

For sustainable educational design for all

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ABSTRACT

This contribution intends to propose some reflections on sustainable and accessible educational design, starting from the analysis of today's educational contexts called upon to promote processes of pedagogical revisitation on the wave of both the profound discomforts and the unprecedented opportunities offered by the pandemic. In the name of the generative gaze that should accompany every process of change between past and future, between awareness achieved and the search for new territories to be explored, the school narrative of a pupil with special needs is proposed, aimed at enhancing the inclusive design interventions concerted and synergic between secondary school, family and out-of-school.

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INTRODUCTION

The topic of inclusive education, rightfully grafting itself into the complexity and plurality of pandemic and post-pandemic globalised social, cultural, political and economic contexts dominated by digitalisation and *téchne* (Boccia Artieri & Bentivegna, 2019; Rivoltella, 2020), opens up new and unusual challenges to be faced, despite the worrying acceleration of existing problems of inequality, disadvantage, social exclusion, marginality, school dropout, educational poverty, emotional-relational distress and disorders (Iavarone, 2019; Nuzzacci et al., 2020; Rocchi, 2020; Save the Children, 2020; Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020; Vicari & Di Vara, 2021).

The growing complexity that characterises today's educational contexts is, therefore, a constant unknown, but also an exciting challenge for the experts in educational processes (teachers, managers, educators, families, researchers, etc.) who are committed to taking maximum account of the dynamism of the transformations taking place and to understanding the plots, even unexpected ones, of the human being, in an inclusive perspective.

As protagonists of the open and democratic culture, the actors of inclusion are oriented to hypothesise, research and design, according to appropriate logics of sustainability and feasibility, flexible and accessible educational-training paths (Pavone, 2020), even in the complexity of the micro and macro existential contexts crossed by the epochal changes that characterise the contemporary onlife era (Floridi, 2014, 2017).

Inclusive logics, in promoting with educational conviction the recognition of the differences of all and each one, are the bearers of new and desirable horizons of opportunities, both scholastic and extracurricular, as constitutive elements of the universal right to equity and equality (Caldin, 2019; Nota et al., 2019). For the past few decades, we have been witnessing a profound socio-cultural paradigm shift from welfarism to the valorisation of capacities and real opportunities for all (Nussbaum, 2012).

The inadequate attribution of a minus profile to the person with disabilities characterised by custodialist, protective and controlling aspects loses more and more value to make way for the safeguarding of the rights of full citizenship and independent living (Marchisio, 2022). The guiding compass towards the concrete implementation of personalised and participatory projects, in line with the needs and expectations of persons with disabilities, is represented by the UN Convention (2006), which recognises and guarantees the right of each person to live the life he or she desires, regardless of the functional limitations produced by the deficit.

This convention represents an enlightening and crystal-clear source of educational design inspiration aimed at the intentional and conscious care of human diversity from the perspective of accessibility and sustainability. Access to learning by means of flexible and modulated didactics, attentive to the educability potential of each pupil is inspired not only by the principles of the UN Convention, but also by the current vision of educational sustainability recalled by the Universal Design for Learning-UDL model (Mace, 1985; Savia 2016), which proposes multiple and differentiated transversal approaches, in the name of diversity and opportunity.

In orienting inclusive educational design with a universal character, the UDL invites to revisit, rethink strategies, tools and languages starting from the rich heterogeneity of differences present in the classroom (Fornasa & Medeghini, 2003; Dovigo, 2007). From this premise, comes the need to support a culture and education for accessibility and sustainability linked to development and the promotion of real school participation (Riva, 2018) as indicated by the strategic frame of reference of the Global Agenda for Sustainable Development approved by the United Nations (2015).

It outlines seventeen sustainable development goals -sustainable development goals- to be achieved and completed by 2030 that assign a key role to education. Goal 4, specifically, addresses and supports educational interventions to protect children and persons with disabilities based on the categorical imperative to exclude no one. The 2030 Agenda aims, in particular, to "provide quality, equitable and inclusive education and learning opportunities for all" as well as to "build and adapt school facilities so that they are child-friendly, disability- and gender-sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all" (goal 4.a).

In this perspective, a school context that promotes best practices that are inclusive of differences and diversity represents a "place for all" in that it tends to offer the necessary conditions for each pupil to feel welcome, to be able to learn at his or her own pace and to feel positively and concretely involved in reality, in its multi-perspective and multi-dimensional aspects.

In short, effective belonging and adherence, as expressions of active citizenship, need to develop in democratically authentic school contexts, based on shared educational opportunities, equitable and accessible to all, which respond to the right to diversity and strive to eliminate barriers and obstacles to learning and cultural, social and educational participation (Booth & Ainscow, 2014).

DESIGNING SUSTAINABLE INCLUSIVE ACTIONS

Inclusive planning is aimed at experiencing the authentic in the educational relationship, considering pupils, whether with special needs or not (Montanari, 2020), certainly not sick subjects and/or with interrupted capacities to be repaired and interpreted essentially at a diagnostic level (Canevaro, 2018).

The different pupil is, therefore, recognised and valued phenomenologically as a set of stories to be lived and as an educational potential (Caronia, 2011), despite the uncomfortable presence of deficit and/or disadvantage. The transformative design capacity of the educational figures who work in school and extra-school contexts (teachers, educators, parents, managers, social workers, etc.) is essentially based on a caring gaze aimed at fully understanding the suffering, discomfort and difficulties of the pupils (Mortari, 2021).

It is necessary, therefore, to start from the personal life context of each pupil in which to insert the specific educational action, certainly not detached from the occurrence of unexpected problems and questions to be resolved. The delicate attention towards pupils who show experiences of vulnerability, marginality, bewilderment and problems is combined with an industrious inclusive planning (Zappaterra, 2022) that, taking into account the complexity of their existential plots, is aimed at enhancing and redefining the Life Project of each one (Gaspari, 2022), in a future improving perspective.

The centre of the sustainable inclusive project of/for each person is characterised by the importance of collaboration, of the educational co-responsibility pact between school, family and other subjects, public and private, operating in the territory as indispensable elements for the promotion and realisation of an effective and reciprocal interrelation between Individual Project, Individualised Educational Plan and Life Project (Montanari & Brunetti, 2022).

Sustainable planning designed for each and every person, centred on the concept of the person in the different contexts of life in which he or she is inserted, represents the stimulus for innovative and responsible synergic cooperation between school and non-school, within a fertile broad and complex ecosystemic planning dimension.

As evidence of the realisation of virtuous, concerted and structured forms of planning between school and non-school, the brief school narrative of Alexandru, a pupil of Romanian origin attending the first class of the secondary school of a comprehensive institute in central Italy, is presented. In the transition between primary and secondary school, the parents, at the urging of the teachers of the previous school grade, agreed to subject Alexandru to clinical observation at a multi-specialist medical team. After an initial phase of resistance and reluctance, in which both parents' fears and negative projections emerged, the boy's family accepted the school's suggestion, hoping for a favourable medical pronouncement.

The diagnosis accompanying the event is as follows: mild cognitive disability in comorbidity with attention disorder (no hyperactivity). The family, unprepared for the unexpected and unwanted news about Alexandru's functioning profile, immediately showed an attitude of closure and resistance. In particular, the father's non-acceptance of the new reality, which has resulted in the presence of a specialised teacher in his son's class, causes him discouragement and discouragement. Alexandru, after some initial reservations, accepts the possibility of collaborating with the new support teacher assigned to him, also appearing eager to open up and establish a dialogue with the team of educators who take turns in accompanying the pupil in his Life Project (Canevaro et al., 2021).

On a temperamental level, Alexandru stands out as a calm adolescent, endowed with a generous disposition who willingly accepts the help offered. He possesses an obvious self-deprecating spirit that helps him downplay facts and situations, relieving him of possible anxiety disorders. At times, he tends to become stubborn, entrenched in his positions and considerations, refusing, a priori, to change his ideas, evaluations, or to modify them, reformulate them even in part.

As for the organisation and articulation of the afternoon extracurricular educational activities, Alexandru is supported by two socio-pedagogical educators for three hours a day. During each week, there is usually a return meeting with the family by the psychologist from the social cooperative in charge of managing the customised educational intervention, shared with the school and the family. The dialogue involves both informing Alexandru's parents of the evolution of the educational path undertaken and the relative practices adopted and a direct exchange with the boy, so that he can freely express his voice and can narrate himself with satisfaction.

At this point, the school becomes the concrete spokesperson for a planning synergy for the realisation of an educational pathway aimed at broadening the pupil's possibilities of choice and self-determination (Cottini, 2019). In the first instance, the team of educators, accompanied by the competent supervision of the psychologist, begins to draw up a weekly programme for Alexandru, structured in three distinct sequences,

interchangeable at the level of succession. The initial phase includes the performance of tasks and/or deliveries related to the morning work in the classroom. Subsequently, the possibility of joining the sports activities conducted in the social centre run by the cooperative, to which the educators have free access, becomes apparent. The final moment represents an opportunity for collective sharing and relaxation with the other, older boys of the day centre. Alexandru has always been very attracted to the group in which he is placed, he considers the boys in it as models to imitate and in whom he mirrors himself to such an extent that he spasmodically seeks their attention and their gaze. With regard to everyday family life, Alexandru lives much of his time next to the reassuring presence of his mother, supporting her in household chores and being affectionately close to her. Alexandru does not have the same attachment to his father, as his father, being very busy at work, is not able to share much time with his son.

Alexandru's mother has a strong attitude of mistrust, which sees her firm in her conviction that she does not at all welcome her son's daily visit with the educators to 'do his homework' in this centre which is unknown to her and which she does not trust at all. It is not at all easy for the educational team to involve Alexandru in the project specially designed and adapted to his needs. It is therefore necessary to create a widespread and sustainable educational network of support (Canevaro & Ianes, 2019) that can synergistically activate all school, family and social resources according to an integrated intervention logic functional to the development of the person's identity, her abilities and her desire to self-determine (Mura & Zurru, 2016).

In order to be able to outline and implement a concretely inclusive design capable of linking the formal education dimension with the informal, scholastic and extra-scholastic dimension, the educational team, supervised by the psychologist, first of all organised a meeting to get to know each other and to bring about educational convergence with the team of teachers in Alexandru's class, of which the specialised teacher was a particular promoter. On this occasion, the invitation to this meeting was also extended to the boy's mother. According to what is described in the IEP-life project, Alexandru expresses most difficulties in concentrating and maintaining attention for a prolonged period of time.

Many of his problems stem from the excessive amount of time he spends in front of his smartphone and tablet screen, digital tools, unfortunately, too often abused by the new generations and sources of various disorders (Riva, 2019; Cannizzaro & La Barbera, 2020). In order to combat this form of addiction, the school and, first and foremost, the support teacher, strongly recommend that Alexandru use the day centre spaces during the afternoon. In order for him to gradually emancipate himself from the use/abuse of technology, the competent support of educators was necessary within the project.

Thanks to the contribution of an educator particularly experienced in the use of digital tools for communication, Alexandru began to use computers and tablets, mediums he loved, not only to enjoy the most popular social media -*Instagram, Whatsapp, TikTok*- but to prepare and assemble diverse study material. The digital objects he created, carefully reviewed and prepared, gradually took the form of presentations using webtools such as *Google* or *Canva*, after being assigned by the curricular teachers during school time. During the afternoon educational activities, Alexandru prepares such learning material with the careful assistance of the teacher, while honing computer knowledge and skills that are a source of great attraction and passion for him.

Following the joint interview, Alexandru's mother showed a less distrustful attitude because she was reassured about the much-feared day care centre. In addition to the shared planning between school and extra-school, further personalised planning took place over time. Since the cooperative's day care centre is equipped with a basketball court, and another educator is an expert in the game of basketball, a project idea spontaneously came to light between the teacher of motor education and the educators. Alexandru tried his hand at the sport of basketball with his classmates during class -part of the semester is devoted to this discipline- and together with the other daytime boys. Once a week, some of his classmates voluntarily went to the day care centre he attended, carrying out the project, accompanied by the educator's watchful eye -

the boys often did their homework together with Alexandru, with the help of the educators. At the end of these activities, the educator proposed a test on the subject in the classroom. The educators and the cooperative's psychologist collected a brief report from the teacher on Alexandru's game modes, as well as the progress on the fine manual dexterity expected in basketball. Here, then, is a twofold proposal for a widespread inclusive action between school and out-of-school that can enhance Alexandru's inclinations and convergence in sporting-digital skills.

The joint and shared planning between school and out-of-school has proved particularly effective for Alexandru, to such an extent that the teaching team in concert with the educational team have taken steps to implement new and fruitful forms of inclusive collaboration. During the school mornings, the socio-educational educators -one of whom follows the pupil for four hours a week- take over what Alexandru and the home educators do in the afternoons. Together with the maths and science teacher, the educators, with the help of the specialised teacher, organised an orienteering competition aimed at improving the orientation and organisational skills of the pupils, especially Alexandru.

Precisely in the area belonging to the cooperative where Alexandru goes every afternoon for his homework, thanks to the help of an expert, an orienteering competition is organised in pairs formed by the students of the class - of which Alexandru is also a member, with his desk-mate - who have to orient themselves with their maps following the clues to finish the route. This itinerary, subdivided into twelve stages indicated on the map by green triangles, invites the students to conquer the goal of finding and reaching all of them, in the shortest possible time, despite the fact that they are hidden in cramped places and hidden from view. Although physically and mentally demanding, Alexandru enthusiastically adheres to the activity, showing keen interest and involvement.

The pair in which he competed did not reach the podium, but for the boy, the result was not a failure; on the contrary, he succeeded in realising the fundamental importance of participation and fun in a group. The activity also proved to be extremely positive as it helped to consolidate the relationship with the class and his peers. The school and the cooperative treasure the constructive project experience, considering it a fertile matrix of further, constructive and future initiatives aimed at school and social inclusion.

CONCLUSION

Today, more than ever, it is crucial to emphasise the value and fundamental importance of promoting inclusive educational practices to foster and accelerate quality social transformations in favour of building democratic, equitable and sustainable societies (Ghedini et al., 2018). In such utopian and generative frameworks, educational institutions, first and foremost the school, are configured in a renewed way by representing not only places of training but by enhancing actions on the micro and macro socio-cultural contexts of reference and by aiming educational design at the participation of all. Promoting inclusive educational action as a creative act to be sustained, always and in any case, means questioning and critically re-interrogating the structures and the load-bearing values of educational action in concrete, real situations full of dramatic, unexpected but also creative changes (as current events teach us).

In promoting the perspectives of accessibility and sustainability, in attempting to reduce situations of inequality and marginalisation, in fostering social cohesion and processes of true cultural, civil and social emancipation, schools are called upon to achieve the goal of possible inclusion, both in the present and in the future (Meirieu, 2020). The transformative change towards the inclusive and supportive community (de Anna, 2014) that absorbs the complexity of human living and its multiple, functional and dynamic relationships with differences and diversities (Bocci, 2021) assumes as a performing tool the responsible solidarity oriented to the construction of a common good (Mortari, 2017).

Such a process can positively restart from a shared and personalised educational planning, as in Alexandru's school narrative, aimed at guaranteeing the right to choose of each and every person (d'Alonzo

& Maggiolini, 2019) supported by the openness to a facultative vision of existence where no life is tiny (Gardou, 2015).

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