

## **Pedagogia e Didattica Speciale nel Contesto Scolastico**

### **Special Pedagogy and Didactics in the School Context**

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#### **Abstract**

The aim of this research paper is to highlight the importance of a pedagogical and special education approach in the school context.

In this regard we analyze the main methodologies of special pedagogy and education which might be adopted at school level to promote the processes of inclusion and integration.

Only starting from the school system we can arrive to a concrete social development.

L'obiettivo del presente contributo di ricerca è quello di evidenziare l'importanza di un approccio pedagogico e didattico speciale nel contesto scolastico.

A tal proposito si analizzano le principali metodologie di didattica speciale che potrebbero essere adottate a livello scolastico per favorire i processi di inclusione e di integrazione.

Solo partendo dal sistema scolastico si può arrivare ad un concreto sviluppo sociale.

#### **Keywords**

Special Pedagogy; Special Didactics; School; Inclusion; Integration.

Pedagogia Speciale; Didattica Speciale; Scuola; Inclusione; Integrazione.

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## Introduction

Knowledge in the field of learning is, for a teacher, the foundation on which to design the teaching activity, and an indispensable prerequisite to lead effective lessons. Every student, in fact, develops his own learning modality in different ways, with valuable and irreducible singularity, which must be taken into account for every subject to reach educational success by providing a personalized and individualized learning. The main theoretical fields in the research on learning are Behaviorism, Cognitivism and Constructivism. Behaviorism, the reference authors of which are J.B. Watson, I. Pavlov, E. Thorndike, and B. Skinner, sees learning as a result of new combinations between stimuli and behaviors in response to the stimuli themselves. It follows that a person who learns is essentially passive; the teacher designs activities according to cognitive and behavioral goals by adjusting the contents to the fixed standards, assessing the learning level in the students by means of summative and formative tests, and checking the validity of his teaching activity. He has control over his class, laying down rules and behavior patterns, without taking into account the personal characteristics of every student (motivation, self esteem, learning styles, etc.).

In contrast, the Cognitive approach, supported by authors such as C.Hull, E. Tolman, W. Kohler, K.J.W. Crick, G.A.Miller, E.Galanter, K. Pribram, U. Neisser, considers the subject as an active part in the learning process. Teaching does not only aim at conveying contents, but on understanding how this content can be encoded, stored and processed. So Cognitivist didactics tries to relate every disciplinary goal with a particular learning level by developing taxonomies, a hierarchical classification of learning, in which every level of cognitive processing is based on the complete mastery of the previous one, and is a prerequisite to the next. The teacher is the one who encourages new learning, making sure that students activate their pre-knowledge; In addition, he organizes the strategies aimed at promoting in the subject the ability to learn and organize knowledge contents in an independent and significant way. The Constructivists (L.S. Vygotsky, J. Piaget, J.Bruner, D. Merrill), while agreeing with the idea of the centrality of the cognitive subject who learns, consider learning as an active process of knowledge construction, and not as a process of knowledge acquisition through clear strategies. Teaching activity and teacher are a support to this process. Moreover, learning is not a personal activity, it arises from the social and interpersonal communication and is linked to the concrete situation in which it takes place. The learning environment, according to the constructivists, becomes a lab where we learn to interact with others, supporting cognitive processes of problem solving and finding new problems to be faced and overcome, in an atmosphere of creativity, discussions and exchanges of viewpoints.

In the studies on the nature of learning, which follow the above-mentioned theories but that provide a major contribution (especially for educational purposes), is the pedagogical approach focused not only on the learner but also on the single differences, and it arises from the theory of multiple intelligences worked out by H. Gardner. According to the American psychologist, humans being have at least eight forms of intelligence of different grades, and combine and use them in personal ways. They are not static but change over time as a result of experiences. Therefore, every subject has his own intellectual profile which leads him to respond differently to mathematical, artistic, linguistic and other stimuli. So he assimilates content and knowledge through his own ways of learning. To a variety of learning styles and intelligences must correspond a variety of teaching strategies, in an approach aimed at valuing everyone's diversity and facilitating the development of collaborative and inclusive relationships. The implications of Gardner's theory, at the level of innovation and educational applications, are varied and concern different fields of the teaching-learning process. In particular, the enhancement of individual differences and the overcoming of obstacles related to learning (and not only) are embraced by pedagogy and special education, which put the special educational needs at the heart of their reflection process, for the school and social inclusion purposes. The ministerial directive of December 27, 2012, states that: *"The area of school disadvantage is much bigger than that referred explicitly to the presence of*

*deficits. In every class there are students who submit requests for special attention for a variety of reasons: social and cultural disadvantage, specific learning disorders and/or specific developmental disabilities, difficulties arising from the lack of knowledge of Italian culture and language because of different cultural groups of belonging". In the varied panorama of our schools, the complexity of the classes becomes increasingly evident. This area of the school disadvantage, covering different issues, is indicated as Special Educational Needs area. [...] Here three broad sub-categories are included: that of disability; that of the specific developmental disabilities and that of the socioeconomic, linguistic, cultural disadvantage. Therefore, Special Education and Special Pedagogy provide adequate responses to specific educational needs. Their special field of research is aimed at individuals who need adequate and appropriate interventions, and their task is to promote the development of the human potential for the achievement of autonomy, growth and full participation of the person in society".*

## **1. The new perspective in Special Pedagogy**

The new perspective of Special Pedagogy moves from new a terminology, which changes progressively from Handicap to Integration, and leaving room for those of Disability and Social Inclusion. The socio-cultural and pedagogical development leads to a new vision of disability, focusing on every individual's potentialities. The new international classification (ICF, 2001) is no longer focused on the disability, but, on the contrary, on every individual's resource, potentialities and wellbeing.

The new concept of educational culture is aimed at the enhancement of every diversity to support every individual's development and growth process. The object of investigation is the person, in his entirety and in his multidimensional system of relationships. The aim is to discover the potentialities of the individuals in their way of dealing with the life environment: every person has resources and abilities that need to be discovered so that they may develop and manifest themselves. The educational interventions must be designed to make the subject able to acquire self-consciousness, through the development of his potentialities referred to the socio-cognitive, emotional and affective dimensions. This is the prerequisite for the realization of the personal life project, understood as the need to live, to make sense to existence in order to self-design or self-choose independently through one's own identity.

Developing one's own life project is multidimensional as it includes all the subject's life aspects: the family, school, training, educational, cultural, and social one.

"Special Epistemology" aims at identifying the Special Needs by working out strategies to develop learning in view of an effective school and social inclusion, avoiding the creation of special places separated from the experienced contexts. In a disability there may be disorders that affect different areas of the cognitive, psychomotor or affective-relational development. The working method involves a number of interventions and of subjects, and is intended to support the student in carrying out his project of life according to an experimental approach, always ready to reshape itself and adapt to the special needs, but by always preserving the consistency with the educational and learning process of the students with disabilities (Trombetta & Rosiello, 2000).

## **2. The main Methodologies of Inclusive Didactics at school level**

One of the main objectives of an inclusive learning approach involves the need to make all the students reach the highest level of learning and social participation possible. Obviously, in this perspective, it is not possible to ignore the enhancement of diversities within the group, including all the different and not just the more visible and marked ones in the student with a handicap or with a specific disorder.

In this respect, here below a table showing some of the didactic methodologies used for the inclusion of SEN students (Carlini, 2012; Halvorsen & Nearly, 2001).

**Table 1: Inclusive Didactics methodologies**

<i>Methodologies and Didactics</i>	<i>Theoretical Framework</i>	<i>Application in Education</i>
Metacognitive didactics	Cognitivism	Meta-cognitive didactics aims at making the student aware of his cognitive processes, and putting him in the position to control, choose and improve them. For this purpose, the teacher can choose activities with problematic situations that encourage discussion, exchanges of views and possible solutions, and that stimulate reflection on the steps to take to solve the problem.
Didactics for Integration	Gestalt psychology Systemic Theory of Communication (Palo Alto) Institutional Pedagogy	Didactics for integration is an educational work focused on the organization of the background elements, in order to support the processes of cognitive self-organization of the subjects being trained. The integrator background can be defined as a connecting structure, a container of experiences or rather a strategy that allows connecting and intertwining different skills and paths.
Didactic laboratories	Pedagogical Activism	Through the didactic laboratories, the teacher acts as a learning facilitator and stimulator, and helps students discover knowledge through the action-research method. In this way the student becomes an active knowledge builder, according to his own learning style and by using the different intelligences he has.

Source: our elaboration

### **Conclusion**

In this research work were presented the main methodologies of inclusive didactics capable of promoting an inclusive process of the student with special educational needs in the school context.

A full inclusion of such people must always provide a synergistic development of learning and social integration; by making such this situation we design the bases for the formation of individuals able to exploit its own difficulties not only in the school but in any other social context.

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