



## **Psychopedagogy of special needs: specific interventions**

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### **Psychologist and teacher**

The biopsychosocial perspective and the empathetic communication.

The word “need” means what we miss and what we really need, what we have the necessity for surviving, that could be psychological, social, organizing, affective, economic or relational wellness.

Maslow hypothesized the theory of the individual’s needs, in which these are classified according to a hierarchical order: physiological need, security, sociality, estimation, self-realization.

It should be noted that in all individuals there is the main needs of Maslow, but it is better to think that “there are needs that are unique in every individual” (VEHMAS.2010) because every individual is unique and unrepeatable.

For a long time the themes of special needs in family, social and educational context occupy an important place in our country.

Everyone in continuity or discontinuity way may have special needs for physical reasons, biological and physiological for which we must offer highly personalized answers that can be social, cognitive, emotional one.

The person is a global system with an holistic view, promoting the development that means promoting contact with themselves and their resources increasing self-esteem, emotional competence and ability to relate with others.

For the hypercomplex society the vision of health changes: it is increasingly conceived as a resource for the individuals and for the society, good co-produced and a responsibility shared by countless sectors and social actors. (Kickbusch. I. and Maag D. 2007)

Let start from the idea that every human being is a different individual, original, unique and unrepeatable with weakness but also with extraordinary resources, must have a total vision of the person, with reference to the ICF model (International classification of functioning, disability and health) based on function profile and context analysis as defined by the World Health Organization (OMS. 2002).

The problems related to inclusion in social-communicative system of the persons with special needs, lay on the need to frame the psycho-pedagogical intervention in an inclusive communicative dimension, taking into account the biopsychosocial perspective in reference of two important constructs: activities and participation in domains of ICF (international classification of functioning, disability and health). From the psychopedagogical point of view the communication construct incorporate the activities and the social participation.

The ICF becomes an useful clinical tool in the assessment of psychological needs, in the coupling between rehabilitation treatment and specific conditions but it can also be used in the psychological field to explore the cognitive system subject report : what the subject thinks and says about himself.

In order to provide answers to the individuals with special needs is important to identify common objectives through the establishment of conversation's spaces between the different sectors involved surrounding the living space of the individual with special needs. Without saying much words, we must think about the reasons with which the boy with special needs manages the activities of the daily living and social participation.

Often, a person with special educational needs, leaving out his trouble, shows discomfort in various forms of social participation reaching out to the phenomenon of relational-communicative anorexia.

We find this situation in the novel by Giovanni Verga 1880's "Red Malpelo", a child with a special need, Rosso Malpelo that everyone ignores his real name. Everyone in fact call him only Malpelo for his red hair because they thought was an ominous signal.. Neglected and mistreated by everyone, Malpelo grows up angry. His father's mourning (his father was the only person able to understand him) marks deeply the boy that decides to behave so ruthless with all.

Malpelo has no one who takes care to him, eventually dies in a tunnel following a dangerous exploration. The verbal and non verbal communication used by him (by Rosso Malpelo) leads us to ponder on and reflect on his behaviours, as violence and aggression, to hurt others for not being hurted. Today in our schools he would be identified as a student with special educational needs, for his oppositional behaviors, provocative and rebellious.

What are the feedback that company, the school, the family, the friends gave to Rosso Malpelo? The feedback that the others sent to him were full of contempt to him.. It is so clear for everyone that any action, positive or negative, influence positively or negatively to our interlocutor creating an initial refusal or a barrier that generates than a difficult situation to retrieve and manage.

Analyzing the communication that adults were using with Rosso Malpelo, reveals a "wolve's language", an expression used by Marschall B. Rosenberg, a psychologist, to describe that destructive form of communication in which the charges move and devalue the others...He developed the theory of a "nonviolent communication" better called as "language of empathy", it has found wide application in the solution of conflicts.

The track that we should follow is this one : behind every conflict there are legitimated and important human needs, as esteem, respect, autonomy, understanding. If those needs are recognized and understood by others this can increases self-esteem, participation in social life otherwise you risk communicative mismatch, aggression and relational anorexia.

Human systems are open systems that communicate constantly with their surrounding environment. If you want to grasp the need of an individual you must be at the level of the whole individual and not at the level of the details. The quality of communication is a key factor in the activities and social participation.

From the psycho-pedagogical point of view becomes important for the adults learning how to read, to understand minds communicative, that is to acquire the skill of rage of what is the other person thinking. It is an essential tool for social interaction and is called theory of mind. This can be defined as the ability to attribute mental states as desires, intentions and beliefs to others (in our situation the persons with special educational needs) in order to explain and predict their behavior.

The adults : teachers, psychologist and educators that work with children with special needs cannot not consider the "science of self", emotional literacy and empathic communication.

To answer adequately to emerging educational challenges we need to develop in the student with special educational needs the self-esteem, the ability to withstand obstacles, empowerment of communication, emotional and social self efficacy.

Therefore, it is necessary to deepen skills and knowledge related to the psychology of communication in order to calibrate effective and efficient interventions. Learn how the others communicate and understand the signs, the meanings and the symbols means finding tools and methods to make communication more effective and more real.

### **Special needs education and empathy in self help**

The cognitive science have shown the intercessions, emotion and cognition. A negative emotional signal sent from the outside to the mind of a pupil or a child can cause in him to vacate his action and to participate in society. On the other side, emotional signals can also be operated in a subtly way, in most of the cases, that's how they perform their function. It is believed that the enhancement of positive emotional dimension in communicating with persons with BES (special educational needs), could encourage the emergence of positive emotions. Becomes fundamental focusing the concept of empathy to tune then with intentional states of others, to favorate metalanguage and meta-communication. The inner world cannot be observed with the help of our sense organs. Our thoughts, desires. Feelings, fantasies cannot be seen, touched, heard or smelt. They have no existence in physical space but they are real ,so much that we can observe them however, as well as take place in time: with introspection in ourselves and with empathy in others. (Kohut,1978).

It is important that the adult who interacts with the pupil with special needs, asks himself:

-What are the resources of the boy with special educational need?

-How are these recources created?

-How are the resources distributed in the context where he lives?

The teacher and the parent that are competent, realize very soon that something is wrong in the child, that the operation is somewhat out of balance or dysfunctional negatively.

Pupils with special educational needs are living a special situation, which hinders them in learning and development: this negative situation can be organic, biological level, family, social, environmental or contextual or in combinations with these. These situations cause directly or indirectly difficults, obstacles or delay in learning processes that should take place in various contexts.

In the ICF's context, a special educational need can originate in the frame and bodily functions of an individual, resulting in lower motor or sensory cognitive actions, but it can also be originated by environmental factors such as the architectural barriers and yet can be connected to personal factors, resulting from poor sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem, behavioural and emotional problems.

The educational psychology of students with special educational needs takes the inclusive perspective through self help groups engaged in the relationship of treatment and exchanging narrative.

Gielen (2006) says that one of the reasons why self help groups have been developed and spread so rapidly over the last 30 years in Europe, is probably due to a growing decline of natural systems to support (family, church, neighbors).

Self help groups have as their objective to motivate and activate in all students the forms of self regulation and potential workship.

Who helps is someone that has encountered before the problem of the newcomer, captures a sense of appropriatens and the expectations associated with his role as helper.

Who receives help has a pattern in who provides help which also represents the hope of a future in which may change.

It makes us think that their suffering will not be permanent but can be overcome through the same process and the same tools used by this model that the self help group can provide.

Sharing the experience is therefore a key aspect. Self Mutual Aid is defined by the World Health Organization as “the set of all measures taken by non professionals to promote, maintain and recover the health, understood as complete wellness, fisical, psychological and social well-being of all the community” (O.M.S,1987,p.29).

The self help group puts emphasis on narration of critical events of the children’s life, helping to understand that discomfort is not a limit but a resource for themselves and for others. A new way to stay together, to discuss, to find solution to their problems. The self help group through the narrative of how the individual has learned to live with his “new way of being”. The group is a community of life generator on the territory, a catalyst for change, a way to reclaim the hardship placed in coexistence in everyday life, to transform a limit in resource. Allows the individual to leave the rails already traced from diagnosis, labeling, putting back on the public stage people, skills, knowledge, emotions. A way to live less anonymously, to encourage socialization and communication of experience.

The educational psychology of special need takes account of epigenesist, therefore for boy to grow up not certainly needs dropping or damaging stasis, but neither for premature and alarming stigmatization.

Educational and psychological strategies resulting communicative techniques that promote the ability to address actively of the individuals with (sen=special educational needs). The goal of the psychopedagogical branches is to develop resources or strategies of the person with sen, so that it can better fit into the social and cultural system. Examples of these strategies are technical training, behavioral modification programs, educational intervention on the current crisis, etc. It is also a question of focusing an ethics of self-help support group as a psycho educational resource, mobilized knowingly in a community.

In this sense, the relationship of professionals treatment are called upon to perform the professional skills in helping relationships which constitute mainly in empathic communication activities and educational care.

There is important to taking charge of the boy’s disadvantage in the totally of the person and his friendly life context. Archieving psycho-physical state of the student is crucial. Must offer to those who find themselves in a disadvantage situation active acceptance time seeking all, means to reduce the disadvantage of the departure.

The goal is to archive the best living conditions possible and especially to conquer autonomy combined with ability to be useful to themselves and to others (Feuerstein, Rand, Rynders, 1995).

Often in groups of self help, the boy with special need, manages to implement social and communicative, cognitive, affective operations he had never done before thanks of the use of direct and indirect motivational tools and techniques.

**The motivational card**

The motivational card is defined by Galimberty as a dynamic factor of animal and human behavior that activates and directs an organism toward a destination. Everyone has experienced situations where he found himself demotivated before one or more situations. The same situation can motivate us at a particular time and demotivate in another moment. It’s easy to hear even from people close to us: you are a slacker, you are apathetic, you’re lazy. For a boy with special educational need the demotivation is the daily bread. Often he feels inadequated and think that he can’t do anything.

The motivational card analyses the emotional-mental act through the following parameter: “interest”. Before undertaking any activities within the self help group is important to work on the motivational card. The adult who constituted the self help group will give a motivational card to different members with a personal photo of each participant. The members of the group will be invited to tick the type of external factor that interests him and only later during the second meeting to choose the type of external factor that prefers. The same method must be carried out also for the internal factors.

Here we can read the motivational card pattern by the author

Motivational card			
External factors (in the group)	to be filled in by the guy	internal factors (individual's)	to be filled in by the guy

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <input type="checkbox"/> Encouragement</li> <li>● <input type="checkbox"/> Praise</li> <li>● <input type="checkbox"/> Goal setting</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <input type="checkbox"/> Confidence</li> <li>● <input type="checkbox"/> Improve</li> <li>● <input type="checkbox"/> Appearance</li> </ul>
This table is based on Carron's table (1984)		

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[RIVISTA TELEMATICA NUOVA DIDATTICA -Numero II -Anno 2018 -ISSN: 2283-723X](#)