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EDUKACJA / EDUCATION

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ROOTING AND INTERCULTURE: FOR A PEDAGOGY OF DIFFERENCES

1. The evolution of intercultural education in Italy

Intercultural education made its official appearance in the Italian school in 1990, with the ministerial circular of July 26, 1990, n. 205 (Compulsory school and foreign pupils. Intercultural education)¹.

This is an important circular because for the first time it dealt with the themes of the insertion of foreign pupils in the school and referred to intercultural education; but the document also contained important innovative principles and provided indications for the reception and integration of immigrant pupils while posing the problem of intercultural education for all.

Subsequently, intercultural education appeared more and more often in documents and studies, also because society became increasingly multicultural and therefore fundamental concepts such as the relational climate and the promotion of dialogue and therefore the indication were made in this regard, the intercultural value of all disciplines and interdisciplinary activities.

Subsequently, the right-duty of foreigners to school education was increasingly affirmed, providing devices and resources to be activated for learning Italian and to facilitate access and to common structures and curricula, also through agreements with local authorities, communities and associations.

There have been numerous approved regulatory provisions, the last of which, very important, the Guidelines of foreign pupils of 2014² which specifically concerned the needs and expectations promoted by the intercultural approach and in line with the pedagogical issues that paid attention:

- the relationship, through the activation in the school of an atmosphere of openness and dialogue;
- knowledge, through intercultural commitment in disciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching;

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¹ CM. del 26 luglio 1990, N. 205.

² Linee guida per l'accoglienza e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri: https://www.istruzione.it/allegati/2014/linee_guida_integrazione_alunni_stranieri.pdf.

• interaction and exchange, through the carrying out of supplementary interventions of curricular activities, also with the contribution of various bodies and institutions; the purpose of integration-inclusion through the adoption of targeted strategies, in the presence of foreign students.

In light of the massive migratory flows, which have been increasingly intense since the 1990s, it has been necessary to review and rethink teaching and integrate disciplinary programs, while special interdisciplinary experimental initiatives currently involve all teachers in the effort to modify and enrich the curriculum, both in terms of content and in terms of methodology and school organization.

We believe, today more than ever, that in order to achieve an effective intercultural education, the school must develop intercultural events or activities starting from the meeting opportunities in which to involve pupils with information and knowledge objectives of the "other cultures", Of exchange and recognition of differences, also with the programming of additional activities for immigrant pupils only to thus respond to the needs of language learning in Italian.

It is also important not only to review the contents, but also to revisit the methodology and methods of transmission of knowledge as well as the school organization itself, in order to carry out educational activities that meet the objectives identified and provide for a coherent assessment, which is in any case always indicative, educational and training as claimed by the docimologist Vertecchi³.

We believe that intercultural education constitutes an important opportunity for the school and teachers to consolidate some general pedagogical acquisitions, which will be invaluable for the student's training process throughout the life of his or her life. Among the latter we can identify: joint attention to the cognitive and relational aspects of learning, the centrality of those who learn and the importance of an active and interactive pedagogy that integrates the needs of decentralization, consideration of different points of view, communication skills and active and creative listening. For this reason it is important to experiment and put into practice a pedagogy of the project and a cooperative working method around common objectives, an action-research methodology and the activation of an ethnographic look⁴ as well as the development of partnership forms within and outside the school system, supported by the exchange of stories, knowledge, references and, therefore, of interdisciplinary aspects.

³ Cfr. B. Vertecchi, Manuale della valutazione. Analisi degli apprendimenti e dei contesti, Franco Angeli, Milano 2016.

⁴ Cfr. C. Ellis, T. E. Adams, A. P. Bochner, *Autoethnography: An Overview*, "Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/ Forum: Qualitative Sozial Research" 12/1(2011), Art.10; per un ulteriore chiarificazione del concetto di etnografia si vedano: Cfr. H. Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek 2008; C. Ellis, A. P. Bochner, *Analyzing Analytic Autoethnography: An Autopsy*, "Journal of Contemporary Ethnography" 35/4(2006), pp. 429–449; E. Becchi, *Per un'etica della ricerca educativa: il paradigma della restituzione*, in: *Pedagogia: ricerca e formazione*. *Saggi in onore di Mauro Laeng*, L. Corradini (a cura di), SEAM, Fornello 2000.

2. Enhancement of differences and democratic coexistence

One of the primary tasks of the school is now to welcome, integrate, include and enhance the multiple differences that are found in the school population. In fact, in addition to disabilities, learning deficits and disadvantages of socioeconomic origin, problems that require specific interventions and the collaboration of other local agencies, individual discomforts that affect the condition of foreign pupils, more and more numerous, are frequent, due to the growing immigration from non-EU countries. These differences, if not integrated into the school fabric, can result in a negative emotional state that manifests itself in dysfunctional behaviors, which prevent the pupil from participating in school life adequately and learning successfully.

"Diversity" is a concept that implies a differentiation from a dominant model, from a uniformity of words, language and thought; it certainly constitutes the being of the person of each of us and is a term that is opposed to homologation and that has significant implications on the human existential and socio-cultural level.

In the past, homologation and assimilation in the various political systems have had disastrous consequences for humanity because they have subdued and denied the dignity and expressions of individuals and ethnic or religious minorities who were. Nor can we forget that migrations and cultural exchanges have often given rise to flourishing periods in the history of peoples. Think, for example, of the Roman empire in which people from all over the world met and exchanged knowledge.

In reality, every culture is "multicultural" because it inevitably contains sediments from different places and peoples. Think, for example, of Christianity, a significant element in the construction of the European identity, and which has its origins, in the Near East, an area inhabited by a predominantly Semitic population. The same term multiculturalism today is considered in a reductionist perspective because it is connected to the societies affected by immigration, but the term in its broadest and most significant meaning indicates the cohabitation between different linguistic, cultural and religious groups living in the same territorial space. Think, for example, of Italy itself where there are different linguistic groups such as the Slovenian, Cimbrian, Ladin, Tyrolean, Provencal, Occitan, Albanian; but also in reference to religious belief in Italy, where there are Jewish, Orthodox, Protestant, Lutheran and Waldensian communities besides Catholics. It must be convinced that cultural boundaries are not as rigid as those of the state, and today more than ever the term global village, coined by Marshall McLuhan, about half a century ago, appears current to define the dense network of interdependencies and interconnections on a global scale and transnational culture that characterizes our civilization.

For this to be effective intercultural education must be based on the recognition of differences respecting their identities and their "roots" in order to achieve

and achieve a possible democratic coexistence. Only in this way will it have a particular formative impact that can develop «in all dimensions, in all planes, in all regions that the subject finds himself inhabiting, involving the biological, psychological, social, social aspects. individual, politician, historian and cultural»⁵.

Having said this, it can be said that interculture, «before being configured as the object and task of a social and educational theory / practice, is the voice that critically and problematically questions pedagogical knowledge in its structure so as to be able to interpret, understand, make confrontation, activating practices, governing the forms of the relationship between different cultures in view of a common action strong of mutual dialogue and consequent enhancement of differences»⁶.

Also very important in the intercultural educational process is the objective of establishing and implementing a new citizenship pact capable of managing the transformations taking place guaranteeing social cohesion.

Increasing democratic participation must mean overcoming the "subaltern integration" model which sees immigrants as a mere workforce and recognizing the difficulties that these people encounter every day in the territory in which they reside. Interculture needs socio-cultural mediation which is primarily a strategy of equalization of opportunities with the aim of rebuilding social networks, creating new skills and restoring the self-esteem of immigrant students, also recognizing those aspects related to cultural and religious experiences. In this there must be the pedagogical commitment of the educational community both horizontally and vertically, therefore not only of the territory, but of the various orders and grades of school.

The presence of pupils with non-Italian citizenship is now a structural phenomenon of our school system. Hence the necessary choice of full integration-inclusion in everyone's school by taking intercultural education as a transversal dimension, in the belief that one must start from the acquisition of the ability to understand and be understood and from the effective mastery of Italian as a second language to give response to communicative and linguistic needs for students with non-Italian citizenship, especially those who have recently immigrated.

«Entering the interculture means entering into a hypercomplex device, full of travails and fraught with obstacles, directly involving the school, which can become the ideal place for an ethnocentric review and for training in multiple formae mentis. A school, therefore, that sensitizes respect for cultures, promoting constant dialogue between them, stigmatizing ethnocentrisms and divisions. Hence the need to rethink / reconstruct the professionalism of the teacher, with a view to a new awareness (anthropological and pedagogical at the same time) that lies beyond the attitudes of resistance and / or simplistic enthusiasm to instead go towards a "true intercultural education"»⁷.

⁵ E. M. Bruni, *Pedagogia e inter-cultura. Tre possibili chiavi di lettura*, in: *Una pedagogia possibile per l'intercultura*, E. M. Bruni (a cura di), Franco Angeli, Milano 2019, p. 36.

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ A. Mariani, Elementi di filosofia dell'educazione, Carocci editore, Roma 2006, p. 55.

Therefore the importance of the educational function on the part of adults (in the family, in society, in the school) requires the centrality of the subjects in education, as a prerequisite and objective for a growth richer in opportunities in a society increasingly characterized by differences and multiplicity and where there is a need to strengthen the awareness that diversity and pluralism are a wealth of democratic coexistence.

3. Intercultural dialogue as a wealth of diversity

The school has always played a fundamental role in encouraging creativity and inspiring an authentic dialogue between cultures and for this reason all educational institutions must be able to implement cultural exchange programs with other countries.

Our country ratified the Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions on January 31, 2007, which is now in force. Peace and intercultural diversity are the founding principles of a new conscious and supportive citizenship, in the new multiethnic, multireligious, multicultural societies, which are consolidating following the unstoppable processes of globalization and new migratory flows⁸.

The European Commission has declared 2008 "Year of Intercultural Dialogue": the promotion of a European year is in fact aimed at raising awareness among European citizens and, in particular among young people, the cultural difference with its lifestyles⁹.

The school is called to actively contribute by proposing activities aimed at promoting intercultural dialogue to give strength to the development of a responsible citizenship, respectful of diversity and oriented towards shared values¹⁰.

In the work "The inclusion of the other", a topic that particularly touches on the theme of the communicative relationship and equal rights for all men, Habermas conducts a critical analysis with a careful look at pluralistic societies, in which multicultural contrasts there are very evident, bitter and strong contrasts that have led different parts towards conflicts with tragic conclusions ¹¹.

The inclusion of the other in the collective and in the process of socialization of the community is never homologation of the other with the suppression of any element of diversity, difference, cultural divergence.

"Multiculturalism" in other habermasiano work too, the themes of the inclusion of the other and the rights of the person and the universalization of rights,

⁸ Cfr. M. Fiorucci, La mediazione culturale: strategie per l'incontro, Armando, Roma 2007.

⁹ Cfr. Commissione delle comunità europee. Migrazione e mobilità: le sfide e le opportunità per i sistemi di istruzione europei, Libro verde, luglio 2008.

¹⁰ Cfr. F. Zadra, Convivere nella diversità. Competenze interculturali e strumenti didattici. Per una scuola inclusiva, http://www.eurac.edu/en/research/autonomies/minrig/Documents/Diversity4Kids/Convivere%20nella%20diversit%C3%A0-Franca%20Zadra.pdf.

¹¹ Cfr. J. Habermas, L'inclusione dell'altro. Studi di teoria politica, Feltrinelli, Milano 1998.

together with respect for differences, are taken up and addressed at the level of social and legal concreteness, without losing sight of the integrity of legal entities¹².

A rights system based on a democratic process must respect both private and public autonomy.

Habermas writes: «A "liberal" reading of the system of rights that has ignored this connection would end up misunderstanding the universalism of rights in terms of an abstract leveling of differences: precisely those social and cultural differences that must instead be increasingly evaluated if we want implement the system of rights democratically. The universalization of citizens' rights continues to be the "engine" for a progressive differentiation of the system of rights. But to protect the integrity of legal entities, this system must also equate and rigorously protect the contexts of life that guarantee their identity»¹³.

A pedagogy of communicative action, which does not exclude the other, "different" in culture, ideas, ethnicity must necessarily be seen in the horizon of a universalization of rights.

Equal respect for anyone [Jedermann] does not concern who is similar to us, but the person of the other (of others) in his specific diversity. And joint responsibility for another seen as one of us actually refers to the flexible 'we' of a community¹⁴.

The pedagogist Mariani believes it necessary, so that a profitable ethnic-cultural "dissonance" can be legitimized «to theoretically deepen the meaning / value of multiculturality [...]; of interculturality [...]; of mixed breeding [...]; of dialogue [...]; of deconstruction [...]. But above all of the difference»¹⁵.

Following large migratory flows, and therefore the connotation of a society that becomes increasingly mixed and complex, it is necessary that educational institutions and agencies are called to develop a culture of peace, hospitality and solidarity to guarantee the human rights of each and every one and avoid the great injustice that Don Milani spoke of, namely to "make equal parts for unequal ones".

Elsa Bruni writes: «The intercultural project therefore can only be multidirectional, speaking and looking at all the citizens of today's societies, whether they are autochthonous whether they are foreigners or immigrants or migrants. It is each individual who must be allowed to carry out his own humanization process, recognizing himself as a person, that is, capable of resisting the tendency to dehumanization, recognizable in the many forms of exclusion, alienation, marginalization generated by an "unfair order", as well in the late 1960s he described Paulo Freire experiencing the condition of political exile in Chile after the military coup in Brazil» 16.

 $^{^{12}}$ Cfr. J. Habermas, Ch. Taylor, ${\it Multiculturalismo}.$ ${\it Lotte per il riconoscimento},$ Feltrinelli, Milano 1998.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 73.

¹⁴ J. Hebermas, L'inclusione dell'altro. Studi di teoria politica..., p. 9.

¹⁵ A. Mariani, Elementi di filosofia dell'educazione..., p. 63.

¹⁶ E. M. Bruni, Pedagogia e inter-cultura. Tre possibili chiavi di lettura..., pp. 38–39.

The school is the privileged place where the quality of life of people can be improved and where the skills that can be spent in the world of work can be acquired, without prejudice to the credit that must be given to the protagonism and diversity of each student.

Educating in interculture is educating to know how to create perspectives from which to look at reality in a decentralized way and not only utilitarian or prejudicial, it means dilating the interior space by increasing the reflexivity, so that, in this interior space, "reality" is placed and activated the processes of overcoming all intellectual and cultural egocentrism¹⁷.

4. The peace building school

It is essential that the school becomes a place of peace, a place where one learns the value of peace, which must be internalized and then externalized, therefore witnessed by putting into practice the dialectic of mutual recognition of human rights, solidarity and a love for the neighbor who has no boundaries, because loving one's neighbor «means making oneself closest of the most disturbing, upsetting, of the unexpected that assails us, which hits us, the mere sight of which creates repulsion»¹⁸.

A school of peace is, in effect, a school that reflects on itself and that "rethinks" educational models and teaching strategies with reference to the integration-inclusion process, which must interest the whole educating community and disciplinary knowledge in a transversal sense.

Every moment of school life can be decisive:

- from the moment the student reception is organized;
- the reception and integration of non-Italian children in schools;
- the activation of specific educational paths in respect of the diversity and equal opportunities of each person;
- the common construction of citizenship:
- taking care of participation in school life;
- the planning of activities and initiatives to combat early school leaving through peace tools ¹⁹.

A culture of peace also aims to preserve future generations from war, inspiring and acquiring attitudes of sharing, respect, tolerance, dialogue, cooperation, in an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding, and is the prerequisite for fostering social cohesion and development of an economy based on knowledge and solidarity.

¹⁷ Cfr. Interculturalità e scienze dell'educazione: contributi per una proposta di educazione interculturale, L. Santelli Beccegato (a cura di), Adriatica, Bari 1995, pp. 24–25.

¹⁸ M. Cacciari, *Drammatica della prossimità*, in: *I Comandamenti. Ama il prossimo tuo*, E. Bianchi, M. Cacciari (a cura di), Il Mulino, Bologna 2011, p. 91.

¹⁹ Cfr. F. Bossio, Fondamenti di pedagogia interculturale. Itinerari educativi tra identità, alterità e riconoscimento, Armando Editore, Roma 2013.

Pluralism and intercultural dialogue are today pre-eminent tools to stem and discourage extremism and fanaticism and to foster a peaceful culture and civil coexistence.

In addition to being the fundamental reference value for peace, intercultural education derives from a conscious acquisition of the skills that every citizen must possess in order to be involved in global democracy.

The help that hegemonic culture can give to that of the "different" consists in following the paths indicated by intercultural pedagogy, that is, an educational project that addresses both natives (so that by knowing other cultures they learn to know each other more), as well as foreigners, so that their minority appears as the distinctive trait of an identity to be reaffirmed and to be manifested socially, not asking for the piety of others but the respect due to every difference²⁰.

The concept of interculture within the school community can contribute to improving the organizational and relational structure by placing the centrality of the person in the teaching-learning process.

«Educational planning in an intercultural sense requires organic planning, which goes beyond the sporadic nature of isolated interventions which are only the re-proposition of the stratification that characterizes society. Consider, for example, the folkloric approach that reduces knowledge and the relationship with other cultures to the so-called "hour of interculture".

The curricular reorganization recalls a new idea of cultural difference, a concept of difference as a value which provides for a methodology based on the analysis and coherent predisposition of pedagogical practice. The curricular revision from this point of view covers all disciplines and is, as has been pointed out, logically bidirectional in that it is aimed at indigenous young people and young people who come from other cultures»²¹.

As amply demonstrated by the educational experience of the schools, the teacher is the main protagonist of the diffusion of a culture of peace. It is the task of teachers to promote understanding, mutual respect for differences, tolerance, gender equality, friendship and solidarity.

Realizing and building intercultural and peace paths is one of the objectives that the Italian school has set itself in recent years. All this will be possible by promoting activity-oriented educational courses that facilitate the collaboration of Italian and non-Italian students.

5. The school as a place of roots

The school must be considered as a place of roots for the many children who find themselves living in the condition of uprooted from native places. Much by the way, the philosopher Weil, a young Jewish French refugee, dedicates her

²⁰ Cfr. D. Demetrio, G. Favaro, Bambini stranieri a scuola. Accoglienza e didattica interculturale nella scuola dell'infanzia e nella scuola elementare, La Nuova Italia, Firenze 1997, pp. 13–15.
²¹ E.M. Bruni, Pedagogia e inter-cultura. Tre possibili chiavi di lettura..., p. 44.

reflection on the duties and human rights in view of a future society, which was no longer under the nightmare of so much barbarism and the errors of the so-called civilization that I had made it possible. His thoughts on duties and human rights clearly emerge from posthumous work: The first root. Prelude to a declaration of duties towards the human being, issued out of interest by Albert Camus in 1950²².

In the work "The first root", Weil expresses the primacy of obligation, an obligation that defines eternal and responds to the eternal destiny of the human being. And the fact that a human being has an eternal destiny imposes only one obligation, respect. The obligation is fulfilled only if respect is actually expressed, in a real and non-fictitious way, and this can only happen through man's earthly needs such as the need for rooting²³.

Rooting for the French philosopher is the most important need of the soul and is manifested through a real, active and natural participation in the life of the community. It is the sense of belonging to the community that is given by the place where you live, by the profession you carry out, by the environment. A person is naturally rooted in a community environment when, by contacting environments other than himself, he manages to act as a vehicle of transcendence. A closed environment is not a true community; it can offer the individual the nourishment to which it is entitled only if it connects it to differences.

«A certain environment must be influenced from the outside, not to be enriched, but to be stimulated to make one's life more intense. It must feed on external contributions only after assimilating them and the individuals who compose it must receive them only from it. When a painter of authentic value goes to a museum, his originality feels reinforced. The same must happen to the different populations of the terrestrial globe and to the different social environments»²⁴.

The community represents the environment in which the 'different' becomes important for the maintenance and consolidation of the unrepeatable identity of each of its members. Without 'grounding', that is, when the human need-right to the true community is violated, not only does the life of the individual become impoverished, but the dynamics of an ever wider eradication are triggered.

«The Jews were escaped slaves and exterminated or enslaved all the peoples of Palestine. The Germans, when Hitler took possession of them, were truly, as he continually repeated, a nation of proletarians, that is, uprooted [...]. Who is uprooted uproots. Those who are rooted do not uproot»²⁵.

The force that produces eradication is only "brute force". But this force is a 'screen' behind which the strategy of love of the same God is hiding: the

²² Cfr. S. Weil, L'enracinement. Prélude à une déclaration des devoirs envers l'être humain, Gallimard, Paris 1949; tr.it. di F. Fortini, La prima radice. Preludio a una dichiarazione dei doveri verso l'essere umano, Leonardo-Mondadori, Milano 1996.

²³ Cfr. S. Weil, La prima radice..., p. 17.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 49.

²⁵ Ibidem, pp. 52-53.

uprooted, the violent, are only the unfortunate that we are called to love precisely because we love those from whom we will have no spare of love or gratitude is the true greatness of love.

Uprooted people need love, they have the right to love.

For the French thinker Weil, there is eradication whenever it is impossible to feed on otherness.

Rethinking the school as a place of roots, of otherness, of relationality, bearer of values, allows the child to develop a constructive coexistence in a multifaceted cultural and social fabric. This implies not only the acceptance of the different, but also the recognition of his cultural identity and the right of each person to develop starting from what he is, based on his needs, through his life plans, in a perspective of effective social integration.

Particular attention is paid to intercultural teaching and, therefore, to the most suitable strategies and methodologies aimed at development in pupils, starting from kindergarten, with intercultural mentality and personalities. Spreading correct knowledge and enriching the thinking of boys and girls with multiple, rich and articulated investigative tools are therefore fundamental conditions of an intercultural training project²⁶.

Intercultural education today must reconsider its foundations with categories that take into account the evolution of the planet-school²⁷ with models supported by a pedagogical thinking that uses guide models, aimed at playing a role as orientators and coordinators for a process of reflection on education²⁸ and for this reason the construction of an intercultural curriculum that provides for the integration of intercultural issues in disciplinary teaching and the integration of interventions in educational activities can be useful²⁹.

The objective that the Italian school must pursue is to mediate between the different cultures of which the pupils are carriers, a non-reductive mediation of cultural contributions, but animator of a continuous and productive comparison between different models.

It is a matter of designing an educational path capable of guaranteeing the cultural solidity of the subject, directing it towards an identity open to grasping the meaning and value of diversity, an approach that avoids the natural opposition between different cultures, but which predisposes to a relationship constructive, made of understanding, love, concern, acceptance and collaboration between all members of the human community.

²⁶ Cfr. F. Pinto Minerva, L'intercultura, Laterza, Roma – Bari 2002, p. 9. Questo è un saggio molto interessante perché nell'ambito della teorizzazione pedagogica attorno alla possibilità di un "nuovo umanesimo", in cui il soggetto si interpreta costitutivamente aperto all'alterità intraspecifica e interspecifica, la studiosa approfondisce criticamente i temi dell'educazione alle differenze.

²⁷ Cfr. F. Cambi, Intercultura: fondamenti pedagogici, Carocci, Roma 2001.

²⁸ Cfr. F. Cambi, Uno stemma plurale, in: Intenzionalità: una categoria pedagogica, vol. I, E. Colicchi (a cura di), Unicopli, Milano 2004, pp. 26–29.

²⁹ Cfr. E.M. Bruni, Pedagogia e inter-cultura. Tre possibili chiavi di lettura..., p. 44.

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SUMMARY

Educating the heart and intelligence of the person to understand diversity is the commitment that the school has set for some time and that the teachers, together with the students and families, have passionately pursued in view of an integral development of the person.

First of all the school is called, once again, to contribute concretely by proposing a pedagogy of differences.

KEY WORDS: pedagogy, interculture, rooting