

STRATEGIES AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL DESIGN MODELS FOR THE PROMOTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

STRATEGIE E MODELLI DI PROGETTAZIONE DIDATTICA INCLUSIVA PER LA PROMOZIONE DEI PATRIMONIO CULTURALE

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ABSTRACT

In order to realize educational pathways on the topic of cultural heritage, the school must design and share with professionals outside the school *widespread didactic workshops*, as well as strategies and inclusive didactic design models of that can be realized through the use of disciplinary didactics, heritage pedagogy and, above all, special didactics and pedagogy for inclusion, the latter being areas of pedagogy that are indispensable to guarantee the inclusion of all pupils.

Per realizzare percorsi educativi sul tema del patrimonio culturale, la scuola deve progettare e condividere con i professionisti esterni alla scuola *laboratori didattici diffusi*, nonché strategie e modelli di progettazione didattica inclusiva realizzabile attraverso il ricorso alle didattiche disciplinari, alla pedagogia del patrimonio e, soprattutto, alla didattica e pedagogia speciale per l'inclusione, settori della pedagogia, questi ultimi, indispensabili per garantire l'inclusione di tutti gli alunni e le alunne.

KEYWORDS

Cultural heritage; education; school; inclusion
Patrimonio culturale; educazione; scuola; inclusione

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present a reflection elaborated from the application of the University of Catania's project entitled *PiaceriVisinMusa*, coordinated by Prof. Paolina Mulè, on the theme of cultural heritage, «the outcome of a centuries-long evolution, which began with the idea of a list of tangible assets, mainly historical-artistic assets, considered to be of exceptional value and arrived at that of a significant set of tangible and intangible testimonies, the expression of a culture in its different manifestations» (Bortolotti, 2018, p. 19). Officially, in Europe, we begin to discuss 'cultural heritage' with *Decision 2017/864 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year of Heritage*, a document that stresses the importance of reflecting on the «ideals, principles and values inherent in cultural heritage, which constitute for Europe a shared source of memory, understanding, identity, dialogue, cohesion and creativity» (Official Journal of the European Union, 2017). The aim of this document is to «encourage the sharing and appreciation of Europe's cultural heritage as a shared resource, to raise awareness of common history and values and to strengthen the sense of belonging to a common European space» (European Parliament European Union Council, 2017, Art.1, para. 2), a place where cultural diversity can be enhanced and intercultural dialogue promoted.

In order to achieve these educational goals, the school certainly has a considerable role to play, because it is from the school that educational pathways must be promoted to enhance the cultural heritage, while at the same time guaranteeing, with a view to a culture of inclusion, the democratic nature of the educational offer, addressed *to all and for all*. It is therefore inescapable that the school designs teaching spaces by sharing them with professionals working in heritage contexts, with the aim of introducing all pupils, regardless of their educational needs, to heritage assets, enabling each of them to study them directly on site, and to make them perceive these assets as an integral part of the culture of each of them, without excluding anyone. This implies the need to share, with professionals from outside the school, educational and didactic intervention tools and strategies, and didactic design models to plan activities aimed at promoting and enhancing the cultural heritage, understood as pathways that contribute to a global education, which promote the development of a critical, creative, active and responsible personality, prepared to live in a multicultural and above all inclusive society, while also enriching the training of teachers and that of the other professionals involved in the desired pedagogical partnership.

1. Educating for cultural heritage: the school's role

Educating for cultural heritage means promoting the learning of new knowledge useful to contribute to the new educational and inclusive demands, to the strengthening of the experimentation of an innovative school system open to sustainability and to the development of cultural welfare. This implies a change of direction, or rather, a change of pedagogical perspective geared to interactive forms, to the realization of projects that allow for increased relations of collaboration with the territory, with a view to an inclusive school that is increasingly open to the territory. It is therefore necessary to design open and flexible teaching environments that make it possible to promote heritage education, while at the same time guaranteeing criteria of substantial equality for the dissemination of knowledge and for ongoing training, capable of conveying principles of protection, enhancement and citizenship.

The concept of cultural heritage is «the outcome of a centuries-long evolution, which began with the idea of a list of material assets, mainly historical-artistic, considered to be of exceptional value and arrived at that of a significant set of material and immaterial testimonies, the expression of a culture in its various manifestations» (Bortolotti, 2018, p. 19). Some scholars in the relevant literature argue that this concept starts to be paid attention to when the awareness becomes widespread that the cultural background constitutes, for every people, the indispensable prerequisite for generating social drives oriented towards the re-appropriation of peoples' traditions, because without culture there is no consciousness and without culture there is no identity (Cortese, 2017).

As of 2018, the reflection on cultural heritage in the countries of the European Union officially starts, exactly with *Decision (EU) 2017/864 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year of Heritage*. This document stresses the importance of reflecting on the «ideals, principles and values inherent in cultural heritage, which constitute for Europe a shared source of memory, understanding, identity, dialogue, cohesion and creativity» (Official Journal of the European Union, 2017). The main objective is to «encourage the sharing and enhancement of Europe's cultural heritage as a shared resource, to raise awareness of common history and values and to strengthen the sense of belonging to a common European space» (European Parliament European Union Council, 2017, Art.1, para.2), a place where cultural diversity can be enhanced and intercultural dialogue promoted, understood as a necessary horizon for building a common future (Di Cintio, 2021).

In order to achieve this desired goal, it is indispensable to educate people about cultural heritage, thus promoting educational paths aimed at making each citizen develop «an assumption of responsibility and a civic commitment to protection and enhancement, but also because the use of heritage in education can contribute to a global formation, promoting the development of a critical, creative, active and responsible personality, prepared to live in a multicultural society» (Branchesi,

2018, p. 25). Cultural heritage only exists for an individual if the latter recognizes it as such: there is no heritage without awareness and education.

For the realization of this project, certainly every school in the European Union has a specific and considerable role and task. It is from schools, especially those in the first cycle, that it is incumbent upon us to systematically initiate pedagogical paths aimed at promoting and enhancing cultural heritage, precisely because it contributes to the full realization of every human being (Fregni, Santini & Gestri, 2021). Schools have a duty to develop and initiate didactic projects specifically designed to stimulate a widespread and shared awareness of history and culture, starting as early as the first grade of education (primary school), to which they can entrust a task of positive social cohesion, not understood as a nostalgic feeling of belonging, but as a desire and need for active participation in its preservation, protection and enhancement.

In the reference literature, cultural heritage is considered multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, a hinge between the humanities, technology, science and art and, at the same time, transversal to the various disciplines in the school curricula, making it possible to develop and explore a variety of topics in an innovative way. Through heritage education, it is possible to carry out historical and geographical investigations, create literary, musical and artistic activities, while at the same time developing knowledge and skills in other disciplines, such as mathematics, science and the others included in the school curriculum (Branchesi, 2018), but above all by developing a sense of belonging and respect for the cultural heritage, experienced as a place that guarantees the realization of inclusive processes.

In fact, as can be seen from the Italian school regulations, the *National Indications and New Scenarios for the curriculum of the first cycle school*, the teaching of certain disciplines, such as history and geography, «contribute to education in cultural heritage and active citizenship. Teachers, from primary school onwards, are committed to helping pupils discover the link between traces and knowledge of the past, to make them use archaeological, museum, iconic and archival sources in a methodical way, and to make them appreciate the value of cultural heritage. In this way, heritage education makes a fundamental contribution to active citizenship. In particular, teachers highlight the relationships between institutions and society, gender and generation differences, state forms, democratic institutions». Knowledge of the heritage, inherited from the past, goes hand in hand with the study of the landscape, which represents the «container of all material and immaterial memories, also in their future projection» (MIUR, 2018).

The use of geography, history and the social sciences enables «the planning of actions to safeguard and restore the natural heritage, so that future generations can benefit from a healthy environment». Through the teaching of these disciplines, it is also possible to «provide the tools to form autonomous and critical individuals, who are able to take responsible decisions in the management of the

territory and the protection of the environment, with an eye to the future» (MIUR, 2012). Through artistic disciplines, such as art, image and music education, which are essential for the harmonious development of the personality and for the formation of a person and a citizen capable of expressing themselves in different ways, it is possible to educate pupils in the protection and conservation of the artistic and environmental heritage, starting from the territory they belong to, also enabling them to develop intercultural relations based on communication, knowledge and comparison between different cultures, the appreciation of diversity and above all social inclusion and the democratic participation of all.

In order to promote heritage culture, the school must, however, change its teaching organization, for example by creating and sharing spaces with other professionals outside the school. It is advisable for the school to design specially structured spaces-workshops, to introduce heritage assets to each pupil, making them study them directly on site, so that these assets are perceived as an integral part of their culture, because «in order to be protected and enhanced, heritage must first of all be known and considered an integral part of our culture no less than of our education» (Pasquini, 2011). Hence the need to establish a partnership between the school and heritage-related services, for example with:

- public and private cultural institutions, repositories of heritage elements and responsible for their protection and enhancement (archives, museums, libraries, archaeological sites, etc.);
- political-administrative institutions at local, national and supranational level, as well as their peripheral bodies dealing with culture and education and non-governmental organisations;
- citizens who are members of ethnic, religious, ideological, cultural and social aggregations (Bortolotti, 2018).

Partnerships with these sectors and/or work areas could encourage the implementation of educational projects centered on the theme of heritage education, understood as a training activity «which, while educating to knowledge of and respect for heritage through the adoption of responsible behavior, makes heritage an object of research and interpretation, adopting the perspective of recurrent and permanent training in active and democratic citizenship for all people» (Bortolotti, 2018, p. 10).

2. A pedagogical project to all and for all

The realization of didactic projects useful to promote heritage education, from the point of view of an inclusive school, an educational institution that aims to achieve the educational success of each pupil, allowing them to benefit from didactic offers aimed at initiating research paths on the pedagogical meaning of cultural heritage (Grassi, 2015), requires a careful reflection on the inclinations and

potentialities of each pupil, especially those with special educational needs. In fact, heritage education is only such if it is understood as an educational process addressed *to all and for all*. It is a process that responds to a series of principles, the basis of which can be found in important initiatives deriving from the Salamanca Declaration of 1994, which represents, on an international level, the moment in which a clear commitment to the principle of education for all and for everyone was finally officially made, recognizing the need and urgency for people with special educational needs to attend training and education courses within common educational systems (Cottini, 2022). This statement certainly gave rise, from the outset, to considerable reflection on the subject of inclusion, promoting a new school profile: a school that, with its programs and educational projects, adapts to the educational needs of all its pupils and students, and not vice versa (UNESCO, 1994).

From the aforementioned Declaration to the present day, the concept of school inclusion has been the subject of much debate and reflection. There has been a succession of initiatives and documents, such as the Luxembourg Charter of the European Union in 1996, then in 2006 the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the United Nations, which certainly represents a considerable and important step in sanctioning the right to full inclusion of persons with disabilities in every context. Subsequently, in 2009, the Guidelines on Inclusive Education were issued by UNESCO, which reaffirmed the concept of an inclusive school, considered an institution capable of offering educational responses to the innumerable diversities of each pupil and their educational needs (UNESCO, 2009, p. 8). Considerable, on this topic, have been the initiatives of the European Union, such as the creation of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education that contributed, in 2009, to the elaboration of the document on Guiding Principles for Promoting Quality in Inclusive Schools. The latter is a document that emphasises, through special Recommendations, the importance of promoting flexible school systems that are able to offer responses to the diverse and complex special educational needs of all pupils. In 2014, this document was noted by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, specifying that these Recommendations should be considered in order to guide schools towards a new dimension of didactics, one that is increasingly inclusive (Cottini, 2022, p. 41).

In Italy, these initiatives have enabled the enactment of a series of measures on schools: Law No. 170/2010 on pupils with Specific Learning Disorders (SLD); the Ministerial Directive of 2012 on pupils with Special Educational Needs; Legislative Decree No. 66/2017 and the subsequent delegated decrees and inter-ministerial decrees (MIUR & MEF, 2020; 2023), which regulate the school inclusion of pupils with disabilities. In addition to expressing principles and goals of great relevance and representing the development of the hoped-for process of inclusion, these regulatory provisions highlight the importance of achieving school inclusion

through educational and didactic strategies aimed at the development of each individual's potential, while respecting the right to self-determination and reasonable accommodation, with a view to the best quality of life. The legislator dwells on the importance of implementing educational projects, in connection with the school and the family, but also and above all with the world outside school, also involving and engaging other components/professionals of the community. These are not only individualized educational projects (IEP, CTP), but also others that, if structured in a systematic manner, certainly enrich the school curriculum. Those conceived and implemented on the theme of heritage education represent some of the possible projects that the school should promote, with a view to an inclusive school, which addresses *all and for all*.

3. Heritage pedagogy and inclusive educational design models

In order to promote inclusive pathways addressed to all and for all, to educate every pupil to heritage, it is inescapable that the school shares, with other components working in the heritage field, a model of inclusive didactic design, which includes the use of the disciplines included in the school curriculum, the knowledge of what could be called 'heritage pedagogy', and, undeniably, to special didactics and special pedagogy for inclusion, sectors of pedagogy - the latter - that specifically reflect on the education and training of pupils with special educational needs, both in school and out-of-school settings, making considerable contributions to the formulation and choice of inclusive activities and teaching strategies.

Heritage education can be regarded as a young field of pedagogy, to which the Council of Europe has attached considerable importance since 1989 (Bettaini Dragoni, 2006). It is a field of knowledge capable of offering scientific contributions to design educational activities on the topic of cultural heritage (Ria, 2023), understood as «a formal and informal activity, which, while educating in knowledge and respect for heritage with the adoption of responsible behaviour, makes heritage a concrete object of research and interpretation, adopting the perspective of recurrent and permanent training in active and democratic citizenship for all people» (Bortolotti, 2018, p. 10). Heritage pedagogy is based on heritage, including active teaching methods, cross-curricular proposals, partnerships between the educational and cultural sectors, and employing the widest variety of modes of communication and expression (Branchesi, 2006). Heritage pedagogy «illustrates well the use of cultural heritage as a factor in conflict prevention and peace preservation through interpersonal and intercultural dialogue, cultural pluralism and mutual understanding» (Branchesi, 2018).

Special didactics and special pedagogy for inclusion (d'Alonzo, 2015; Cottini, 2022; Gaspari, 2020; de Anna, 2022; Besio & Cadin 2020; Bocci, 2021) are, on the

other hand, pedagogical knowledge that can be used to define the objectives to be achieved, the strategies to be adopted, the didactic tools, the appropriate times and spaces, as well as the criteria for verifying and evaluating the learning processes, therefore also for evaluating skills, competences, psychic dynamisms, the factors of bio-psychic growth rhythms, social life conditions, the identification of the foreseeable levels of development that pupils with special educational needs can reach (Muscarà, 2017). These are areas of knowledge that provide the school and also the non-school world, such as the contexts in which professionals involved in the protection and promotion of cultural heritage work, with tools to construct and adopt teaching strategies aimed at promoting the well-being of pupils with special educational needs and, at the same time, of all the others who are part of the same learning environment and who, in such teaching situations, represent important human resources for inclusion (Canevaro, 2021).

Thanks to the contributions made by these educational sciences, the school and the educational contexts involved in the heritage education project together become inclusive places in which it is possible to understand the various individual situations, through a complex and biopsychosocial anthropology, and the various personal situations, attributing a fundamental role to the various contextual factors. This becomes possible thanks to the multisystemic and multidisciplinary perspective, which is the one that is spreading in European schools, through the ICF model, whose diffusion and adoption is contributing to the overcoming of traditional didactics and to the promotion of inclusive didactics, designed for all, of "structural" differentiation, which has as a personal characteristic that universality that makes every form of school knowledge accessible to every pupil, to the various learning modes (Ianes & Canevaro, 2015).

In this direction, the conjugation of these main pedagogical knowledges becomes useful to promote heritage education in an inclusive way: a process that emphasizes how each individual, regardless of personal and/or cultural traits, is a constitutive entity of the social institution, which finds in the full appreciation of all the same reason for being, the ways to promote its own educational success and active role (Cottini, 2022).

However, there is an important aspect to be considered, which distinguishes inclusion. Inclusion is «a research process aimed at achieving formal and substantial equality in educational processes, through the sharing/diffusion of values and underlying principles, the reorganization of school contexts, and the use of teaching methodologies and tools that have proven to be effective» (Franceschini, 2020, p. 26). This means that in order to carry out heritage education in an inclusive manner, it is necessary to adopt a scientific attitude, characterized by systematicity, the sharing of didactic design models structured with scientific criteria, the adoption of a plurality of approaches and didactic methods capable of carrying out didactic activities centered on each pupil, on the educational needs of each of them,

adapted to their learning times and levels, respecting their cognitive styles and providing, above all, alternative didactic spaces to traditional ones.

In this direction, the educational activities that can be realized in *diffuse laboratories* can be considered useful to promote the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage. These are alternative spaces to the classroom, to the traditional school environment, in which it is possible to carry out flexible teaching activities, including differentiated, multi-purpose and multi-disciplinary activities, in which each pupil has the opportunity to learn knowledge, developing skills and competences directly in the places, in the contexts where the cultural object being studied is located. In these teaching spaces, thanks also to the collaboration with other professionals outside the school, it is possible to realize learning situations characterized by curiosity, the spirit of research, the appreciation of cultural heritage, also understood as an 'object' to be studied, explored, respected and shared with and for others, in a community climate full of civil and ethical values.

An inclusive didactic design model, useful for designing and implementing, starting from primary school, the educational activities we are reflecting on here, could be structured as follows:

1. choice of the discipline(s) envisaged in the school curriculum, with particular reference to the anthropological field;
2. definition of the:
 - european key competences
 - targets for the development of curricular skills;
 - specific disciplinary and interdisciplinary learning objectives, divided into skills and knowledge;
3. choice of the:
 - teaching strategies and of the verification and assessment systems to be adopted;
 - materials to be used;
 - spaces to be used;
 - school and non-school human resources to be involved, including also the members of the Operational Working Group for Inclusion (OWG);
4. connection with the individualized and personalized educational-didactic plans of pupils with special educational needs, in order to respect the dimensions of the human functioning of such pupils and, therefore, to guarantee the adoption of the educational and didactic strategies and objectives already provided for in the aforesaid plans drawn up during the didactic planning process with the members of the Operational Working Group for Inclusion;
5. description of the articulation of the planned teaching activities, with particular reference to the workshops;
6. systems of verification and assessment of the learning objectives and the development of the skills envisaged.

This is obviously a hypothesis of a didactic design model that could be adopted by schools, starting with those in the first cycle, together with professionals working in heritage contexts, in liaison also with the members of the Operational Working Group (MIUR & MEF, 2020), to design and implement didactic actions aimed at promoting cultural heritage, based on methodological-didactic experimentation, on active, motivating approaches, facilitating the inclusion of all pupils, the implementation of processual and systemic methodologies and, at the same time, improving the continuous training of the school teacher and that of the other professionals involved in this pedagogical partnership characterized by co-responsibility and pedagogical co-participation (Mulè, 2016, 2022; Muscarà, 2022).

Conclusions

In view of what we have tried to argue, we can conclude this short contribution by arguing, without any pretence, that in order to realize educational pathways aimed at the promotion and enhancement of cultural heritage, it would be appropriate for schools to build pedagogical alliances with professionals, external to their own institution, who work in the field of cultural heritage. Such an alliance would allow the organization of educational environments, such as widespread workshops, both inside and outside the school, in which it would be possible to orientate, through networking, every pupil, no one excluded, to the knowledge and appreciation of cultural heritage assets. In order for pupils with special educational needs, especially those with disabilities, to also be involved in such teaching activities, it is advisable that professional teachers from outside the school share, together, strategies and teaching design models conceived and structured through recourse to the disciplines envisaged in the school curricula, to heritage pedagogy and, above all, to the theoretical principles of special pedagogy and special didactics, inescapable, these two pedagogical knowledge, for the promotion of school and social inclusion.

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