

BEING OPEN TO THE EDUCATIONAL COMPETENCIES ON THE COMMUNITY LIFE EXPERIENCE

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Abstract: Social transformations in times of economic crisis suggest the need to re-evaluate (upgrade) the educational role of parents, educators, teachers, and social workers. The new social emergencies sometimes obscure the importance of education as an indispensable instrument of social, cohesion, integration policies, and economic and human development. The present study describes the theoretical pedagogical context in which the research project on the socio-educational competences of educators in a community for unaccompanied foreign minors was developed. Lifelong learning, remaining active, improving individual creativity and generativity are the ways to train young educators today to invest in the development of skills for individual growth, economic participation and the social inclusion (literacy).

Keywords: capability approach, educational expertise and resources, planning, territorial education cooperation

1. Social transformation and education responsibility

Even knowing how to teach the concept of "being for oneself" and knowing how to distinguish the epistemological and ontological plane of being from the concept of "being for the other" is a capability that requires high commitment and great educational ability. It is a capability that previously required the adult to have the ability to reflect on the experience and then to be able to manage educational problems in every situation and life context (family, professional, social). An example from the field of social educational services is

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when the concept of desire had to be interpreted in view of the exclusion of the subject from the sense implied in different life events.

As recently as 2003, C. M. Mozzanica held that the word of “desire” were unknown to traditional welfare ". Desire, unlike “need”, evoked a sense of expectation and relationship (professional, interpersonal, empathy). Need, on the other hand, evoked satisfaction in the forms of what was guaranteed, and demanded the protection of the law as a right which demanded a response. Similarly, different approaches could be found for the study of disease, suffering and old age, death, disability. Disease could be considered as something to be freed from rather than something to be understood"; suffering as something to which we become silent impotent spectators; old age was not accepted as a time of life and death, an "unspeakable event"³⁴ .

After a decade, the issue of exclusion of the person from the search for existential meaning, appears in the context of socio-cultural scenarios that have characteristics similar to the approach described above. However, overshadowing this same horizon, now there is the risk inherent in the loss of sense not only in the search for existential meaning but also in the exclusion of the person from the world. Among the most interesting analysis on this transformation is that carried out by Z. Bauman, which invites us to reflect on the concept of "negative globalization".

In its current purely negative form, globalization is parasitic and predatory that postmodernism has changed over time. It has progressively fed on the poison of fear, lawlessness, terrorism, surveillance and drying up of solidarity. For Z. Bauman this transformation is leading inevitably to alarming consequences. Most of all, is an inability "to slow the astounding rate of change, let alone to predict and control its direction." The fear of uncertainty in a world that appears increasingly liquid and impenetrable leads us to the idea of minimizing the risk of existence: "We are all looking for the " Seven Signs of Cancer "or" Five Symptoms of Depression ", exorcise the specter of “high blood pressure or cholesterol levels, stress or obesity” without realizing that this feeds in us that sense of disorder and widespread insecurity that is very lucrative for advertisers whose increased sales of

³⁴ Mozzanica C.M., 2003. I contesti della progettazione educativa, in M.Santerini, C.M.Mozzanica, R.Sidoli, G.Vico, (a cura di), *Formazione e progettualità nei servizi educativi*, Milano: Franco Angeli.

superluxury SUVs have become a symbol of security³⁵. It's clear that we feel threatened and the worst thing is not the fear of danger but what this fear can turn into. In keeping with the idea of the future, we think we live in a time when the rule of fear leads us to a defensive attitude, contrary to the principles of education inspired by the virtues of faith, hope, openness to the next person. The matrix of actions inspired by fear seems to take root in the unstable ground of an uncertain future that puts a strain on the self-esteem and sense of confidence that is needed to educate, to live, to be generative. If we analyze how we managed this fear, we see that it appeared in two phases in the period of "solid modernity". The first marked the disappearance of solidarity, where associations, unions and the collectivity "tended to replace the natural ties "damaged beyond repair" The second phase, marked the end of freedom from fear, with the return of "dangerous classes", meaning those classes consisting of redundant groups, temporarily removed from society but still potentially reintegrable. Today, new "dangerous classes" make their appearance as one of those social groups commonly considered inadmissible, unfit to be reinstated because no useful function can be found for them to play after "rehabilitation." In this context, the new generations will have to confront not only these classes, but also those considered superfluous and permanently excluded (...). In the future, as Z. Bauman explains, the exclusion, will not be perceived as something temporary and potentially remediable, but as a permanent process actively encouraged by the liquid modernity. Increasingly exclusion tends to be "one-way street (and be perceived as such)". Its main attribute will be, but in fact already is irrevocability: "a direct consequence, even if unexpected of the decomposition of the welfare state, as the web of established institutions, but perhaps in an even more significant way is an ideal project by which to judge reality and incite action"³⁶.

From these statements what is more important to the purposes of our pedagogical reflection springs from the idea of the project. It is an idea that includes the need to hope for a better future which does not corrode talents, human qualities, ideals and does not smother expectations, so isolating humanity itself from the world in a process of general indifference.

It would be a terrible defeat if the project of the welfare state faltered due to its inability to define its objectives eliminating opportunities for redemption, as well as the possibility of recovery and social reintegration.

³⁵ Bauman Z., 2014. *Il demone della paura*, Roma: Laterza.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

It is a project that loses its ability to influence the social context. Faced with this framework of uncertainty, how can you educate the principles of Christian personalism when already with the idea of the withdrawal of social recovery is implicit gradual reduction of hope and weakening of will³⁷.

If educating means learning to live with dignity, respect and responsibility, what image will the young have of the adult when they have to measure up to the consequences of the culture of waste and the dematerialization of work? Today, "not having a job is increasingly perceived as a state of "redundancy" (discarded, labeled with the brand of unnecessary, useless, unemployable and condemned to remain "economically inactive") rather than as a condition of "unemployment" (a term that indicates a departure from the norm, which is that of "being employed". Being unemployed means being disposable, perhaps having already been disposed of once and for all, thrown on the scrapyard of "economic progress" (...). Being unemployed means not only being stigmatized but seeing themselves categorised as waste, namely in those categories which, from our point of view, clearly separate the adult world from that of the present generation. The first category "separates the unemployed, particularly the long-term unemployed, from the black hole of "the underclass": men and women who do not fit into any legitimate social division, individuals outside classes and who have no recognized, approved, useful or essential function performed by members of 'normal' society: people whose contribution to the life of society is zero, with whom society could do without and from whose disappearance it would only gain.

The second category separates those declared "redundant" from what are called criminals: the "underclass" and "criminals" are none other than two sub-categories of the excluded, the "socially unsuitable" or even "anti-social elements", differing from each other more by social classification and the treatment that they receive than by their attitude and conduct³⁸.

Just like people out of work, the criminals (those jailed, charged and awaiting trial, watched by the police, or simply on a police file) are no longer seen as temporarily excluded from normal social life to be "re-educated", "rehabilitated" and "returned to the community" at the first opportunity, but as individuals who have been permanently marginalized, who are unfit

³⁷ Ibid., p.28.

³⁸ Ibidem.

to be "recycled socially" and destined to remain long out of trouble, separated from the community of citizens law-abiding³⁹.

Educating in the era of waste, of exclusion by the same rules that govern the coexistence of peoples, cultures and generations, means taking note of the consequences arising from the existential emptiness, the absence of work, and the inactivity, and taking a step forward until, along the path of life, everyone can walk with dignity regardless of their existential condition of difficulty, hardship or inefficiency. The active involvement of youth, adults and the elderly depend on the ability to push to act on skills in the sense that we have given in the assumptions of the capability approach.

This theory takes into account what determines the opportunities of life and is based on the development of substantive freedoms, but also on the reasons behind the more entrenched social injustice and inequality, particularly discrimination, marginalization and the lack of capability. Recognizing the ability to act and to be, as M. Nussbaum says, will generate greater confidence in man and recognition of human dignity⁴⁰.

In this perspective we present the idea of an educational research project that is currently underway and is being implemented in a Community for Italian and unaccompanied foreign children. The Kayròs Community was set up in 2000 in the Lambrate suburb of Milan by religious and lay volunteers from the parish of San Martino and hosts minors in difficulty, referred by the Juvenile Court, the Social Services and by the local police in the area. Kairos derives from the Greek and means "appropriate time", "the right time to", "unique opportunity", "decisive event". On this concept it is placed on educational work in the Community. A place where every child is given the right to live the time of the responsibility, the sharing, the welcome and not only of "rehabilitation.

2. Research into the Kayròs community cross-generational skills'

³⁹ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁰ Nussbaum M., 2000. Women and human development. The capabilities approach, New York: Cambridge University Press; trad. it. Diventare persone. Donne e universalità dei diritti, Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004; Cfr. M.L. De Natale, 2013. Bisogni educativi e risorse nel ciclo di vita delle famiglie. Una ricerca nella realtà di Verona, Bari: Ed Insieme; G. Alessandrini, 2014, La "Pedagogia di Martha Nussbaum. Approccio alle capacità e sfide educative, Milano: Franco Angeli

In recent years there have been major changes in perspective in research on adults with regard to the objectives, the reference theories and the definition of the field of investigation: According to a widely-held point of view, we should talk about lifelong education – all the educational processes that occur during life – rather than andragogy and relatively circumscribed age-ranges. The research in the Kayròs Community moves from this very horizon of studies on adult education and has renewed interest in the life stages of adolescence and post adolescence.

2.1 General aims

The investigation sought to highlight the social and educational skills of educators and trainers by placing them in a capability-approach perspective.

We present the process of development of the educator's personal and social skills from his first educational experiences with children from the Community to an exploration of the skills that have consolidated his awareness of his role and his educational professionalism.

The identification of skills is not intended to reduce the experience of the individual educator to a catalogue of capacities and educational resources or to a simple cataloging of his repertoire of educational ability but aims to raise the value of personal experience to make it concretely recognizable in terms of 'adult learning and educational reflection on foreign children in adolescence.

2.2. Research objectives

The research project “The educational skills in the Kayròs Community” moves from 'intent to investigate the educational models, behaviour, and educational strategies that aim to promote the full development of the growth of the children and educators of the community, the programming/reformulation of the community educational project with the intention of submitting proposals for educational and cultural promotion projects as well as projects in human dignity education.

The object of detection relates to the particular responsibilities of educators at different stages of the educational work in the Community (e.g. reception of unaccompanied foreign minors,

accompanying, etc.), excluding planned interruptions of the educational project provided for by the managers of the Community of practice⁴¹.

General objectives:

Investigate the educational skills of educators belonging to a community for minors; identify the educational problems and relationship between the educational skills already recorded and those still to be detected.

Specific objectives:

- Review the learning (knowledge, skills, abilities, value system, the conditions, expectations, desires, behaviours) in the context of the structural dimensions of knowledge and review the relationship between learning already acquired during the educational experience and learning considered as structural and functional to the educational work of the community. The structural and functional learning of educational work will be analysed. The research aims to investigate the learning that has been learnt and “transferred” in the educational activity and those learnt but not yet recognised by the person and the group of educators as effective educational skills of work in the community. In the research process data acquired through the method of *Bilancio di competenze* will be compared with data from the elaboration of exercise on the auto-narration of an experimental educational learning (whose outcome will contribute to building the reward path of the individual educator) with the comparison of educational categories (intentionality, caring relationships).
- Investigate (from the perspective of the “capability approach”) the capacity, abilities and skills of educators in the processes of reception, design and implementation of pathways to integrate children into the community, integration of programs with local educational services, cultural promotion of the educational service of the Community.
- Analyse the organizational processes of the Kayros Community for enhancement of the educational and cultural heritage of the educators and their effectiveness in relation to application tools that are used in personalized planning and in the education and training projects of minors (Stauto, PEI, etc.).
- Explore the educational models and skills of educators in integrated community settings and their adaptation to the activation of networks of institutional learning in formal, non-formal and informal local setting.

⁴¹ E. Wenger, 2006. *Comunità di pratica*, Milano: Cortina; J. Mezirow J., 2003. *Apprendimento e trasformazione*, Milano: Cortina.

- Identify the strategic tools that are used to set paths of creativity, mediation and customised educational planning with new language and innovative forms for the dissemination of the arts and culture to promote greater social cohesion and to strengthen the sense of belonging of the educators to their place of work in the community.
- To promote social mediation, as a transformative learning experience, between educators, coordinators and top management of the Community, in order to develop knowledge and appreciation of the origins, history and cultural identity of the minors' original cultures.
- Highlight the educational skills related to the functions of coordination and pedagogical design.
- Identify the problems relating to the application of the tools of coordination and planning.

2.3. Lines of action

In relation to the requirements of design tools the following activities have been identified:

Line 1. Initiatives of educational relevance and of socio-educational impact

Initiatives to promote pedagogical competence, enhancing the value of educational communities with particular attention to the diffusion and improvement of educational programs that combine social and cultural identity development of the children with educational issues concerning the educational problems of adults and the elderly.

Line 2. Analysis of educational resources for the enhancement of the cultural identity of young immigrants and for the dissemination of knowledge about their traditions.

In this respect, the research project intends to organise initiatives to meet and reflect on the educational skills of young people to promote (not only within the Community, but also externally) the acquisition and utilisation of historical memory and cultural traditions that characterise and distinguish the context of origin of young immigrants (eg. the promotion and enhancement of the source language to create cultural integration in the Kayròs Community).

Line 3. Macro-territorial Initiatives

The research project aims to promote initiatives for the development of the educational cultural heritage of the Kayròs Community, such as a permanent open laboratory for the dissemination of education research and for the realisation of exchanges and initiatives for Collaboration in project activities that promote the cultural heritage and artistic area of the historical centre of the City of Milan, with particular attention to areas affected by the Movidà phenomenon.

2.4. The research methodology

As part of educational attention paid to the Kayròs Community educators (, etc.), the methodology aims to investigate the instances related to the social needs of the community leaders, coordinators, educators, involved (educational, training, cultural) through the use of educational content applied to scientific research that allows people and groups to be self-motivating and to learn to maximise their subjective personal development, critically and creatively. The methodology intends to make use of pilot sample groups and, for this purpose, uses qualitative and quantitative tools, such as questionnaires, narrative interviews, educational skills assessment and the community of educational practise.

2.5. Instruments

Quantitative tools: forms structured for the target audience and the questionnaire for the educational skills survey.

The structure of the questionnaire for the assessment of the “Social and educational skills of educators in the Kayros Community” was inspired by studies of the writings of Martha Nussbaum, a philosopher and expert on law and ethics. She has coined the term “human capabilities”, which seeks to convey the wealth of potential that belongs to each individual and that must be the subject of care on the part of the human community and international organisations.

Qualitative tools: workshop meetings for each target may be proposed with differentiated proposals for group of educators, volunteers, leaders of the Community to make the participants protagonists.

3. The researchers' findings

To clarify the results of the detection path that is currently under way, the following brief summary is offered of the procedures for participation in research and the necessary processes of involvement of educators that fully satisfy the information requirements:

- A prize will be awarded to the educator who best writes an account of the educational experience.

The winner will have achieved the following capabilities:

1. processing and transformation of their educational experience in social skills that will have to be made available to the whole Kayros Community (with the innovative promotion of new activities planned. Examples: preparation of the community magazine; workshops of music, art, writing, meditation, video productions for educational purposes; permanent updating services of career guidance policies, cultural medium library services, the library, the person etc.).
2. cooperation in educational and training initiatives that will foster cultural exchange between the inhabitants of the suburbs and the centre of the City of Milan;
3. design of territorial cooperation paths for the Education for human dignity.

At the end of the search path, and in collaboration with the trainer/researcher and to panel of experienced educators who have been chosen from among the various educational figures that operated both inside and outside the community, educators will receive “The educational creativity awards” as a token of trust and as an incentive to lifelong learning and the development the social life of the community.