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Abstract

The research work presented in this thesis stems from a core of reflections on some aspects that currently characterize the national and international scientific debate within the educational field.

First, the need to embrace the proposal of full inclusion, welcomed by the Italian educational institutions in 2009, year of the approval in Italy of the United Nations Convention of 2006. The inclusive approach aims at eliminating all barriers to learning and promoting the participation of all pupils in school life by responding to their different needs, thus highlighting the importance of a real transformation of educational policies, cultures and practices (Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Booth et al., 2002).

In the light of this approach, teachers become a central element of an educational system promoting school achievement of each and every one. The scientific literature on this topic, however, highlights a positive correlation between the quality of teacher training and student performance. In addition, research on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion suggests that the success of inclusive education is strongly related to perceptions that daily guide teachers (Sharma et al., 2012; Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Jordan et al., 2009; Agbenyega, 2007).

Indeed, in recent decades, different studies gradually recognized the educational value of teacher subjectivity, leading to the affirmation of a specific field of research aimed at investigating the so-called *implicit dimension* of education in order to put in evidence its implications on teaching practices.

In this perspective, teaching profession develops from teacher's ability to retrace his or her experiences to learn from them through the implementation of reflective practices that enable the mobilization of internal and external resources that guide the teaching action in situation (The Boterf, 2010), allowing the development of different and effective problem-solving strategies and the use of a flexible and non linear organization.

In this scenario of reflections the theory of simplicity enunciated by the physiologist of perception and action of the Collège de France Alain Berthoz seems to be an innovative, non linear approach that, in referring to simple rules of functioning of living organisms in the process of adaptation to the environment, suggests solutions based on simplifying principles that “process complex situations very rapidly, elegantly, and efficiently, taking past experience into account and anticipating the future” (Berthoz, 2012, p.3).

Within this perspective, the paradigm of simplicity can offer the keys to interpret the complex nature of teaching moving from the possibility of extending the properties and the principles set out by the French physiologist to the didactic (teaching-learning) system, in order to identify patterns of functioning that regulate teaching action (Sibilio, 2014) thus representing a functional underpinning framework on which to design a new teacher education programme.

This theoretical framework supports the study presented in this thesis aiming at investigating the opinions, attitudes and concerns towards inclusion of a sample of teachers who took part to a training activity carried out in the academic year 2014 / 2015 in Campania.

The aim of the research is twofold: on the one hand, it aims at stimulating reflections on the possible ways of structuring training courses in order to promote positive attitudes towards inclusion and reduce any states of teachers’ discomfort and concern; on the other, it aims to provide a translated and validated version of the Sacie-R Scale (Forlin et al., 2011), which measures teachers’ opinions, attitudes and concerns towards inclusive education.

The work is divided into two parts.

The first part outlines the theoretical framework underpinning the research, by focusing, in the first chapter, on teacher training within an inclusive perspective. In particular, the importance of a new educational culture is highlighted also with reference to the Profile of Inclusive Teachers, the document developed in 2012 by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education which aims to

identify a framework of values and skills needed for teachers for working in inclusive contexts (Aiello et al., 2016). In the second chapter the theory of simplicity and its implications in education are presented, moving from the assumption that the complex nature of the teaching-learning process requires an inter- and transdisciplinary approach, in order to identify strategies and tools for dealing with this complexity, by implementing and capitalizing the suggestions and instances from different scientific domains. The third chapter finds the roots of the culture of inclusion in the concept of habitus theorized by Pierre Bourdieu (1972), taking into account that individuals unconsciously internalize a cultural habitus, which is the matrix of an implicit dimension resulting in specific dispositions to act. Since this implicit dimension seems to have a major impact on the action with respect to the explicit teaching theories (Pearl, 2010), it is of paramount importance to investigate tacit elements that guide teachers' practices so that they can give a new and more inclusive sense to their professional action.

The second part of the work is dedicated to the research project.

Starting from a premise that, in the fourth chapter, introduces the study, the objectives and the background of the research are described; then a literature review on teachers' opinions, attitudes and concerns towards inclusion is presented. The fifth chapter introduces the research design and development, while the sixth chapter focuses on the analysis of the results. In the seventh chapter some considerations and future visions are proposed.