

INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES AND PRISONERS STRATEGIE EDUCATIVE INNOVATIVE E DETENUTI

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Abstract

The contribution highlights how the inclusion of the Biodanza SRT System within the treatment programs addressed to prisoners, turns out to be an innovative educational strategy which, through Embodied Training, encourages existential creativity as a competence capable of significantly stimulating the sense of self-efficacy perceived and empowerment, in order to trigger a process of personal innovation useful for bringing out a new perception of oneself, new ways of problem solving and a sense of responsibility for a new future life project. The body laboratory is that experiential space that favors access to one's inner world, involves and stimulates all dimensions of the person (psychological, motor, emotional, relational, spiritual), allows you to incorporate knowledge and acts as a capable personal and interpersonal mediator to let people creatively enter into relationship with themselves, with others and with the world.

Il contributo evidenzia come l'inserimento del Sistema *Biodanza SRT* all'interno dei programmi trattamentali indirizzati ai detenuti, risulti essere una strategia educativa innovativa che, attraverso un *Embodied Training*, incentiva la creatività esistenziale quale competenza capace di sollecitare in maniera significativa il senso di autoefficacia percepito e l'empowerment, al fine di innescare un processo di innovazione personale utile a fare emergere una nuova percezione di sé, nuove modalità di *problem solving* e senso di responsabilizzazione per un nuovo futuro progetto di vita.

Il *laboratorio del corpo* è quello spazio esperienziale che favorisce l'accesso al proprio mondo interiore, coinvolge e stimola tutte le dimensioni della persona (psicologiche, motorie, emotive, relazionali, spirituali), consente di *incorporare conoscenza* e funge da mediatore personale e interpersonale capace di far entrare le persone *creativamente in relazione* con sé stesse, con gli altri e con il mondo.

Key-words Inclusive Didactics, Prisoners, Health Education

Parole-chiave: Didattica Inclusiva, Detenuti, Educazione al Benessere

Introduction

With regard to the evidence of neuro-scientific, pedagogical, and from the most recent perspective of Embodied Cognition, "every form of human cognition is embodied and that is rooted in bodily experience" (Welsh, 2016). A centre of identity and pivot of every experience, corporeity acts as a personal and interpersonal mediator capable of letting us enter creatively into a relationship with ourselves, with others and with the world. The laboratory of the body is that experiential space that, giving access to your own inner world, allows you to incorporate knowledge and foster useful changes to your personal growth and existential development. (Rosa, Madonna, 2019) In this interpretation the proposal of the Laboratories Embodied Centred represents a physical place, emotional, social and mental where the student develops a work on himself through learning by doing and constitutes an opportunity for growth with the awareness that the most important aspect consists in the process and not in the point of arrival. The inclusion of the Laboratories "Embodied Centred" within the treatment programs addressed to prisoners, has turned out to be an innovative educational strategy that

stimulates existential creativity as a competence capable of significantly stimulating the sense of perceived self-efficacy and empowerment. Through "Form-Action" interventions, the acquisition of good practices aimed at respecting human dignity is encouraged in adolescents with a criminal record, promoting and emphasizing personal resources (rather than deficits and pathologies) and adopting motor and psycho-psycho-approaches engines designed to facilitate optimal operation, satisfaction, positive affectivity and vital momentum. The originality and innovative educational character of the project proposal are represented by the pedagogical value of the body mediation methodologies of the Biodanza SRT System and the Biosystemic Approach Counseling considered optimal experiences "agents" on the promotion of personal well-being thanks to the quantitative and qualitative monitoring of social research tools with processing and analysis of data acquired through the Questionnaire of Optimal Experience . Through these innovative educational strategies, the aim is to promote well-being education by strengthening and developing in prisoners the life skills or personal skills useful to consolidate a positive coping mode thanks to which it is possible to face effectively the demands and tests of everyday life by laying the foundations for the construction of a future project of life.

1. Embodied Cognition and Embodied Centred didactic

Based on the construction of embodied theory (Varela, Thompson, Rosch 2009) and the research of embodied cognition (incarnate cognition) (Barsalou, 2008; Wilson, 2002; Caruana, Borghi, 2013) it is now scientifically proven that cognitive functions are rooted in the sensory-motor-emotional system and therefore strongly linked to the perception/ interaction with the experiences concretely experienced through bodily actions located and interconnected with the environment (intersubjectivity) in which the human being lives, acts and interacts (Varela, Thompson, Rosch, 2009). The neurocognitive and psycho-pedagogical sciences have focused on the role of the body and corporeality in the process of constitution and development of cognition and identity and have highlighted the presence of strong connections between brain activity, mental and motor from which it is deduced that the body-kinesthetic intelligence becomes a real tool of knowledge as "The body becomes the main actor in cognitive functions" (Gardner, 2005). In the Embodied Body approach, mind and emotions are the three dimensions of the human being that acquire an essential role in the process of the overall development of the individual in fact pedagogical studies and neuroscience allow to claim that cognitive processes are significantly influenced by the bodily states. All human experiences are necessarily mediated by the body that through a process of awareness of its motor-cognitive-emotional potentialities promotes self-awareness and the perception of their individuality and identity.

The movement induces the person to perceive himself as the undisputed protagonist of his gestures, his actions, his emotions as a true proponent of choices and changes, as a creator and a modifier of reality and, above all, as an artist of his own life. An embodied centred didactics emphasizes the role of corporeity and its multiple relapses in the cognitive field with the development of problem solving and decision making skills .For creating embodied based learning environments, are to favor innovative teaching methodologies that use the body as a medium through which you can realize useful experiences to develop personal resources to stimulate the reorganization of self-knowledge by allowing effective interventions with effects long-lasting. The enhancement of the physical and emotional dimensions is a valid educational strategy training able to stimulate the development of multiple intelligences and emotional intelligence to stimulate that existential creativity as personal innovation that teaches us to exploit critical issues as opportunities for growth.

2. Laboratories Embodied Centred: Innovative Educational Strategies in Prison

The pedagogical reflection of well-being is linked to the "pedagogy of well-being" based on the perspective that "learning to feel good" can be taught by assuming the idea that everyone can learn to feel better, that well-being is not only a question of the quantity of resources, but above all of the quality of choices, individual and social and that the training to the well-being must absolutely be thought as a process of fundamental awareness to the global and integrated development of all people. The goal of the Embodied Centred Laboratories in prison is to privilege teaching to learn to be comfortable through the promotion of an overall empowerment process such as knowledge enhancement, skills and attitudes and coping strategies that the prisoner needs to learn to take care of himself and to redesign his own existence (Lopez, 2004). It's that learning that's necessary to trigger a process where feeling good essentially means being fully aware of the subjective dimension of one's life. Prisoners need training that supports them and helps them to identify and manage the emotional needs of the individual and others with the aim of devising strategies useful for acquiring skills for life. Thinking about the global and integral development of man forces us to reflect on the importance of educating, especially in re-educational contexts, those skills useful to live positively their life (family, school, social, work) and to train a creative mind, respectful and ethical, recognizing and rediscovering the importance of the affective-emotional sphere also in relationships (Gardner, 2014) and emotional intelligence as the ability to self-control, enthusiasm, perseverance and self-motivation and as that "that particular form of intelligence that has allowed our distant ancestors to survive in a hostile environment and to elaborate the strategies that are the basis of human evolution" (Goleman, 1996). A study within the IPM "Formelli" of Bari (part of the project "Mens sana in corpore sano" coordinated by the 1 CPIA Bari) has provided a path of experimentation and investigation characterized by laboratories Embodied Centred, which has used the Biodanza SRT System and the Biosystemic Approach Counseling (transformative practices in body mediation), accompanied by quantitative and qualitative monitoring with processing and analysis of the data acquired, by means of social research tools aimed at emphasizing the pedagogical value-scientific of the innovative educational strategies used through the monitoring of the changes progressively observed in prisoners as a result of participation in the activities of the laboratories Embodied Centred. The Biodanza System SRT (Rolando Toro System) is a social pedagogy body mediation that is based on a well-defined Gestalt that acts on the healthy part of the person using the Music (universal language that facilitates self-expression and deeply stimulates emotions and existential sensibility), the Movement (natural expression, spontaneous and felt, emotional, as a rediscovery of their most authentic gestures, full of meaning and meaning) Vivencia as an experience lived with great intensity in the here and now. (Toro Araneda, 2007).

By stimulating individual development and human potential, Biodanza SRT aims to educate prisoners to existential creativity as personal innovation by helping to develop:

- 1) Personal skills: self-awareness, emotional management, empowerment, individual responsibility, resilience
- 2) Social skills: empathy, pro-social behaviour, cooperation and inclusion
- 3) Communicative-relational skills: stress management, conflict mediation, ecological communication, sustainable relations

Studies in scientific literature show that the Biodanza SRT System is:

- an important strategy to prevent emotional distress with significant variations on alexithymia (Giannelli, Giannino, Mingarelli, 2015).
- a good methodology to reduce stress and improve mood, emotional intelligence, self-esteem, sense of competence, effectiveness and self-awareness, social skills (Castañeda, 2009); Villegas, Stuck, 1999); Stueck, Villegas, Terren, Toro, Mazzarella, Schroeder, 2008). The Biodanza System SRT, as an educational tool Embodied Centred, represents for minors in custody a significant educational experience that promotes cognitive and metacognitive development, learning the skills of problem solving and decision making, of relational, communicative, emotional and social skills with the aim of educating to existential creativity as personal innovation. The Biosystemic Approach Counseling is a professional activity that deals with the relationship of help and emotional support, through deep and active listening and ecological communication. It offers the person or groups the opportunity to orient and develop their potential for greater personal and relational well-being (Liss, Stupiggia, 2004). The Biosystemic method refers to our body, its dynamism, its vitality and its oscillations between the "sympathetic" and the "parasympathetic" system (Alternation that must always be in sync and be carried out continuously and balanced, because otherwise the individual would face a strong state of "discomfort") and the Theory of Systems that in our case are the bodily sensations, emotions and cognitive aspects that are part of a single organism and that must collaborate with each other for a good functioning of the individual. Within the laboratories Embodied Centred Counseling interventions with detained boys have mainly the purpose of deepening the experience that emerges through the various proposals in order to orient, support and develop their potential, promoting positive and proactive attitudes. A space in which participants are reinforced with respect to their ability to face problems and seek solutions, also through comparison with other comrades.

3. Research Study: Laboratories Embodied Centred and Wellness as Optimal Experience

METHOD

The Laboratory Embodied Centred involved a sample of 15 boys (with an average age of 18 years) and lasted 2 Months with a structured programming of 7 meetings with a session per week of 3 for a total of 20 hours.

The study method focused on two main objectives

- Probing the perception of your own well-being by investigating the areas Perceived commitment, Perceived abilities, Emotional well-being, Motivation through the Optimal Experience Questionnaire (Goldwurm, 2015) and tools of social research with the processing of data on the transformations of psycho-emotional and affective-relational behavior of detained children resulting from participation in the laboratories Embodied Centred.
- evaluate the impact of the Biodanza SRT System and Biosystemic Approach Counseling (transformative practices in body mediation) on emotional, relational and cognitive skills parameters, for the promotion of bio-psycho-social well-being.

The Optimal Experience Questionnaire (Goldwurm, 2015), compiled in "anonymous" form, reported 12 items corresponding to the scale of values : very little - little - enough - a lot - a lot and a thirteenth

Item open question useful to investigate feelings and considerations about the personal usefulness that the laboratory experience has provided them.

The optimal experience is characterized by a series of emotional, relational and cognitive components that, experienced by the person, lead the latter to seek the same in other situations, activating a process of growth and promotion of subjective well-being. Well-being as an evaluation is a dimension that includes global assessments such as the level of overall satisfaction and within the different daily areas, the attribution of importance and significance to existence, the perceived quality of life and the perception of autonomy and control of one's actions and decisions (Goldwurm, 2015b).

The Questionnaire on the Optimal Experience investigates the experience and its subsets and offers an overview of the emotional and motivational components of the experiences experienced by the young people during the laboratory of Biodanza SRT valuing the opinion of the individual with regard to the perception of the task in relation to one's own abilities. (Pink, New York, 2019). The questionnaire used refers to that prepared by the scholar Mihaly Csikszentmihaly (2008), author of studies on happiness and creativity, introduced the concept of flow, which has been adapted to some ITEM in relation to the user, to the quarrel and the path lived. This tool is aimed at deepening the theory of psychological selection and the flow state construct (also called optimal experience) that occurs through the interaction between high challenges and adequate skills, promoting engagement, cognitive effectiveness and self-determination.

The population present within the IPM "Fornelli" of Bari is increasingly multi-ethnic therefore, in correlation to the diversity of the language and culture of origin, the questionnaire has been revised adapting and calibrating it according to the user in order to facilitate as much as possible a clear understanding and authentic compilation stimulating the students to ask themselves about themselves, how they feel and perceive and to reflect on their life, their relationships and their friendships. In addition, it allows us educators to identify aspects useful to develop functional and adequate didactic proposals of "emotional literacy". We tried to make a "photograph" of the psycho-physical-emotional well-being of the group in order to identify strategies that can respond to the affective and relational needs of children who are eager to be heard, to be welcomed and to participate more in their rehabilitation.

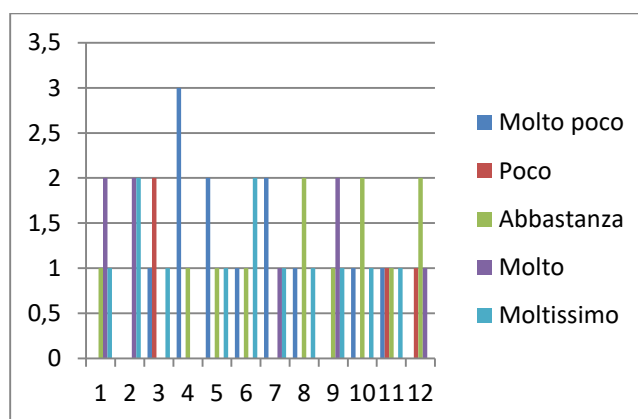
RESULTS

Through the Questionnaire the objective was to evaluate the Optimal Experience and the areas related to the commitment, emotional and relational well-being through a collection of data that have highlighted the experiences and personal considerations of the participants from which decoding it is clear that the majority of the results are predominantly positive in relation to emotional experience

By administering the Optimal Experience Questionnaire (Goldwurm, 2015) it is understood that:

- deepen what emotions, thoughts and motivations have characterized the experience lived within the laboratories of Biodanza SRT and Counseling Biosystemic approach;
- investigate: Perceived Commitment, Perceived Abilities, Emotional Well-being, Motivation;
- assess the impact of the Biodanza SRT System and Biosystemic Approach Counseling on emotional, relational and cognitive skills parameters in the promotion and perception of their well-being (Rosa Madonna, 2019). The Optimal Experience Questionnaire (Goldwurm, 2015) was an important tool that highlighted:

- a qualitative significance of the experience experienced by prisoners in all respects estimated: cognitive-behavioral, emotional, motivational and relational, facilitating the adoption of socially accepted behaviors that are the basis of reintegration into civil society;
- the pedagogical value of the Biodanza SRT System and the Biosystemic Approach Counseling as innovative Embodied Centred methodologies that, through experiences actively participated and lived by young prisoners, were aimed at encouraging the learning of life skills (emotional, cognitive and relational skills) and awareness of the perception of their well-being, important individual strategies to facilitate the adoption of positive attitudes and better orientation in life (Rosa, Madonna, 2019; Rosa, 2019).



Graph. 1 Graphical representation of the overall data of the Optimal Experience (our processing)

Conclusions

Body mediated experiences not only favor the maintenance of psycho-wellness physical-emotional prisoner but are an opportunity for learning and education for a future life project in a place like prison that becomes a possible educational environment of meaningful learning. Despite the limitations inherent in the small number of the sample and the lack of a follow-up period up at the end of the active treatment the results of the study show that the Laboratories Embodied Centred realized through the Biodanza SRT System and the Counseling Biosystemic approach are able to produce in the boys held a significant improvement on the perception of their own well-being, of their sense of self-efficacy and empowerment. The work is the basis for future research objectives that beyond considering the increase in the number of the sample and a differentiation of the same both by age (minors/ adults) both by gender (women/ men) and by conditions (detention/ semi-detention) provide for a follow-up in order to assess the long-term effects and a feedback with a control group, hoping for their institutionalization as a structured path within the rehabilitative treatment protocols of the Justice Systems. The work is and as a basis for future research objectives as a further project that has just ended at the IPM "Fornelli" in Bari for which, in addition to considering the possible increase in the number of sample, there was a follow-up for the purpose of assessing long-term effects and a control group. Investing in the construction of personal skills and offering significant opportunities for self-expression through methodologies and pedagogical approaches to body mediation can encourage the finding of optimal experiences, support motivation in the process of education and re-education potentially trigger the search for optimal experiences that can be expressed even outside the "penitentiary" context with a view to better integration in the context of life.

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