REDUCING UNIVERSITY INEQUALITIES AND THE RISK OF ACADEMIC DROP-OUT: AN EXPLORATIVE RESEARCH WITH STUDENTS WITH VISUAL DISABILITY.

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Enhance the quality of training and ensuring access for everyone in education process have been considered in recent years, the strategic objectives of the European Council[1] policies. Recognize equal opportunity for all students is a prerequisite to design a system of education that can be described as "inclusive."

Inclusion means to "bring in" training environment for all students, with a twofold objective: on the one hand to promote active participation in the educational context, so you can activate personal student skills; on the other hand we can to achieve a personalized training, but at the same time, a training recognized by the institution itself.

The inclusive proposal is part of a wider effort to ensure a genuine right to active participation in the training processes, aimed to ensuring a fully adequate learning that respond to the needs of each person. So there is a substantial consonance with the ONU guidelines that recommend an education aimed at developing of people, including the promotion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, cultural identity and the physical environment. The watchword, then, is active participation.

With participation, in fact, we refer to the ability of students who can and must take a position on all issues affecting them and, specifically, about their training, in order to increase their decision-making skills.

The successful training is, therefore, closely linked to the identification and achievement of common goals, set for all subjects and personal goals, differentiated on the basis of personal skill, inclinations and talents.

The concept of personalization, providing diversified training programs to achieve educational goals, it can eliminate the negative connotation related to the concept of difference; this concept is not linked to minimum standard that is restrictive for those able to overcome it and meaningless to those who are unable to. Education and training policies must therefore ensure that all students are able to acquire and develop their professional skills, essential skills necessary to facilitate their employability, further learning, citizenship active and intercultural dialogue. Educational disadvantage should be addressed by providing, therefore, inclusive education.

In 2007, in fact, took place in Istanbul the 22.th Session of the Standing Conference of Education Ministers of 46 countries of the European Council. The meeting, entitled "Building a more humane and inclusive Europe: the contribution of education policies", addressed the problem of identifying effective strategies to achieve education for all, and in this sense inclusive.

The processes of inclusive education are possible to bring out the so-called "low demand"; it's related to the need of the most marginalized person who still risk being cut off from educational institutions. Among these, a student population that is likely to pay for the lack of adequate services is the population of students with disabilities.

The first initiative of the European Community, on the legislative protection of the right to education of disabled students, is from '70s with the creation of pilot projects for financial integration services. Although these initiatives will mark an important step towards a real awareness on disability rights, the fundamental event that led to the development of policies and guidelines articulated in respect of the rights of disabled people; so there was in 1981 the International Year of People with Disabilities, and the subsequent inauguration of the decade 1983-1992 as the Decade of

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[1] OCSE, 1994; 1995; Charter of Luxembourg, 1996; European Disability Forum 1999; Declaration of Copenhagen del 2002.

the Disabled. Thus was born in 1996, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education[2], an autonomous and independent organization that recognized by European States; the organization uses an online platform to collaborate on the development of provisions relating to students with Special Needs Education.

Non-discrimination of disabled people move Europe towards legislation to protect their fundamental rights; so, in 1997, the Union States, with the Treaty of Amsterdam, issued the legal basis of European intervention for the protection of disabled people . For the first time, disability is specifically mentioned in a European treaty and is publicly recognized the need to combat discrimination related to the presence of disability.

In 2002 the Declaration of Madrid was publicated, it is the cultural manifesto of policies aimed at the disabled. The statement claims "The disabled must have access to ordinary health, educational, professional and social services, as well as all the opportunities available for people without disabilities. Propose an integral approach towards disabled people requires changes at different levels of daily life. " The Convention is inspired by a new approach to disability, the disability is brought back to the existence of various barriers and overcoming them identify the goal. New priorities are protect and make possible the exercise of fundamental rights such as dignity, equality, non-discrimination, individual autonomy, active participation and inclusion in society, acceptance of disability as part of human diversity. The measures taken to protect the rights of the disabled person and to facilitate its inclusion have acted in such a way as to prepare the environment to accommodate the disabled in this direction and particular attention was paid to education and training.

It follows, then, that training and education inclusive processes are fundamental to promoting active citizenship, social integration and personal fulfillment. Essential strategy to achieve social inclusion is precisely to ensure the involvement of all people in the teaching-learning process that must be coextensive with the length of life, consistent with the personal skills and abilities.

On the Italian side, the Parliament, since the '70s, accepts a bet very important for its civil, social and cultural growth: the bet of inclusion in schools and classes, whether those who had hitherto directed to closed institutions, such as special schools, or to seemingly less marginalizing institutional forms, such as special classes. Respect for human beings requires the admission of this fact: the disabled person is a person and as such needs to respect and inclusion in educational shared contexts and open to all. The value of the person requires not only be asserted, but to be effectively promoted by an educational context can provide everything that the condition of disability required. 40 years have passed since then and the situation has evolved.

From an initial phase of integration and legislative protection of the forms of inclusion for students with disabilities it was passed, then, to the constitutional right of the disabled person to access to all forms of education and higher education.

In Italy, just ten years ago, with the law No.17 of 1999, regulated the presence of a disabled student in the university context.

Italian universities had have to adopt a systematic approach to inclusion and support for disabled students.

The objective was to provide students with disabilities the same opportunities as all other students, being careful to avoid creating a sort of "university for the disabled", which exacerbate their sense of isolation.

The Italian universities know mobilized to design and Implement Services that would accommodate the "special needs education" of students with disabilities. In the specific context of the University of Naples, the Center of the University SINAPSI was established which deals with services for the active inclusion and participation of students. It pertains University "Federico II" and offers to the disabled students services to support level of Autonomy and Their active participation in university life and to Prevent the risk of academic drop-out. In fact, the university is a dispersive environment That May Hinder The Conclusion of the Training Undertaken and can impair the quality of it. In

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[2] website: www.european-agency.org

Addition, the relation Between a disabled student with non-disabled students Requires a mutual adaptation and Services That Can a facilitated meeting Between the disabled student and His colleagues who do not share the same "special needs education" (MacLean, Gannon, 1997, Milner, Kelly, 2007).

A good experience in the social field allows you to feel recognized and valued in their own specific characteristics, and it strongly influences the quality of their university career, thus preventing the risk of drop-out. In a special training environment where students are united by sharing the same disability, the reports can be thought of as a field, a shell, as theorized by Anzieu (1986), that binds individuals to promote growth and change. A training environment defined by common tasks, by the learning tasks.

Relationships that revolve around a common task may represent an ecological niche capable of opening gates for significant cognitive and social development for the construction of identity (Bion, 1961).

What is the role of these relationships in the process of inclusion of disabled student? What is the impact of this relationship in the training quality ?

Several nationally and internationally studies, conducted in primary school, have had as objective to verify the degree of acceptance or rejection of a disabled student by their peers and evaluate the role of relationships in predicting the performance school. The results show clearly that good relations not only facilitate the adaptation and social inclusion but also the cognitive and social skills that the disabled student can master their own.

The study of Reid and Button, completed in 1995, shows clearly that the relationality has a role on cognitive development and the development of autonomy.

In the Italian context Tomada, Tonci and De Domini (2005) showed that a good friendship network not only facilitates a better quality of life and social adaptation, but also has good predictive function on academic performance. Parker and Asher (1987) have pointed out a continuity between difficulties with peers at school and lack of profit in their training. Students not accepted by their peers are more likely to develop not only the difficulty of adaptation phenomena, but also drop out.

Especially students with a visual disability have particular difficulties in social inclusion (Bruce, Muhammad, 2009), Because he hinders Clearly the constant comparison with the others That Takes place through one looking Each Other, Which Emerges by the mainstream disability in the personal identity image (Fraiberg, 1999). Therefore, services to Promote the active participation and social inclusion of students with disability are required (Gillies, Pedlar, 2003), by supporting their training.

Within the university context, in particular, the disability is a condition of inequality which acts as a barrier to achieving these educational potential. In many cases, it is also a risk factor in the academic drop-out (Fuller, Healey, Bradley, Hall, 2004, Borland, James, 1999).

The dropout rate for students with disabilities is approximately twice that of general education students (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). For Youth with Disabilities, Several factors beyond academic achievement Influence Their ability to complete studies: accurate identification of the disability and educational Supports That Make learning possible regardless of disability-related factors.

Accountability without the Necessary and support opportunities for youth with Disabilities to Achieve High Standards May Increase the Rate at Which They drop out and fail to successfully complete university studies. It is important to Determine the study ways to keep students in university.

Students with Disabilities Scored Lower Than Their nondisabled peers on Measures of academic self-confidence (ie, the Extent to Which Students Believe They Can Perform well in school) and social connection (ie, students' feelings of connection and Involvement with the community college) , They Are More Likely to report feeling isolated and alone, and are more Likely to Drop Out Because of a disability or health issue.

Based On Our Findings on Students with Disabilities, interventions Aimed at building confidence in Their academic abilities and encouraging Them to Participate in Both the academic and social life of the college May Be useful.

Current Research Suggests That Not Only Should begin early dropout Efforts, But That They Should continuous across periods of transition for students and be sustained over time. Attendance rates in elementary grade levels are highly predictive of nonschool completion (Hess, Lyons, Corsino, & Wells, 1989), and Significant numbers of students leave to begin studies at University (Camet, 2005).

Considerable Evidence Suggests That May Be Any stressful time of transition for youth (Hillman, K., 2005, Huon, G. & Sankey, M., 2002). The transition from high school to University May Be Particularly Difficult for students with disability, as Indicated by The Significant Increase in dropout rates Among University Students with Disabilities at (Sinclair, MF, Christenson, SL, Evel, DL, & Hurley, CM 1998) .

Furthermore, students experiencing the transition Have to make the usual adaptations to new teachers, new context and new colleagues, as well as to an Increased emphasis on academics, where, the focus shifts from passing classes to earning academic credits Toward graduation (Cameta, R. , Levine, P., & Wagner, M., 2004).In Addition, students must internalize a whole new set of rules and Expectations That Are Heightened by local, state, and National Initiatives to INCREASE academic and behavioral standards of performance for all youth.

In accord, this paper Explores Relationships Between the Experiences of disabled students with visual impairment and non-disabled students, to identify possible resources and Problematic Areas to be Strengthened by designing an intervention to Promote active participation and social inclusion. We report here the results of an initial exploratory phase of a larger project of action research Aimed to Promote social inclusion for disabled students Attending the University of Naples Federico II and Prevent the risk of drop-out. We Collected life stories of four students in training, aged Between 18 and 25 years, Who Have Had Experiences in normal educational contexts (University Federico II) and special training contexts.

The life stories were transcribed ad verbatim and subjected to thematic analysis by two independent expert judges (Lucidi, Alivernini, Pedon, 2008). In the texts have been identified and collected narrative sequences that are related to the relational experiences of disabled students. The data were discussed to understand the differences between the kinds of relationship that creates by the disabled student in two different contexts of training with peers not disabled, peers disabled and the relationship with the university tutor. For each of the relational modalities we have resources and limits.

In a special educational context the mutual help among peers encourages the sharing of knowledge that comes from direct experience of the problem.

Sharing problems determines a strong sense of membership and facilitate the exchange of personal stories and experiences.

Sharing is determined by the existing problems around which are added the participants, whether directly or indirectly involved in the problem, and this provides emotional support through the breakdown of the isolation.

Mutual emotional support is facilitated also by the guarantee of protection of mutual disclosure; confide their "secrets" to an audience of people able to identify with the protagonists of similar experiences, not only strengthens relationships with others, but also allows the meeting with their privacy, through an "unlock" produced by the possibility of expressing oneself.

Nevertheless, although the relationship with a disabled student is described as much easier to establish, because it is based on sharing, but on the other hand confined to a context whose characteristic is to be attended only by people with disabilities; so there are the risk of closed to the outside world, the risk of reinforcing dynamics of exclusion and dependency from other's help, and a risk of a lesser pressure to invest in their training.

A student say: «If you close only in that world [of people with disabilities], it is true that everything is easier, but it risks closing. One should try to reconcile the two contexts. I am not only my disability, I am a person like all the others».

The experiences in a special training with people with the same problem facilitates the establishment of a strong sense of membership. Sharing is not reduced to a simple exchange, but it amalgams the specificity of each to build a context of membership that rewards and protects; personal skills and individual characteristics are sacrificed to mingle with the other creating a closed but reassuring environment.

A student say: «[Being] in contact with people with my same problem, the acclimation and orientation, the amalgam was easier, (...) because, in my view, when two people have the same problem is not difficult to understand . We give you a hand much more (...) that may help you more on an emotional level, I feel more ease».

In the university context, however, in the process of adaptation, the students refers to the difficulties experienced in relationships that are built in an environment perceived as enlarged, open but dispersive, which hinders the existence of significant relations.

«in the university was a bit 'harder on the relationship level. (...) I had to adapt. (...) The university is a largest institution compared to the school. You see, the relationships here are much more discontinuous than the relationships you have in a school group».

Although the stories shows clearly that is the other, the other "normal student" must be educated to the relation. The problematic in relation to the other non-disabled are related to the difficulty of approaching a disabled person.

«With a blind person I doesn't have to explain many things, but with a person who see (...) you have to educate him to have a relationship with you, a preparatory phase to the relation».

In a broad but dispersed context as the University, however, the relation with "normal people" is more difficult to build, but on the other hand it facilitate the inclusion in a broader social contexts; it promotes personal skills enterprise and individual autonomy, which facilitates the training, raising the quality of it and decreases the risk of dropping out. An accompanying effective, in this regard, encourages independence and not dependence on the other.

«In the university there isn't a "safe living", something pre-determined and reassuring as the school, (...) at the university I can speak than "survival" as the ability to adapt. I'm to fit the institution, I'm to propose in the relation, and so you grow and makes you gain more responsibility for yourself, without a constant support of the other, and then it gives you even more autonomy (...) if there is someone always willing to help, you never have to do it yourself».

Then, the stories show that the role of tutor whose the disabled student benefits in the university context seems a central role. The tutor mediates in the difficult process of mutual adaptation between the disabled student and the university. It is a key figure who not only stands as an important mediator in the relationship between the disabled student and their peers not disabled but also he supports and promotes the quality of training. When taking notes, being supported dialogue with the teachers, in planning a curriculum better matched to their abilities. This facilitates the training and stem the risk of academic drop out.
In the relational aspects we are accustomed to thinking of disable as a person to help, but more often than we don't focus on the fact that perhaps it is just the other non-disabled have to be helped

to contact and begin a relationship with a person with disability. The initial embarrassment is a major obstacle to the relationship between people who do not share the same condition. The tutor, which ranks as the third member, makes easier the relation and he becomes a bridge between disabled student and his peer not disabled, between disable student and the university context; therefore the tutor allows for the not disabled student to find a key to the relationship with the disabled student, he acts as a transitional space as well as a secure base, he allows for the exploration and knowledge of the new, of another that is different from himself.

Even the tutor, however, has be trained to its role. The purposeful movement of a disabled student who prepares the guide to dealing with disability allows him to feel the potential to move to a different world, a different world from his everyday life, but a world who scares because it is different.

«I believe that those who are not disabled, whose doesn't have a problem in these terms, he feels more difficult to approach. [The tutor] doesn't know what he does with me, what he has to say and maybe he fears of offending or pitying».

The tutor plays an important role of mediation to help, but this help is received and processed by the ability of disabled student, surpassing the old welfarist vision. The tutor mediates between the social world and the disabled person, access key to an unexplored world, he takes the role of bridge and driving.

«There are so many people at the university, and I was more fond of the tutor (...) Then, after I was able to open myself to the others, I have a guide in the tutor who has helped in this sense, the fact to have a reference in himself has been helpful».

Conclusions

The relationship with disabled peers which is based on a shared disability creates an amalgam of functions with mutual help: the peer is a figure you can help and from whom you can be helped, it becomes a mirror of themselves and the similarity is replaced with identity . Moreover, although They are conducive to emotional sharing, in experiences in which students belong to special schools for disabled students, the other is likely to hinder social inclusion.

It seems clear, however, that the closure is detected when it is limited to experiences in relational contexts that are defined as primarily related to disability. In these contexts is apparent excessive protectionism against the disabled that would prevent the independence and choice.

The relationship with non-disabled peers, however, even if it is more difficult to establish, is narrated as a place of choice for the student and autonomy "steered" in the social universe by the "normal" figure of a facilitator, a mentor able to activate His planning.

The university, a "normal" context, is regulated by laws that don't arise for the disabled person, there is a place that allows for more autonomy and opportunity to commit themselves to define their own life project. However, participation in such a social world is complicated and not always positive, if not adequately supported. In this regard, the presence of a mediator, a tutor can be a bridge in the relationship between disabled and "normal" students, is told as the key figure for the significant relationships with university colleagues who are not disabled. This is a spontaneous resource, if developed and nurtured, can make more flexible the process of inclusion. For this reason, this initial exploratory phase was useful to guide the larger project of research and intervention aimed at promoting social inclusion of disabled students, through tutor training activities, supporting this figure in his mediation function in the relation.

The question that arises now is precisely the type of training for tutor. What are the skills of tutor to his function as mediator? Today, the psychology seems to be called to deal with the training of

those tutors who accompany the disabled student in his formative career in order to better prepare the key role in the processes of inclusive educational contexts. What are the place for psychology in this training ? What should be the responsibilities to them are required? How psychology can help to promote this?

In this context we believe that is useful to be able to answer these questions, make research projects in this regard. At the SINAPSI center, of the University of Naples Federico II, are starting a research project aimed at understanding the role of tutor in the process of inclusion of students with disability.

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