



Cap sur l'école inclusive
en Europe



Resource sheet

Special Education

Section D for /Define

1 Report

The Birth and development of Special Education.
Special Education as a project inclusion programme.

2 Approach – demonstration

The purpose of this fiche is to help us acquire an understanding of how, why and when special education needs to be developed within the larger sphere of general education. It is also meant to lead to a better understanding of the concepts of 'diversity', 'normality' and 'educability' so that we can reflect deeply upon the importance of the inclusion of individuals with special educational needs in both scholastic and social contexts.

What is Special Education ?

Special Education is a research area dealing with the educability of students with disability as well as with that of students who have specific educational needs.

As Maura Gelati states: "just as in general education, special education still focuses on the educational relationship as its main programme of research. The difference lies in the fact that it identifies a particular sector of the population, namely individuals with physical or mental impairments, or individuals coming from environmental contexts which could eventually impair their health conditions. This research analyses these individuals' relative educational problems and outlines specific methods which can meet their needs." (1)

Special education deals with "special people": people at a disadvantage due to physical or mental impairment or learning difficulties. Other situational cases could arise with immigrants or individuals with poor health or socio-economic conditions.

"Special education observes the diversity in individuals on a genetic-functional level. Such mental, psychological and/or behavioural processes are the consequence of some sort of handicap which thus leads to develop processes which are different to the ones evolved in the normal average student." (2)

Special education is meant to identify these processes, understand the needs and outline adequate proposals which enhance these students' potential and encourage their inclusion within the social and the scholastic environment.

The origin and development of Special Education

Special education was founded in France by Jean Marc Gaspard Itard (1775-1838) (3) together with his student Eduardo Seguin (1812-1880) during the late 1700s and early 1800s.

Itard, a French physician and pedagogue, practised his profession in Paris, in an institute for the deaf and dumb. After finding a child named Victor in the Aveyron forest in France, in strong disagreement with psychiatrist Philippe Pinel (1745-1826), Itard sustained the conviction that Victory could be educated despite the cognitive-linguistic, socio-affective and coordination deficit he owned. Itard believed that the education of such a case required additional medical support and it is here that other authors and intellectuals of the time such as pedagogue and philosopher Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) (4) and pedagogue Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) (5) started forming theories in relation to education with special needs.

In Italy, towards the end of the 1800s and beginning of 1900s, psychiatrist and infant neuropsychiatrist Sante de Sanctis (1862-1935) (6), and physician and educator Maria Montessori (1870-1952) (7) introduced a new system of schooling based on pedagogy of activism. This approach focused on the importance of the teaching environment and materials thus creating the ground to respect the child's natural psychological, physical and social development.

Giuseppe Ferruccio Montesano (1868-1961) (8), another renowned personality, insisted on the importance of training for teachers who should acquire knowledge, competence, methods and resources; in 1900 he founded the first orthophrenic school, a medico-pedagogical institute, in Rome.

The first university course in Europe was established in Zurich in 1931 while in Italy in 1964 special education was introduced for the first time in undergraduate degree programmes co-ordinated by psychologist and pedagogue Roberto Zavalloni (b.1920).

By the end of the '60s UNESCO was engaged to discuss and propose the renewal of all programmes within the sector to various countries.

Andrea Canevaro (b.1939) (9) is one of the major contemporary exponents dealing with social inclusion. For him Special Education is the future; it should indulge in exploration, give solutions to recognised needs and find out about new ones thus leading this practice of special consideration to become a normal one (10). Canevaro's reflections consider the concept of "handicap" not just with that of "environment" (11) but also with that of "identity". He emphasises that when dealing with the disabled, identity is one of the most important aspects to be considered since these individuals have a plural identity which should be open to the reception of new elements (12).

The concept of Educability

In all theoretical reflections regarding special education the primary objective is the individual's inclusion within the scholastic and social context. In this case research is of great importance where different specialists work in direct contact with the disabled. There is ample literature about the subject, with new strategies, books, magazines and software resources being continuously supplied to support educators within this field.

Canevaro observes that: "Special education and inclusion should also help develop an ethical sense of knowledge. These areas of study are meant to promote a representation of those who actually live such a situation, weighing the use of language and considering difficulties and challenges (...) they must picture themselves from a point of view of a pedagogy of conflict.." (13)

In one of his articles, Italian scholar Gaetano Bonetta states that "civilisation of our society has been built through civilisation of diversity, the latter being an educational civilisation." (14)

All this has been made possible due to the development of the concept of Educability. This concept bases itself on the individual's potential development of growth and emancipation, which are at the core of the human condition. Educability gives us a sense of belonging to the human race. It allows our recognition of a deep sense of humanity present in each individual. This concept refuses the comparative terms to 'normality' as an interpretation of dominant ideologies and their functions accepted so as natural.

The concept of 'replacement'/repositioning'

In one of Canevaro's most recent articles, the author deals with "replacement", a concept which is of vital importance in the field of Special Education. According to the Italian author, this is when an individual puts himself on a different track to what would have seemed to be his "destiny" (15).

When dealing with the disabled, especially with cases of mental impairment, it is likely that the individual is expected to follow a certain life style with no space for choice or flexibility. Canevaro believes that there is no predetermined destiny: to reposition one self means to give a wider range of possibilities and do away with preconceptions which usually accompany our view of disabled individuals.

According to Canevaro, each individual should be aware of their possibilities: every person has an ideal destination which can be reached wholly or in part by adopting different tracks and making different choices.

Identifying normal aspects in diverse/special individuals

In 1980 the ICDH (International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps) when dealing with "functioning and disability" and "contextual factors" used concepts such as "impairment", "disability" and "handicap".

In 2001 the ICHD was replaced by the ICF model (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health), which was updated to the children and youth version ICF-CY in 2007, which also introduced "Special Education Needs". This model suggests that throughout lifetime, considering the human structure and physical functions in relation to activity and participation within a specific context, any individual could find himself in difficulty and thus need "special education".

Including persons with difficulties into every day life activities means recognising each individual's "normality" within its twofold meaning: first of all it values every individual's rights, and secondly it calls for equality of rights regardless of personal/social status...

Italian researcher Ianes Dario describes the "need of normality" as "the affirmation of owning the same rights and the same value, in addition to having equal opportunities. Furthermore, one should be given the necessary tools to overcome any difficulty encountered so as to develop their maximum potential: we should not stop at providing equal opportunities, but - as Don Milani teaches us - we should «give more to those who own less» (16)".

Ianes adds that "the struggle for inclusion in schools [...] and the fight for human rights stem out from the need to be equal. All individuals are valuable, no matter how diverse." (17)

In one of his seminars (Ravenna, 2008) Canevaro criticises resistance to innovation and insists on the importance of opening up to new competences.

The education system should adopt efficient strategies and technical aspects from special education and psychology of education. This will enable the diverse to be included within a normal learning context so as to allow students to develop their own identity, their self-esteem, and a sense of belonging within a safe context. Such a context is a good background for effective learning even in more difficult cases. Students with special needs have a right for inclusion and finding effective solutions within a normal school context. The concept of normality and diversity should be considered as complementary and not as contradictory.

"The education system can only boast inclusion by deciding to adopt adequate functional conditions which can meet the requirements of a considerable presence of students with special needs." (18)

NOTES

- (1) GELATI Maura, *Pedagogia speciale e integrazione - Dal pregiudizio agli interventi educativi*, Roma, Carocci, 2014
- (2) GELATI Maura, *Pedagogia speciale - Problemi e prospettive*, Ferrara, Corso, 1996
- (3) Itard is known for trying to educate the so-called "wild Aveyron", a child of the apparent age of twelve, unable to speak, found alone and naked in the Aveyron bush. Brought to Paris (1800), he formed a study group within the "Société des observateurs de l'homme", composed L.-H. Jauffret, J.-M. Degérando, G. Cuvier and P. Pinel, with the intent to examine it scientifically, but it was above all Itard to care: moving within an anthropological and educational perspective largely inspired by the philosophy of E.-B. Condillac, Itard, against Pinel who considered unrecoverable, tried, through psychophysical initiatives, educational and playful, the recovery of "Victor" (as he called the boy). The history of these attempts is performed by two writings: *Mémoire sur les premières progrès de Victor de l'Aveyron* (1801) e *Rapport sur les nouveaux progrès de Victor de l'Aveyron* (1807)
- (4) Educator and educationist Swiss Italian family (Zurich Brugg 1746- 1827) in January 1799, based in Stans a home for orphaned and abandoned children; forced to leave Stans for the events of the war, Pestalozzi taught as a teacher in Burgdorf and in 1800 he founded an institute that will be the center of his teaching experience, which created the script *Die Methode* (1800) and the fourteen letters to Gessner, who up volume *Wie Gertrud ihre Kinder lehrt* (1801). "How Gertrude teaches her children" encompasses his pedagogical principles, which on another occasion he sums up: "... understanding, love and the ability to exercise a craft perfected man; the sole purpose education consists of this improvement." The key elements of Pestalozzi's educational method can be summarized in the formula "head (cognitive skills), heart (moral capacity) and hand (handy-craft skills)." (*Dizionario storico della Svizzera*, Locarno, Armando Dadò editore, 2002; DELEKAT Federico, *Pestalozzi : l'uomo, il filosofo, l'educatore*, Venezia, La nuova Italia, 1928)
- (5) Educator and German educator (Oberweissbach, Thuringia, 1782-Marienthal 1852). Several were his cultural background and his professional life until, after meeting Grüner (disciple of Pestalozzi), called his interest in the pedagogical problems. From early educational experiences with Pestalozzi passed to the realization of its institutions, among which leads the Kindergarten (Kindergarten) which he founded in Blankenburg in 1840 and which is linked his fame as an educator and theorist of child education. The fundamental trend of fröbeliano thought consists in the translation in educational terms of philosophical idealism of Fichte and Schelling. The childish game for F. is a non-recreational or diversionary, but essentially "serious": the result is a new conception of the creative freedom of the child, more advanced than that developed by Pestalozzi
- (6) Sante De Sanctis (Parrano, 1862 - Rome, 1935) can be considered one of the founders of psychology and Italian neuropsychiatry. The commitment for children suffering from disabilities remained constant throughout his life. Monographic studies devoted to it (*L'educazione dei deficienti*, 1915) and original institutional solutions, such as "kindergarten-school" for the assistance and social rehabilitation of children and poor adolescents and mentally handicapped outside hospitals.
- (7) Maria Tecla Artemisia Montessori (Chiaravalle, 1870 – Noordwijk, 1952) was an educator, educator, philosopher, doctor and Italian scientist, internationally known for its educational method that takes its name, adopted in thousands of nurseries, primary, secondary and higher around the world; she was among the first women to graduate in medicine in Italy.
- (8) Giuseppe Ferruccio Maria Montesano (Potenza 1868 – Roma, 1961) was an Italian psychologist and psychiatrist; It can be considered one of the founders of psychology and Italian neuropsychiatry
- (9) Professor Emeritus of the University of Bologna and scholar of international prestige, since the seventies of the twentieth century has been committed to social inclusion, with particular attention and interest in the field of disability and handicap. It is considered the father of Special Education in Italy, a discipline that he himself helped to implement and spread in the country. His activism in the areas indicated above, and the great contributions made by his research and studies have made him a key figure internationally recognized in the field of special education and disability
- (10) CANEVARO Andrea, *Pedagogia speciale. La riduzione dell'handicap*, Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 1999

- (11) CANEVARO Andrea, La difficile storia degli handicappati, Milano, 2001, Carocci.
(12) CANEVARO Andrea, Handicap e identità, Cappelli editore, 1986
(13) CANEVARO Andrea, Pietre che affiorano. I mediatori efficaci in educazione con la logica del domino, Trento, Erickson, 2008
(14) BONETTA Gaetano, Dall'integrazione all'inclusione: il modello italiano, in "Pedagogia oggi", 3, 2007
(15) CANEVARO Andrea, Le logiche del confine e del sentiero. Una pedagogia dell'inclusione (per tutti, disabili inclusi), Trento, Erickson, 2006
(16) IANES Dario, La speciale normalità – Strategie di integrazione e inclusione per le disabilità e i Bisogni Educativi Speciali, Erickson, Trento, 2006
(17) Ibidem
(18) IANES Dario, La speciale normalità – Strategie di integrazione e inclusione per le disabilità e i Bisogni Educativi Speciali, Erickson, Trento, 2006.

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