

## **LIFE PROJECT, EDUCATIONAL ALLIANCE AND WELLNESS**

### **PROGETTO DI VITA, ALLEANZA EDUCATIVA E BENESSERE**

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#### **Abstract**

Compared to the complexity and multiplicity of the needs of people with disabilities and their families, the need to experiment with innovative forms of support and accompaniment, to respond effectively to their needs and guarantee them a good quality of life, is growing more and more. Therefore, a methodological, instrumental and cultural evolution is necessary to elaborate a dignified and quality Life Project. The Life Project is fundamental for People with Disabilities, it represents a guide and a program to live their lives in respect of their needs, interests, characteristics and talents. It has an individual basis to then open up to the community, to the social, it extends over the vast horizon of life and for this reason it is essential, in planning, to seek and establish educational alliances to ensure a Global Development of the Person. Therefore, Design cannot be extemporaneous, a scientific reflection is necessary that takes into account the reference to the ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health) for the elaboration of the Project, of the Alliances with the Third Sector to serenely prepare for the "During and After Us" and that also and above all considers Development through motor activity.

Rispetto alla complessità e molteplicità dei bisogni delle persone con disabilità e delle loro famiglie, cresce sempre di più l'esigenza di sperimentare forme innovative di sostegno ed accompagnamento per rispondere efficacemente alle loro esigenze e garantire loro una buona qualità di vita. Pertanto, è necessaria un'evoluzione metodologica, strumentale e culturale per elaborare un Progetto di Vita dignitoso e di qualità. Il Progetto di Vita è fondamentale per le persone con disabilità, rappresenta una guida e un programma per vivere la propria vita nel rispetto dei propri bisogni, interessi, caratteristiche e talenti. Esso ha una base individuale per poi aprirsi alla comunità, al sociale, si estende sul vasto orizzonte della vita ed è per questo imprescindibile, nella programmazione, cercare e stabilire alleanze educative per garantire uno Sviluppo Globale della Persona.

Dunque, la progettazione non può essere estemporanea, è necessaria una riflessione scientifica che tenga conto del riferimento all'ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health) per l'elaborazione del Progetto, delle Alleanze con il Terzo Settore per prepararsi adeguatamente al "Durante e Dopo di Noi", facendo particolare leva sullo Sviluppo attraverso l'Attività Motoria.

### **Keywords:**

Project of Life, Inclusion, Family, Wellness

Progetto di Vita, Inclusione, Famiglia, Benessere

### **Introduction**

The basic principle in the Design of a Service to the Person is the construct of Quality of Life, according to which at the center of the Design and the Final Project there is the disabled, with his needs, peculiarities and talents. The project includes a set of programs, responses and synergistic interventions to accompany the Disabled Person in all phases of his life by providing for a periodic review. The Life Project aims to achieve the harmonious and global development of the disabled person to ensure a dignified and high quality life. Therefore, the Life Project should include the area of Well-being that refers to mental and physical health, the area of growth orienting itself towards the achievement of possible autonomy and the Personal area that refers to the expectations, desires and talents of the disabled person (Ciucci et al., 2018). To pursue the aforementioned objectives, the design must bypass a medical and clinical vision with a focus on the deficit and on the deficit aspect, to arrive at an anthropological and pedagogical vision that, considering and knowing the condition of discomfort, focuses on the strengths, desires, aspirations of the Disabled Person, immersed in an inclusive context in which he is an active part. To create inclusive living contexts, the so-called Educational Alliances cannot be ignored, which must be strategically established to guarantee well-being in every area of the disabled's life to promote a Global development of the Person. The Family, thanks to the support of a Pedagogist, has a fundamental role in the research and consolidation of Educational Alliances, it is the first educational agency that is part of the Life Project even before the birth of the Disabled Child. Educational alliances are fundamental to concretely realize an inclusive planning so that the Project of Life opens up to the outside, to life (Durst, 2010).

### **1. Project of Life and Family**

When a disabled child is born, the moment of communication of the diagnosis represents the most delicate phase for the design of a possible future for the disabled and for the family. It is essential, in these moments, an action of support to the family, which, in most cases, turns out to be disoriented in the loss of future expectations for the unborn child.

In fact, the discovery of intellectual disability, which is not always immediately diagnosable, can be a cause of pain for the family (Pati, 2014). The pain comes from two factors: the first is related

to the perception that one's child will have greater difficulties in the journey of life; the second is linked to the disappointment of the design expectations that the family had hypothesized and dreamed of for the unborn child with respect to personal, cultural, social, relational and work developments.

Therefore, the family, understood as the first educational agency, is at the center of the educational process and needs professional support from properly trained pedagogists, to offer advice also at home, in order to:

- Listening to the Family
- Deepen choices, relationships and projects;
- Redesigning the family unit in the light of the important change that has taken place;
- Being able to search for solutions to problems;
- Set the life project and face it in the different phases of existence;
- Promote the educational potential of parents and any other family members;
- Set up and establish Educational Alliances and actively insert yourself into networking.

The pedagogical intervention, as a support to the family, is necessary for the realization of the Project of life of the disabled. The design begins before the birth of the disabled child, as the Family needs to redesign itself to welcome the unborn child and accompany him in a successful future (Wharton, 2009). As mentioned, the family represents the first educational agency, and the pedagogist must develop the educational potential of parents who must learn the basics for the special education of a special child. It is necessary to go beyond diagnosis and reset the project of family life, of a family that, despite having been able to destabilize itself, is called, not without difficulties, to reorganize itself, to redesign itself by renewing internal and external relations, setting up specific and strategic educational alliances, as well as to acquire special educational skills (Owen et al. 2000). The difficulty is not only of the disabled, but of the whole family; therefore, Special Pedagogy must also focus on strategies of responsible, active and educational involvement of parents and the whole family. The Life Project is a pedagogical approach according to which each person draws his own life, understands what he can become and be by experiencing during the path and redesigning himself in the path. A Life Project is composed of a series of proposals that have as their objective the realization of the Person in the awareness of his potential and his limits. It must be prepared following a Global vision of the Person in consideration of his needs, his peculiarities, his feelings and above all his Uniqueness (Nigris, 2018). The Educational Project is born on an individual basis, it refers to the individual. Through the Project of Life, we look at the future from the perspective of the individual person, but at the same time it is closely linked to the social reality in which the individual lives his existence. In the specific case of disability, the Life Project cannot be separated from the intervention of a facilitator of choices, planning of objectives and relationships.

This figure is the Pedagogist who helps to establish educational alliances with all the figures that revolve around the Disabled in order to contribute to the construction of an identity of disuse.

When we talk about Disability we cannot ignore a Design that makes use of the aid of Scientific rationality, which has as its characteristic the predictability of events starting from the knowledge of scientific laws and theories. Therefore, designing according to a scientific line means having full awareness of sustainable objectives and actions necessary to achieve them concretely. The programming allows to reflect and therefore to define in a well-thought-out way the objectives of the proposals, to evaluate the most appropriate initiatives, to seriously develop strategies to decline the objectives for a daily care-educational path and therefore not to ensure that the objectives do not remain vague and pure intention. In this way it is necessary to overcome the limits of a way of operating devoid of scientific guidance. The objectives of an educational project, which wants to

be a Life Project, are defined by actively involving light disabled people in the choice of proposals or works, when there is the possibility of choice (McTaggeet, 1997).

In this way, we arrive at talking about a Life Project that considers the characteristics of the Person, recognizes its originality and its unique and unrepeatable characteristics, in order to promote a successful identity.

Designing with scientificity implies references, on the part of the Pedagogist who represents the expert, to the ICF Classification (*International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health*), where "human functioning" is observed and considered according to the bio-psycho-social perspective. The ICF goes beyond a medical perspective that focuses on deficits, to the benefit of a more complex view that considers people's living environment. The ICF measures the concept of severity, not starting from individual health conditions, but through evolutionary assessments based on the interaction between person and contexts (Ianes et al., 2018).

Referring to the ICF means having a clear picture of the physical and personal condition of the person concerned according to a broader vision which considers the following aspects (Fig.1):

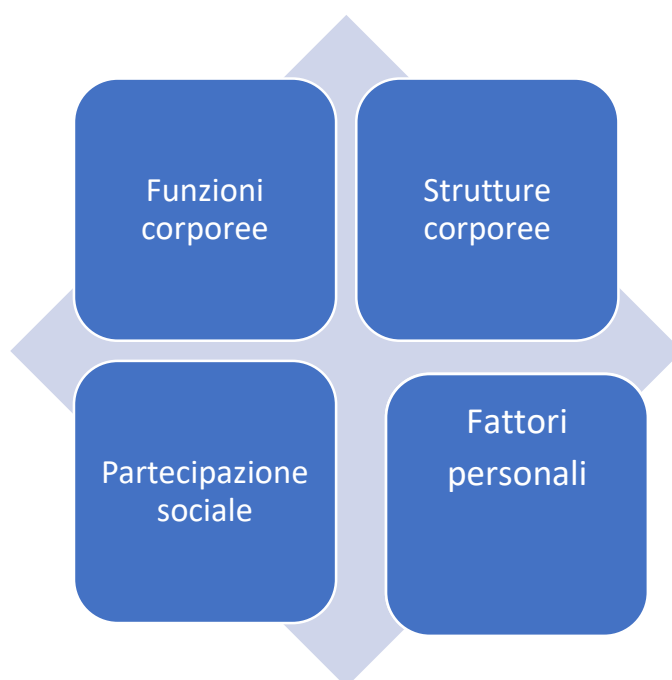


Figure 1. Activities and factors present in the ICF

Therefore, the project of Life places the person at the center, considering him within a complex of relationships with the spatial, cultural and social context. This series of links with culture, the family, history form the social aggregate and these aspects cannot be ignored in order to consider a Progetto that concretely over looks the vast panorama of Life. Therefore, in an educational key it is necessary to consider the totality of the person and his horizon of meaning. In this way the concept of Education is considered according to a broad and global vision that sees the collaboration of the different educational figures, foreseeing first of all the design of welcoming contexts. In these contexts it is possible to develop in a global way the human potential of the person in order to promote a true inclusion. The global development of the person, his integral promotion, is the motive and end of all human beings, always, without exception. If the goal, therefore, is the integral promotion of the person, consequently the approach to the person, the method of approaching and supporting can only be the educational relationship of help. The figure of the Pedagogist,

who enters into a relationship with the disabled, establishing a relationship of reciprocity, is necessary in the design phase and also and above all when difficult situations can arise to face, which require expert intervention to unlock them.

The educational and design action starts from the consideration of the four epistemological dimensions related to the family educational reality:

1. Planning
2. mediation
3. become
4. integration

From the Family starts a Project of personal life of the disabled that is confronted with the reality of life reshaping itself thanks to the flexibility of its Objectives and the common thread that is the integral promotion of the Person. In the light of the four epistemological dimensions of the educational reality of the family, it is evident that collaboration with the Family is an essential condition for building a successful Life Project, the Educational Alliance must be sought, extended and strengthened with the School, with the Services and with the educational figures that represent the Third Sector (Mantovani, 2018).

Given the complexity considered by the Life Project and its importance for the global growth of the Person, synergistic and joint attitudes and actions on the part of those who are responsible for the growth of the child are of fundamental importance, in order to promote his global development and a good quality of life for the whole family. The diagnosis itself becomes a starting point, but without over-medicalizing the problem. It is a matter of assuming an attitude that is of Care, care understood as sharing in the condition of the weakest, as an orientation towards creative freedom. It is about being close with tolerance, sharing and empathy, but an empathy that is not limited to "putting oneself in the shoes of the other", but implies being aware of the condition of those around us and provides for an action to make the context welcoming and inclusive and to plan together for Life. Empathy is participating, with closeness and awareness of uniqueness and the other, in the search for autonomy as far as possible, which is not utopia but is to live one's own existence as a protagonist in consideration of one's own potential and limits. Possibilities and limits are an essential condition, insurmountable constraints for a project of freedom and rational autonomy (Pirchio et al., 2013). They give a sense to the Project that if it were meaning less it would be a project with flat educational actions in which one is worth the other. Freedom is neither empirically measurable nor phenomenologically provable, it lives in our conscience and rests on the faith of one's own project of life, linked to the origin and end of man. Freedom is lived starting from one's own frame of reference, starting from one's own conception of life, it is a conquest of the person and cannot be given from the outside (Viganò, 1997).

Autonomy is a gradual conquest, as man becomes a personality, the autonomy that develops in concentric circles grows, until the freedom of the spirit is reached. Autonomy, therefore, coincides with the development of the person, which is gradual and continuous, if it is a development with an educational basis. It is necessary to seek to establish an educational alliance between the different figures and institutions that intervene in the life of the person, to carry out a project that develops the three dimensions of man:

1. Auxologica: dimension of physical, bodily growth and emphasizes having the necessary;
2. Psychological: emphasizes knowing and knowing each other;
3. Spiritual: emphasizes self-affirmation, self-realization.

This presupposes respect for dynamic, biological and psychological processes; taking into account that from the newborn to the adult there are a series of qualitative-quantitative changes to look at carefully and consider in the Design of a design of life that tends to autonomy and freedom.

The task of the family is to seek the aforementioned Alliance through knowledge and external openness, it is not required, utopically, to make an exhaustive environmental analysis, but to focus and identify the obstacles that may arise:

1. Knowledge of the family environment: through comparison with other families;
2. Knowledge of the environment -companions: accept them at home, establish a relationship of mutual trust;
3. Environmental-social knowledge: participate in the social and political life of one's environment, reading newspapers, critical reflection to get an idea of the social and political context in which one is inserted and in which one's child will have to live.

In this way we want to promote an active involvement of the Family in the realization of the project of Life, going in search of meaningful and strategic educational alliances to guarantee educational continuity and well-being to one's Son. Therefore, planning as characteristics intentionality and relationality. The first implies a call to conscience, to the ability to give meaning to choices and action; the second, on the other hand, implies that planning is in itself a relationship that sees man inserted in a given context.

## **2. Educational Alliance: School, Third Sector and Operational Tools**

Educational alliances make it possible to develop and share projects and works. The family, together with the pedagogist, is the centre from which the rays start to create and establish an educational Alliance, first with the school and then with the Third Sector. As far as the dialogue is concerned, collaboration with the family, in the process of formation and education, is strictly necessary. The school is defined as the educational environment par excellence. An inclusive school is a place where every pupil can find his or her own dimension because it is made for the pupil and not vice versa (. In the literature, we can refer to Don Milani who affirms that equality must be placed at the level of opportunity. It is not a question of underlining and radicalizing differences, but of grasping the difference in order to understand the need and respond adequately by offering the same opportunities (Cambi, 2009). Therefore, the right purpose of the school is to dedicate itself to others, which can be achieved by promoting communication and relationship. In this way, relational pedagogy enters fully between educator and educating, favoring a personal, affectively and culturally significant relationship, a living relationship. It is necessary to give the right importance to the relationship, as a healthy and meaningful affective relationship motivates to learn knowledge. Trust, relationship and dialogue facilitate and allow sincere communication by encouraging the development of one of the basic skills to live with others, that is to understand others and be understood. The class is characterized by being a tool through which to live an experience of small community in which everyone is called to interact, to cooperate in a climate of mutual enhancement and support. In this perspective, teachers are called to value and develop different interests and various personal skills (Granese, 1999). They must exalt individuality by fostering solidarity that translates into cooperating and making their resources available for the benefit of those who struggle to learn. Therefore, it can be said that school inclusion is linked to social inclusion, as they are linked to the formation of active citizenship, to the development of the spirit of solidarity also understood as social participation in the name of mutual respect, the removal of barriers and obstacles and non-violence. The good teacher of the school must be able



to grasp the skills and potential of the students in a design key to guide them to orient themselves in the school journey, projecting them towards the broader horizon of life that opens up before them. Education alone is useless, a network with the family and with the territory is needed, so that a network of educational continuity can be created (Bassi, 2011).

The relationship between school and family, in the literature, is analyzed by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory. According to the author, family and school are two microsystems and the mesosystem is the level of relationship between school and family and includes affective qualities such as: emotional tone, communicative clarity, trust, support and cooperation. At the level of the mesosystem some barriers can be represented by the parents themselves, so the task of the coach is to seek a frequent and productive dialogue with families, in order to cooperate to promote the full development of the Person.

The educational alliance between school and family is linked to the communication system, that is, the frequency and quality of the teacher-family relationship that includes aspects such as trust, respect, parental involvement and cooperation. From a legislative point of view, educational responsibility, understood as a central aspect of the school-family educational alliance, is defined by the Educational Pact of Co-Responsibility, provided for by art. 5-bis of the DPR. No 235/2007. The pact was wanted by the MIUR to recognize the importance and strengthen the school-family alliance to ensure the scholastic well-being of all students according to the educational success of each one, establishing common commitments and responsibilities in the school-family relationship. The foundation of the Pact is the sharing of the scholastic educational path that wants to ensure growth and personal and social development. The Pact has a meta-legal nature, in fact it does not provide for sanctions in case of non-fulfillment signed by both parents, to emphasize the responsibility of parents for the care and education of children (Elia, 2012).

With regard to the Alliance with the Third Sector, which includes educational agencies, Sports Associations and Personal Services and Communities, they can support family projects towards the disabled child since his or her coming into the world. One of the key objectives of the Life Project is to achieve Full Wellness, an objective that can be pursued through collaboration with the experts of the Local Sports Associations. Motor activity represents a precious opportunity for harmonious development, favoring formal and informal learning and promoting the acquisition of correct lifestyles in respect of the partner and the rules. In addition, it allows a physiological, cognitive, emotional and socio-relational development. The benefits of motor activity and sport are not limited only to promoting the acquisition of motor skills, but open a cognitive window on the world.

Considering the reference to the ICF, which considers the functioning of the Apparatus to have a clear vision and classification of Disability, the Benefits of Motor Activity are schematically reported (Table 1,2,3,4):

| <b>Benefits of Training on Personality and Behavior</b> |
|---|
| Good emotional control                                  |
| Good adaptability                                       |
| Valid Self-Esteem                                       |
| Good relationship skills                                |
| Increased frustration tolerance                         |

(Table 1)

| <b>Benefits of Training on the Metabolic System</b>       |
|---|
| Increased Basal Metabolism and Energy Expenditure         |
| Correct lipid structure                                   |
| Physiological neuroendocrine response                     |
| Favorable pondo-stature ratio                             |
| Increase in active lean mass and reduction of passive fat |

(Table 2)

| <b>Benefits of Cardio-Circulatory Training</b> |
|--|
| Bradycardia                                    |
| Quick recovery after exertion                  |
| Favorable blood pressure                       |
| Increased peripheral spraying                  |
| Facilitated venous return                      |
| Increase in Lung Volumes and<br>Aerobic Power  |
| Valid Systolic Range                           |

(Table 3)

| <b>Benefits of Training on the Musculoskeletal System</b> |
|---|
| Correct Posture   |
| Symmetrical and Tonic Muscle Masses                       |
| Better Muscle Mobility                                    |

(Table 4)

In light of what is reported in the previous Tables, motor activity cannot be excluded from the Life Project, as it is a source of psycho-physical well-being, allowing the establishment of affectively significant relationships with the Group. The experience of the Sports Group and the acceptance of the behavioral norms that it imposes, can be useful for a collective identification and therefore acquisition of security in its actions. Through motor activity it is possible to create moments of exchange and support between athletes, in a group in which athletes and able-bodied people collaborate together in achieving the specific sporting goal. From a pedagogical point of view, the coach's intervention is not limited to the achievement of the athlete's sporting result, it is not linked only to performance, the coach takes charge of the person integrally for which he will compare with the other educators who are in charge of the Disabled (Granese, 1999). A synergistic and joint collaboration is fundamental to promote the integral development of the Person through a joint action that is articulated at several levels of the life of the Disabled. The coach, as an educator, must seek a relationship of communication - collaboration with families, who must be aware that the growth and learning of the athlete does not pass only through the disciplines, but also through life experiences lived personally through activities involvevol men. The potential for development increases when the link between the contexts is strong, in fact the interaction between the different contextual levels influences the development and growth of the individual.



### **3. Educational Alliance: the Operational Tools**

Educational alliances, in the perspective of the Global Development of the Disabled Person and in guaranteeing full Well-being, must also extend over the territory, as the Life Project starts from the individual to extend to the community, to society. Not considering alliances with the territory means closing the Person under the protective wing of the family, it is necessary to overcome this limited and limiting vision to stem the risk of isolation and at the same time give continuity to the Project of Life in the During and After us. The support of a pedagogist allows families to be able to think about the "during us" and the "after us", that is, the residential solution after the family of origin, without anxiety and anguish, this perception is given by not being able to see a happy future without the care of the family of origin. The perception of anxiety and concern about a residential solution is linked to seeing mere residential solutions of a welfare and hospital mold that have little in common with the family environment. The expression "during and after us" refers to the evolution of the life cycle of people with disabilities when they will no longer have a family to refer to. At the legislative level, the Law After Us, No. 112/2016, in force since 25 June 2016, provides for a plan to ensure the well-being, social inclusion and autonomy of people with disabilities (Nigris, 2018). Establishing strategic alliances with the Third Sector helps the Family must prepare for the "After Us" serenely, accepting the detachment and the possibility, for their child, to find in a Community a new affective and relational dimension, where to realize themselves in adult life leaving the family of origin to enter a world of sharing and union. Alliances of this kind allow to give continuity to the Life Project through innovative methods, renewed synergies and creative responses adapting to new needs. Building educational networks, establishing and strengthening strategic educational alliances does not mean losing one's identity as a family, it does not mean assuming a secondary role, on the contrary one has the possibility of still being there, in a renewed way, with more strength, efficiency, effectiveness (Argyris, 1995).

To realize an Inclusive Design in view of a Life Project, there are several tools, in particular there is the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and the Universal Design for Learning (PUA).

Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a concept spread by the Research Center for Universal Design (CUD), aims to design products, structures, environments, means and services for everyone, regardless of their age and personal abilities. It wants to be a Universal Design using the application of seven principles:

1. Fairness;
2. Flexibility;
3. Simplicity;
4. Perceptibility;
5. Fault tolerance;
6. Containment of physical exertion;
7. Sufficient Measures and Spaces.

The Universal Design for Learning PUA transfers and extends this vision to the field of education to promote training paths accessible to the greatest number of students thanks to its flexibility and adaptability. To pursue this objective, it uses three principles:

1. Provide multiple means of representation: refers to the object of learning. Students perceive and understand information differently, there is no single way of representation and therefore it is necessary to provide multiple options of representation;
2. Provide multiple means of action and expression: refers to the methods of the teaching-learning process. In reference to the heterogeneity of students, there is not only one means of action, but a large number of strategies and practice is required, for which it is necessary to have options of action and expression.

Provide multiple means of involvement: refers to the purpose of learning. Students have different levels of involvement and motivation, the reasons that can influence learning are manifold; therefore, you need to have multiple engagement options (Cambi, 2009).

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