualities of that "character" already defined by Hillman for these phases of life and at the same time return to them the attention and participation they want and need. "AGE: WISE" researches ways to allow the over-65 age group to acquire skills as trainers in heterogeneous IGL contexts - by working with younger generations, and/or those of the same age - to adopt co-construction methodologies to share knowledge, skills and values. The training is intended as meta-training, since the intention is to allow future over-65 trainers to recognise their inner potential, some good personal functions, the range of knowledge internalised and matured over time, promoting self-esteem and awareness of being still active citizens in the construction of social capital.

The research collected the good practices already existing in training courses and pedagogical interpretation of the places of intergenerational experiences. Methods of organisation and delivery of activities are among the results of this first phase. In detail, IGL Centres are managed mainly by private, non-profit organisations and, to a lesser degree, by public organisations.

Generally, the majority of IGL Centres have the ability to independently finance the activities provided and to use their own spaces. The context becomes one of the determining factors for a good quality of intergenerational learning activities. The participants at the Centres considered are mainly over 65 years of age, followed by an age group between 50 and 65 years old and, to a lesser extent, adolescents and children. The data collected shows how intergenerational teaching practices, regardless of the recipients of the activities and the type of activity itself, are usually provided through informal practices, little structuring, and are dependent on the “training beliefs” of the trainers involved in the Centre.

The semi-structured interviews with the trainers of the Centres – the second phase of the project – made it possible to build a first comparison of the direct experiences of their methods of organising learning experiences for the different generations. The synthesis framework confirmed the prevalence of de-structuring and informality, accompanied more by attention to building a positive relational climate. In fact, the structured part of the interview investigated some areas extracted from the bibliographic research evidence - pedagogical, methodological, technological, organisational, communicative, evaluative and social – in order to understand the first profile of the trainers. It is interesting to note how the perception of over-65 trainers regarding the qualification of the profile considers that intergenerational learning activities should be guided by an educator experienced in reading the needs of the various generations with whom he meets, an empathic educator, who is able to promote collaboration, listening and mutual activation between the participants, understanding how to organise the learning process, know how to make it motivating, participatory and interactive.

The context in which to design and organise learning experiences should take on the traits of informality, like a laboratory, creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere: outdoor spaces, libraries, cultural centres are taken as places of community, for example, which guarantee a sense of security but at the same time stimulate creativity.

4. The emerging profile: first steps towards a training curriculum?

The range of training proposals in IGL Centres show strong heterogeneity both among the recipients and among the trainers. The number of over-65 educators who teach other senior students is low, on the contrary, people under 65 who teach senior students are much more frequent.

Educators who work with senior students face greater challenges in motivating them to embark on a learning journey, to overcome day-to-day obstacles with technology, to help them have confidence in their potential and sometimes to question what has been built over time. Over-65 students are afraid to lose sight of what is taught, as they need more time to memorise and repeat content. They do not identify as flexible subjects and this leads them to tense up when confronted with new teaching and learning methods or transmissive practices. The fear of always being one step behind others is frequent, they attribute their inferiority to the inability to use the new tools and, if they try, the fear becomes that of failing. For an educator to know and grasp these aspects, related to effective practices for different ages is very important: to build trust in their potential and understand that they can still be a resource, motivates senior subjects to undertake new learning paths and, more importantly, to learn to remain mentally active, to be updated to participate and connect in social life. Senior students want to take care of themselves, have a hobby and regain lost opportunities; they need to feel useful, active and an integral part of society. Some key words that emerge from the research work on the profile of an effective intergenerational educator are: participation in the topics and in the choice of study materials, the sharing of experiences, the need for methods for learning, the activation of resources to continue the training path. Some educators with experience with over-65 individuals highlight the need to know how to work to break prejudices and stereotypes related to age (ageing); often what hinders the desire to undertake a new path is the prejudice that they themselves have of not being able to do it, because they are too old to start learning again.

In addition to purely didactic work, the educator is required to manage the emotional component, being the channel through which adults express their needs and fears. Over-65 educators, in teaching practice, make greater reference to their own life experiences, advise how to face daily challenges, establish a relationship with adults in order to create a climate of trust that makes the learning process easier and possible. They have less difficulty entering into relationships with senior students as they share affinities regarding their own generational culture. Senior participants prefer a face-to-face approach, limiting the use of technologies only when necessary.

The methods used that are most effective in working with an adult age group are those related to laboratory experience, methods that require active participation and in particular playful methods, because through play and fun it becomes pleasant to learn and teach.

Senior educators who interact with young people, are usually educators who have been involved in teaching in formal contexts and continue to do so even in non-formal contexts. These educators are confronted with a generation that is very different from their own, a hypermedia generation that sometimes doesn't want to get involved. Communication competence becomes necessary for an educator who interacts in an intergenerational context; the latter must promote an active and reciprocal exchange, it must be rich in symbols, as this would guarantee a greater closeness between two worlds that seem clearly distinct and distant.

The didactic proposal emerged from the investigation phase useful for the formulation of a possible training path, considers two areas: digital skills and pedagogical skills.

In the first section, the objective becomes that of knowing how to use the technologies of the information and communication society with familiarity and a critical spirit to find, evaluate, store, produce, present and exchange information.

The area of pedagogical skills considers training in cooperative teaching methods based on the problem-based approach, the design and evaluation of training interventions in relation to the needs of groups and effective communication both at the interpersonal and group level.

The design hypothesis of the training modules itself provides for a meta-process organisation, with the laboratory proposal through which the future educator will have the opportunity to experiment in a protected context. The ultimate goal of the educational proposal will be to train an empathetic, reflective intergenerational educator, ready to listen and to confront, a promoter of *agency and empowerment*.

5. Conclusions

The emerging profile project of over-65 educators takes on importance both in the perspective of Agenda 2030 - in the implementation of objective four to promote mutual respect, together with a shared responsibility - as well as in the WHO (2020a), where intergenerational solidarity allows social cohesion and interactive exchange between generations to support the health and well-being of all people. Healthy ageing requires lifelong learning, allowing older people to do what they value, maintain the ability to make decisions and preserve their purpose, identity and independence. It requires literacy, vocational training and barrier-free participation, including digital skills. We therefore really need to change the way we think, feel and act in relation to age and ageing by involving the elderly themselves in each of these action areas, since they are agents of change and beneficiaries of services. And a new season for *adult education* is likely to open.

Notes

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Educate to integrate: refugee challenges to lifelong learning in tertiary education settings

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Keywords

Lifelong Learning, Evaluation, Integration, Educational Credentials, Participation, Refugee Adults

Abstract

Starting from the challenge that the lifelong learning process must support in order to facilitate access to education and tertiary education systems by young people and refugee adults, this article offers an overview of the experiences and results achieved by the Service Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Bari (hereinafter CAP), which has been operating since 2015 to support the academic integration of immigrants, in response to the growing demand for an evaluation of their previous formal educational credentials and a recognition of their professional and transversal skills. Therefore, the working methodology and the outputs produced by the activities carried out by the University Service Centre are described, in order to support, with a view to a lifelong learning system, the process of cultural integration and the active participation of refugees in the territory.

1. Lifelong learning and skills of migrant adults

The delicate historical period we are experiencing, marked by the Covid-19 health emergency, and the growing expansion of an increasingly digitalised society at the European level, pose new challenges for adult education and lifelong learning processes, especially for people coming from a migration background not immediately recognised by traditional education systems. It is estimated that the current emergency has had the largest disruption to education in history, affecting an entire generation (Srivastava et al., 2020). Recalling what UNESCO said, more than 91% of students around the world are pursuing their education through distance learning, a phenomenon that crosses industrialised and non-industrialised countries, rich countries and countries in extreme poverty (Foradini, 2020), and which, following the suspension of in-person schooling activities, is in line with the *learning loss* highlighted by Save the Children in the survey conducted in 2020 with IPSOS (Save the Children, 2020).

The COVID-19 crisis has made pre-existing inequalities even more evident and is responsible for a significant risk of increasing the rate of poverty or social exclusion (European Commission, 2021). The digital divide has also led to unprecedented disparities, followed by a learning crisis, caused by the difficulty many young people have in mastering basic skills (UNESCO, 2018; Srivastava et al., 2020).

Specifically, if we consider the educational needs of refugees and their learning in adulthood, the importance of accessing opportunities for continuing higher education is well known, which the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) sets as a target of 15% (today it is 3%) (UNHCR, 2020a) of the refugee population included in the higher education system by 2030 (UNHCR, 2019). This right is closely linked to the possibility of being able to benefit from “accessible and effective learning opportunities and to make use of adequate supports for the recognition and enhancement of the skills acquired in every context” (Palumbo & Proietti, 2020, p. 92).

Attention to the lifelong learning processes of young adult refugees starts from the need to intervene on the increase in the demand for recognition and evaluation of the “cultural capital” and the migratory background in their possession, with reference not only to the formal educational credentials possessed (for example, qualifi-

cations issued in their country of origin), but above all informal skills and soft skills acquired in different learning contexts. If we consider that in Italy, according to UNHCR estimates, only 3% of refugees are able to access the tertiary education system, compared to an average of 37% globally, it is important to ask ourselves how we can simplify, once in Italy, access to these paths, while at the same time guaranteeing inclusion in lifelong learning systems. A right, that of the value of lifelong learning which, following the establishment of the *National Directory of Education and Training Titles established by Italian Legislative Decree 13/2013 and the definition of a Unitary Reference Framework for the certification of competences*, finds its concrete approval in the recent Decree of 5 January 2021, with which the Guidelines that make the National Competence Certification System operational are adopted.

These issues highlight the value of skills recognition and learning challenges for the refugee target, but at the same time the importance of considering adult education as a “system” and the need for professionalisation, in continuity with what is proposed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a programme of action for people, the planet and prosperity was signed in September 2015 by the governments of the 193 UN member countries, which are committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 (UN, 2015).

2. Universities and the challenge of refugees to the lifelong learning system

In recent years, the role of universities has become increasingly important in lifelong learning systems in adulthood, offering a target - such as that of refugees - the opportunity to more easily guarantee access to and participation in these systems, since, in the context of the Third Mission activities and the internationalisation processes that the academic realities propose to implement, they can contribute to favouring their path of personal/professional achievement and social inclusion. Thanks to Law 92/2012 and the establishment of a unitary system of lifelong learning, in fact, the right to lifelong learning is highlighted as a right to the person, thus arriving, through Italian Legislative Decree 13/2013, to consider the university as a qualified body for the provision of services for the identification and validation of skills, thus guaranteeing the possibility of seeing formal and informal learning validated as training credits, within the limit of the 12 CFUs provided, according to art. 14 of Law 240/2010.

The enhancement of the skills and learning acquired, therefore, is closely linked to the importance of ensuring that universities can promote the process of cultural integration and the participation of young refugees in higher education paths (UNHCR, 2020b), as indicated in the Manifesto of the Inclusive University by the UNHCR (UNHCR, 2021). In recent years, in fact, several Italian universities have paid attention to these issues, joining the UNHCR initiative promoted in 2019. These actions have been implemented in the light of a profound process of transformation of hospitality, which has been affecting Italy since 2014, following the increase in the number of arrivals and applications for international protection, so, today, universities are called upon to offer a qualified response to the need to enhance the cultural capital of young people and adult migrants, in response to the challenges that learning in adulthood poses.

Over the years, moreover, there has been a growing demand for recognition and evaluation of the “cultural capital” and the migration background of adult refugees who, before leaving their country and arriving in Italy, very often have skills and experiences acquired in contexts other than traditional ones. The educational credentials in their possession, in fact, which are not only formal, are also obtained in informal and non-formal contexts, including soft skills or transversal skills, such as social and communication skills and attitudes and predispositions that increasingly need to come to light and be validated, to respond to the needs of society and a constantly changing labour market. This reflection highlights “the centrality of education and training, also for the purposes of greater employability” (Revolt, 2019, p. 47) or employability, which constitutes “a key step for every adult in life development” (Boffo & Frison, 2020, p. 8).

Italian universities, therefore, make use of the collaboration established with CIMEA (Information Centre on Mobility and Academic Equivalencies), which since 1984 has offered them the possibility “to be supported in the processes of making the study paths of students from other countries transparent, including through specific declarations of degree equivalence” (Colombo & Scardigno, 2019, p. 127). Thanks to this collaboration, together with the CRUI (Conference of Chancellors of Italian Universities) and the CNVQR (National Coordination on the Evaluation of Refugee Qualifications), universities are called upon to undertake paths to accompany the integration of refugees, and these reflections recall the intent of Law 92/2012 and the right to the recognition of lifelong learning for all, not only in terms of access to tertiary education, but also of support and accompaniment to the success and reduction of the return training dispersion.

3. The learning of refugee adults in action: the experience of the Service Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Bari

Among the Italian universities participating in the Informal Network of CNVQR experts and the Manifesto of Inclusive Universities, the University of Bari, via the CAP - University Service Centre for Lifelong Learning, is also committed to concretely promote processes of integration and participation of young people and migrant adults, with particular attention to the refugee target. Among its tasks as a “Third” Academic Mission, the Centre aims to implement services of “finalised recognition” and evaluation of previous qualifications so refugees can access an academic course of study, making use of the interdisciplinary experience of researchers and teachers belonging to the socio-psycho-pedagogical area, with a real perspective of integration between social research and internationalisation. This has allowed, starting from the 2016/2017 academic year, the registration at the University of Bari of international students who, through the accompaniment of the counter, have been awarded a CRUI/Ministry of the Interior/ANDISU scholarship. This initiative has helped develop a real process of internationalisation, with the registration of a significant number of international refugee students (to date the highest of all Italian universities). These are international students from Eritrea, Nigeria, Gambia, Cameroon, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Yemen, Pakistan and Libya.

In addition, thanks to the initiative of the Council of Europe of the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees, with the coordination of CIMEA, in the Italian evaluation session held at the University of Bari, 42 “European passports” were issued to refugees who had limited documentation of their formal qualifications, with the aim of offering a chance of recognition of the qualifications obtained prior to their arrival in Italy. The EQPR, in fact, has been used since 2020 for the purposes of enrolment in the courses of study at our University.

The overall working methodology adopted by the Uniba CAP is based on a job in which the user, after initial access to the Service, can participate in a multi-stage process of variable duration, in relation to the type of need for academic integration, and in which they are taken charge of and concretely supported in the most suitable choice to be made, linked to the inclusion in a tertiary education course, recognition of previous professional skills or evaluation of their soft skills.

The work procedure starts from the first contact with the user and from a phase of reception and analysis of needs, in which the authorisation to consent to use the service is collected, together with the evidence produced. After analysing the available documentation and verifying the possession of the access prerequisites, a biographical reconstruction of the life stories of each beneficiary is taken into consideration, through semi-structured interviews that aim to analyse the expressed training need.

In the course of the activities we try to understand, specifically, whether each user is more likely to enrol in an academic course of study at the University of Bari and/or to head towards a path to have their soft skills recognising, in the active search for work. If they are inclined towards the first choice, the user is supported in star-

ting the procedures to have their qualifications recognised, to enrol in one of the University's degree courses, through the enhancement of previous study paths, the shortening of courses, the recognition of credits or the comparability of the declared qualifications.

At the end of the initial orientation and mentoring phase, the user is directed to the skills certification path that is laid out in the recognition phase of the skills highlighted by the initial skills balance. In the course of these activities, various assessment tools are used, which reach the final phase of drafting the profiles of the beneficiaries, with the return of a folder-dossier of skills that defines the professional profile that emerged during the activities carried out.

The orientation and evaluation procedures implemented in the activities carried out by the CAP, therefore, are aimed at giving importance and recognising how the different forms of learning that each person develops over time occur more frequently than one would think and are sometimes difficult to understand, since the value, the ability or awareness are not always recognised.

Concretely, therefore, the Service Centre has carried out, over the years, innovative field experiences, which have interpreted adult education (international students and refugees) as a polycentric and integrated system, highlighting the value of both hard and soft skills.

Another service that the Uniba CAP has launched since 2019 refers to the possibility of obtaining the recognition of a regional professional qualification, an experimental action carried out in a pioneering way in 2018 in favour of two Afghan refugees who used the service, to whom the qualification of "technician of inter-cultural mediation" was granted.

The request for recognition of previously acquired experiential learning, in fact, was an innovative experience in the context of lifelong learning processes in adulthood, since it was the first case in Italy of obtaining the regional professional qualification aimed at refugees, who have brought to light skills gained even in non-formal and informal contexts. Following this experimentation, in July 2020 the Uniba CAP, having become a Qualified Subject, issued 28 professional qualifications as a "family assistant", preparatory to a regional examination of professional qualification, in application of the new operational model of Identification and Validation of Competences (IVC) for the professional figure of "Operator for Family Assistance Activities" (D.G.R. no. 632/2019) - Cod. 428 of the Regional Directory of Professional Figures. This figure acquired greater value only a few years ago, since initial training in the sector was developed without guidelines and regulated courses, so it is important to understand that to enhance a figure such as that in the context of family care activities, it is appropriate "to introduce a regulation of the required skills, highlighting and certifying them" (Salvati & Scardigno, 2021, p. 232).

The skills validation process carried out, therefore, was based on a work methodology in which the process of identification and transparency of skills was started, and then, after examining the candidate's professional and training curriculum, an evaluation of the evidence provided, according to the criteria of value, relevance and validity, followed by the release of the validation documents produced (Scardigno, 2019). Following the evaluation carried out, the course ended with the skills being certified and the professional qualification being issued to the user, in the presence of the Puglia Region and the same expert members of the Uniba CAP staff. A path, that of validating and certifying the skills of refugees, which in 2019 led to the award of the 2019 Vince Prize, in the international plenary session of the "Vince - Validation Award for Inclusion of New Citizens of Europe", promoted by EUCEN, a European network of continuous university education.

In addition, within the framework of lifelong learning services and initiatives promoted for the University of Bari in support of refugees, the Uniba CAP also works in favour of the transparency and evaluation of the soft skills of migrants. This is a service offered to the beneficiary users as activities on behalf of third parties and as part of activities carried out for some national and international projects of which the CAP is a partner. An example is

represented by the DIMICOME project “*Diversity Management and Integration: Migrants’ Skills in the Labour Market*” - MIGRATION and INTEGRATION ASYLUM FUND (FAMI) 2014-2020 - Notice “Promotion of social and economic inclusion interventions of citizens of developed third countries in Italy and other Member States”, which, starting from 2019, aims to support and enhance the role of the skills of young migrants in diversity management processes. These activities are oriented towards a process of assessment of skills, with particular attention to the validation of soft skills, or of all those transversal skills (e.g. communication skills, ability to work in a group, decision-making skills, etc.) acquired in formal and informal training and professional contexts.

4. Redefining learning and social inclusion paths

The challenges that the new knowledge society poses are based on listening to emerging needs and on constant attention to the demand for the acquisition of new skills, which respond to the needs of integration and social participation. It is therefore important to start from the assumption that recognising lifelong learning processes in all the forms in which they are expressed in the territory and in the communities and, at the same time, enhancing and supporting them, can prove to be decisive in promoting better social cohesion and responsible active citizenship paths. This is possible by investing in the training of young and adult migrants, offering greater opportunities for social and cultural integration and at the same time developing greater autonomy, awareness and responsibility.

The experiences described and the results achieved in recent years by the Uniba CAP, in terms of the enhancement of cultural capital and, at the same time, of inclusion and social participation, highlight the importance of conceiving adult education and the challenges of lifelong learning of the future in a new and more sustainable European dimension. To this end, we’d like to mention the approval of the *European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning* by Cedefop (the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training), which have worked on the enhancement of the skills and competences acquired in different learning contexts. This was followed by the recent European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, promoted by Cedefop themselves and edited by Ilona Murphy (2018), who describes the interesting initiatives taken by some North-East European countries (Austria, Belgium-Wallonia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden) in the process of validating the skills and experiences of people with a migration background, in light of the profound changes that characterise our society in the processes of vocational education and training and labour market reform.

These practices stand out as examples of possible actions for the recognition of skills and competences held by migrants and refugees, acquired through different forms of learning. This is because the uncertainty of postmodern careers requires skills such as independence, flexibility, adaptability and reorientation (Bauman, 2007). The reference is to the possession of transversal skills, attributable to the concept of informal learning, which goes beyond the still widespread idea of considering a person qualified only through the evidence produced by his formal qualifications, especially if we are talking about refugees who do not have the possibility of easily having such documentation.

In this perspective, the need to give value to the lifelong learning processes of adults emerges more and more, starting first from the analysis of needs and listening to the evaluation question, as Michael Patton (1986) stated, according to which “to be useful, evaluations must respond to the needs expressed by the various actors and formulate the right questions” (Palumbo, 2001, p. 96). These questions acquire particular importance when brought back to the refugee adult target, because they are closely connected to the need to evaluate the educational credentials in their possession, with the commitment to “provide opportunities for access to university and professional training qualifications to those who, otherwise, would be excluded due to the lack of formal qualifications”

(Scardigno, Manuti & Pastore, 2019, p. 37). It is therefore appropriate to continue in a direction that favours the possibility of refugees becoming involved in decisions regarding the education and training choices to be made and at the same time to affirm their skills and competences, in order to promote inclusive educational processes that can always pose new challenges to lifelong learning in adulthood.

Notes

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Social justice in guidance practices for migrant adults with low qualifications: the SoJUST project

Iole Marcozzi¹

Keywords

Lifelong Guidance, Social Justice, Disadvantaged Groups, Personal Professionalisation, Adult Education

Abstract

In the field of adult education, there is a growing political and scientific attention to social justice as a guiding value for guiding practices. At all levels of governance, the urgent need for effective measures to prevent and compensate for the disadvantages of under-represented groups or groups at risk of discrimination, and the need to support professionals in responding to this challenge, is underlined. This article outlines the prospect of intervention of the European project “Social Justice in lifelong guidance services for low-educated adult migrants” (SoJUST) aimed at improving the quality and effectiveness of guidance aimed at migrant adults with low qualifications through increasing the specific skills of educators aimed at promoting contexts and guiding practices inspired (by) and directed (towards) social justice.

1. Introduction

Within the framework of the European strategies on lifelong learning, the adoption of the lifelong guidance paradigm, in order to guarantee access to quality guidance services for all throughout life, marks an evolution of the orientation from a limited intervention to a permanent educational process aimed at developing the skills of people to constantly re-design their life, training and professional horizons. European policies include among the priority objectives of adult education the development of effective lifelong guidance systems and integrated systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2011/C 372/01; 2008/C 319/02), and highlight the need to “prepare teachers and trainers for and accompany them in carrying out these activities” (2008/C 319/02, Annex, Action Line 1, p. 3). The Eurydice Report on expanding access to learning opportunities clarifies that guidance and counselling services play an important role: in supporting adult learning, in terms of setting progression objectives and validating previous knowledge and skills; in creating accessible learning environments; and in empowering citizens in managing learning and work (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). The orientation was relaunched as a key factor for the success of the paths of improvement of skills by the European Commission which, in the Staff Working Document on the state of art with respect to the implementation of the aforementioned paths (SWD(2019)89), stressed a “lack of emphasis on outreach and guidance is a problem because they are essential to inform, advise, co-manage and design learning, and mentor learners, who are often reluctant or not motivated to successfully get through a learning pathway” (p. 29). Reaching out to disadvantaged adults, especially those with a migrant background or newly arrived migrants, remains a challenge. The European Pillar of Social Rights is refocusing the importance of equitable and inclusive quality education and learning opportunities for all (Principle 1) – also mentioned among the sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda (SDG 4, UN, 2015) – and underlines the urgency of effective measures to prevent and compensate for the disadvantages of under-represented or at-risk of discrimination groups (Principle 3). However, there are concerns both with respect to uneven access to guidance services (Sampson, Dozier & Colvin, 2011), and with respect to the limits of guidance practices in meeting the needs of everyone and in supporting mobility in educational systems of people from “non-domi-

nant populations” (McMahon, Arthur & Collins, 2008), considering that “guidance services seem to be primarily intended for adults with higher levels of qualification” (Coccimiglio & Garista, 2019 p. 4; 2016/C 484/01). There is a growing focus on the importance of social justice as a guiding value for guidance practices, understood in the triple dimension of 1) equitable distribution of opportunities, 2) direct action to improve oppression and marginalisation within society and 3) full inclusion and participation of all members of society in a way that allows them to reach their potential. It should be stressed, however, that the focus is mainly conceptual in nature, while little has been done when it comes to actions and interventions (Barham & Irving, 2011; Irving, 2010).

In line with European frameworks and research in the field of adult education, the European SoJUST project partnership, taking a social justice-based intervention perspective, aims to increase equity in access to training opportunities and to ensure targeted services and support for adult learners from disadvantaged or under-represented groups, acting on the professionalisation of guidance educators and counsellors.

2. The SoJUST project: the founding perspective

The “Social Justice in lifelong guidance services for low-educated adult migrants” (SoJUST)² project is designed to improve the quality and effectiveness of guidance aimed at migrant adults with low qualifications through increasing the specific skills of educators aimed at promoting contexts and guiding practices inspired (by) and directed (towards) social justice.

Orientation practices, like educational practices registered in the same way, are affected by the social and cultural contexts in which they are implemented and risk exercising some form of symbolic violence that classifies people on the basis of their most likely social destinies. In other words, each orientation intervention is based on specific conceptions of the person and their development prospects, assumptions about the universality of human cultures and experiences, ideas and orientation processes (more or less latent) that enhance (or diminish) cultural capital and forms of competence (Arredondo & Perez, 2003; Arthur, 2005). These elements should be considered, recognised and managed, especially when guidance practices involve adults who suffer from cumulative disadvantages, linked to migratory backgrounds and low levels of qualification, and generally also low levels of self-esteem and perception of self-efficacy, in order to counteract the so-called “Matthew effect”, due to which an already unfavourable condition produces an exponential growth of further disadvantages. This effect, however, was specifically recalled by the ET2020 Working Group on Adult Learning (Report meeting 11-12 December 2018) which indicates the “Matthew effect” as one of the priority aspects to be considered in the implementation of guidance activities. The orientation, therefore, if not effectively directed, risks being configured, involuntarily, as an element that increases educational poverty, as a measure that pushes people, especially if in conditions of vulnerability, to adapt to the dominant representations that society gives, not infrequently internalised in terms of educational and professional perspectives considered viable and/or aspirations considered reasonable, rather than a device to favour the inclusion and expansion of possibilities (Appadurai 2004; Conradie & Robeyns, 2013). Moving from the perspective of social justice implies for adult education professionals: first, engaging in a reflection on how their personal and professional socialisation influences (or can influence) their opinions on the expectations of competence of people belonging to disadvantaged groups, on development perspectives and on how they can inadvertently perpetuate attitudes and actions that determine further disadvantages for people belonging to minority groups (Hooley & Sultana, 2016); second, taking a broader view of the dynamics and processes connected to targeting specific targets, such as migrant adults with low qualifications; and finally, but certainly more challenging in daily practice, expanding the objectives of orientation interventions (Young, 1990/1996). Andersson, Fejes and Sandberg (2013) state that even in research on the recognition of previous learning (RPL), an essential element in orientation, “the issues of social justice and social change have emerged

as central. In practice, however, the RPL has moved further and further away from focusing on aspects such as social justice to focusing on the benefits for society, especially regarding economic development” (p. 406). Several argue that it is time to move from a whistleblowing approach to a proactive approach, which lays out the principles, processes and practices for embracing social justice in guiding practices for specific target groups (Blustein, McWhirter & Perry, 2005).

3. The project: problematic elements and action strategy

The SoJUST project partners, based on the recognition of European literature and documents, monitored their guidance systems with the aim of understanding and analysing the level of implementation of social justice practices in direct guidance to low-skilled migrant adults.

Monitoring was conducted in the light of the Guidelines developed by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN, 2015). Specifically, guidance services and processes were analysed against the following guidelines and related descriptors used by ELGPN to track good practices:

- 1) Guideline No. 13, adult guidance:
 - be sensitive and responsive to the diversity of adult learners;
 - support the training and professionalisation of personnel;
- 2) Guideline No. 18, guidance for disadvantaged groups, including migrants:
 - give priority to the role of guidance as an instrument of social equity and social inclusion;
 - provide guidance professionals with training to enable them to work effectively with these groups, with a particular focus on a culturally aware approach to guidance and counselling;
- 3) Guideline No. 3, ensure guidance quality:
 - promote the development of shared professional quality standards that apply to guidance delivery and products.

The analysis highlighted problematic situations, briefly attributable to:

- 1) the unavailability of a shared conceptual framework centred on social justice-focused orientation, which determines ambiguities within organisations and between organisations with respect to the methodological-operational declination of orientation interventions capable of guaranteeing social justice;
- 2) the inadequate implementation of refresher courses and professional development actions to strengthen the social justice skills of adult education professionals and adult education consultants;
- 3) target-oriented practices with a focus on social justice that are absent, or contemporaneous and not based on specific skills, with negative impacts in terms of difficulties in meeting the guidance needs of migrant adults, including the evaluation of previous learning, and limits in the activation of a tailor-made training offer.

On the basis of these acquisitions, the project aims, on the one hand, to extend the understanding of social justice in orientation practices through the definition of a common and mutually recognised framework for referencing the skills of the social justice-focused educator in the orientation of migrant adults; and, consequently, on the other hand, to increase the skills of adult education operators in order to implement targeted orientation practices aimed at reaching people who need a special motivation (as per 2016/C 484/01), as a driving force of equity and encouragement to participation.

In pursuing its objectives, the project adopts a multi-level strategy.

The partnership is developing a competency profile for adult education educators for the implementation of guidance practices based on social justice (Intellectual Output 1). The profile will be developed through the iden-

tification of areas of competence; within each area of competence the corresponding skills will be identified and developed in terms of attitudes/knowledge/skills. The areas of competence will be structured on the basis of their breadth (not only quantitative but qualitative), in compliance with the principles and processes of social justice, starting, for example, from the individual sphere (e.g. self-awareness of beliefs/attitudes impacting on the process and results of orientation), proceeding towards the sphere of the orientation relationship with the migrant adult up to the sphere of activation of orientation and advocacy interventions at the level of the adult education organisation, and the practice and territorial community. The definition of a profile corresponding to level 4 of the EQF aims to provide a shared and transferable conceptual framework, despite the strong internal (in countries) and external (between countries) lack of homogeneity due to the existence of different educational and professional paths to become educators/consultants in the adult education sector as well as considerable skill differences. To this end, the definition of the profile will also take into account all those variables – linked to the training and professional background, such as type of training (pedagogical or technical or social sciences/psychology, etc.) and roles in the organisation (educators, social workers, etc.) – that will help to establish an accurate profile.

To support adult migrant educators in the development of functional skills for the concretisation of guiding practices as characterised, a specific learning programme (Intellectual Output 2) will be structured to try out pilot tests conducted at a transnational level. It is probably appropriate to emphasise the difference between training in multicultural orientation, which focuses only on the social skills of the educator, and training in orientation focused on social justice, which is instead focused on the subjectively defined needs of marginalised groups. The priority focus is not so much the cultural dimension but the ability to recognise and overcome obstacles and tensions related to power and privilege that occur in the context of social diversity and that seriously affect the effectiveness of the orientation process.

Based on the pilot tests, a knowledge base will be acquired for the modelling of practices in real and socio-culturally different contexts that will be systematised in a handbook (Intellectual Output 3). These practice models can be replicated by a wider professional community and, if suitably adapted, can also be used for different targets that share disadvantaged situations (e.g. adult prisoners, etc.).

4. Conclusions

The project was started a few months ago, many steps are still to be taken. At this stage we are carrying out exploratory research in all partner countries that involves, in addition to guidance educators and consultants, migrant adults and their territorial representatives. In spite of the more extreme aspects of the methodology of social and educational research underlying the survey that is being carried out, we would like to underline two elements that have inspired and guided it: first, the effective acceptance of the solicitation to “involve disadvantaged groups and their representatives in the design, planning, implementation of services and guidance products based on their strengths and their specific needs” (ELGPN, 2015 p. 53); second, the attempt to operationalise the approach according to which the empowerment of people through adult education is a process that must be “forged and implemented” with them, not for them (Boyadjieva & Ilieva-Trichkova, 2017).

Notes

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² The Strategic Partnership for the Development of Innovation under the Erasmus+ programme (adult education sector) involves nine organisations, including adult education or guidance centres, from six European countries (Italy, Sweden, Romania, Portugal, Lithuania, Turkey). The partnership consists of: ilmiolavoro srl (IT), Lead Partner; CPIA Teramo (IT); Institutul Roman de Educatie a Adultilor-IREA (RO); Folkuniversitetet i Uppsala (SE); Lietuvos suaugusiųjų švietimo asociacija-LSSA (LT); Governorship of Bursa- BURSA VALILIGI (TR); Psientifica - Associação para a promoção e desenvolvimento social (PT); Bursa Aile Calisma ve Sosyal Hizmetler İl Mudurlugu Bursa-AÇŞİM (TR); Agrupamento de Escolas Águeda Sul- Centro Qualifica-AEAS (PT). Cfr: <http://sojustproject.com/>

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The challenge of lifelong learning in the adult education system. Teacher skills in the Provincial Centres of Adult Education (CPIA) for the recognition of competences

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Keywords

Lifelong Learning, Certification, Guidance, Teacher Skills, CPIA

Abstract

The renewal of the organisational structures of the adult education system in Italy is inspired by, among others, the principle of lifelong learning. As part of the National Competence Certification System, CPIAs are bodies entitled to carry out the certification of competences in the territorial lifelong learning networks. This implies a new role for teachers, who must carry out activities of reception and accompaniment of students, aimed at the recognition of previous learning and functional to the preparation of the personalised training pact. The research presented adopted a qualitative-quantitative system and was aimed at studying the practices of the CPIA teachers in Abruzzo. The results confirm the specific training need to equip teachers to carry out the activities of accompaniment and guidance. The importance of adopting, in addition to standard techniques, qualitative tools of a narrative-biographical type is highlighted.

1. Introduction

The article presents part of the research carried out between 2019-2020, within the competences attributed to the Regional Centre for Research, Experimentation and Development (CRRS&S) in Abruzzo, which involved all the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA) in the region. The aim here is to discuss the results relating to the recognition and development of teachers' skills with respect to the implementation of the procedure for certifying the skills of students entering the CPIAs.

As can be seen from Law 92/2012, the new adult education system is called upon to make a challenging leap in quality on the crucial terrain of lifelong learning policies, as well as, equally crucial, the recognition and enhancement of the wealth of resources that people have.

The test to measure this qualitative leap is represented by the challenge of enhancing the entire cultural and professional heritage of which, in fact, each person has; a challenge that extends the horizon of adult education and training greatly, pushing it beyond the boundaries of the traditional functions of literacy and education in the strict sense; which does not mean abandoning these tasks and these functions, but rather their transcription and transposition to a higher level, at the crossroads of knowledge and knowing how to do, knowledge and knowing how to act, knowledge and knowing how to live, with a view to learning throughout the course of life (Morgan-Klein, Osborne, 2007).

And it is precisely to this challenge that the innovative figure of the new adult education system can be traced. That, in fact, which binds the system to the enhancement of the entire cultural heritage and skills of the person. Therefore, the alpha and omega of the setting of the system itself are given by the assumption of the individual history of the learner. That history within which the heritage of knowledge is inscribed, however acquired and skills, however matured (Di Rienzo, 2017).

In light of these reasons and starting from these basic values, the new adult education system based on CPIAs provides, among other things, that the educational pathways are organised and customised (Baldacci, 2006),

at the base of which the Individual Training Pact (PFI) is placed and defined starting from the recognition of the knowledge and skills of which each person has, as provided for by art. 5 of Italian Presidential Decree 263/2012. The Pact is a contract shared and signed by the adult, the Commission and the director of the CPIA. The levers of the engine of the training pact are operated by the aforementioned Commission for the definition of the training pact which is responsible for the articulation of the three phases of identification, evaluation, certification. The CPIA and CRRS&S have the task of promoting interventions aimed at developing, updating and consolidating the skills required at the various levels to support the transition to new organisational and educational structures, in order to give teachers adult education paths, as well as the design, planning and implementation of products related to accompanying activities and guidance for the certification of skills and the definition of the training pact. On this basis, the research project has been designed and has taken shape, with two objectives:

1. to define and develop the role and skills of teachers called upon to carry out accompanying and guidance activities in the context of the procedure for the recognition of skills for the preparation of the PFI (individual educational project);
2. to promote methods and tools for managing the skills of adults who (re)enter training, also with regards to culture.

This article, for reasons related to the economy of speech, refers to the first objective which has been divided into two phases:

1. an empirical survey by means of a questionnaire on the profiles of CPIA teachers in Abruzzo and their skills, in the field of guidance, accompaniment for certification of skills;
2. a training course aimed at a group of teachers to develop orientation and accompaniment skills, which emerged in the light of the previous empirical survey.

2. Research design

The general research structure was mainly qualitative and oriented towards the principles of action-research (Cipriani, 2000; Creswell, 2014). The methodology refers to the search for a collaborative intervention with the purposes of both exploratory and cognitive research and training with transformative purposes (Formenti, 2017). In line with this approach, a multi-method approach was adopted that referred to qualitative-quantitative tools. The system was consistent with the need to bring out the knowledge and representations of teachers, as privileged witnesses of the context in which the project is carried out. This method has allowed us to operate in a real context, allowing us to know and modify certain conditions considered by the reference community as unsatisfactory.

The representative picture of the participants refers to 110 CPIA teachers in Abruzzo.

The CPIAs in L'Aquila, Pescara-Chieti and Teramo form a network with a good degree of coverage of the educational offer of adults in the region. The network covers 19 large, medium and small-sized places (municipalities or cities) distributed across the 4 provinces, between associated offices and delivery points, with the use of 110 teachers, of which 72 teach first level courses and 38 courses for literacy and Italian language learning (AALI). The cultural departments that have the largest number of teachers are the language departments (39 teachers), the scientific-technological departments (13 teachers) and the mathematics departments (12 teachers).

Overall, the network of the three CPIAs serves a total of 2,298 trainees/students, about half of whom are enrolled in the CPIA in Pescara/Chieti (which has 1,018 members). This is followed by the CPIA in L'Aquila with 674 enrolled and the CPIA in Teramo with 606 enrolled (the data refers to the 2018/19 school year). The nationality of the enrollees explains the number of AALI courses in a striking way: Italians are a clear minority and the majority of students are from Africa. These figures alone are sufficient to explain, in part, the problems and the difficulties of developing appropriate guidance and credit recognition strategies.

3. A description of the activities and an analysis of the results

The research was conducted among teachers (110), through an online questionnaire to which 43 of them answered. The group of teachers who answered was divided into five age groups: 7 teachers were in the 32-40 age group; 11 in the 41-50 age group; 18 in the 51-60 age group and 7 in the 61-65 age group. The experience data shows us that over half of the teaching staff is substantially established in adult education.

The recognition of training credits takes place largely through the administration of tests (69% of respondents) or in any case through objective tests (9% of respondents). More than 60% of respondents consider them inadequate, not very adequate or to be improved. The picture that emerges shows the absence of strictly qualitative instruments.

The recognition of credits in relation to cultural areas provides a predictable and plausible framework. Languages and the technologies are those that got more answers, mathematics, being an abstract language, collected fewer answers.

The figure for participation in refresher courses (48.8%) is significant and can be explained by the intense promotion of refresher courses for CPIA teachers carried out by MIUR and also by the high rate of innovation contained in the CPIA system itself, which generates an increase in the level of training needs. With regard to the topics, there are professional updating activities related to the areas of teaching, design and evaluation, with the almost absence of issues related to the certification of skills, such as accompaniment and guidance.

The training lasted 16 hours and 23 teachers from the different CPIA provincial offices participated, it was set up as a workshop and the following objectives were:

- to build a common background on the subject of competences acquired informally and methods for the emergence of skills;
- to share experiences and reflections on the characteristics of the reception and recognition of credits in the multicultural field;
- to initiate a reflection on the effectiveness and adequacy of the practices currently in use, in order to bring out the critical issues and identify what can be changed, including in light of the experimentation carried out;
- to be familiar with the CPIA practices in other regions;
- to know the use of biographical-narrative tools for the emergence of previous learning (biographical interview/survey, summary sheets for the recognition of training credits, devices for the construction of the student's portfolio);
- to practise a biographical interview and summary sheet to recognise training credits.

The workshop was introduced, in the first meeting, by an in-depth study on the topic of adult learning and the value of experience, reflection and the narrative biographical method as an approach to make the wealth of skills of adult individuals transparent (Di Rienzo, 2012).

The centrality of the experiential element in the learning process (Jarvis, 2004; Mortari, 2004), considered as the beginning of every form of learning, has been identified as the starting point for the reception path of an incoming student in adult education paths. Evaluating individual, existential and experiential learning that always varies from individual to individual, is the key to preparing individual training paths.

In addition, especially in educational contexts with the presence of students of different nationalities, attention to individual history allows us to recognise that each individual is the bearer of his own culture that he shares in interaction with others, internalising new things and externalising parts of himself. If, therefore, learning is an individual phenomenon, which focuses on the subject, and the attribution of meaning that the individual assigns to

their own experience, learning through autobiographical narration becomes a tool for reflection and reworking of their own experience (Bruner, 1990).

The transformative potential of biographical practices and paths of reflection on experience allows learning to be a conscious, critical and reflective process, through which the adult attributes new and updated interpretations of the meanings attributed to past experiences or thoughts, in order to guide the present and guide future action (Mezirow, 2003).

After sharing these theoretical considerations, the path continued with a reflection on the concept of competence, opening an interpretative perspective of this paradigm with a holistic approach, which enhances all aspects of people's lives and the experience they bring, starting from their own culture of origin, passing through school and professional experiences and personal passions. To encourage reflection on this topic, a work sheet was handed out, taken from a study by Le Boterf (2010), which defines competence as the ability of an individual to orchestrate and mobilise both their own internal resources (knowledge, know-how, skills, operating patterns, motivations, values and interests), and external resources (technologies, work organisation, institutions, labour market, etc.), thus giving rise to effective performance and socially recognised action.

A specific phase of the training course was characterised by an in-depth study of the biographical-narrative interview, starting from the different purposes for which a biographical approach can be used, then moving on to a focus on its use for the emergence of previous learning (Dominicé, 2000).

Finally, the methods of preparing a biographical-narrative interview were addressed, starting from the design of the interview, up to the suggestions on its creation. Teachers were given the task of conducting an interview with the purpose of the emergence of previous learning for training credits to be recognised, based on past experience from other similar situations.

The second meeting with teachers aimed to explore the issue of certifying skills and recognising training credits, defining the differences between the two activities, discussing the constraints and practices of credits recognition, the evaluation methods of completed or interrupted degrees, as well as experiences made on-formally and informally, and to question the types of evidence most appropriate in the different cases. In addition, teachers had the opportunity to discuss the experience of conducting the interview and evaluate the potential of the tool for preparing the application to recognise training credits (Atkinson, 2002; Di Rienzo, 2020). To facilitate the transposition of previous learning from the interview to a proposed credit application, the teachers practiced in the classroom with a worksheet.

Subsequently, in the third meeting, pilot projects and/or practices used by CPIAs in other regions were examined regarding the evaluation of qualifications and previous learning in the recognition of training credits, which provided food for thought and in-depth analysis, stimulating teachers to establish a working group in the individual CPIAs to prepare an internal practice that could guide teachers in supporting students in the application phase of credit recognition.

In the final phase of the course, in light of the interest shown by teachers regarding the possibility of improving the methods of conducting the reception and orientation of students, a reception device for the analysis and identification of previous learning was presented for the purposes of adapting to the specific context of the survey (Di Rienzo, 2020). The device consists of eight tools to be submitted to beneficiaries who intend to carry out the path of emergence of experiential skills and previous learning. These tools, through the narrative biographical approach, accompany the individual to the reflection and emergence of the learning paths of his own life (in the formal, non-formal and informal spheres), working on the reconstruction of personal identity and the definition of a personal project

4. Conclusions

The National Competence Certification System (SNCC) established in Italy with Law 92/2012, presents a regulated framework in full form with the issuance of the 2020 Guidelines. In this framework, CPIAs are identified as bodies entitled to certify competences. However, in order for this system to be put in place effectively and made operational, in order for people to be able to request the enforceability of the right to lifelong learning, some crucial issues must be resolved, including the establishment of territorial networks and, in particular, with regard to the issue discussed here, the training of professionals called upon to carry out the phases provided for by the skills certification procedure.

The CPIA Guidelines of 2015, for the transition to the new Italian adult education system, attribute to orientation and reception the highest importance, especially according to the path that leads to the training pact. More generally, orientation is understood as a longitudinal activity that accompanies the crucial steps of the learning subject's training path, even beyond the Training Pact. The skills in the field of accompaniment and guidance, therefore, become crucial for teachers at CPIAs.

In this sense, as shown by the results of the empirical survey, which involved all the Abruzzo CPIAs, it is necessary to support and develop the new skills attributed to teachers with respect to skills certification activities.

The teaching staff of the CPIA network in the region presents itself as a teaching staff placed in the 51-65 age group, in line with the same age group of Italian teachers. It should be noted that about half the teaching staff has a good grounding (in terms of years of experience) in adult education in general. Some of them have taught in the 150 hours, in the evening courses for workers, in the Permanent Territorial Centres and in recent years in CPIAs. Although, in the practice of teachers, reception and orientation activities are documented for up to 40 hours, 62.8% of respondents have never participated in the Commission for the training pact, moreover, the professional refresher courses carried out do not concern the issue of certification of skills and a very limited use is made of strictly qualitative tools such as those attributable to biographical and/or skills methods (Benadusi & Molina 2018; Cambi, 2002; Demetrio, 1996).

This justifies the significant willingness on the part of 81.6% to continue to learn and train with a view to lifelong learning and to increase professionalism. In particular, the teachers express a strong educational demand related to the improvement of the methods of conducting the reception and orientation phase of the students, compared to devices and instruments of a biographical-narrative type.

The procedure, device and tools for the analysis and recognition of previous learning, being the subject of the training, have registered the interest of teachers with respect to its application in professional practice. Specifically, the teachers used qualitative practices through the preparation and use of biographical techniques and tools, which they considered to be particularly suitable to enhance the skills of students, in particular unwritten ones, acquired in informal learning contexts. This approach was also considered to be functional in affecting motivation and planning in adult students.

From this point of view, the principle of the certification of competences, which is a right to the recognition of competences acquired in any case and everywhere and is therefore intended as a factor for individual empowerment and growth, undoubtedly presents itself as a measure that can affect the more equitable and sustainable functioning of the different systems (cultural, training, social, professional and economic). For these reasons, it has a transversal value with respect to the seventeen objectives of the 2030 Agenda, adopted by the United Nations, and is at the same time structurally linked to objective four: providing quality, fair and inclusive education, and learning opportunities for all. This principle is associated with the promotion of participation and inclusion, as indicated in the latest UNESCO report (2019). A complete system of skills certification contributes to developing the strategic objectives of an integrated system (Piazza, 2013) of adult education, such as personal enri-

chment and empowerment, accessibility to training, improvement of the cultural profile and skills of the adult population, employability (Boffo & Fedeli, 2018).

Notes

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Teacher training and retraining: strategic resources for quality adult education

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Keywords

Training, Professional development, Teachers, Adult Education, CPIA

Abstract

The Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIAs) represent educational institutions with specific characteristics both for the legal system and for the users to whom they are addressed: factors that affect the organisation of the training offer, as well as educational choices. The lack of specific initial training for teachers working in these contexts is a crucial problem for the improvement of the system, also in a perspective of attractiveness of the profession.

After having studied the regulatory context and the main peculiarities of adult education, the article presents a professional refresher course carried out in the province of Prato, during the 2020/2021 school year.

1. Introduction

The EU and national debate on adult learning has gradually brought into play strategies, resources and legislative initiatives which have led to the recognition of the centrality of skills, the need for higher qualifications and life-long learning in order to cope with the changes that characterise modernity. The concept of lifelong learning, in fact, represents the main focus of the most recent education and training policies that, since the end of the last century, contemplate ours as a learning society (Alberici, 1999) pervaded by knowledge, know-how and skills transversal to the dimensions inhabited by people and characterised by processes of change and transformation. Living in today's society, therefore, requires facing the complexity and challenges inherent in it, in the systemic perspective of an organisation made up of people, roles and bodies in which knowledge and learning are configured as conditions for the functioning of the system itself. In this perspective, education and training represent values oriented to self-fulfilment, to the growth of the person, to the economy and are, consequently, social values too.

The current historical moment, characterised by the health emergency, highlights the many critical issues that pervade every sector of society at various levels and that cannot but emphasise the importance of education and training, understood as an essential basis for the harmonious development of the future citizen, as well as the possibility of continuous learning and retraining for the adult person, in need of solid key skills for work and the exercise of global citizenship.

This scenario includes adult education, which involves multiple spheres, methods, places, ages; it embraces self-education, the areas of the formal-not formal-informal, the development of the person starting from their biography, their work experiences, study and needs. Within this pluralism of factors, learning, the party who learns and their orientation needs, play a leading role (Borri & Calzone, 2019).

The national policies aimed at the adult world, in light of this evidence, have favoured the establishment of the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIAs) which, starting from the 2014/2015 school year, have replaced the training offer proposed by the Permanent Territorial Centres (CTPs) aimed at acquiring knowledge and skills for obtaining qualifications and literacy in the Italian language.

2. Specificity, criticality and the potential of CPIAs

The Provincial Centres for Adult Education, created after a long process culminating in the reorganisation of the legal structure, referred to in Italian Presidential Decree 263/2012, are autonomous educational institutions divided into territorial service networks, usually on a provincial basis (paragraph 1, art. 1), organised in such a way as to establish a close connection with local government, the world of work and the professions (paragraph 3, art. 1), whose points of delivery are determined on the basis of defined criteria (paragraph 4, art. 1) and can expand their training offer within the framework of agreements with local authorities, other public and private entities, with particular reference to training structures accredited by the regions (paragraph 5, art. 1).

It is clear, therefore, the intention of the legislator in tracing an identity of the CPIA strongly open towards the territory, where the concept of network is central, moreover in line with the autonomous vision of educational institutions sanctioned by Law 59/1997, by Italian Presidential Decree 275/1999 and subsequently taken up by Law 107/2015. While on the one hand all educational institutions can promote network agreements or join them for the achievement of their institutional purposes (paragraph 1, art. 7 of Italian Presidential Decree 275/1999), CPIAs find in the network the central element of their existence and the purposes to which they are institutionally called. The network can include upper secondary schools that provide technical, professional and artistic education courses for adults, but also all lower secondary schools where the CPIAs are based (mostly inclusive institutions, in continuity with what happened with the CTPs), as well as prison institutions and the plurality of associations, public and private bodies that operate in various capacities and deal with adult education, often together with the CPIAs, in the context, for example, of IeFPs (professional education and training projects)

Analysing adult education according to this perspective allows us to grasp the complexity that characterises it and to emphasise the central role played by the territory, not simply the recipient of actions decided elsewhere, but at the same time the object and subject of government actions, in which the CPIAs represent privileged actors able to involve other subjects, prone towards an improvement of services and society itself.

The Centres for Adult Education are characterised by precise innovative elements, which have now become established characteristics, such as flexibility, personalisation and technological innovation.

The high degree of flexibility that distinguishes the reference paradigm of the CPIA is materialised with the realisation of paths organised by level groups, overcoming the rigid concept of class, as well as in the design for learning units, oriented towards learning outcomes instead of content. The training offer focuses on the construct of personalisation, it is calibrated on the needs of the student, on their history, on the skills acquired through previous study and work experiences, necessary for the co-build and enhancement of the life project. So, the adult is guided on a journey where the destination is the discovery of knowledge, also going through processes of integration and reworking things already learned and consolidated previously.

It is through the instrument of the Individual Training Pact that the personalised study path is defined, starting from the reception activities (Porcaro, Sibilio & Buonanno, 2020) and, subsequently, to their educational-training evaluation, going beyond the concept of annuity towards that of a didactic period.

The characteristics of flexibility and personalisation of the CPIA are also found in a radical innovation for the education and training system, introduced by Italian Presidential Decree 263/2012, regarding the possibility for the party in training to attend a part of the educational pathway remotely, in a period where there are no pandemic emergencies. The CPIAs, in fact, can provide a share of distance learning up to 20% of the total hours of the didactic period; an opportunity that is very inclusive in taking into account the needs and requirements of the adult learner who often covers multiple roles simultaneously: citizen, parent, worker and student.

Parallel to the aspects characterising these educational paths, it is possible to identify the critical issues highlighted in the literature (Bertazzoni, Passante, Valle & Tacconi, 2019; Colosio, 2015) and from the recent surveys conducted (Poliandri & Epifani, 2020), among which those relating to:

- *identity*. CPIAs are schools which are often associated with the foreign population but which are generally not very well known, if not unknown, both by professionals - teachers, ATA staff - and by local authorities, training agencies and, more generally, by stakeholders. The Provincial Centres are still an unexplored mine within the State-Regions system, able to actually and actively address the problems related to unemployment, retraining, updating and improvement of economic and social conditions;
- *inhabited places* Unlike traditional schools, 87% of CPIAs coexist with school buildings already in use by other institutions (Poliandri & Epifani, 2020), or non-school spaces, with which they often do not even share a part of the target users. The relaunch of education and training in the learning society should instead enhance the place par excellence for adults, also necessary to expand the construction of territorial service networks and, therefore, consolidate CPIAs as reference points, according to the European perspective of school-civic centre, as a radical rethinking of school construction in pedagogical terms and the educational-training model;
- *teacher turn-over*. Borri and Calzone (2019), in a research conducted among school directors highlighted the widespread turn-over of teaching staff that characterises the CPIAs and brings with it evident negative repercussions regarding the quality of the training offer and the teaching organisation. At the same time, the problems related to the skills and the didactic dimension of new teachers (Di Rienzo & Maurizio, 2020) or those not specialised in teaching in adult contexts, not being required by law, can be seen.

Precisely this last aspect related to the specific training of teachers, represents an issue on which duty it will have to and will be able to intervene organically, through system measures developed with the academic world.

3. The importance of teacher training

The teacher who arrives in an adult context for the first time very often does not possess adequate training, just think of all the primary school staff employed for the literacy and learning of the Italian language or those assigned to prison contexts. So sometimes, individual institutes put in place immediate strategies such as, for example, the activation of more or less formalised training courses - which often take on the role of self-training - through which to build and expand the know-how and knowledge of individual teachers. However, as shown in the Invalsi report (Poliandri & Epifani, 2020), although the training of professional resources represents a fundamental area of importance, on a national scale the training projects that involved less teaching staff are those aimed at new arrivals, relating to the peculiarities of CPIAs.

The need for specific training for adult education is advocated by a plurality of actors: both by teachers, whose needs are discussed in the annual training plan of individual institutes, and at the level of the network on a regional rather than national scale, through bodies such as the Italian Adult Education Network (RIDAP) to which most Italian CPIAs currently adhere. This network has been carrying out training activities for all staff belonging to the network for years.

The issues of training and retraining, today more than ever, play a crucial role in the national government policies of all Western countries that are oriented towards the renewal of education systems in light of the needs, characteristics, challenges of society, of the contemporary productive world and, likewise, aimed at increasing the attractiveness and recognition of the teaching profession. Investing in schools, curbing early school leaving, contributing to educational success by promoting the development of the necessary skills in the learner in order to learn independently in different contexts, implies an enhancement of the training of teachers, who must pos-

sess specific cultural and professional skills that are increasingly updated, in the perspective of lifelong learning, typical of learning societies.

At a Community level - just think of the considerations produced by the Council of the European Union (2014; 2017; 2021), the objectives of Europe 2020, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - teacher training is a strategic element and a priority for the economic and social development of the Union States, called upon to carry out high profile training and educational actions, able to offer the citizens of tomorrow the fundamental tools for the exercise of active citizenship and social participation.

It should also be noted that this topic has been the cornerstone of the most recent reform of the Italian school, Law 107/2015, through which in-service training of school staff has become mandatory, permanent and structural (Article 1, paragraph 124), making it a decisive element for increasing the professionalism of workers and the efficiency and effectiveness of the entire system. Likewise, the aspect of training will concern one of the actions that the government intends to promote with the resources of the forthcoming National Recovery and Resilience Plan to face the crisis caused by Covid-19.

4. Teach in adult education: instructions for use

“Teaching in adult education: instructions for use” is the title of the course carried out by Scuola Polo d’Ambito 23 for the formation of Prato, on a proposal from the *Commission for the definition of the Individual Training Pact*². During the Commission meetings held in the 2019/2020 school year, in fact, the need emerged to discuss the phenomenon of the annual teacher turn-over, to support the staff that, for the first time, approaches teaching in the field of adult education and to provide an opportunity for professional updating for those who have already worked there for a long time, going to stimulate the processes of meta-reflexion and, consequently, to qualitatively elevate those of learning-teaching (Marzano & Calvani, 2020).

In identifying training needs, in addition to an effective interest in the topic, a *bottom-up* approach was used, of particular pedagogical importance for the analysis of the educational situation (Baldacci, 2014), which highlighted the need to respond effectively and factually to the critical issues relating to the continuous replacement of the teaching staff, going to compensate for the lack of specific training/updating paths aimed at this target group of professionals.

After outlining the reference context and training needs, we proceeded with the creation of the course, through a comparison of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) of the Institutes involved³, contextualising them with the areas of the National Plan:

SAR process area	Processes
Inclusion and differentiation	Encourage the updating of teachers on the issues of inclusion, BES [<i>Bisogni Educativi Speciali</i> - Special Educational Needs], personalisation of learning paths.
Continuity and orientation	Promote continuity among adult education paths.
Development and enhancement of human resources	Promote communities of practice aimed at improving the quality of teaching; Encourage the documentation of good practices.

The National Plan area to which the educational action refers

Systems skills	Skills teaching
Skills for the 21st century	Foreign languages; Digital skills and new learning environments
Skills for an inclusive school	Social cohesion and prevention of juvenile distress.

The course, lasting a total of thirty hours, included four distinct modules including educational meetings and in-depth material, each of which developed specific content, among can include:

1. the history and legislation relating to CPIAs;
2. inclusion, special educational needs, listening, relationship and socio-emotional approach;
3. teaching in prison contexts, the Individual Training Pact, the credit recognition process and the related identification, evaluation and certification;
4. Italian L2 teaching, planning for LU, interdisciplinarity.

The purpose of the training, to which thirty-six teachers belonging to the different institutes have joined, was to develop didactic-methodological skills, as well as to deepen content knowledge on the essential topics of adult education through an operational-laboratory approach, within communities of practice, such as actions in support of teaching professionalism and shared reflection.

Through an initial questionnaire given to the teachers in training composed of twelve questions, different aspects were investigated, including the emotional-affective aspect experienced at the time of the first day of adult education courses. The analysis of the answers to these questions allowed us to highlight four categories of teachers:

- a. those who had a positive and enthusiastic attitude;
- b. those who had negative emotions, doubts, uncertainties and fear in having to work with a new target (adults) or in another context (prison);
- c. those who consciously choose to work in adult education;
- d. those who have shown curiosity about traditional education in terms of interculture, students and the school environment.

In addition, the reasons that led teachers to enrol in this training path were investigated, attributable to:

- the desire to improve the educational action in relation to the specific target audience;
- the need to activate the exchange of knowledge and best practice, but also forms of continuous reflection, through which professional skills and the creation of a community of practice can be leveraged;
- the desire to improve their personal knowledge, skills and competences;
- the right/duty to participate in vocational training and retraining.

This framework of teachers in training has laid the foundations for observing the entire training process, from which it emerges that the sharing of knowledge and the exchange between peers have contributed to the development of a reflective attitude of daily practice, to the analysis of documents and their redesign, which have led to the production of some operating forms of particular relevance for action in adult education contexts, with the aim of promoting training marked by elements of practical operation. In fact, contemporary education, today more than ever, needs reflective professionals, able to combine practice with constant reflection during action and on action (Schön, 2006).

5. Conclusions

While it seems necessary on the one hand, for the political world to enhance, as well as evolve of the current system of education and training of adults guided by a well-defined long-term vision, it is also necessary for the actors who work there to promote interventions aimed at improving the quality of services according to a systemic perspective, reverberating positively on the educational success, in terms of inclusion, socio-linguistic integration, certification of skills, retraining of citizens who are increasingly in need of lifelong learning and to be more resilient to the challenges that characterize contemporary life.

The initial training and refresher training of teachers is an essential element especially for those who work in a CPIA, for whom there is no specialised university course, in order to train competent teachers regarding the user and their specific needs, which cannot in any way be shared with those typical of compulsory education, with a solid cultural and experiential background - a toolbox made of andragogical theories and methodologies - to be used in the different contexts that characterise it and, at the same time, pursue the identity recognition of this education segment aligning with the European dimension (Borri & Calzone, 2019; Poliandri & Epifani, 2020), as well as to relocate the teacher in a prominent position, to the rank of other professionals (Minardi, 2014).

Notes

¹ Philipp Botes, School Director of CPIA 1 Prato and PhD in Pedagogy.

² In the framework of a network agreement, this Commission, made up of directors and representatives of adult education institutions, is responsible for agreeing, implementing, monitoring and verifying system measures based on the training needs of the territory.

³ The following are part of the adult education system of the province of Prato: the CPIA 1 Prato, the hotel institute "Francesco Datini", the technical institutes "Paolo Dagomari" (economic and services) and "Tullio Buzzi" (technological).

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The evolution of Adult Courses and the System Figure in charge of Research, Experimentation and Development in the field of Adult Education.

Giovanni Di Pinto

Keywords

Research, Adult education, CPIA, System figure

Abstract

Given that the object of the research was the study of the organisation of the CPIAs, an attempt was made to understand whether, in the light of the evolutionary process that made them complex, the introduction of a competent figure could contribute to improving the design of the educational offer and the guidance of human resources. The qualitative-quantitative field survey, through the use of the focus groups and the structured questionnaire, highlighted the need to introduce an ad hoc System Figure to the staff of the CPIAs who, through pedagogical research, was able to experiment with innovative teaching practices in the field, disseminate best practices within the CPIAs and in the academic field. A professionalism that guarantees an osmosis, in the absence of which there can be no research and, therefore, innovation in a sector, such as that of lifelong learning, in constant evolution, called to promote the raising of educational levels.

1. Introduction

The creation of the Regional Research, Experimentation and Development Centres (CRRS&S) in the field of Adult Education (IdA) has led to an evolution of the identity of the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIAs) which, at present, no longer only carry out educational activities, but also those of Research, Experimentation and Development (RS&S) in the adult lifelong learning field.

In this context, the CPIA, through the Activity Plan for the Innovation of Adult Education (PAIDEIA), has been urged to experiment, in line with European objectives, a series of “system measures” through which to ensure the transition to the new order.

2. PAIDEIA as the beginning of the evolution of CPIAs

Before going into the merits of the research, some premises about PAIDEIA need to be made. The plan, a national project promoted by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR) from the 2014/2015 school year to the 2016/2017 school year, accompanied the transition to the new system of adult lifelong learning providing an opportunity to various professionals, who in various ways operated in the CPIAs, to emancipate themselves and acquire the “lenses of pedagogical research” through which to investigate the phenomena and identify suitable solutions to improve the quality of teaching and, therefore, to raise the levels of education of adult users.

The activities carried out by the CPIAs within the framework of the aforementioned plan were aimed at:

1. defining the necessary devices for the production of the Individual Training Pact (PFI);
2. designing the system measures necessary for the connection between the first level paths and the second level paths;
3. carrying out the research, experimentation and development activities and the interventions to expand the training offer.

PAIDEIA, favouring the acquisition of managerial, organisational and educational skills to support and promote the application of new organisational and educational structures, has prepared the “ideal context” to systemati-

cally promote Research, Experimentation and Development (RS&S) activities in the field of adult lifelong learning. Since the 2016/2017 school year, MIUR has supported the activation in each region of a CRRS&S belonging to a CPIA, in a network with the other CPIAs of the respective region. The need to achieve its institutional purposes, as established by art. 7 of Italian Presidential Decree 275/99, led all the Centres designated for this purpose to establish, on 30 May 2017, the National Network of CRRS&S.

The fact that each CPIA-CRRS&S must be coordinated by a Technical-Scientific Committee, within which the participation of at least one University or a University Department or a Research Centre must also be guaranteed, is one of the main reasons why it would be appropriate to assume the intervention of an unprecedented professionalism that is dedicated to the construction of constant relationships between the University and the CPIA.

Emblematic for the purposes of the research appears the definition of the Three-Year National Plan of Research on adult lifelong learning of 5 May 2018, through which four strategic actions are planned:

1. strengthen the research areas referred to in Article 6 of Italian Presidential Decree 275/99;
2. enhance the CPIA as a service structure;
3. facilitate the link between the first and second levels of education;
4. promote the construction and operation of territorial networks for lifelong learning.

The construction and operation of these networks calls into question the CPIA, which is the institutional reference point for coordinating and implementing actions aimed at the adult population capable of promoting the raising of education levels and the consolidation of key competences for lifelong learning, as evidenced by the “Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 18 December 2006”.

The fact that the territorial networks for lifelong learning are as relevant on the lifelong learning side as they are connected with the CPIAs is understood by the fact that, to facilitate their implementation, MIUR has promoted the “National Plan for Guaranteeing the Competences of the Adult Population”.

In the third of the five points of the aforementioned plan, presented by the Minister of Education at the Lifelong Learning Conference in 2018, we note how, as part of the actions to be put in place to intervene on the skills of the adult population, the strengthening and consolidation of activated CRRS&S is envisaged.

This operation is not to be taken for granted.

3. The transition to the new CPIA system: the focus of research

Within the broader context of lifelong learning, the CPIA, an autonomous educational institution and Territorial Service Network, can contribute to the implementation of the “priority measures” of national policies for lifelong learning and to the achievement of the “specific objectives” of the territorial networks, referred to in points A.5 and B.4 of the Agreement in the Unified Conference of 20 December 2012 on lifelong learning.

The research, conducted from 2017/2018 to 2018/2019, analysed the processes that accompanied the transition to the new CPIA system.

We tried to understand whether, as a result of the qualitative-quantitative research, it was necessary to intervene with:

1. the introduction of specific “system measures” to support the management of a complex organisation such as the CPIA;
2. the establishment of an ad hoc “System Figure” for the CPIA, in charge of the RS&S, competent to seek an intervention strategy that can lead to the change of the situation under examination, where this should manifest evident critical issues.

The recognition of training credits, with the certification of acquired learning and the promotion of guidance services throughout the life course, have made the CPIA a place within which to experiment with system actions aimed at enhancing the cultural and professional heritage of the individual. Innovative functions, those described above, that require human resources that are up to the task.

4. Participatory action-research: a method functional to the purposes

The choice of participatory action-research, as a methodological approach suited to the dual ontogenetic and transformative purpose of the survey carried out, was configured as the result of the influence of the operational logic that distinguished PAIDEIA.

Starting from the assumption that the participatory action research always comes from a concrete situation, the results of this research have led to the assumption that the establishment of the CPIA, as a new complex concrete situation, has caused difficulties to the professionalism that operate within it. Hence "action-research is thus conceived as a functional process for the social and political emancipation of practitioners" (Carr, Kemmis, 1993; Kemmis, Mc Taggart, 1988, cited by Mortari, 2015, p. 214).

The birth of the eighteen CRRS&S, distributed in the Italian territory, as suitable places for the promotion of education, research and innovation, represents an opportunity to constantly promote the culture of pedagogical research within the CPIAs that, at present, increasingly need a constructive comparison with those sites where the didactic experience in the field becomes pedagogical speculation and vice versa.

With regard to the detection tools used, it should be noted that their choice has tried to comply with the criterion of functionality. With the structured questionnaire, in which each question was matched with a single variable to be analysed, it was possible to investigate the characteristics of the interviewee (age, sex, educational background, qualification), professional experiences (school institution frequented, years of service, type of positions on which the teaching had been carried out), opinions (on the existence, functionality, areas of intervention, the necessary skills and cultural qualifications that a System Figure for RS&S should have had). The aforementioned quantitative device served to highlight the usefulness of a hypothetical ad hoc System Figure for CPIAs, in this particular historical moment. To understand the results deriving from the quantitative survey carried out, a statistical analysis of the data was carried out through the IBM Statistical Package for Social Science software.

With regard to the sample size, 294 stakeholders from the Puglia territory were selected. In this regard, it was decided to involve all the teachers and directors from the seven CPIAs in Puglia. To carry out the processing and analysis of the data, a univariate descriptive analysis was carried out, in order to understand the distribution of the answers to all the individual questions.

Subsequently, a bivariate statistical analysis was carried out, in order to cross-check the answers of some questions taken in pairs. The structured questionnaire, administered through Google Modules and sent to the email address of the school in question, contained both single-answer and multiple-choice questions.

In relation to the qualitative survey tools used, the focus group made it possible to increase the knowledge of the cognitive and behavioural models of the groups of actors investigated (Calaprice, 2007) on a new phenomenon (which was that of the agreements between the 1st level educational pathways and those of the 2nd level and the common design of the two types of pathways mentioned) of which there was little knowledge.

A modus operandi that has allowed the research to achieve the planned objectives. If the state cannot claim that PAIDEIA is well known (since the activity plan is limited to CPIAs only), in the future the scientific and educational community will be able to make use of some pedagogical reflections on the innovative results deriving from the aforementioned national experimentation and its own regional research.

5. The results of the research

From the qualitative-quantitative survey report it was found that, if the MIUR Referents have an optimistic vision about the regular functioning of the CPIAs, then, opposing this are the teachers and directors who complain about some anomalies in the new adult lifelong learning system. The results showed that something, in the sophisticated mechanism of the CPIAs, did not work “by the book”.

The picture taken showed how, despite the initial good intentions of MIUR, which through the PAIDEIA would have wanted to provoke in the participants a process of emancipation from mental habits limiting their field of action (Mortari, 2015), most of the professionals, who for various reasons operate in the CPIAs, perceive only an increase in formal obligations, which do not lead to the improvement of the quality and effectiveness of adult lifelong learning.

The focus groups, each lasting one hour, were created with some key figures from the seven CPIAs in Puglia, with seven people, namely the school director, his two collaborators and the four instrumental functions.

The focus group, for whose analysis of the textual materials obtained used the technique of qualitative content analysis, made it possible to take into account the different perspectives from which the discussion was considered. Given that during the second edition of the PAIDEIA the working group focused on the experimentation of specific “system measures”, aimed at promoting the appropriate connections between the first level and second level education paths and, therefore, on the common design of the first and second level paths, it was considered appropriate to focus the interview on:

- a. the role that the Commission should have had for the definition of the PFI, as an institutional entity in charge of the recognition of credits and the personalisation of the Study Plan;
- b. the reception, orientation, enhancement of the cultural and professional heritage of the person, which represent the innovative figure of the new adult lifelong learning system.

From the comparison of the focus group results (carried out with 49 stakeholders belonging to the different CPIAs in Puglia), visible in points a and b, and the structured questionnaires (administered to 294 stakeholders operating in the seven CPIAs in Puglia), observable in points c, d, e, f, g, the following aspects emerged:

- a. an approximate approach to the Commission’s work in defining the PFI, which, for 58% of stakeholders, should have more competences in the area of skills balance and adult user orientation;
- b. 98% of those consulted are interested in methodological and disciplinary innovation as a driving force for improving the quality and effectiveness of adult lifelong learning;
- c. for 63% of respondents, there is no intermediate figure advocating the development of educational research and the experimentation of unpublished management practices;
- d. 84% of participants consider the establishment of a System Figure for RS&S in CPIAs necessary for their survival and evolution;
- e. it is important, for 80% of the participants, that the above-mentioned Figure has specific training in the field of lifelong learning and, above all, the methodology of socio-educational research;
- f. the strategic role that the aforementioned figure could play, for 75% of respondents, in cultivating synergies with academic institutions, with the different territorial areas of the Regional School Office of competence and, above all, with the different CRRS&S;
- g. the functionality, for 83% of stakeholders, of a system figure in charge of RS&S in the field of adult lifelong learning which, as an impartial professional between two institutions, could guarantee a fruitful exchange of ideas and innovative projects between academics and operators in the school sector, becoming a promoter of the research culture.

6. The identity of a System Figure in charge of the RS&S of good practices in the field of adult lifelong learning

The need to give a precise identity to the system figure in charge of RS&S in the matter of adult lifelong learning, derives its genesis from what is highlighted in paragraph 3.1.2 of the Guidelines for the transition to the new order in support of the organisational and didactic autonomy of the CPIA.

In this document, it is reiterated that all RS&S activities aimed at enhancing the role of the CPIA as a service structure aimed at preparing appropriate “system measures” that are in line with European objectives and are aimed at:

1. reading the training needs of the territory;
2. constructing adult profiles defined on the basis of the needs of social and work contexts;
3. interpreting the skills and knowledge needs of the adult population;
4. the reception and orientation of the reference user;
5. improving the quality and effectiveness of adult lifelong learning.

In addition, a System Figure in charge of the RS&S on adult lifelong learning, as stated in paragraph 3.1.1 of the aforementioned Guidelines, could play a relevant role when the CPIA:

1. enters into agreements with universities, regions and public bodies;
2. promotes contractual arrangements with associations and individuals;
3. participates in temporary associations with public and private agencies that create synergistic collaborations for the implementation of particular training projects.

Further suggestions on other tasks to which this Figure is called upon to fulfil come from the operational indications, for carrying out the activities and monitoring, of the second edition of PAIDEIA.

In fact, by analysing the table (concerning the products) annexed to section 2.3 of the indications mentioned above, the expert could deal with:

1. training design and evaluative research (scope 4 B.2, art. 3, par. 3, letter a) of D.D. 1250/15, no.10);
2. the training and cultural and professional updating of school staff (scope 4 B.2, art. 3, para. 3, letter b) of D.D. 1250/15, no.11);
3. methodological and disciplinary innovation (scope 4 B.2, art. 3, par. 3, lett. c) of D.D. 1250/15, no.12);
4. the educational documentation and its dissemination within the school (scope 4 B.2, art. 3, par. 3, letter e) of D.D. 1250/15, no.14);
5. the exchange of information, experience and teaching materials (scope 4 B.2, art. 3, para. 3, letter f) of D.D. 1250/15, no.15);
6. the integration between the different articulations of the school system and, in agreement with the competent institutional subjects, between the different training systems, including professional training (scope 4 B.2, art. 3, par. 3, lett. g) of D.D. 1250/15, no.16).

A figure who performs the functions mentioned above could become a resource for the CPIA because it would help to replace that superficial optic, which is summarised in the motto “we have always done this, so we will continue to do it”, with a self-reflective and self-assessing perspective summarised, instead, in the motto “let’s do this, let’s check if it works and if it does not work we’ll change it” (Trincherò, 2004, p.VI). A more productive and innovative approach that looks at action research as a mental habit. PAIDEIA and Trincherò’s thought bring out a professionalism that, reflecting critically on its own and others’ experience in the field, is able to produce scientific knowledge starting from empirical evidence.

It is a question of outlining the characteristics of this system figure, the boundaries within which they can move, their areas of intervention and delivering to MIUR an “archetype” that is able to show the results of the research-action conducted in the field.

For us to start understanding how to create the aforementioned Figure, we can look to Trincherò, who insists that “the professionalism of the teacher requires knowing how to listen, how to reflect, how to model, conceive and evaluate one’s ideas”.

The scholar goes on to say that “the professional teacher is not a mere executor of directives imposed from above, but an active and creative presence that can ‘read’ the situations that the world has to offer and is then able to offer original, creative but, above all, adequate, effective and efficient responses” (ibid., p.VII).

In the light of the results that have emerged, it is hoped that the Ministry of Education will take into consideration the possibility of institutionalising this figure related to middle management which, despite being competent in the field of adult lifelong learning, does not disdain training on the methods and techniques of research in socio-educational contexts. Moreover, the improvement of the quality and effectiveness of adult lifelong learning can become an achievable objective when the desirable and indispensable osmosis between academic theory and didactic practice occurs.

The possible System Figure could help to bring out the dialogue between “academic theory” and “school practice”, in the absence of which sterile daily solipsism could prevail.

Dialogue, fruitfulness reiterated by Mortari, when he argues that, for a long time, in Italy, the necessary attention to empirical research has been lacking, with the consequence that the pedagogical culture has been reduced, in many cases, to closed theoretical discourses (Mortari, 2015).

Dewey himself argued the need for a continuous presence of the researcher in the life of the educational context because the first source of a science of education lies in the minds of educators (Lagemann, 2000, cited by Mortari, 2015, p.14).

7. Conclusions

If the desire to promote a research that illuminates experience, which reconnects pedagogical research and educational practice (Kennedy, 1997, Wagner 1997, cited by Mortari, 2015, p.16), constitutes the premise, the natural consequence could be represented by the examination of the results of this research, which should lead MIUR to reflect on the innovative potential of the CPIAs that, in their evolutionary process, have assumed the appearance of a performing means through which to promote the use of guidance services throughout the life course (art. 4, c. 55, lett. c, Law 92/2012).

Services, whose quality can be perfected through the competent exercise of the autonomy of RS&S, conferred to CPIAs pursuant to art. 6 of Italian Presidential Decree 275/1999. The good practices of PAIDEIA and the experimentation of CRRS&S are not elements disconnected from the results of the survey conducted which tried to show how much research is ingrained in the institutional purposes of these autonomous educational institutions, which arose as a result of Italian Presidential Decree 263/2012. The complexity of the CPIAs, as functional places for the development of the “knowledge triangle” (education, research, innovation) repeatedly recalled in the European context, could be governed by an unprecedented professional figure, whose institutionalisation would foreshadow career prospects of interest to the teaching class.

Notes

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The value of digital teacher competences in L2/LS teaching and learning. Educational proposals and analysis

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Keywords

Teacher Digital Skills, Experiential Learning, Prosumirtuación

Abstract

This article defines, in a clear and contextualised manner, the teacher's digital competences, to then deepen the characteristics and merits of L2/LS teaching and learning contexts on a professional and educational level. Subsequently, a functional proposal is presented for the development of linguistic, digital and soft skills through a didactic approach in which the digital teaching competence plays a fundamental role.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, as we know, our society has undergone profound structural, economic and cultural changes, to name just a few. The world in which we live is constantly evolving and we all need to keep up, so we find ourselves having to grasp the new developments for growth both individually and collectively. This change has involved several sectors, including education and training, in which the aim is not only to acquire knowledge, but also to develop and strengthen skills. Furthermore, the serious repercussions suffered by this sector due to the Covid-19 pandemic cannot be ignored, so it is essential to carry out an in-depth analysis on what can be found and the innovations to be proposed in the educational field.

Technology and the digital revolution have provided new ideas for improving teaching and, consequently, fostering learning. In fact, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can offer their contribution in the long journey towards universal education, quality teaching and learning, professional development of teachers and better action by every body and party involved in education and training (Talebian, Mohammadi & Rezvanfar, 2014). These objectives arise from the observation of the network society in which we live, which presents us with new and continuous challenges that we must know how to face. Consequently, those working in this field must first reflect on what it means to learn in the 21st century, a period in which the excess of information breaks down classroom barriers and changes the role of the teacher. The latter, in fact, not only has the task of transmitting information to their students – which sometimes happens almost mechanically – but is a real guide among the information overload to which students are exposed to every day. In addition to this, it is important not to forget other essential elements in current and future educational perspectives. Think, for example, of the personal growth of apprentices, the ability to learn how to learn, autonomy in learning processes and the development of a critical spirit, these are just some of the so-called *soft skills* that are complementary to the purely linguistic ones, which we deal with specifically.

It is therefore appropriate to reflect on the importance of digital teaching competence (hereinafter DTC), with a specific focus on the teaching of foreign languages and second languages, as we are strongly convinced that it is now indispensable in the daily life of every teacher. In particular, we consider it essential that it is then reflected on the autonomy of students within their learning processes, also (and above all) through digital tools and resources.

We will discuss this analysis starting from three fundamental questions: what is digital teaching competence? Why is it important to develop DTC? What DTC-based didactic approach can you propose to your L2/LS students?

We will first study some existing DTC models in the literature to reflect on the value of the digital component in teacher education. Then, we will focus on the contribution that this skill can offer in the implementation of training courses in terms of learning for students. Finally, we will propose a procedural model that, based on the empirical data collected in recent years, has ensured the strengthening of digital teaching skills and - in parallel - has favoured the acquisition of both digital and linguistic knowledge and skills, as well as soft skills in different profiles of apprentices with whom we have worked.

2. What is Digital Teaching Competence (DTC) and why is it important?

One of the main reflections to be addressed is based on the following question: how can we define digital teaching competence? Although it may seem simple to answer this question, we actually believe that the definition of DTC needs to be further developed.

There are several models developed at the international level to try to provide an answer to this question. In our case, we considered it appropriate to focus on the analysis of the following four models:

- *National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers (NETS-T)* (ISTE, 2008).
- *UNESCO ICT Competency Framework for Teachers* (UNESCO, 2011).
- *European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu)* (Redecker, 2017).
- *Marco Común de Competencia Digital Docente* (INTEF, 2017).

Common elements can be found among these. First of all, almost everyone shows particular interest in using ICT for the implementation of teaching strategies and methodologies, to stimulate collaboration and participation in learners and to make them aware of the importance of issues such as the correct and legal use of the network and web security. Furthermore, in the detailed analysis of the models carried out by Castañeda et al. (2008), the authors identified a more instrumental dimension of DTC, linked to the use of ICT and the solution of technical problems in an autonomous way. Two models, namely *DigCompEdu* and the one developed by INTEF, include online research and information management, while only a few models provide for the use of ICT in global management in educational terms and for content creation.

What emerges is therefore a focus on the instrumental function of technology (Castañeda et al., 2018). However, it is limiting to define DTC as the ability to use digital tools such as LIM, tablets and PCs within the classroom, or - in the same way - restrict this competence to conducting monothematic lessons on cyberbullying, web security and piracy, as much as they are current and undoubtedly important topics.

DTC should in fact be understood as a path of continuous training for the teacher, which allows them to first discern the value of technology in their life and that of their students and - consequently - to understand how to implement it in their curriculum. This assumption implies a much broader and deeper dimension of the digitally competent teacher: being a guide for their students within a historical period in which individuals are no longer passive actors on the web, but are becoming *prosumers*, who transform each activity into an act of collaboration and civil participation (Rifkin, 2014).

Everything that has been talked about so far guides us in understanding why DTC is important, both for teachers - lifelong learners according to the foundations of lifelong learning - and, above all, for their students. Those who deal with training, in fact, cannot fail to take into account the relationship between learning and information chaos, also called *infoxication* (from information overload) (Cornella, 2000), to which their students are exposed today. In order to manage the high amount of information and - at the same time - develop their language skills, the latter need to enhance their digital communication skills, which are formed by those skills that a person needs for their growth within the post-digital society (Torres, 2011). These skills are fundamentally based - besides

ICT – on Learning and Knowledge Technologies (TAC) and on Empowerment and Participation Technologies (TEP) (Reig, 2012).

Nowadays, learners are also led to create, manage and share Personal Learning Environments (PLE) and Personal Learning Networks (PLN) (Adell & Castañeda, 2010). In this article we will limit ourselves to providing a brief explanation of both: by PLE we mean a space of interaction and communication between individuals who have learning as their common goal (Attwell, 2007), while PLNs are the actual groups of people and sources of information that each of us can create, thus forming personal learning networks.

These two concepts present a truth of modern learning: you don't just learn in the classroom. In fact, the large amount of information available to each individual means that they constantly learn from different sources on a daily basis. Obviously, the digital world plays a fundamental role in this. Think, for example, of the use of search engines or social networks: why consider them only leisure environments and not exploit their potential within a learning path guided by a digitally competent teacher? Thanks to technology, in fact, it is possible to create digital environments (PLEs) in which each individual can develop their communication skills, in our case in a foreign language, thanks to the interaction with other learners (PLN). It is therefore essential that teachers are able to work in these contexts, as students now feel comfortable with the tools and resources mentioned above and time could be dedicated to strengthening their communication skills in L2/LS by enhancing their digital mastery. Another clear example of the importance of DTC can be found in the new scenarios that have been created in the educational field following the Covid-19 pandemic. Distance learning (DL), which later became integrated digital teaching (IDD), has highlighted the need for a ready and digitally appropriate training system at a school, university and vocational level.

For teachers, the emergency immediately highlighted the need to know how to use new IT tools and platforms for video lessons or to manage materials from/to students. However, when it comes to didactic programming, we are sometimes limited in transferring the training paths developed in class to new contexts characterised by computer screens and cameras. The result, in similar cases, is unsuccessful as it is much easier to lose the rhythm of the lesson due to technical problems and/or there are many distractions on the students side, the relational component is also greatly limited (which is something that cannot be ignored).

A set of methodologies and techniques that stimulate student motivation and interaction should be developed. The digital world gives us interesting ideas from this point of view and it is precisely for this reason that we reiterate the importance of DTC for every teacher. The next section will focus on presenting an educational proposal based on the creation of digital content through projects, which is effective in a critical context such as the one in which we work daily. Therefore, if on the one hand we are forced to become aware of the limitations that we have with distance learning, on the other hand all of us as teachers have the duty to seek solutions that guarantee quality results on a linguistic level and in terms of developing digital skills and soft skills already mentioned above.

3. Prosumirtuación (prosumerisation) to develop linguistic and digital skills

As mentioned in the previous section, the new critical issues could be addressed through alternative methodologies. This does not mean that these opportunities are only available in an emergency context such as the one in which we have been living for more than a year. Indeed, the contrary is true. The difficulties that the school, academic and professional education world have faced and continue to face today, highlight the limits of teaching that is still mainly based on front-facing lessons and passive learners, thus inviting all of us to look for operational proposals that see the student at the centre of their learning process, using information on the web in a critical way, enhancing the interaction between students and teachers favouring the creation of unpublished digital content by learners.

In recent years, several didactic approaches have focused on the relationship between technology and cognitive processes and have been dedicated to studying how these new forms of learning can be integrated into more traditional educational models.

Among these, we have to mention connectivism (Siemens, 2004). Supported by Siemens and Downes, the model aims to explain the complexity of learning in a rapidly evolving and constantly changing digital age. According to this approach, learning is favoured by the creation of connections within a network (Siemens & Downes, 2008). Equally interesting is the approach based on virtual learning communities (Murua, 2015), i.e. groups of individuals such as professionals, students or simply people with common interests who communicate and establish continuous contact with each other through learning networks. Within these communities, information, ideas, reflections and experiences are shared with the common interest of taking care of their own personal, academic and professional development, as well as that of other members.

The *prosumirtuación* approach is based on the value of the digital component in learning and teaching and on the pedagogical assumptions mentioned above (Ríos, 2017). It is based on the three Spanish verbs *consumir*, *interactuar* and *producir* (consume, interact and produce). Following this approach, students carry out mainly digital projects in which they “consume” information, that is, they use online information materials, to produce – after several phases of work in which the interaction between peers is encouraged – new digital artifacts. In detail, the *prosumirtuación* projects are divided into the following phases:

- 1. Presentation of the project idea.** During this first phase, students are informed about the teaching objectives, the specifically linguistic ones and the type of evaluation. It is important to pay attention to the spontaneous feedback received from learners, to understand if the implementation of motivational strategies is necessary and to ensure that they feel involved in the decisions made by the entire class group.
- 2. Organisation of the learning environment** Normally, the suggestion is to create a group in a social network or educational platform. In this regard, the best choice is to opt for the one most used by all/most students. In this way, an interaction space is created through which students can understand the values of digital culture, create learning networks, understand and manage collaborative learning, develop autonomy and critical spirit (Magro, 2015).
- 3. Debate on the digital content to be created.** Starting from the assumption that the final digital artifact must have real informative value and provide a service in L2/LS, it is important to discuss and debate what type of content should be created: podcasts, blogs, subtitled videos, Wikipedia entries, live events to promote on Twitter or other social networks, to name a few examples. Already from this stage, students must play an active role, so that their interests, attitudes and peculiarities contribute significantly to the success of the project.
- 4. Searching, filtering, managing and sharing information.** In this phase, students enter the information *chaos* of the web in search of useful content, which is selected and critically filtered by each of them, and then shared with their team mates within the chosen platform. To manage the information collected, the recommendation is to save everything online for easy access and the enrichment of PLE. Diigo, for instance, is an excellent tool for collecting, managing and sharing digital articles and documents.
- 5. Drafting and cooperative correction of content.** Once various pieces of information have been collected, a document is drawn up, usually in text format, which can correspond to the desired final product or act as a support for its creation. Both in the case of editing, and in the case of the subsequent analysis of the text, the use of the Google Docs application is recommended. It promotes cooperative writing and allows each participant in the project to comment on the parts written by their companions. This is funda-

mental, as it guides the metalinguistic reflection between peers on the communicative aspects expressed in a foreign language through an inductive approach. In fact, each student can report any errors in content, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, grammar and syntax, just to mention some aspects related to the learning of a second language or foreign language.

6. Teacher intervention and broadening of reflections. Only at this stage does the teacher intervene, who previously only had the role of being a mediator and facilitator. The teacher clarifies doubts and resolves the linguistic debates initiated by the students. Immediately afterwards, the explanations provided by the teacher are reported cooperatively by the students in a document that is normally renamed “Language Reflections”.

7. Creation of the final product. Starting from the text analysed and corrected, we move on to the creation of the final product. Normally the document is uploaded to the students’ blog, so that you can add other multimedia content such as audio, video or photos.

8. Dissemination of the final product. The digital artifact created is then shared by each student on their social profiles to promote its dissemination and be enjoyed by foreign users who are part of the digital community. This means that this product can provide a service to other individuals on the web.

As can be seen, there are several theoretical foundations behind *prosumirtuación* projects: critical reflection, digital competence, sentimental and emotional aspects, participation, cooperation and service. Similarly, it is clear that such structured projects require the guidance of a digitally competent teacher and that this competence is not reflected in the simple ability to use the tools mentioned in the description of the operational proposal. On the contrary, it consists in the awareness of the value that these resources can bring to the management of information by students, to the interaction between peers even outside the classroom and to the creation of multimedia content useful to learners, first, then also to their digital community.

To deepen the topics mentioned throughout this entire article, between June and July 2018 the Higher Training Course for Foreign Language Teachers #CFDOL (Continuing Online Training) was held, organised by the University Language Centre of the University of Cagliari. The course was attended by thirteen lecturers and Expert Linguistic Collaborators (ELC) in English, Spanish, German, Chinese and Russian languages of the university. They all had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the didactic approach of *prosumirtuación* and to create a digital artifact – specifically a podcast – following the different phases of cooperative work mentioned above. After a first analysis and research of information within articles concerning the didactics and teaching methodologies of L2/LS, speeches were recorded in various languages. In this way, every participating teacher explored new methodological horizons useful for their daily training action and, at the same time, acquired a greater awareness of the importance of strengthening their digital teaching skills³.

4. Conclusions

This article reflected on the digital competence of teachers. Starting from the literature on the subject, we have provided a clear and contextualised definition to the daily practice of each teacher. Within the various NETS-T (ISTE, 2008), ICT Competency Framework for Teachers (UNESCO, 2011), DigCompEdu (Redecker, 2017) and Marco Común de Competencia Digital Docente (INTEF, 2017), we observed a prevalent instrumental function of DTC and, at the same time, we reiterated the weight that this competence can have if we understand that the teacher and student roles, which we have always been accustomed to, must be redefined.

We then focused on the importance of DTC both in terms of the professional development of teachers and in terms of the impact on the teaching proposed to their students. In fact, analysing the needs of the latter at the level of effective, functional and lasting learning, and taking into account the new scenarios created as a result of the

Covid-19 pandemic, it was considered appropriate to draw a well-defined line on the challenges of the current and future educational world and the tools that are available to us to address them.

Finally, after considering connectivism (Siemens, 2004) and virtual learning communities (Murua, 2015) as starting points for our methodological reflection, we proposed *prosumirtuación* as a didactic approach, based on DTC, able to lead to quality results in terms of developing linguistic, digital and complementary skills (soft skills) for their students. It is necessary to emphasise that the operating model we present is not the only course of action that can be taken, in fact everything always depends on the creative capacity of students and teachers to take the most advantage of this type of experiential approach.

In summary, what emerges in our study is that DTC plays a key role in an educational itinerary in which we aim to develop language skills in L2/LS, digital skills and soft skills at the same time. It is therefore hoped that the growing needs of modern society and the challenges posed by the current historical moment will be addressed by providing professional training courses for teachers on the digital realm, as well as educational activities increasingly focused on the active role of students, so that the adults of the future are mature, autonomous, able to learn how to learn, critical and competent linguistically and digitally.

Notes

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³ Link to the podcast: urly.it/3cn2r

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Rethinking education: a challenge to reshape prison schools

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Keywords

Prison, Adult Education,
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Abstract

The article explores the issue of the educational relationship in prison schools and the need for its rethinking, also in light of the difficulties that emerged due to the pandemic situation. There is not only the need to place the person as a whole microcosm at the centre of the educational relationship, but also the opportunity to reflect on the skills of teachers called to act as trainers and educators (re-educators) in prisons. Precisely from this point of view, of a fundamentally plural character, the importance of rethinking the design action in a collegial perspective is highlighted so as to allow the implementation of interdisciplinary paths capable of increasing the same perception of the centrality of the student, consequently increasing the intrinsic motivation to learn.

1. Education in prison: a new dialectical perspective

Each context in which the teaching-learning process takes shape, both formal and informal, has an intrinsically relational characteristic. It is, however, a relationship that has very often underlying peculiarities because it is ensnared in mechanisms that end up stripping concepts from the deepest of meanings. After all, the famous Athenian Master knew this well, and it was not by chance that he became the promoter of a revolutionary *paideia* proposal at the time. In fact, Socrates, far from the sophisticated educational model, proposed a *paideia* based on the dialectical relationship capable of bringing to light, through dialogue, the true essence of things (Borrelli, 2013). This is still the deepest meaning of the term “educate” (from the Latin *educĕre*, “to draw out, to raise”), and it is from this “bringing to light” that all forms of development of intellectual faculties can start, but from where? Generally, to answer this last question, we tend to refer to learners, pupils, students, forgetting that these terms are not able to give true significance hidden behind the “person”. In fact, people are “the relationship” and it is people who enter into the educational relationship as unique and authentic subjects, because they are constantly in transformation and tension between communicative forms of the intrapsychic and the interpsychic, as Socrates had intuited. People are, therefore, much more than just rational animals, they are rational animals with language, that is, the natural propensity for social communication, for sharing with the other from which they can benefit or wound. Therefore, by nature, people are vulnerable.

This premise becomes indispensable for a critical understanding of the educational relationship that, today in a pressing way, must redesign its most authentic boundaries to be able to respond to the fluidity, transience and even incorporeity of human bonds (Burza, 2008). Moreover, in the educational relationship not a single person comes into play, but more people who dialectically intertwine and try to meet each other in dialogue, that is, in the highest form of communication and education. As Burza again recalls, in the educational relationship dialogue is necessary, because only through it is it possible to see in the interlocutor a traveling companion with whom to synchronise and avoid the fall towards solipsism. It is, therefore, a question of positively setting out towards the encounter of the other who is an epiphany, that is, the manifestation of a dimension that recalls responsibility towards otherness (Lévinas, 1984) and, consequently, to redesign the boundaries of one’s ego (Burza, 2008, p. 23).

2. Rethinking schooling in prison contexts: rethinking teaching

In the educational context of adult schools, the premises made so far acquire greater prominence, because they show the dialectical interdependence that allows the dichotomous logic of the educator and the person being educated to be overcome. Even more so in contexts in which the adult is imprisoned, a person with a different and complex educational history that cannot be easily changed and that, therefore, requires relationships capable of re-establishing social ties (Lizzola, 2019, p. 132).

Suffice it to think, as Lizzola himself recalls (2019), that the school in prison operates between big discontinuities, that are even more serious since the pandemic, which are cause and sometimes also a consequence of the enormous biases in attendance and the motivational decreases that the teacher, individually, although full of good will and teaching strategies, cannot fully face. This latter scenario is extensively described in the studies of Decembrotto (2020) and Mancaniello (2020), which, although with different arguments, report that within prisons the pandemic emergency has led to double isolation, due to significant forms of loss and destabilisation (Decembrotto, p. 282; Mancaniello, 2020, p. 224). Especially in the first pandemic phase, the one most analysed by Mancaniello, prisoners were stripped of the world of relationships to the point of experiencing a form of panic due to total social distancing, that is, the absence of any form of communication also and above all of an affective nature (Mancaniello, 2020). In fact, a balance between “treatment” and “safety” still has not been found, thus leading, in some cases, to moments of tension (Mancaniello, 2020, p. 224). However, this particular historical context has brought to light how backward technology is in prisons and the need to quickly improve it to also allow communication with families and the continuation of school activities (Mancaniello, 2020, p. 229). However, further difficulties were found in the management of the same IT stations, whose operation depended on the staff within the structure, together with staffing problems (Decembrotto, 2020, p. 279).

From the didactic point of view, this pandemic has allowed us to recognise the need to rethink the same role of the teacher as a facilitator of the learning process, given the massive use of digital didactic mediators. Prison schools are important magnifying glasses that analyse the limits of distance learning. In fact, when the “digital” mediator appears jagged and inefficient, the teaching-learning process itself becomes discontinuous and the facilitator has to rethink their actions, to better guarantee training success (Benelli, 2012, pp. 129-130). Borrowing an expression from Benelli (2020), the school, a strategic institution for training in prison contexts, appears increasingly imprisoned because it is harnessed in social marginality and in a discarded dimension (Benelli, 2020, p. 40), ending up being powerless before a process confined to the place of abjection masterfully described by Julia Kristeva (1981) in her famous essay, *Powers of Horror. Essay on abjection*. This last reference, far from being excessive, strongly explains the constraints that the school in prison must be able to overcome, albeit linked to an organisational and control context that is rigid as well as functional to the prison discipline (Lizzola, 2019, p. 166), even closer among the various suspensions of the activity in person.

Rethinking the educational relationship, therefore, must bring with it a rethinking of the educational dialectic, capable of sustaining itself and also feeding itself in fluid and even unpredictable contexts. Those who find themselves explaining their educational action in prison environments already know that the very creation of an educational relationship is quite complex. Often we find ourselves in situations of discontinuity in the attendance, but also in conditions of psychological impermeability, that is, in the difficulty of establishing effective communication with the prisoner-pupil due to their *closure* towards the outside world. In such circumstances the teacher must be able to weave, little by little, the plots necessary to re-build an empathetic emotional tissue that serves as a basis to build trust in the other.

Sometimes adults in prison contexts do not find other reasons for attending school, especially when there is no need to get their diploma or certification of skills, except for leisure and a way to obtain alternative measures

(Cesareo, 2019, p. 73). Benelli's (2020) reconstruction of the motivations that lead prisoners to attend school, that is, the desire to learn and make the best use of prison time, seems too benevolent (p. 42). It is good to keep in mind, in fact, that such situations described by Benelli arise when the school succeeds in leveraging the intrinsic motivation of the student, that is, in what is determined by internal stimuli (values, expectations, interests, etc.). This motivation can only be cultivated if the school environment is able to create contexts in which it is possible to support, in a personalised way, the learning of students and to lead them towards a greater perception of themselves as beings progressively capable of learning (Ricchiardi & Torre, 2014); this condition that the school in prison has not been able to produce, especially in the alternation of in-person-schools and schools-at-a-distance that has, however, made it even more difficult to build an authentic educational relationship.

These elements help to validate the idea, found in many studies, including that of Benelli herself (2009, p. 41), of rethinking the entire school system in prison in a more autonomous perspective than the "conventional" school system. In addition, it is necessary to rethink and redesign teacher training (Decembrotto, 2020), especially in terms of skills, attitudes and empathic support skills.

3. Re-thinking and re-designing prison schooling contexts

The school in prison context is conceivable as a space of re-signification, of re-design, a place, understood precisely in the physical sense, in which interpersonal relationships can be rethought through processes of rediscovery of the other. For this place to be functional and effective, it is necessary to design new narrative paths, where it is possible to take yourself further, re-narrate yourself (Lizzola, 2019). It is clear that to make this possible, it is necessary to focus on the teacher's specific psychological and communicative skills (Di Rienzo & Maurizio, 2020). In fact, Lizzola (2019) highlights that these skills do not concern the disciplinary fields themselves, but it is the know-how of these disciplines, taken in a unitary context, *vehicle* through which to question experiences, and to present new and unexpected perspectives (p. 158). This is only possible if teachers think of themselves as a united group in order to design re-educational pathways to develop skills that can be used over the course of one's life, *lifelong learning* (Di Profio, 2016, p.38).

From this perspective, rethinking didactic work means considering the action of professionalism called to work together in designing by using didactic methods and methodologies capable of preferring narrative forms of self and, likewise, capable of bringing out the same concrete utility of the skills acquired and to be acquired. This means that teachers are called upon to design, using the full potential of interdisciplinary teaching, annual plans that respond to the training needs of students and that give them a unified vision of knowledge. Thinking about an educational design of this type involves renewing the same way in which it is designed within a very specific context, not once and for all at the beginning of the year and for individual disciplines, but as best suited to the design of the first school cycle: periodically, setting the objectives in the short, medium and long term; monitoring the trend and making the necessary corrections. It is about working collectively to make the school environment a real laboratory of active skills, in which both the skills of teachers and those of students can be put to work.

The educational space, therefore, must become, in a socio-constructivist perspective, a promoter of competence, freedom of self-expression, critical attitude and the exercise of divergent thought. The only way to ensure that this environment can be recreated, especially in training contexts in prison, is to shift the *focus* on those disciplines that characterise the individual courses of study of secondary education and allow the other disciplines to be able to connect to them, through interdisciplinarity. In fact, allowing students to create, shape, design and redesign, using the knowledge made available, gives them the opportunity to rediscover themselves as factual and authentic agents of the surrounding world.

Every self-respecting laboratory context is a collaborative and cooperative environment capable of developing interpersonal skills: thinking positively placed in a context together with others and not necessarily in isolation; feeling part of a whole, always interconnected with the other; accepting otherness as a resource, because it carries a cultural, generational diversity, of thought, of enriching perspective. All these skills are fundamental for students, as they allow them to re-declare their life projects. This variation in didactic design implies, borrowing the words of Lizzola (2019), an end to the mutation of “maladaptive ways of perceiving the self, others, the world and restructuring intentional capacity” (p. 134).

Besides the more theoretical aspect, knowing that this topic is far from exhaustive, it is necessary to confront some operational aspects. The first is closely connected with the educational dimension itself: the school in prison is still an educational institution and as such is called to respond to a set of learning “parameters” which are defined at the national level; this involves objectives which must be achieved in order to certify the achievement of skills and which also refer to the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge. The Ministerial Guidelines for secondary education courses have guidelines to follow depending on the type of institution, some of which are defined as “essential”. However, these should not be considered as action *blocks* to the didactic design, therefore they do not limit the field of action in the perspective thus far examined. This is demonstrated by the introduction of the transversal discipline of Civic Education which has certainly placed the teaching component above the need to design in synergy. This *modus operandi* can also be used for the design of didactic activities in the disciplinary daily life, although it remains desirable (Decembrotto, 2020) that the school in prison reaches a degree of autonomy such as to have its own Indications and Guidelines to guarantee the educational success of the students. In fact, this recognition would bring with it – as already stated – a review of the training path of teachers especially with regard to the psychological, pedagogical and special and inclusive teaching area. In prison, the school actually needs teachers who are more specialised and aware of their role as relational models and agents of change.

This last point would, among other things, avoid the risk that the teacher in prison may not have sufficient reasons to activate the same teaching-learning process, which is psychologically driven to develop a degree of inepititude in the face of such an educational experience. Taking for granted that the teacher is satisfied with having a strong teaching experience, as complex as that of prison schools and that they perceive it as highly formative and they are therefore motivated, is a mistake. There are many contexts in which teachers do not choose to teach in prison, just as there are many cases in which teachers accept teaching in prison convinced of the reduction of workload. Teachers in prison, on the other hand, need a different *toolbox* that is not simpler than that provided in other schools. Understanding this already means setting ourselves on the path of re-signification.

4. From an interdisciplinary perspective: knowing how to influence

The other operational aspect to complete the examination proposed so far, which cannot be ignored, has a purely exemplary character. It is first appropriate to remember that, consistent with what has been argued, it is not possible to propose an exhaustive interdisciplinary vision while remaining in a singular perspective. However, it is always possible to propose thematic ideas to allow, subsequently, design by “filling” the content gaps that arise. Precisely because the interdisciplinary perspective brings with it a positive logic of *influences*, it does not seem improper to present an example of a design path on the *Stories of influence*. The latter theme lends itself to being treated in a dual way: in the negative sense of influence, allowing an analysis of the current context, both with the pandemic and the social perspective of (presumed) threat to cultural identity, thus proposing the examination of issues inherent to the teaching of Civic Education; in the positive sense, starting from this last point, which certainly initiates reflection on the interweaving of uses and customs in a multicultural perspective, allowing to shift

the centre of gravity – as has been repeatedly stated – on the disciplines characterising the direction of studies. In fact, considering the different approaches of secondary school, it is possible to decline the theme in a plurality of fields and factors: from the artistic to the culinary, up to that of the care of the territory.

It could, therefore, induce students to think and design ways of positively influencing in an intercultural and multicultural perspective and, likewise, to limit, through the dimension of the cure itself, the negative aspect deriving from chemical, environmental, health contamination, etc. Designing interdisciplinary educational paths of this type means putting together different theoretical resources, analysing good practices, bringing ideas on the creation of engaging and motivating educational products through the activation of different disciplinary laboratories. It is now the classroom itself, in fact, which must be considered a disciplinary laboratory, according to the so-called *educational avant-gardes* (Indire, 2016).

Paths like this guarantee the continuation of learning processes even in IDD or simply DL contexts, dealing with the numerous problems mentioned above. In fact, the fact that the didactic pivot is placed in the workshop classroom allows, where the activities are present, the thematic didactic path to be continued without hindrance, keeping the commitment and motivation to learn at a high level. This is because each portion of the course, even of a purely cognitive nature, would be considered by students as fundamental to continue the didactic project. In the circumstances in which the same activities are carried out in DL mode, on the other hand, the presence of disciplinary teachers would guarantee the continuation of the path, using methodologies such as that of the *flipped classroom* for the project activity.

This last possibility calls into question a factor that has hitherto been placed between the lines, but which will be demonstrated here, namely that of responsibility. Recalling responsibility towards one's own learning process, which in a prison environment is also re-education, involves thinking of students as active subjects in all phases of learning itself, not only from the point of view of teachers, but also and above all from the point of view of students. Indeed, it is precisely the assumption of responsibility that makes it responsible, as it recalls the dimension of trust in oneself and in others, an important invitation to fill a place other than that of abjection, a place from which one can tell their story again. It is only by grasping and fully understanding the educational and training challenge underlying the school in prison that it is possible to build contexts in which the school is a catalyst for re-creating forces, capable of allowing the development of the *soft skills* that are fundamental for reformulating a life project. From this perspective, the school in prison becomes itself a “contaminant” of life.

Notes

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Learning from inside: a double view of prison schools

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Keywords

Prison, Adult Education, Student Voice, Critical Pedagogy

Abstract

The article analyses prison school from two points of view: that of a group of experts and that of the detained students. The two points of view are compared to describe a choral reflection, in which the strengths and issues within the system are shown and possible improvement strategies are suggested.

1. Introduction

The school in prison presents itself as a multifaceted system. As it might be easy to guess, in fact, it has peculiarities that make it a complex system, more complex than schools on the “outside” because it is marked by an essential characteristic: the detention condition of students. This assumption has an impact on the entire system: the environment, the parties involved, the rules, educational *setting*, relational aspects, teaching.

An accurate reflection on the school in prison cannot, therefore, ignore the involvement of heterogeneous professional figures, capable of bringing their own personal contribution to the overall vision. This picture, however, assumes substance and truthfulness where it is integrated from the point of view of those who are the reason for the school in prison: the detained students.

In this work, therefore, two different perspectives are integrated.

The gaze of the experts emerges from the reflections collected in the volume “Learning inside. The school in prison” edited by the author together with Aldina Arizza and Corrado Cosenza and which is part of the series “Folded notebooks”. The “Folded notebooks” are drawn up by the Research, Experimentation and Development Centre in collaboration with the Lombardy CPIA network with the aim of documenting the teaching experiences carried out in Lombardy, coordinating with the university system and providing an operational tool to those working in adult education.

The point of view of the detained student is instead presented through the results of research conducted in the II Detention Facility in Milan Bollate which, following the *Student Voice* pedagogical approach made the detained students protagonists of an exploratory study.

2. The experts' point of view: Learning Inside – “Folded Notebooks”

The volume “Learning inside. The school in prison”, published in January 2020 in the series “Quaderni spiegazzati” (Folded notebooks), is the product of research that lasted almost two years and that involved a group of teachers working in prisons in Lombardy and who come from CPIAs and secondary schools in the region, in collaboration with the Regional School Offices and with representatives of the Lombardy academic world. The objective was to examine the school in prison, its strengths and issues, observing it from various points of view.

The activity began in the form of *brainstorming* by the group of teachers around the focus of the school in prison, and then structured in a progressive reorganisation of ideas that materialised in the form of a notebook.

To these were added the contributions from academics engaged in research activities on the subject: Prof. Ivo Lizzola (University of Bergamo), Prof. Filippo Giordano (Bocconi University of Milan) and Prof. Luisa Zecca (University of Milan, Bicocca). A further point of view was offered by *dott.ssa* Catia Taraschi, of the Provision for the

Prison Administration of Lombardy and *dott.* Corrado Cosenza, regional contact for Adult Education at the Lombardy Regional School Office. The reflection is organised into five thematic areas: the value of the school in prison, pedagogical reflections, good teaching practices, school diaries, regulations.

The work is therefore multifaceted both with respect to the topics covered and with respect to the authors involved who, with the variety of their points of view, have conferred wealth and depth to the analysis of the topic.

3. The students' point of view: field research

The students' point of view was collected through field research conducted by the author in collaboration with Prof. Luisa Zecca of the University of Milan, Bicocca at the II Detention Facility in Milan Bollate in the 2015/2016 school year.

The research was inspired by the *Student Voice* pedagogical movement, launched in the 1990s in countries such as Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States and promoting the active participation of students in education discourses. *Student Voice* supports the impossibility of developing truly effective change and innovation in education without the active involvement of every stakeholder, including the students themselves. The movement was therefore started in response to the classic vision of students as clean slates, vases to be filled, personalities to be kept under control, proposing, on the contrary, an idea of active students, authors and builders of their own knowledge and of their future as citizens. Student participation is interpreted by *Student Voice* not as a simple statistical resource or for documentary purposes, but as a form of active involvement, recognition and enhancement of students' potential, legitimisation of their opinions (Grion & Cook-Sather, 2013). In the context of the school in prison, this type of research has therefore represented a proposal for the experience of democracy in prison (Zecca & La Fortuna, 2018).

The research conducted was qualitative, using the in-depth interview tool, based on a conversational model (Mortari, 2010) and structured into four broad thematic areas: a description of the student's experience, motivations and expectations with respect to the school in prison, strengths and weaknesses detected based on their experience, proposals for improvement.

The sample consisted of six inmate students attending the "Paolo Frisi" Professional Institute for Food and Wine and Hospitality, where I work as a teacher of mathematics.

The criterion was to represent the greatest heterogeneity with respect to the factors that I felt could influence the perception of the school in prison: age and end of sentence.

	Under 35	35-50 years	Over 50
End of short sentence (≤ 5 years)	Manuel – 26 anni, fine pena 2021	Simone – 35 anni, fine pena 2017	Pietro – 51 anni, fine pena 2020
End of long sentence (> 5 years)	Giovanni – 24 years, end of sentence 2024	Yuri – 39 years, end of sentence 2027	Ciro – 63 years, end of sentence 2028

Table 1. Students interviewed

The interviews lasted about one hour each and were transcribed and analysed according to a bottom-up process, recursively identifying some thematic and conceptual categories (Zecca & La Fortuna, 2018).

4. Themes discussed

The main thematic area on which both experts and students focused was that of the *value and meaning attributed to school in prison*.

During the interviews several interpretations emerged, among which many common views stand out.

The most widespread is the idea of school as a tool for accessing culture, to which students recognise a broader role than the simple path to obtaining a degree. The school is interpreted as an opportunity to open up to new worlds, an aspect considered fundamental in a detention regime. Thanks to school, new practices, talents and passions can be discovered that were never encountered before:

"I'm slowly falling in love with culture, also because I do other things: I write, I write poetry, I do theatre. I discovered culture in here, and that's not a bad thing. A prisoner needs, more than anything else, to get out of prison parameters: you start writing, reading and acquiring other news, other information and that's nice" (Yuri).

This aspect is also highlighted by experts: Cosenza (2020) highlights the power of culture in activating forms of emotional resonance and learning useful to improve the prisoner's living conditions. School, together with other cultural activities, gives the tools needed to rethink one's existence, as well as for the improvement of the detention situation.

As Lizzola (2020) observes, the school offers the detained student words, images, narratives and thoughts that can become a means to convey pain and suffering. It can also happen that the school becomes an amplifier of this suffering, but the merit must be recognised for channelling it towards forms of expression other than those usually experienced in the prison context (depression, drug use, violence).

The same legislator attributes a dual role to education in prison: professional training and cultural training, both aimed at the social reintegration of the convicted person (Taraschi, 2020). The role of education in prison, in fact, has been greatly enhanced with the penitentiary system launched in 1975 and reformed in 2018, which assigns the school a fundamental role for re-socialisation and identifies it as an essential aspect of re-education.

Much of the students' reflection then focuses on the relationship with teachers, perceived as people from outside with whom to establish a constructive bond, made up of "friendship", "family", "open" relationships.

"With you teachers there is a relationship that I am familiar with because there is a lot of reciprocal respect... we could even find ourselves drinking a coffee together in the kitchen or eating something together. It is socially good for us" (Yuri).

As Cosenza (2020) observes, the presence of teachers alone is significant for the school experience of the prisoner, as it represents an opportunity to access new worlds. The teacher is for the students an "other" figure, different from those who populate the penitentiary institution and therefore able to offer a new point of view. The teacher also represents the person who, through their work, relates to the student as a person and not as an offender.

Invited to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the school in prison, students and experts have identified common categories, and then go on to develop proposals for solving critical issues.

The first aspect evaluated by the students was that of teaching, distinguishing two thematic areas: content and methodologies.

The content covered in the course of study was considered by students to be appropriate to the outgoing professional profile and the treatment of content that is not only professional but oriented towards cultural enri-

chment and human growth (Zecca & La Fortuna, 2018). All this represented a further confirmation of a wider perception of school, understood as an experience of enrichment and exploration of new worlds.

This interpretation is strongly supported by Lizzola (2020) who suggests “the need to rediscover materials as an adventure of the human, to take them up in their epistemological statute again, to grasp languages as a new experience of oneself and of the world” (p.32).

Observations on didactic methodologies highlight a criticism by students of the lesson conducted through the simple reading of the textbook. In fact, the students consider it ineffective from the point of view of involvement and highlight the need for the teacher to provide the information necessary for a correct interpretation of the text, often missing due to basic cultural deficiencies:

“The history professor comes and stands there without looking at the book and tells you, makes you understand...But if he tells you to read: you don't know what nationalism is, what populism is... you can't have us read the book as it is. I am either already cultured and therefore interpret it in the right way, or, if I do not know what nationalism or what populism is and you do not explain it to me, then I read, but I did not understand the situation at the time well” (Ciro).

A suggestion in this sense is provided by Cosenza (2020) who proposes to the teacher in prison the tool of individual/coaching explanation, in which the teacher clarifies the doubts to the individual student, listening to their needs and following their learning rhythms. Often, in fact, the adult student struggles to admit some of their shortcomings or difficulties, fearing the judgment of their classmates. This emotional discomfort is amplified in the prison context where everyone wears a mask for safety and self-control.

The students' reflection then extends to the criticism of the front-facing lesson in general, considered boring and ineffective. The passive approach, according to the interviewees, should be replaced with a more dialogical approach (Zecca & La Fortuna, 2018, pp. 452-453):

“I like the student's involvement, making them talk, asking them to talk, intervening.[...] it is better to read a piece and then have a debate about it. One says “in my opinion it is so”, everyone has their say. The debate is fun” (Manuel).

Lizzola (2020) resumes this reflection, defining repetition and transmission as disastrous. He therefore suggests making the school “a complex place, a place to self-test, of recognition thanks to the other and to diversity [...]. Learning from one another, in a community of life and experience” (p. 24).

Finally, the students reflect on the opportunity to resort to teaching that is closely connected to reality and experience, not too theoretical and that makes use of situations close to the prisoners' experience:

“So if you say “How can you earn?”, people are more motivated. I've seen it, you know, even personally because it's more fun and then you learn on the field. [...] less theoretical. I liked this” (Manuel).

This reflection is certainly confirmed in the theories on adult learning: adults learn when they feel the need and only if they recognise the usefulness and meaning of the education path they are living (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2016). The adult student must also be recognised as a bearer of experience that, suitably valued, can become a starting point for the education path, conducted through reflection on it and comparison with the experiences of others. It is an approach oriented more to contextualisation than to transmission, in search of knowledge starting from experience (La Fortuna, 2020).

This approach is also supported by legislation: the Guidelines of 12/03/2015 speak of “enhancement of the cultural and professional heritage of the person starting from the reconstruction of their individual history” (Cosenza, 2020, p. 57).

Educational reflections have inevitably led students to critically evaluate the characteristics of the teacher in prison, based on their experience.

The tendency of teachers to adapt to the rhythm of students is very appreciated, explaining unclear concepts several times and constantly monitoring learning: “Teachers are quite good, that is... they help you enough because they adapt according to your experience. They adapt to us, not us to them” (Pietro). However, there is a demand for greater rigidity on the part of teachers, the habit of demanding something more from students (Zecca & La Fortuna, p.449). The teacher should demand more, precisely because the school in prison should be like the one “outside”: a demanding system.

“I mean, it’s nice to come to school...But school should... you teachers should also be a little more demanding so as to understand what you have transmitted to me. If I copy something, how do you know I’ve actually learned it? On the outside you demand that one learns, otherwise you give them a bad grade. In this environment, I think it could do with a little more rigidity” (Ciro).

The teacher is therefore faced with a continuous and tiring search for balance, oscillating between being attentive to the needs of the individual student detained and the protection of their institutional role, which must never be lost so as not to generate disorientation (Cosenza, 2020).

To be able to work in such a complex situation, the teacher in prison is required to have various skills: cultural and psycho-pedagogical, technical-professional, methodological-educational and research, relational (Benelli, 2012).

It goes without saying that these skills can only be acquired through targeted training, which accompanies and guides the prison teacher in their daily work. Interesting, to this end, was the activity of collecting and analysing the training needs of prison teachers conducted by a group of researchers from the University of Milan, Bicocca. Through two focus groups in which teachers working in some state prisons in Lombardy participated, multiple aspects were detected on which to reflect to build training paths, which can be grouped into two macro-areas: orientation and support of the student detained in their course of study, acquisition of didactic skills aimed at the realisation of flexible and personalised interventions (De Michele, Giroldi, La Fortuna & Zecca, 2020). The study led to the design and implementation of the Higher Education Course “Teaching in prison” provided at the University of Milan, Bicocca in two subsequent editions (academic year 2019/2020 and academic year 2020/2021).

Among the critical issues reported by students and shared by experts, important organisational issues emerged. First of all, the theme of the discontinuity of training courses is highlighted, due to transfers and changes of prison regime (Zecca & La Fortuna, 2018, p. 451). The students interviewed all had experiences in at least two different prison schools. Many of them, in fact, had found themselves having to interrupt the school year several times, having to start again later. Emblematic is the experience of Manuel who had to attend the third grade three times before getting his qualification, as he was constantly transferred to other institutions during the year:

“I did three years of middle school because I was interrupted by the trials, in fact I did 6 months – 6 months – 6 months...then when I left and returned, the second time I enrolled there were just three guys. The others had already finished. Just us three fools are left. We had to start studying again” (Manuel).

Often the transfer takes place in institutions in which there is not the same type of school and this determines the interruption of the path. The problem of discontinuity also occurs in the event of a change of detention regime. On the subject of discontinuity, the legislator gave answers through rules, regulations and protocols (Italian Presidential Decree 263/2012, the Guidelines on adult lifelong learning of 2015, the Italian Legislative Decrees of December 2018 on the penitentiary system, the Prison Regulations of 2000, the MIUR-MG Memoranda of Understanding). There are also useful tools for the reconstruction of the prisoner's school career and the certification of the skills acquired, able to accompany them in their transfers (Individual Training Pact, Credit Recognition System) (Cosenza, 2020, p. 65). Knowing and using these resources jointly (school and prison) would guarantee the detained student a training course that is as continuous and smooth as possible.

The other critical point, in the students' opinion, is the reconciliation between study and work. The need to work is often badly reconciled with school schedules, leading the student to have to choose between the two opportunities. Obviously, economic needs often lead to preferring work to school (Zecca & La Fortuna, 2018). Therefore, a work of comparison and collaboration between the two administrations (school and prison) is necessary in order to develop organisational measures that make the needs of both institutions compatible.

There are suggestions for good practice in this respect. Take, for example, the pilot project carried out in the Bergamo prison to create a course to obtain a European ECDL licence. The project was based on flexibility in terms of:

- Time slot: the course was held in the afternoon/evening (16.15-18.15) to avoid the usual overlap with non-derogable activities
- Calendar: the lessons covered a period of time between February and the end of July, thus "filling" a part of the summer period notoriously characterised by the complete absence of activity
- Tools: the need to have the network for the final test (administered directly by the entity) was addressed by setting up an external server capable of communicating with PCs programmed for the purpose on the agreed dates. From the latter, data was transmitted to the examination stations through an intranet that does not communicate with the outside world (Agostinelli, 2020).

This demonstrates how careful joint planning by the two institutions can lead to the resolution of organisational problems related to time, space and instrument factors.

5. Conclusions

The analysis of the school from a double point of view presents unprecedented depth, since the themes and peculiarities of the context are identified in a detailed and precise way and examined from various points of view. A methodological approach that connects experts with service users, from a *Student Voice* perspective, is therefore effective both in identifying critical issues and in developing possible solutions.

This methodology also has the merit of accompanying the detained student in an experience of problematising education, in the sense attributed by the Brazilian pedagogue, Paulo Freire. Abandoning the idea of education as a simple transmission of notions, Freire proposes a model of education based on dialogue, on the problematisation of reality, on the acquisition of the awareness of being able to change the world. Man is thus removed from fatalism, from pessimism, from the feeling of helplessness in the face of his own destiny. For this reason his masterpiece, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968/1972), represents a message of hope, which becomes even more significant when pertaining to a student in prison.

Notes

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Developing entrepreneurial skills for the present and future of young adults through entrepreneurship education: good practices in comparison¹

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Keywords

Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship Education, Good Practices

Abstract

The article addresses the theme of entrepreneurship education, which in recent years has begun to play an increasingly important role in the pedagogical-educational debate at the international level (European Commission, 2016; Lackéus, 2015) and at the Italian level (Morselli, 2016). The two good practices, presented in a comparative key, have the purpose of reflecting on the construct of entrepreneurship in its dimension of personal development and acquisition of life skills (Boffo, 2018a).

1. Introduction

The current historical situation raises important questions for the future of education and training. What challenges will adult learning face? What will the trends in formal, non-formal and informal education be?

The constructs of *entrepreneurship* and *entrepreneurship education* are playing an increasingly important role at the international level in response to these questions. In fact, developing skills aimed at innovation and value creation becomes increasingly important to keep up with a rapidly evolving and constantly changing world.

The definition adopted at the European level of the aforementioned constructs is based on research by the Danish Foundation for Entrepreneurship which defines entrepreneurship education as: "Content, methods and activities supporting the creation of knowledge, skills and experiences that make it possible for students to initiate and participate in entrepreneurial value creating processes" (Moberg et al., 2012, p.14). This definition is based on the concept of entrepreneurship defined by the authors themselves: "Entrepreneurship is when you act upon opportunities and ideas and transform them into value for others. The value that is created can be financial, cultural, or social" (p.14).

Since 2006, the European Commission has included entrepreneurship among the key competences for lifelong learning. Starting from this date, entrepreneurship education has been considered strategic for the development of the potential of European citizens who, in addition to generating ideas and translating them into opportunities, "develop a new awareness of themselves and experiment with new ways of interpreting and interacting with the world" (De Marco, 2020, p. 144).

There have been many actions and communications from the Commission on this up to the most recent Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (2020). Among them, the EntreComp model (Bacigalupo et al., 2016) deserves special mention for the definition of a shared European framework, in which the players involved in the paths of entrepreneurship education can recognise themselves through a common language.

The educational perspective on these issues allows us to highlight their primary role in promoting a proactive culture, which makes young adult citizens able to act and transform ideas into opportunities, into shared value and keep the future in their hands (McCallum et al, 2018).

Entrepreneurship education is therefore a theme that questions pedagogical theories from new perspectives and that is based on learning by doing (Dewey, 1899) and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984).

The training approaches (Lackéus, 2015, p. 10) within which *entrepreneurship education* is usually classified are *teaching about*, a theoretical approach aimed at acquiring knowledge for a general understanding of the phenomenon; *teaching for*, oriented to the acquisition of knowledge and skills from an employment perspective and *teaching through*, based on an experiential and *embedded* approach. The latter, in particular, is the basis of the two good practices presented, as the ultimate aim is the acquisition of skills.

The article therefore presents two entrepreneurship education programmes, describing their context, objectives, learning outcomes and target. The two good practices are then analysed, in a comparative key, providing an analysis of the similarities and differences between them.

2. The Skills Map service of the Career Service of the University of Florence

The Career Service of the University of Florence represents a centre of fundamental importance in building the employability of students, graduates, PhD students and research students at the University of Florence.

The current structure, the result of numerous years of interdisciplinary research (Boffo, 2018) on the construct of employability (Yorke & Knight, 2006) and on the models of Career Service at the international level, is divided into four lines of action: Career Education, Training at work, Meetings with companies and Entrepreneurship development.

A Skills Map is among the services of the first line dedicated to Career Education. This line aims to accompany the development of awareness in the construction of the career project of each student, new-graduate and graduate, strengthening transversal skills through workshops, laboratories and seminars.

The service started in October 2018, as a result of a research path on the career design models of Irish and US universities in recent years (Terzaroli, 2019), and, since then, a total of 36 editions have been carried out in which 1,137 students took part.

Since April 2020, as a result of the health emergency, the service has been re-designed and transferred entirely online with the support of the *Meet* platform and the *GSuite Jamboard* tool. This led to 12 online editions involving 300 participants.

A Skills Map is configured as an eight-hour workshop, conducted by two facilitators, which aims to support students in acquiring awareness of their future professional paths in an entrepreneurial way.

The service aims to accompany the reflection in terms of value proposition (Moberg et al, 2014), which students can offer within the world of work, and training proposal to reflect on personal and professional needs, wishes and objectives (Burnett & Evans 2016), working on transversal skills such as entrepreneurship, communication and proactivity.

The tool used by the workshop is the Personal Business Model Canvas (Clark, Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2012), which represents a translation from the original model of the Business Model Canvas (Osterwalder & Clark, 2010), used in the economic field. This tool makes it possible to explain, through a scheme composed of nine blocks, the value that each student can offer to the labour market (*personal value proposition*). The latter, marked by great transformations, pushes people to review their career plans continuously. Therefore, identifying and analysing the way in which each student operates and the wealth of knowledge and skills they possess, becomes essential to be able to adapt to the numerous changes.

The Personal Business Model Canvas (Clark, Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2012) places the person at the centre in a 360-degree way, starting from a reflection on one's personal sphere (interests, abilities and personality) up to an analysis of what the subject possesses in terms of knowledge, experiences, personal and professional contacts, and tangible and intangible resources.

The workshop begins with an analysis of the needs, which aims to explain the expectations of the participants. The keywords most used by students are awareness, concreteness, clarity and deepening. These words express the difficulties of students in knowing the possible employment opportunities and the need to concretely map the labour market to which they will have to turn to. Therefore, the need to develop greater self-awareness and self-efficacy towards future professional projects.

Following an introduction on labour market transformations and the illustration of reference methods and tools (Clark, Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2012; Burnett & Evans, 2016), the educational structure is divided into 30-minute sessions following a pattern that is repeated from time to time: stimulus demand; exercise; individual work; sharing and discussion in plenary (Terzaroli, 2019). The exercises are aimed at highlighting the key points to be inserted within the respective canvas blocks.

The path suggested by the proposed exercises is divided into two main parts. The first part includes a reflection on the personal dimension, exploring one's own priorities, the network of people (networks) to which one can refer and the skills acquired, thanks to mapping the experiences gained in formal, non-formal and informal contexts. The guiding question is "Where do I start?" (Burnett & Evans, 2016), for this reason the first part focuses on the development of awareness about their experiences and the lessons learned from them, which can then be highlighted in the active job search phase with their CV, cover letter and during the selection interview.

The second part focuses on the world of work and, more specifically, on the real organisational contexts in which students can integrate with their educational background. The guiding question is "For whom do I create value?". In order to give a meaningful answer, the exercises propose a work of segmentation of the *target* groups that constitute the potential contexts for job searches. Segmentation represents a first map with which to be able to orientate yourself in your reference labour market, which is enriched thanks to the stimuli of further exercises, with the description of the activities that are carried out for each target group and with a "feasibility analysis of the matching between the capacity of the subject and the demands of the world of work" (Terzaroli, 2019).

In the final part of the workshop, some summary exercises are proposed to define each student's value proposition, which explains the desired career projects. The latter is transcribed and formulated in the *elevator pitch*, a brief personal presentation in which you can highlight your objectives and personal aspects of uniqueness, thus constituting the final result of the workshop.

The service presented here, therefore, is part of the experiences of entrepreneurship education in Higher Education. This service promotes the acquisition of many of the entrepreneurial skills that fall within the *EntreComp* model (Bacigalupo et al., 2016), thanks to the adoption of the teaching through entrepreneurship approach (Lackéus, 2015). In particular, the training activities mainly emphasise the acquisition of skills such as self-awareness and self-efficacy, working with others, vision, creativity (being curious and open and developing ideas), recognising opportunities, learning from experience, planning and management and taking the initiative.

3. Yo-Co Lead Programme

The Yo-Co Lead Programme (Jo.Co Programme in Spanish) is a non-formal educational and mentoring programme for young people from Latin America and Europe to become aware and resilient in their personal and professional lives.

The programme was devised by the AMARNA Vida academy⁵, located in Portugal, in collaboration with the NGO Seres⁶ of Guatemala. Both organisations have worked internationally within projects focused on supporting young people in non-formal education systems. "Education should be seen not as confined to formal schooling but as taking place through a variety of learning non-formal education, informal education and the transmission of local and indigenous knowledge and values" (UNESCO, 2009, p. 108).

Developing leadership competency brings with it the goal of engaging and training young Latin Americans and Europeans who are aware of and able to address the difficult challenges facing vulnerable communities; providing a space and platform where young leaders can increase their strengths, build key relationships, and develop knowledge, skills, and resources for learning and regenerative action.

The methodologies used are based on active learning (Bonwell & Eison, 1991), on *learning by doing* (Dewey, 1951) and on the foundations of *learning to know*, *learning to do*, *learning to live together* and *learning to be* (UNESCO, 2006).

These methodologies focus on a critical, creative and responsible involvement within society, to work on the construction of a personal and collective path in a conscious and resilient way creating value for young people, for their cities and for the members of their community; according to the principle of *learning by creating value* (Lackéus, 2015, p. 11).

The Yo-Co Lead programme, conducted and facilitated in Spanish, lasts 45 hours and extends over 10 months, to which one month is added in specific contexts where there is no access to the internet. Participants are divided into groups of 20 young people, mainly from rural and indigenous backgrounds, aged between 15 and 30. The programme is structured to provide in-person and remote interactions, leveraging technology as an opportunity. During the programme, emotional, social and professional skills are developed, included in the EntreComp model (Bacigalupo et al., 2016) such as learning through experience, working with others, planning and management, creativity, vision, ethical and sustainable thinking, motivation and perseverance, self-awareness and self-efficacy.

The Yo-Co Lead programme supports the development of each young leader by responding to their needs, supporting trainers from different areas with a professional coach who acts as a mentor. In addition, it provides participants with resources, skills and a community of young people with whom to interact to deepen their knowledge of the contexts and how to become conscious and sustainable leaders and entrepreneurs with a global perspective. The Yo-Co Lead programme is implemented in four phases. The first phase lasts ten hours and is entitled, "Online training and building trust". Within this phase, specialists and trainers work on issues such as vocation, aspirations, orientation and professional development, self-efficacy, resilience, social awareness and conflict management, emotional intelligence, self-knowledge and self-esteem and, finally, intercultural dialogue.

The second phase, lasting six hours, is called, "Mentoring". During this phase, each participant works in pairs with their coach and is guided by their personal or collective project. Pair work is done remotely, using technologies such as WhatsApp or Zoom.

The third phase lasts eight hours and is dedicated to creating collaborative projects. Participants are involved in a series of sessions aimed at fostering influence and cooperation to create solutions to problems identified by young people and taking into account elements of innovation to build more sustainable communities. All this includes reflection on issues such as creativity and innovation; problem solving; the creation of life projects; and the construction of sustainable communities.

The fourth, and final, phase is dedicated to the implementation of a 21-hour *Bootcamp*. Participants from European and Latin American countries have the opportunity to participate in the *Bootcamp*, which takes place in Guatemala. The objective of this phase is to create a network of conscious and interconnected leaders through education for sustainable development. Added to this are further objectives such as the promotion of entrepreneurial learning and the acquisition of skills in the field of financing and management and in the field of media and information literacy.

Following participation in the four phases, young participants continue to work on personal and professional development opportunities to increase the knowledge, skills and support systems they need to develop as leaders and to make a meaningful contribution to their communities.

4. Good practices in comparison: comparison and interpretation

This section explores, using the comparative method, the implementation of *entrepreneurship education* programmes by comparing two examples of good practices carried out in the context of Higher and Adult Education in Italy and Portugal.

At the methodological level, the comparison started from the identification of nine common categories for both programmes, i.e. the context in which the education activity is carried out, how it is structured and to whom it is addressed, which professionals are involved in the path, which methodologies are used and the tools to support them, what the macro-themes are to which the constructs treated are attributed, and, finally, what the expected training and professional objectives are at the end of the training activity, as well as the skills learned.

Once these categories have been identified, the analysis of the similarities and differences between the two programmes is carried out in order to underline the educational and formative value of which they are bearers and to identify possible integrations and developments.

Some reflections that deserve special attention are given below.

The first difference highlighted by the comparison and visible in Table 1, concerns the different contexts in which the two programmes develop. In fact, universities, as well as non-formal and informal places of education, represent the point of connection between training and society and in this context entrepreneurship education is precisely the challenge to which they are called upon to respond. Here it is important to underline how the connection between young people and local and non-local *stakeholders* is essential as well as supporting it through active methodologies.

An important point of contact lies precisely in the attempt proposed here to understand the different forms in which entrepreneurship expresses itself. In fact, when we talk about entrepreneurship education we refer to an open mindset, to the development of high attitudes to innovation and creativity, but also to the ability of the individual to respond actively to the emerging needs of both a personal and professional nature, as well as of the society in which they live. The main objectives of both programmes, albeit with different approaches, is to enable young adults to identify their own value and to acquire the entrepreneurial skills necessary to develop and master their professional self (Schön, 1987). In this sense, the main *learning outcomes* refer to the possession of a strong mastery of the tools proposed in order to build a wealth of knowledge, skills and competences to meet the demands of the labour market and the local situation.

In conclusion, therefore, one can say that the strength of the Skills Map workshop is represented by the breadth of perspectives offered by the use of the Personal Business Model Canvas, thanks to which the participants are called upon to take the reins of their professional past, present and future. On the other hand, the strength of the *Yo-Co Lead* programme is to allow a more direct link with the challenges of the community that thus become a valuable growth opportunity for the participants.

In line with the theoretical framework proposed here (European Commission, 2020; Bacigalupo et al., 2016), skills such as proactivity, effective communication, critical thinking, creativity, leadership and self-efficacy acquire particular relevance, with a view to developing entrepreneurship.

The comparative analyses has highlighted how such programmes play an important role in the transition path of young adults into the world of work, in connection with local stakeholders. The university and non-formal education contexts constantly accompany and support the creation of a culture of work (Boffo, 2019), which involves

institutions, organisations and societies in order to provide their students - and the people who live in the community - with new tools to re-evaluate their skills and new opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Comparazione tra buone pratiche di Educazione all'imprenditorialità in Italia e Portogallo.		
<i>Categorie</i>	<i>"Skills Map" (Italia)</i>	<i>"Yo-Co Lead" (Portogallo – in collaborazione con il Guatemala)</i>
Contesto della formazione	Formale – Percorso offerto all'interno del Career Service dell'Ateneo fiorentino.	Non formale – Percorso sviluppato in collaborazione tra l'Accademia di Amarna (Portogallo) e l'ONG SERES (Guatemala)
Target	Studenti, laureandi, laureati e dottorandi dell'Università degli Studi di Firenze	Giovani adulti dai 15 ai 30 anni.
Professionisti coinvolti	Due facilitatrici laureate in Educazione degli Adulti e Formazione Continua.	Coach professionista con funzione di mentor e professionisti della comunità
Struttura dell'attività	Workshop di 8 ore in una sola giornata	Corso di 45 ore suddiviso in 4 fasi disteso in un tempo che va da 1 a 10 mesi. L'attività e le tempistiche sono adattabili al programma e alle necessità dei partecipanti.
Metodologia e strumenti	Apprendimento attivo ed esperienziale (utilizzo del Personal Business Model Canvas)	Apprendimento attivo ed esperienziale (implementazione di un Bootcamp).
Tematiche	Vocazione; Orientamento e sviluppo professionale; Strumenti per la ricerca attiva del lavoro (Curriculum Vitae, Lettera di presentazione, LinkedIn etc.); Le trasformazioni del mercato del lavoro e le competenze trasversali.	Vocazione; Orientamento professionale; Sviluppo sostenibile locale; Innovazione e Leadership.
Obiettivi	Sostenere i giovani studenti e laureati nell'acquisizione di consapevolezza circa i propri percorsi e obiettivi personali e professionali. Stimolare una riflessione sul proprio valore e sul proprio potenziale, attraverso un lavoro sulle competenze trasversali possedute e maggiormente richieste dal mercato del lavoro.	Sostenere i giovani nella presa di consapevolezza della loro vita professionale e personale al fine di costruire un set di conoscenze e abilità per affrontare le sfide delle comunità locali.
Risultati di apprendimento	Conoscere e saper utilizzare il Personal Business Model Canvas; Saper riflettere sul proprio percorso di vita professionale; Essere consapevole del valore da poter offrire nel mercato del lavoro; Saper identificare i propri punti di forza e le proprie aree di miglioramento; Saper individuare il target di riferimento; Saper comunicare in modo sintetico ed efficace il proprio valore*	Conoscere le sfide offerte dalle realtà locali al fine di costruire comunità più sostenibili; Generare idee innovative in risposta ai bisogni della comunità; Saper individuare le fasi della progettazione; Costruire una rete di professionisti; Individuare il proprio sviluppo professionale.
Competenze sviluppate	Proattività, comunicazione, intraprendenza, autoconsapevolezza, autoefficacia, pensiero critico.	Proattività, autoefficacia, autoconsapevolezza, resilienza, lavoro in gruppo, gestione dei conflitti, leadership, creatività, pensiero critico.

**Learning outcomes verified by the final activity assessment questionnaire*

Table 1 – Juxtaposition between good practices of entrepreneurship education (prepared by the authors)

5. Conclusions

At the end of this comparative overview, some reflections at the educational and training level are necessary. The comparison of good practices shows the importance of supporting young adults in the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills essential for the transition to adult life and to face the profound current and future transformations,

also deriving from the pandemic. Formal and non-formal educational contexts contribute equally to the achievement of these objectives. Supporting the acquisition of awareness of one's own needs and skills, connecting education more closely to the world of work and involving stakeholders in the area are just some of the courses on which entrepreneurship education programmes will increasingly have to direct their attention. In fact, the ultimate goal must remain the training of young adults for their profession and their life. Education, therefore, is called upon to deal with these issues in order to provide its own perspective, aimed at fostering a culture of innovation that goes in the direction of training people to learn new ways of creating value for themselves, for others and for the world.

Notes

¹ The article, despite being the result of a joint work, is divided as follows: Letizia Gamberi drafted the abstract, the introduction and the 1st section, Debora Daddi drafted the 1st and 3rd sections, Estrella Luna drafted the 2nd section and the conclusions. The bibliographical references have been drawn up together.

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⁵ AMARNA Vida LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/amarnavida> [04/2021].

⁶ NGO Seres <https://www.seres.org/> [04/2021].

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For an ambitious welfare: the HOOD Homeless's Open Dialogue project

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Keywords

Homelessness, Enabling co-planning, Capacity to aspire, Dialogical practices, Disability

Abstract

In September 2020, the Erasmus+ project, "HOOD-Homeless's Open Dialogue", aimed at social workers and homeless people began. Referring to the "capacity to aspire" reflection, the article discusses the project's feasibility assumptions, which aims to adapt the Enabling Co-planning methodology to the approach towards homeless people.

1. Introduction

In September 2020, the three-year Erasmus+ project, "HOOD-Homeless's Open Dialogue", began, which aims to experiment with an innovative methodology for accompanying homeless people³ Homelessness is a phenomenon of growing importance in Europe: FEANTSA⁴, in 2019, estimated that there were at least 700,000 people living on the street or in emergency shelters in the European Union, a number that has grown by 70% over ten years and that could drastically increase due to the pandemic (FEANTSA & Abbé Pierre, 2021). The five HOOD partner countries are affected in different ways by this phenomenon, partly because of the different socio-political dimensions and characteristics of the countries and, last but not least, because of the issues inherent in measuring the phenomenon, which cannot be explored in depth here. According to data shared by FEANTSA⁵, in 2015 in Italy the homeless population comprised of 50,724 people and in Spain, in 2019, between 23,000 and 35,000 people. In Greece there are no official national surveys, but in Attica alone, in 2015, there were 17,720 people living on the streets and 500,000 people suffering from housing insecurity. The research carried out in implementation of the national strategy to combat homelessness in Portugal recorded in 2018 more than 6,000 homeless people, a number that is close to that of Denmark, which estimates around 6,400 people were homelessness in 2019.

Faced with this scenario, HOOD's objective is to develop the necessary adaptations to use the approach of enabling co-planning in the field of homelessness, initiated to accompany the adult life of people with disabilities (Marchisio, 2019). The project involves an initial process of *training on the job* (Haryono, Supardi & Udin, 2020) for the operators involved, who are trained in enabling co-planning through constant supervision of their work. Educational planning for homeless people and the continuous training of professionals working in this field constitute two important areas of Adult Education, which deserve to be deepened from a lifelong learning perspective. In this article, in particular, we will analyse the feasibility assumptions of this adaptation: specifically, the similarities and continuity between the models and systems of taking charge of disability and homelessness. To this end, we will refer to the reflections of the anthropologist, Arjun Appadurai (2011, 2013), on the "capacity to aspire", which in Italy have been found in the work of sociologists, anthropologists and pedagogists who deal with welfare (De Leonardis & Deriu, 2012; De Leonardis, 2011; Porcellana, 2019; Pellegrino, 2019; Morlicchio, 2012). The "capacity to aspire" offers a useful framework to discuss how the extreme poverty inherent in homelessness and the organisation of hospitality services undermine the exercise of this capacity, which enabling co-planning wants to give back and support.

2. Enabling co-planning

Enabling co-planning arises from the search for a meeting method with design purposes between professionals in charge of accompanying adult life, the person with disabilities and their family (Marchisio, 2018). The theoretical and regulatory framework in which we operate is that of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Harpur, 2017). Consequently, enabling co-planning aims to identify strategies, supports and actions to support the unfolding of everyone's area of life, on a basis of equality with other citizens (Griffo, 2019). It includes methods, strategies and functional attitudes to support each individual in their path of full citizenship within society (Kanter, 2014). It is not, therefore, an effective approach if used to define standard interventions or collective activities or even a rigid method with a therapeutic, rehabilitative and educational vocation (Marchisio, 2019). The approach was developed between 2014 and 2016 and has since been experimented with Public Services and private social subjects in four Regions (Piedmont, Lombardy, Tuscany and Valle D'Aosta). This operating mode integrates insights from the dialogical methods of Jakko Seikkula and Tom Arnkil (Arnkil & Seikkula, 2013) and the cultural perspective of Amartya Sen's *capability* approach (2014). The key element of mutual dialogue practices is the redistribution of power between the operator and the person in charge (Guilfoyle, 2003).

This dimension is closely related to the one of the terms that gives the name to the methodology: empowerment. There is no unambiguous definition of the term in literature (Cottino, 2009) that is used to understand concepts that are also very different from each other. The different uses of empowerment, however, recall and intertwine with each other. As part of the reflections on the educational community, Del Gottardo (2016) describes, for example, empowerment as a key element of this form of learning, referring to Luigino Binanti (2014), who, however, defines it as a translation of the concept of *capability* of Amartya Sen (1992). Carlo Donolo's definition of sociological connotation appears, which speaks of it as "the process of functional connection between types of capital" (2007, p. 143). This definition is very close to that of the *Capability Approach* (Sen, 1999) in describing the fact of having a structurally integrated resource with the ability to use it.

Among the wide array of definitions and different uses of the concept, there are two elements that are underlined in a transversal way. The first is the connection with the purposes that the people themselves have: one cannot talk about empowerment if an individual is required, accompanied or induced to pursue goals and objectives defined by others (Marchisio, 2019). This is the reason why enabling co-planning combines dialogue practices (used to stimulate one's image of them in the future and support the development of one's own objectives) and empowerment (so that the person assumes the direction of the life project that derives from it). The second element concerns the fact that empowerment is never considered as an intrinsic characteristic: it is not similar, for example, to resilience, since it does not have a conformation or a given level in the individual, but is structurally and continuously conditioned by external or context factors (Chianese, 2013) that continuously change. The definition of empowerment closest to the use and meaning that this assumes in enabling co-planning is offered by Mao Valpiana (1999) referring to the thoughts of Danilo Dolci: "empowerment is a process in which individuals or communities in a powerless situation learn habits of thought and action that enable them to act for themselves to address their basic needs and embark on a course of development: those who had no power gain it, or rather discover that they always had it."

3. Imagination and the capacity to aspire

"Imagine yourself happy in five years' time." This is the first question that operators involved in HOOD are asking to begin the path of enabling co-planning with homeless people in the trial under analysis. This strategy refers to the anticipatory dialogues (Arnkil, 2018): an operating mode in which the person is asked to "remember the

future”, to place themselves, that is, in a positive future moment and look, from there, backwards, reconstructing which things make life happy at that moment and understanding which choices and which aids led them there (Seikkula, Arnkil & Erikson, 2003).

In previous research experiences, it has emerged, among homeless people, the difficulty in wanting or imagining something for their future. As part of participatory action research interventions aimed at redeveloping hospitality facilities, homeless people involved expressed amazement and emotion at the possibility of expressing their wishes or a serious difficulty in exercising their imagination (Porcellana, 2011; Campagnaro & Porcellana, 2013).

Inspired by Appadurai, Ota de Leonardis (2011) writes that dominance over imagination is the other side of the lost capacity to aspire. The recent production of Appadurai (2011, 2013) focused on the concept of “capacity to aspire”, which refers to the already discussed concept of *capability* of Amartya Sen (2009), considered as an inseparable core of capacity and opportunity. The “capacity to aspire” represents a meta-capacity, constituted by the interweaving with the concrete opportunity to determine the course of one’s existence, which is necessary to imagine a life and a future for ourselves. In Appadurai’s words, it is not something abstract: it is cultural and must be trained with imagination, experimentation and exercise. With an effective metaphor, it is described as a “navigation” that “feeds on the possibility of formulating hypotheses and disputes with respect to the real world and feeds on experiments that develop in people’s imagination, ‘reserves of possible futures’” (2011, p. 23). Navigating, in this sense, consists in cultivating the possibilities of the present, exercising a “practice of possibility” (De Leonardis, 2011). It needs resources to move into the present, tentatively building a desire for the future. Appadurai, who elaborates these reflections from the ethnographic experience with Mumbai’s *slum-dwellers* movements, highlights how the “capacity to aspire” is unevenly distributed in the population. Appadurai writes that the richer a person is “the more likely he is to be aware of the connections between objects, more or less immediate, to which he can aspire. And this is because the richest, by definition, have a more complex experience of the relationships that exist between a wide range of purposes and means, they have greater knowledge of the relationship between aspirations and results and, precisely because of their ample possibilities to put material goods and immediate opportunities in relationships with more general and generic faculties and options, they are in the best position to proceed by attempts and reap the fruits of these different attempts and experiences”. (2011, p.21).

Taking up the metaphor of navigating, the privileged “have had the opportunity to use the rules map more frequently and in a more realistic way to explore the future, and to exchange this knowledge with each other” (2011, p.22). The “capacity to aspire” therefore represents a craft competence, anchored to matter, experience and relationships: it is not an intrinsic skill of the person, nor something that can be “given”. It must be constantly trained to keep it alive and mature. Homeless people – and the poorest and most discriminated against social groups in general – during their lives have few opportunities to train this ability and a more vague and fragmented knowledge of the links between the elements, which are fundamental to progressing towards the desired future.

4. The reduction of voice between companies and services

In Appadurai’s reflection, dissent and objection assume a central role. To aspire to better futures it is essential to be able to think and express an objection towards the status quo and one’s own condition of inequality in the present. This possibility is linked to the dimension of the *voice* (Hirschman, 1970), that is, taking the floor in public, the ability to express oneself in the world, to dispute, debate, to claim one’s own position and to be heard⁶. The voice of the homeless in greater society is extremely limited: suffice it to say that the loss of one’s home makes it impossible to exercise the right to vote. Moreover, unlike other discriminated groups – such as people with

disabilities who rely on family associations – there are no self-organised pressure groups in Italy, committed to building a self-representation of the phenomenon and promoting their interests as a community.

Their voice is weakened by the social reading of homelessness that is widespread in society. In the neoliberal system, the structural dimension of the phenomenon, linked to the functioning of the labour market (Capello, 2020) and the management of real estate (Madden & Marcus, 2020), succumbs in favour of individualised readings, which make the person responsible for their own condition. The “fault” inherent in the social reading of homelessness deprives homeless people of the possibility of having desires, requests, preferences. To the paradigm of guilt, a second reading oriented towards compassion is added, one that animates realities and interventions based on charity and volunteering, far from a conception of law, the beneficiaries can just be grateful. These conceptions have historically permeated the emergence of services aimed at the homeless population and today are traced in the characteristics of the places of reception – gyms, containers, schools previously declared inoperable –, in food donated by citizens or provided by charitable canteens (Porcellana, Stefani & Campagnaro, 2020), sometimes by European policies of distribution of material goods, defined as sets of standard categories. Homeless people are therefore not only speechless in society, often even within social services the terms of recognition work against them. In this sense, it is appropriate to ask whether the disparity of rhetorical capital – defined by Crenshaw (2017) as “the possibility of saying this happened to me and someone cares” – is the cause or consequence of lack of voice. Those who make personal requests within the services risk being considered an element of disturbance, to provoke negative reactions in operators – who have a power with respect to the allocation of resources among users (Leonardi, 2019) – or to see their path drastically interrupted (Porcellana, 2018). The limitation of the voice of the subjects therefore depends in part on the organisational approaches of the social services. In the field of disability, where the enabling co-planning is born, although it is often not explicit that the person is not considered entitled to desire, the logic that governs the interventions remains the biomedical one of the so-called “appropriateness”. The principle of appropriateness requires a doctor, on the basis of their competence and diagnosis, to indicate the actions to be taken, the drugs to be taken and the analyses to be carried out. The same concept is used to define support for an individual’s life path: diagnosis is able to determine what are the correct interventions and what are the existential possibilities. The current orientation of people with disabilities in services is based on a socio-educational version of appropriateness: the assessment of the professional on the subject determines the service or path “suitable” for them. Hence the articulation in projects aimed at people with mild, medium-light, moderate, medium-severe, severe and very serious disabilities, in which the condition of disability is still treated as synonymous with impairment so that it can be defined as “mild” or “severe”.

The principle of appropriateness reappears in the mode of construction of the paths of homeless people. Operators know that they have a limited choice of types of resources to activate for the person – certain dormitories, shared accommodation, an internship carried out in an association – and therefore try to orient them towards the option they consider most suitable for the specific case. In this perspective, redistribution, linked to material resources, is disconnected from the subjectivity of the person and oriented to projects that are confined to the limited frame of possibilities already given by the hospitality system. In this exchange there is no room for the voice of the homeless person or his aspirations. In services that adopt this perspective, the capacity to aspire withers.

5. Towards socio-educational services capable of aspiring

The enabling co-planning adopted by HOOD is therefore developed as an alternative process mode compared to what is described, aimed at stimulating the planning, dreaming and taking over the direction of one’s own life

project. The possibility of this “directing” is linked to a preliminary decision: operators are called upon to decide whether they want to “direct” the future of the person or promote their empowerment so that the person himself, together with those who are important to them, assumes the direction of their own existence. Addressing the future of the other and fostering their empowerment are two alternative procedures: it is not concretely possible in the context of an intervention in the field of adult education to do both (Arnkil, 2003, 2018). In a traditional way, the operator has a series of “lenses” to observe the life of the subject. In some services these lenses take the form of grids on paper, other times they are simply categories of reasoning oriented by the criterion of appropriateness (sometimes operators say that that person “is from a day centre” or that the other “is not from Housing First”). Whether they are rigid grids or usual practices, social workers have tools that puts them in a predictive position towards the life of the person: while collecting information, they automatically formulate hypotheses regarding what would be better for the present or future of the person concerned (Seikkula & Arnkil, 2014). In this position, there is little space to choose the path of empowerment: if the operators know where they want to go and the best way to do it, it does not make sense that they don’t suggest it. Any intervention aimed at predicting and guiding the other, however, reduces the space for developing the capacity to aspire. On the contrary, understanding early intervention aimed at increasing empowerment assumes that the operators put themselves in a dialogical position (Seikkula, Alakare & Aaltonen, 2001): they renounce the idea of knowing the better solution and put themselves in a position not of orientation, but of support. Only in this way can the individual be sustained to imagine the desired future. In fact, it takes shape in people’s minds if they are allowed the space to do so.

Within the services, often the words of homeless people are not heard, they are not required, they are denied, contradicted, pathologised. At best, they are reinterpreted by professionals, translated into technical jargon or a meaningful sphere consistent with the functioning of the service system, redirected towards objectives, opinions and positions that seem more accessible and realistic to operators. Describing the individual as always part of their own network, starting from their own words, without translating them into technical language allows for the integration, from the start of the authentic encounter, of development of self-description in their own world, establishing themselves as the first powerful tool of empowerment.

This, for social professionals, involves on the one hand a distance from the aforementioned professional culture of appropriateness, which limits the voice of people and hinders the ability to aspire. On the other hand, it requires reflection on the effects of fragmentation of services in terms of de-responsibility of the individual service or operator (Saraceno, 2019). Faced with requests of this kind, the cooperative claims that they would change organisation, but it is the Municipality that does not adapt the governmental tools; the Municipality says that they would change procedures but it is the ASL that won’t finance the new system; the PO says that it is the director’s fault, the directors say they don’t have the mandate from the Councillors, and the Councillors say that it is the cooperative that does not want to change. And so the chain of “*we should tell...*” begins. “*We should tell the school,*” says the subject who wants to work for inclusion, “*we should tell the companies!*” says the manager of the Start-up Centre, “*we should tell the Region!*” they all say in chorus. This mechanism reveals two elements. On the one hand, it accounts for a widespread feeling of helplessness among operators, incredibly transversal with respect to the organisational position held and the type of problem which is being dealt with. It looks like change is somewhere else, that it is up to others to decide. The feeling of helplessness that social workers feel in the face of the efforts of the people they come into contact with also extends to the organisational level, becoming a generalised “*we can’t do anything about it*”. On the other hand, perhaps more severely, we observe that this game speaks of a lack of taking responsibility: the service and the operators frequently tend to see themselves as external to the social system, as if the distance between the full enjoyment of civil and social rights by the people

that are being helped and what is done in the services does not concern them, but it is always up to someone else in the system. This de-responsibility sometimes remains within the system of services, sometimes it also bounces outside: it is said that operators would do something different, but society is not ready, companies do not want to hire people with difficulties, young people do not want to be friends with peers, owners do not want to rent their homes to certain subjects. In this continuous game every possible action appears so diluted and poor in impact that it discourages the push for change.

In these terms, walking for change from within also means giving back to operators that same “capacity to aspire”: the opportunity to think of oneself as an agent of change in one’s social world turns out to be at the same time, both for operators and for people who turn to services, objective and instrumental to change. As De Leonardis writes, the ability to aspire in fact represents “a political capacity, that is, it feeds on the (re)politicisation of the ways of defining issues and making choices on how to deal with them” (2011, p.. XXXV).

Notes

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³ The project is led by the Pio Office of the Society of São Paulo and includes five other international partners: the University of Turin (Italy), the CESIS study centre (Portugal), the NGO Klimaka (Greece), the association Projekt Udenfor (Denmark) and SJD Serveis Social (Spain). To learn more about the planned activities and the progress of the project, see: <https://hoodproject.org/> [17/06/2021].

⁴ European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless.

⁵ Data taken from the “country profile” sheets updated by year and by country on the FEANTSA website, available at <https://www.feantsa.org/en> [17/06/2021].

⁶ For more information, see Bifulco & Mozzana, 2011.

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Schooling in underprivileged areas

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Keywords

Mental Health, Education,
CPIA, REMS.

Abstract

In 2019, for the first time in Italy, the adult school entered a Residence for the Execution of Security Measures (REMS) where offenders with psychiatric conditions were hosted.

It was an experimental and pioneering path, devoid of theoretical references and practices to be inspired by. Following a proposal by the Guarantor of persons subject to restrictive measures of personal freedom of Lazio, the Provincial Centre for Adult Education No. 3 of Rome and the Local Health Authority RMG signed an Agreement to initiate first level courses (former middle school) for the guests at the health facility. The organisation of the level groups, as well as the design of the learning units, required the necessary flexibility to adapt the educational intervention to the specific training needs of REMS guests.

In the 2020/21 school year, the REMS at Palombara Sabina (Rieti) became an associate seat of the CPIA 3 in Rome, with a stable contingent of teachers.

1. Introduction

Bringing adult schools to extreme places of suffering and discomfort, where no one has gone before: this is the challenge that in 2019 the Provincial Centre for Adult Education (CPIA) no.3 of Rome faced. A pool of teachers in close collaboration with the team of psychiatrists and psychologists of the Local Health Authority (ASL) RM5 started a courageous and pioneering experiment. The project allowed some patients of the Residence for the Execution of Security Measures (REMS) of Palombara Sabina (Rieti) to resume studies within the health facility. The idea, or rather the proposal to work in an unexplored and particularly delicate sector came from the Guarantor of persons subject to measures restricting personal freedom in Lazio. The only institution that could have responded to the unexpressed and ignored training needs of a fragile user in a specific context such as health and prison, was the CPIA as a school for adults and a cornerstone of the territorial network for lifelong learning. There are no previous experiences, protocols or projects to refer to. Scientific research on the learning of extremely fragile subjects such as REMS patients is non-existent. The literature and studies on the subject are limited and the approach is clinical/legal, in some cases sociological, never pedagogical and didactic.

It was, therefore, a question of building a new and complex didactic path with uncertain outcomes.

In the start-up phase of the trial, it was a priority to dialogue with the other institutional subjects to establish a direct relationship, aimed at operations and based on a strong collaboration. At the centre, the adult offender with psychiatric pathologies and the universal right to study.

2. REMS: brief history and management notes

To contextualise the experience of the activation of educational courses in a REMS (Residence for the Execution of Security Measures), it is necessary, albeit in summary, to know and understand the normative genesis, function and organisation of these structures in the Italian penitentiary system.

Until 2015 in Italy there were judicial psychiatric hospitals, founded at the end of the nineteenth century as criminal asylums. There were guarded and cared for "persons suffering for any mental illness, dangerous to themselves or to others and publicly ostracised. They cannot be conveniently guarded and cared for except in a mental

hospital” (Article 1, Law no. 36 of the 14th of February 1904).

The long path of evolution from the criminal asylum to the judicial asylum to the judicial psychiatric hospital and its definitive closure, reflects the cultural and political climate of the context in which it developed, and which accompanied it.

The perpetrators of crimes committed by individuals in a mentally unsound (incompetent) state and those who went crazy after committing the crime were destined to the internal health structures of the penitentiary system. If at the end of the nineteenth century a repressive and security conception prevailed against these subjects, a preventive (isolating) and sanctioning (punishing) approach gradually emerged, found in the Rocco Code of 1930. Offenders acquitted for insanity were kept in the judicial asylum as a measure of prison security because they were deemed a danger to society, even if not verified.

The Constitution moved the axis of the ambiguous relationship between safety and the care of mental illness affirming the re-educational function of the penalty (article 27, paragraph three). However, living conditions were often inhumane in judicial insane asylums and complaints regarding the ill-treatment of inmates called into question the legitimacy and therapeutic value of the measures taken.

The cultural revolution initiated by Law no. 180 of the 13th of May 1978, known as the “Basaglia Law” named after the psychiatrist who promoted and supported it, affected, albeit indirectly, the changes that would have led to the abolition of the concept of social danger. As we have seen, the very existence of judicial psychiatric hospitals was based on this assumption.

Law no. 663 of the 10th of October 1986 (the “Gozzini Law”) entrusts the supervisory magistrate with the task of reviewing the diagnosis of social danger and repeals the presumed one.

It is stated, albeit gradually, also thanks to the progress of psychiatry and pharmacology, the idea that the mentally ill offender should be the recipient of therapeutic measures,

With Law no. 354 of the 26th of July 1975, which reformed the penitentiary system, the judicial psychiatric hospital was born, a priority place for treating the mental illness of the patient. The presence of a psychiatrist is foreseen in every penitentiary institution.

The turn towards the closure of judicial psychiatric hospitals takes place in the new century through a series of measures aimed at reforming health care and in particular prison health. With the decree of the Italian President of the Council of Ministers of 1 April 2008, the definitive transfer of competences in this matter to the Regions takes place: “From the date of entry into force of this decree, all the health functions carried out by the Department of Prison Administration and the Department of Juvenile Justice of the Ministry of Justice, including those relating to therapeutic communities, both for drug addicts and for children suffering from mental disorders, of the expenses incurred for the maintenance, treatment and medical assistance of prisoners, are transferred to the National Health Service”.

The Guidelines attached to the decree outline a three-step programme for the gradual closure of judicial psychiatric hospitals. The territorial (regional) management of the psychiatric patient in the mental health departments of the ASL and the social reintegration of the discharged patients is favoured.

The “Report on living and care conditions in judicial psychiatric hospitals” (2011) of the Senate’s Marino Commission was decisive in highlighting the substantial stalemate of prison health reform in the specific sector of mental illness.

With Italian Decree Law no. 211 of the 22nd of December 2011 and Law no. 9 of the 17th of February 2012, the replacement of judicial psychiatric hospitals with alternative health facilities for the execution of prison security measures, the REMS, is initiated, but another three years will have to pass for the definitive closure of judicial psychiatric hospitals.

Law no. 81 of 30 May 2014 extends the final deadline for the disposal of judicial psychiatric hospitals and introduces important changes in the judgment of danger and in the reliance on REMS, which is in any case an extreme measure.

Law 81/2014 entrusts the Regions with the burden of managing rehabilitation programmes for the former patients of judicial psychiatric hospitals. The last patient was discharged in May 2017.

The Parliamentary Commission in 2018 and even earlier the results of the General States of Criminal Enforcement (2015) had highlighted the many critical issues of the implementation of REMS. It is also known that the many open questions on the protection of mental health in the penitentiary system have not been addressed by the three Italian Legislative Decrees reforming the penitentiary system in implementation of the delegation contained in Law no. 103 of the 23rd of June 2017.

Regarding the delicate relationship between mental health and prison, the National Committee for Bioethics - Presidency of the Council of Ministers - expressed its opinion on 22 March 2019 with which it is recommended "to ensure, as a basic form of protection of mental health in prison, humane methods of detention, respectful of the dignity of people, offering treatment with training and work opportunities in a re-socialising perspective; ensuring that the care of people suffering from serious mental disorders and who have committed crimes takes place as a rule in the territory, in therapeutic facilities and not in detention institutions, in compliance with the principle of equal protection of the health of those who are free and of those who have been sentenced to prison".

Currently in Italy there are thirty-one REMS, distributed throughout the national territory with 551 admitted people (figure 1).

Percentuale pazienti uomini e donne presenti in Rems al 30.11.2020

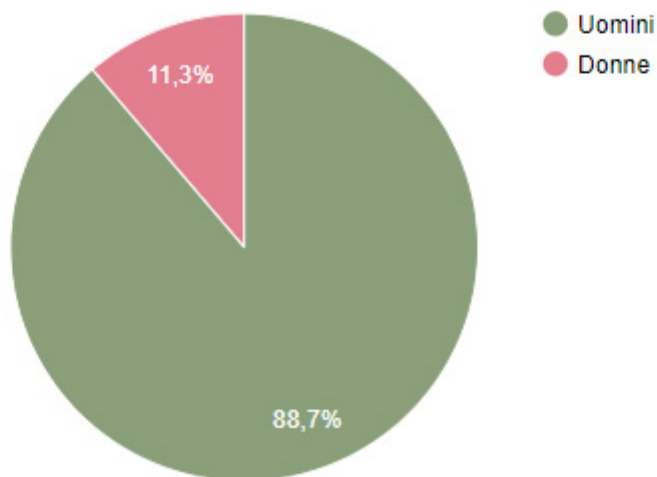


Figure 1: Source: XVII Antigone Report 2020.

3. School in a REMS (Residence for the Execution of Security Measures)

REMS guests come from disadvantaged sections of the population or from a history of addiction and detention. In most cases, there are shortcomings in education and training courses due to long and frequent interruptions of schooling.

Entry into a REMS will result in the suspension of any formal learning pathway undertaken. Among the interventions of the individual therapeutic and rehabilitation project, in fact, neither the continuity of the studies nor their completion is contemplated.

This treatment gap has prompted the Guarantor of persons subject to measures restricting personal freedom in Lazio to request the intervention and involvement of CPIA 3 in Rome, given the specific competence of the teaching staff and the director.

“The resumption of an interrupted educational path represents a fundamental element for the complete social recovery of the person (...) and the definition of an educational process facilitates the possibility of orienting oneself also within the world of work for a re-establishment of social relations in the field of legality and solidarity” (Memorandum of Understanding CPIA 3 Rome - ALS RM G of 3 October 2019).

In CPIA 3 in Rome, some didactic experiences are underway in the external criminal area and training projects have been carried out at national and regional level, aimed at the staff of both administrations: the Italian Ministry of Education and the Italian Ministry of Justice.

These include the national FARE project (Forming Adults who are Restricted with Education), funded by the Italian Ministry of Education as part of the actions provided for in the Memorandum of Understanding with the Italian Ministry of Justice of 23 May 2016. In the 2017/18 school year, over three hundred people, including teachers, school directors, prison police officers and legal and pedagogical officials, were involved in five interregional seminars.

In 2018, a research - action was started in collaboration with the Department of Training Sciences of the Roma Tre University aimed at teachers of the two CPIA 3 prison facilities and extended in 2019 to all teachers of the CPIA prison facilities in Lazio. The objective of the participatory training course was to start the process of defining a profile of strategic and transversal skills of teachers working in prison.

In addition, the CPIA 3 in Rome has in place a “Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of educational, training and guidance activities with the Giacomo Cusmano Psychotherapeutic Community” of Anguillara Sabazia (Rome) signed on 13 April 2018. Adult users staying in the Community are held in alternative detentions to prisons and have no possibility of leaving to attend school. From the 2018/19 school year, the weekly lessons began at the Community where a form of integrated teaching was carried out with lessons in person and at a distance with the tutoring of two teachers outside the CPIA 3 and present in the community. Considering the educational pathways attended by the guests before entering the community, it was decided to propose first level courses – second period, corresponding to the first two years of the second-grade secondary school, for the acquisition and certification of basic skills.

In the previous school year, the collaboration with the non-profit organisation Arpj Tetto was started for the creation of first level courses (former middle school licence) at the headquarters of the “Gli Scetenati” day centre in Rome. The facility includes minors and young adults who are the recipients of alternative measures to imprisonment. In this case, the teachers went to the Centre according to a weekly lesson schedule agreed with the team of the facility. In the 2019/20 school year, the Agreement was renewed, expanding the education offer with Italian courses for foreigners and 200-hour courses for students without primary school skills certification.

In all the projects described, it was necessary to schedule teaching activities at locations outside of school. This has raised some organisational issues to be resolved, first of all that of the external service of the professors. It was therefore necessary to adopt a schedule of educational activities that was compatible with the needs of the health facility.

In the territory of ASL Roma 5 there are three REMS in which the social health team performs the diagnosis for each guest and defines the programme with the aim of carrying out a “rapid stabilisation of the symptoms to allow the transition to a structure with lower care intensity”, as established by Law no. 9/12.

The trial started from the “Merope” headquarters, one of the three structures of the ASL RMG. The patients are all men.

There were preliminary contacts between the heads of the ASL and the CPIA, in which the Guarantor of persons subject to measures restricting personal freedom in Lazio also participated. A number of operational meetings followed, during which the organisation of teaching activities was finalised and the time and methods for carrying out the experimentation were established.



REMS offices in the territory of ASL RM 5

The REMS multidisciplinary team has prepared for each guest an Individualised Therapeutic-Rehabilitation Pathway in which educational activities have been included, in addition to pharmacological therapies and individual and group psychological treatments.

The team also managed the selection of guests who will undergo the educational intervention. Some criteria based on clinical and motivational parameters have been adopted. Subsequently, the teaching reception activities were started by the teachers of the CPIA. For each student, at least a couple of interviews were held with the aim of reconstructing the interrupted school path and the level of previous skills acquired. Each of them signed the Individual Training Pact, as provided for by Italian Presidential Decree no. 263 of 29 October 2012, establishing the CPIAs, and the "Guidelines for the transition to the new order." (inter-ministerial decree of 12 March 2015). During the school year, regular monitoring meetings were held between the teachers of the CPIA and the staff of the social health team, established from time to time on the basis of specific needs.

During the first year of experimentation, organisational and didactic priorities were focused on, and the training needs of patients were better defined. Logistical constraints have been particularly challenging, especially for teachers.

The positive reactions of the students who have regularly attended the lessons and the growing mutual trust and collaboration between CPIA 3 and the REMS at Palombara Sabina have highlighted the need to ensure the continuity of school attendance at the health facility.

In the joint evaluation of the results of the trial, two critical issues emerged: the staffing of the teachers and the absence of an administrative recognition of the REMS school site.

It should be clarified that during the trial the external service hours of the professors were obtained from a complex articulation of the total time of all the teachers of the CPIA. To equip the REMS headquarters with their own contingent of teachers, the only solution was for the director of CPIA 3 to propose an identification code for the REMS headquarters. The Regional School Office for Lazio is responsible for this matter and has accepted the request from the CPIA 3.

Technically, the assignment procedure, which takes place annually, is following the resolution of the Region that adopts the Plan for the sizing of the educational institutions of the regional territory. In the school year 2019/20 for the first time in Italy, a REMS has become an associated branch of a CPIA.

The didactic organisation was consolidated and the number of guests who attended the lessons remained stable (10/13). During the reception phase, the level groups were defined, consisting of a maximum of two/three guests. An Italian language course for foreigners has also been initiated.

For all students, an Individualised Training Pact and a Customised School Course have been prepared. The teachers and the social and health team carry out a joint action to monitor the progress of activities in a now consolidated climate of collaboration.

At the end of the 2020/21 school year, the first final diploma of the first cycle of education was issued. This is undoubtedly an encouraging result if you also consider the difficulties caused by the restrictions imposed by the containment measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some critical issues remain, such as the absence of a space dedicated to lessons that, in reality, take place in a small room made available to the school but also used for other activities.

In addition, class attendance is often hindered due to the interference with other treatment and recreational activities and with the time needed for the therapies that all guests follow. It should be remembered, then, that the REMS at Palombara Sabina is inside a hospital and, being a detention facility, observes strict control regulations at the entrance.

The necessary administration of medication reduces attention spans which is why lessons take place mainly in the morning and with flexible hours.

The structure provided an internet connection and devices that make it possible to carry out integrated teaching on the Agorà platform (SOGI) at the CPIA 3 in Rome during the periods when educational activities were suspended due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

On an experimental basis in the 2020/21 school year, the teaching activities were extended to the REMS in Subiaco.

The CPIA 3 in Rome is currently the only one in Italy to include a REMS among the service delivery points. The experimentation and subsequent stabilisation of such a training course required the maximum collaboration of all the institutions involved.

It should be noted that the experience falls within the regulatory framework established by the Memorandum of Understanding between the Italian Ministry of Education and the Italian Ministry of Justice “Special Programme for Education and Training in Prisons and Juvenile Justice Services”, signed in 2012 and renewed on 19 October 2020.

4. Conclusions

Schooling in REMS is first and foremost a cultural challenge, as well as an educational and organisational one. It requires, in fact, the overcoming of an idea of a closed and inaccessible border, where mental discomfort is amplified as it is associated with the detention measure and goes beyond the dimension of social danger.

The stable presence of a school in the REMS, as the associated headquarters of the CPIA, is an achievable objective, as shown by the experience of the CPIA 3 and the ASL RMG. The feasibility depends first and foremost on inter-institutional cooperation involving local authorities but also involving national levels.

Six years have now passed since the reform of adult education began. The absence any regulation regarding educational pathways for adults in external penal enforcement of the reform of the school system should be addressed through its revision and the adoption of Guidelines on Prison Education.

It is now clear, in fact, that the decision to specifically address the issue of the school in prison in the various aspects that characterise it can no longer be postponed: the organisation, the methodologies and the didactic evaluation, the specific and joint training of the staff of the school and that of the prison administration. This is the lever that can help break down prejudices in favour of improving care and assistance and protecting the rights of REMS guests.

In general, joint staff training has so far not been systematically addressed by the ministries involved. Exceptions are some recent experiences at the regional level (Piedmont and Liguria School Offices) and the training course managed by the CPIA in Bologna in collaboration with the Alma Mater University of Bologna.

It would be worth looking closely at these training projects as valuable resources for the evolution of the prison school system.

Notes

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You can't divide by zero! Math-ethics in prison

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Keywords

Role of the Teacher in Prison,
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Abstract

In this article, some of the Hungarian mathematician, George Pólya's, "ten commandments of the teacher", guide a reflection on teaching in general, and mathematics, in particular, to adult prisoners. The authors' considerations arise mainly from the analysis of the pedagogical and didactic practices employed in a high security prison in southern Italy: the path of reflection starts from the possible role of a teacher within a prison, to end with the possible role of the student in prison. All this from a discussion of teaching practices, in general, and those of mathematics, in particular, which, in the experience of the authors, have proved effective: horizontal teaching and laboratory teaching.

1. Introduction. The role of the teacher in prison

"If you can't fix a problem, there's going to be an easier one you can fix: find it."

For more than a decade now, Europe, oriented towards Lifelong Learning, has been challenged by lifelong learning, which allows everyone, and not only young people, to always consider themselves students, and therefore be able to learn throughout their lives. Lifelong learning is perhaps even more important in the prison context, where classic problems relating to adult education are compounded by problems specific to prison life: the experience of prison itself is not "formation", but the opposite "deformation", which requires the expansion of a subject's field of experience. So, it is necessary to activate a highly personalised educational process, offer alternatives to the experiences that created the maladjustment and solicit, rather than transmit, already given models. But is there a penitentiary pedagogy that is the basis on which to base teaching in prison? That is, to what extent is the penitentiary educator entitled to determine processes of change in the person in a correctional function in addition to external adherence to the rules of civil coexistence? To what extent, finally, can these processes of change be induced within an educational framework, in the absence of the assumption that defines the educational experience as such, namely the freedom of the person? Is it possible to educate when freedom is lacking? It is certain that behind inappropriate behaviour there is always a personal vision of the world, which emerges from the ability that each of us has to give a meaning, indeed multiple meanings, to the different situations that each of us encounters. However, every *Weltanschauung*, even that of a detained person, is never a definitive vision, since it changes as each person changes in the course of their existence. Then, misbehaviour can change based on the change in world view that is underlying individual behaviour. A person cannot change because he is forced to behave in a certain way; the change in behaviour takes place, instead, if the person has been able to change the way he sees himself in the world and the relationship with others. Therefore, it is possible to recover the value of freedom in a prison context but not through conditioning, but only if there is a choice of freedom at the base (even if not in a state of freedom): an evolution of one's own vision of the world is possible. In addition to all these issues that concern prison life, the teacher in prison is faced with an additional difficulty: failing school paths in their past, a school past that is too distant and well-established life skills that stop them from putting themselves "in the student's shoes": these are just some of the problems that the teacher who works in prison must face. In addition, the teacher who works in prison wonders if their role as an educator can have

any chance of success: is it really possible to have a positive impact on the lives of students in prison? George Pólya, in his book “How to solve it” (Pólya, 1957), and inspiration for this article, explains how to solve problems (mathematical and non-mathematical). *The book states: “If you can't fix a problem, there's going to be an easier one you can fix: find it.”* Therefore, following Pólya's suggestion, teachers can put themselves in the perspective of ideas that if it is true that they cannot do much, they can certainly do something. In fact, $1365 = 1 \cdot 1 \cdot 1 \cdot \dots = 1$, but increasing the unit slightly to 1.01, we have $1.01365 = (1.01) \cdot (1.01) \cdot (1.01) \cdot \dots \cong 37.78$. Taking inspiration from this arithmetic, our reflection is that doing something is certainly much more than just standing still and doing nothing. In this spirit, over the years, from 2017 to 2021, the authors took a mathematical but also an ethical path, coining the term *Matem-Etica* [a pun in Italian on “*matematica*” (mathematics) and “*etica*” (ethics) - ed.], which has led to unexpected cultural and personal growth, which will be briefly discussed in section 4. This is a new path to follow, pursuing a modern Penitentiary Pedagogy that no longer turns to a simple acquisition of skills but rather to a change of attitude, which uses as a tool a didactics for problems: Laboratory Mathematics – such as the one pioneered at the Catania Bicocca prison with the project “Not touching is forbidden”³ and briefly presented in section 3 – eradicates some preconceptions, answers questions, puts the students in prison with the perspective of being active protagonists and having at their disposal tools of reflection, useful for a change of their vision of the world and of themselves.

2. Theoretical reference framework

This section will describe the didactic theories of reference for the mathematical activities carried out: horizontal teaching and laboratory didactics.

Which didactics in prison? Horizontal teaching

“Try to read the students' faces, try to understand their expectations, their difficulties; put yourself in their position”.

Clearly opposed to an educational practice (which is unfortunately still widespread) that we could define as “vertical”, the theory of Horizontal Teaching, (Ferrarello, Mammana & Pennisi, 2013) is a teaching/learning model, in which the teacher is not placed at the top to transfer his knowledge downwards. In horizontal teaching, the student's knowledge and the teacher's knowledge are placed at the same level and intersect with each other (Fig. 1).

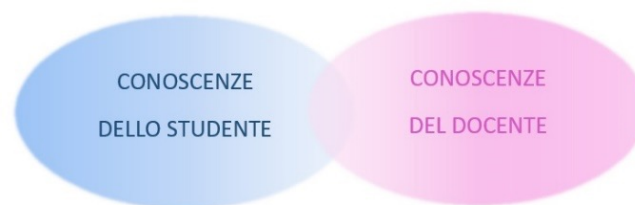


Figure 1: Preliminary phase of horizontal teaching

The teacher must be able to enter this intersection and expand it, so that the common knowledge is greater than at the beginning of the process (Fig.2).

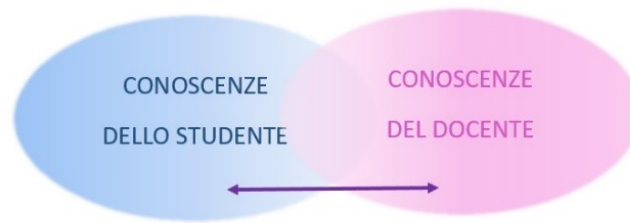


Figure 2: Learning phase of horizontal teaching

In order to enter the intersection, you need to know your students, know their lives, their interests, explore their learning styles. And then adopt didactic transpositions appropriate to those lives, those interests, those learning styles. Expanding the intersection, then, does not only mean giving new notions but it means first of all leading the student to expand their way of learning, putting the student in the conditions of “learning how to learn”. We note that when the intersection expands it can also expand in the other direction, from the student to the teacher who learns something from the student (see the double horizontal arrow in figure 2). On the contrary, this is the most important feature of horizontal teaching, since both sides learn (teacher and students): a teaching/learning process. Perhaps the teacher who enters prison may initially find it difficult to imagine what the intersection with their students may be, but certainly trying to “read the faces of the students, [...] to understand their expectations, their difficulties”, putting themselves in their shoes, as Pólya suggests (ibid.), the teacher understands that it is necessary to start from what we all have in common: humanity.

Which didactics of mathematics in prison? Mathematics laboratory

“Know the ways in which you learn: the best way to learn something is to discover it for yourself”

As in life, so it is in mathematics “*the best way to learn something is to discover it for yourself*” (Pólya, ibid.). Too often, mathematics teachers still present students with problems that have already been solved, or are to be solved by following codified procedures, expecting, at best, that students will study and solve problems similar to those presented. The Italian national ministerial guidelines recommend, however, for all school levels, from primary to secondary, a modus operandi that leads students to the discovery and construction of concepts, supported by the teacher and classmates. These indications are fully implemented in the Mathematics Laboratory, introduced in (Anichini, Arzarello, Ciarrapico, Robutti, & Statale, 2004). “*The mathematics laboratory is not a physical place that is different to the classroom*”, rather it is a set of activities carried out by students and teachers to arrive at the construction of “*meanings of mathematical objects*” (ibid.), including through experiments. The environment of the mathematics laboratory is somewhat similar to that of the Renaissance workshop, in which apprentices learned by doing and seeing, communicating with each other and with experts. The construction of meanings, in the mathematics laboratory, is inspired by a problem and is closely linked, on the one hand, to the use of tools used in the various activities, and on the other to the interactions between people that develop during the exercise of these activities. In fact, there are four elements of the Mathematics Laboratory:

- A problem to address
- Objects to be handled
- Interaction with others
- Teacher guidance.

The problem to be addressed must be stimulating for students, therefore it must be new and of interest to them, but also accessible through the knowledge already acquired. A good choice is to think of a problem that lies in the proximal development zone defined by Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1990). The proximal development zone is the distance between the current level of development and the potential level of development, which can be achieved with the help of someone with a higher level of competence. In solving the task posed by the problem, the manipulation of objects plays an important role, which can be traditional or technologically advanced: simple materials (ruler, transparent sheets, pins, squared sheets, cut-out paper, etc.); mathematical machines (machines that generate curves, or make geometric transformations, etc.); specific software for mathematics (dynamic geometry software, symbolic manipulation software, etc.); other software (electronic sheets, etc.); calculators. Both poor and digital objects favour an acquisition of concepts that starts from concrete experience and induce reasoning about mathematical entities, in the phase of discovery and conjecture. Students in the Mathematics Laboratory must work in collaborative or cooperative groups, making discoveries together, formulating conjectures, demonstrating. The teacher acts as a coordinator: they are the expert who guides students towards achieving results, giving targeted suggestions and encouragement, creating a positive climate. They have the task of creating and directing a mathematical discussion around students' discoveries, bringing out, from them, shared mathematical meanings. It is important to emphasise that with this methodology you learn through discussion with classmates, with whom it is good to dialogue, exchange ideas and suggest possible solutions to the problem. And it does not really matter that the ideas exchanged are immediately correct: it is more important that from the exchange of ideas new ways of seeing are born, new perspectives that make us see the task (the problem placed) under a light that we had not previously considered. "Touching" (objects and concepts) and the comparison with others is very important, not only from a didactic point of view, but also because, from a pedagogical point of view, they accustom the student to not being a passive user of a lesson recited by heart, but rather an active protagonist in their own learning, and, similarly, an active protagonist in their own life. This is why the methodology of the Laboratory is particularly indicated in a context such as prison, in which students often feel "condemned", because they are victims of the choices they have made or have found themselves making. Being active in the classroom accustoms students to feel active even in life, protagonists in new choices. And to embark on new paths it is essential to see new paths that open up to us as we get used to looking with the eyes of others, without truths imposed from above but thanks to shared opinions and strategies. It is no coincidence that both mathematics, as a deductive science, and democracy were born in the cradle of Greek civilization: even in ancient Egypt, for example, mathematics was done, but in a place where power was imposed and the pharaoh reigned by right: there was no place for why and arguments; mathematics had only practical purposes (for example associated with construction). Only in Greek civilization, where power was not imposed but it was necessary to convince others to vote for them, since it was a democracy, did rhetoric, dialectics and logic develop. In this way theorems are born, which are not imposed but reasoned truths, which are not points of view but results of logical thought. In the Mathematics Laboratory, in addition to the relationships between people who work together "democratically", it is essential to solve the mathematical problem, which leads to improving the sense of self-efficacy, that is, the individual's conviction about success in managing a problem (Bandura, 1997). This is particularly evident in the case of a problem that initially seemed impossible or difficult, which often happens with maths problems.

3. Mathematical activity in prison. The experience.

"Give them not only information, but also "know how", mental attitudes, a habit to methodical work"

In the years from 2017 to 2021 the authors, believing in the need for a new perspective of penitentiary pedagogy and in the validity of the didactic theories set out in section 2 of this article, carried out various mathematical activities (each with their own competence) at the Bicocca prison in Catania. The most relevant of these activities is the project "Not touching is forbidden", which allowed the construction of an exhibition/laboratory of mathematical machines at the institute. The central idea is to start from one's own experience (horizontal teaching) and learn by doing, touching (mathematics laboratory): to give the imprisoned students the opportunity to learn not only mathematical concepts, but also "know-how", mental attitudes" (Pólya, *ibid.*), positive for their lives.

In particular, the project included the following phases:

1. 3D design and construction of mathematical machines using a 3D printer.
2. Mathematical training course used by inmate students, about the operation of machines.
3. Preparation of the exhibition/workshop and visits by students and teachers from outside.

The machines created during phase 1, designed to convey mathematical meanings, were the objects manipulated by the students during the mathematical training course (phase 2) to solve the problems posed by the teacher. During the mathematical training course, the students were, according to the methodology of the Mathematics Laboratory, active in the learning process, accompanied by the discovery of the mathematical meanings that were internalised, to the point that the inmate students became guides of the exhibition/laboratory, during phase 3. The acquired mastery has allowed them to gain self-efficacy and self-esteem, showing visitors that it is possible, with commitment and dedication, to achieve initially unexpected results. The exhibition is divided into 4 sections, each of which reveals an ethical, as well as a mathematical, meaning. Briefly:

- *Non-adjustable surfaces*: we often create boundaries (between good and evil, for example) without realising that these boundaries are less vivid than they seem. This section analyses machines characterised by the absence of boundaries, since in such machines (such as the Klein bottle) it is not possible to distinguish the internal surface from the external one;
- *Pantographs for geometric transformations*: the purpose of education is to transform students, not in the sense of completely modifying them, but to find in them the characteristics to be maintained and those to be transformed, as happens in a geometric transformation, which leaves some properties of a geometric entity unchanged and alters others; in this section machines that carry out some geometric transformations are studied;
- *Conicographs*: you cannot think of doing the same thing and obtaining a different result. To leave a place where you do not want to be, you must change the conditions that determined your presence in that place. This section is dedicated to machines that draw particular geometric places (cones), and it is noted that the difference between one geometric place and another is given by the conditions that we decide to change;
- *Archimedean machines*: Sicily is not only a land of mafia, but also a land of mathematics. The section dedicated to the Sicilian genius, Archimedes, and some of his inventions reminds visitors (and guides) that none of us can be boxed into a single definition. Mafia men can also be free men of mathematics.

4. Conclusions. The role of the inmate student

"Suggest, don't force"

The quality of education in view of its social, as well as its educational, consequences and the need to rethink teaching taking into account the social dimension has already been understood and studied in (Mellin-Olsen, 1981). Several mathematical activities aimed at inmate students have been successfully carried out in Swedish prisons. See, for example, (Helenius & Ahl, 2017) and (Ahl & Helenius, 2020). In these studies, the authors worked with adult inmate students with failed school experiences behind them, pointing out that this second school opportunity represents an important opportunity for them to *"change identity in two steps; first, when they decide to seize the opportunity to study mathematics, and second, when they succeed. This change of identity can give inmate students more opportunities to re-enter society"*. (Helenius & Ahl, 2017, p. 247). Since the failed school histories that adults bring with them make their motivation to study fragile (Ahl, Sánchez Aguilar, & Jankvist, 2017), it is important to act by stimulating students towards mastery goals (rather than performance goals). *"This motivational fragility can be managed through carefully chosen teaching activities that meet the potential of students in favour of involvement in learning mathematics"* (Ahl & Helenius, 2020, p. 2). Then, once the teacher has pursued with effort and dedication the objectives described in this short article, it will be the reckoning: the last commandment of Pólya that we report here is *"Suggest, don't force"*; the professor of the Mathematics Laboratory, whose role we described in section 2, has the task of coordinating, guiding and encouraging, not of doing for the student. The great step, therefore, is for the students, who must demonstrate, to themselves more than to the teacher, that they have acquired the main goal of mastery: mastery over their lives. Our conviction is that succeeding in a discipline such as mathematics, fascinating, but often considered difficult, can bring students in prison the awareness of being able to face problems in real life that initially can appear difficult, if not impossible. Only when you see a road, even if uphill, instead of a wall, can you think of starting a journey. Our role as educators is to show the way. It will then be up to the students to decide whether or not to take it. We would like to conclude by quoting some students imprisoned at the Catania Bicocca prison, who, after completing the task of finishing a challenging mathematics project (the aforementioned "Not touching is forbidden") realised that *"This project has led to a cultural, but above all personal change for us. At first we were very enthusiastic but not very motivated, only because we put limits to our potential, our knowledge and intelligence. But by attending the lessons with commitment and passion we were able to achieve great results, making calculations, hypotheses and evaluations. Until a few years ago we would never have imagined having debates about mathematical concepts"* and above all: *"Thanks to mathematics we know who we are and who we will be"* because *"we believed that the only thing you cannot do in life is divide by zero!"*.

This is *Matem-Etica!*

Notes

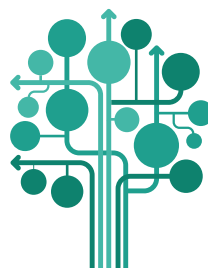
¹ Maurizio Battaglia is Head of the Legal-Pedagogical Area of the Catania - Bicocca prison.

² Daniela Ferrarello (former professor of mathematics at the "K. Wojtyła" institute in Catania, Bicocca section) is currently Associate Professor of Complementary Mathematics at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Environment at the University of Catania.

³ Details available at the project site, "Not touching is forbidden" project <https://sites.google.com/view/vietatonontoc-care/home>

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