

# Social inclusion through game and sport: strategies and reference models





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Scale Project, presented by the NGO We World - GVC Onlus and funded by the Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development (HOPE program - health, protection and education for the most vulnerable groups among refugees and host communities in Lebanon, 2019), aims at promoting access to educational services and social inclusion of Syrian and Lebanese children with special needs, ensuring adequate accessible and inclusive school facilities and protected environments developed through play and recreational activities involving communities in the areas of the municipality of Tall Bire and Bebnine (in the Governorate of Akkar) and the municipality of Nabi Osman (in the Governorate of Baalbek-Hermel). In the framework of this project, UISP provides experts and trainers for the implementation of sports and recreational activities for vulnerable children for school teachers and important adults (parents and social workers), to promote social inclusion and cohesion, ensuring the participation in inclusive processes of children with special needs.

The motivation behind the first training phase of the project was to encourage the implementation of inclusive sports and recreational activities, not only for children with physical difficulties, but also for children coming from vulnerable families. Parents, teachers and representatives of social organizations participated in the training with the aim of promoting, in parallel with the specific contents of the course, also active parenting, to ensure a collective awareness on inclusion, the construction of social cohesion within communities and the social aggregation of different groups within the different school structures. The course, held by the trainers Loredana Barra (UISP Sassari) and Vincenzo Spadaro (UISP Iblei) from 16 to 29 February 2020, respected the following structure.

The training began in two municipalities in the Akkar region, Bebnine and Tall Bire, and continued in the school of Nabi Osman. We initially met the leaders of the two Akkar schools involved in the project, facing different situations, despite being part of the same area/region of the Lebanese state. The Akkar region is characterized by its proximity to the northern border, near Syria. The Syrian population in the two municipalities is between approximately 10 and 25%, in a context of extreme cultural, social and economic poverty, already diffused among the local population. We observed a contrast between the remarkable sensitivity towards the theme of inclusion on the part of the teachers and the division in two shifts of the frequency of Lebanese children (in the morning) and Syrian refugee children (in the afternoon), as in the school of Nabi Osmane. This does not favor the cultural inclusion of the two realities, although both groups suffer from great poverty.

The all-female school we visited in Bebnine offered us a glimpse of a poor but efficient school. The principal was attentive to the needs of the girls; the school spaces were sufficiently appropriate, with a large courtyard for recreation and outdoor activities. The school of Tall Bire, a small agricultural village, smaller in space, but with a great sense of community characterized by the constant but discreet presence of the children's parents.

In both situations we appreciated the great awareness shown by the educational actors to find suitable methods, strategies and tools to welcome them. But the reception has always been directed towards disability, conceived as a physical disability, with brief hints of psychic disability and with great attention to the inclusion of children with learning disorders or special educational needs. Never, however, has attention been paid to the great problem of social and cultural inclusion of Syrian refugees, who have been present for decades on Lebanese territory. However, it should be stressed that in Akkar the Syrian population is also made up of non-refugees and that (especially in Tall Bire) there are strong links with the Syrian areas across the border.

This led us to focus on the clearly identified need: to welcome and include physical disability.

The module began with the presentation of the trainers and participants who were also asked what were the expectations of the training, each of them gave conflicting answers but all united by a single common denominator: to have no tools to promote the integration of children with physical disabilities but also children in situations of emotional fragility with manifest hyperactivity and aggressive attitudes. It was therefore necessary to adapt topics and activities to meet the different educational needs of the group of participants. The knowledge games gave rise to the activities: the path was developed by carrying out playful, educational and sports activities, correlating them to the different contexts and individual roles occupied by the participants in relation to the education of children, and the more general concept of integration.

The theoretical part has deepened in detail the issues related to the psycho-pedagogical vision of play, cognitive, motor and relational development of the child, whose knowledge allows to propose activities suitable for each age group. A range of motor and sports games was provided, including cooperative games, role-playing games, imitation games, motor adaptation, sense of perception, etc. with different aims and characteristics for the enhancement of each child, bearer of individual needs and resources and for the achievement of an adequate relational and emotional balance in the group of children. The educational methods and strategies used in practice have been specified and analyzed in frontal work through active teaching. The last day of the two training courses was dedicated to the presentation and implementation

*of the activities of the replicas with the children, carried out in a time span of 2 hours for each territory. After the repetition, the final part of the training was dedicated to the final restitution of the experience with all the participants and where advice was needed from the trainers regarding the best organization of the activities both from an organizational and educational point of view.*

*Our experience as trainers ends with this text that collects a plurality of theoretical ideas and operational proposals that make it a useful handbook for our project of inter-institutional integration and qualification of educational sports interventions.*

*We therefore recommend its use in all formal and non-formal spaces dedicated to childhood and adolescence: schools, gyms, social centers and sports centers; spaces where we promote activities for children at risk of social marginalization: victims of war, victims of abuse and mistreatment, victims of educational, economic and cultural deprivation; it can be useful to all those who believe in the value of promoting the movement and sport in an educational perspective.*

# 1. Context Analysis

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The Onlus WeWorld - GVC (WW-GVC) has been working in Lebanon since 2006 in support of reconstruction and rural socio-economic development. Since 2011, following the protracted Syrian crisis, has been providing humanitarian assistance to displaced people in Northern Bekaa and the Akkar region. Due to the increasing difficulties encountered by municipalities in responding to the needs of the population and in the face of strong social tensions between Syrian refugees and Lebanese residents, WW-GVC interventions have begun to support municipalities and public institutions, such as schools or water providers, to improve the services delivered to both local communities and refugees.

At the local level, the long cooperation work with Bekaa municipalities as well as with representatives of local associations, religious leaders, refugees and leaders of their communities, started in 2011. In 2016 WW-GVC also opened an office in Kobayat, in the Governorate of Akkar for the realization of a WASH project to support the Lebanese communities most affected by the effects of the Syrian crisis, financed by the Madad Trust fund of the European Union. Due to the scarcity of water resources and the growing demand for water from Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees, and the need for sustainable management of the water resources available in Lebanon, WW-GVC established a complex strategy concerning the WASH sector. The main objectives are to promote the demand for access to the public water management system within the communities, and to make the revenue management system for domestic water supply more efficient.

The protracted humanitarian crisis has increased the exposure of vulnerable people - in particular those with disabilities, both Lebanese and Syrian, and their families - to a number of risks. WW-GVC is committed to mitigate the risks through preventive and reactive protection services tailored on the specific needs of people with disabilities, especially by leveraging the experience gained and lessons learned during the many years of community work in the field. Thanks to the synergy between the ECHO project and the pilot project on CPA methodology (an approach based on community involvement for the definition of risks related to the protection of the most vulnerable people), WW-GVC was able to identify disabled people living in refugee camps, within the areas of intervention, and provide them with both personalized assistance and awareness

raising on protection issues.

In order to increase access to quality educational services WW-GVC, in 2019, launched a project, funded by the Italian Cooperation, aimed at improving school opportunities and increasing the enrolment rate through the strengthening of the reception capacities of schools, both in terms of infrastructure and social, in particular promoting the school inclusion of children with special needs.

Among the 892,310 Syrian refugees officially registered in Lebanon by UNHCR, 38% live in the Bekaa Region and 26.6% in Northern Lebanon. This huge influx has contributed, since the beginning of the crisis, to undermine the already fragile demographic and religious balance in the country, causing economic and political instability and hindering not only the state of infrastructure and the quality of basic public services, but also the general living conditions of the local population, thus contributing to increase social tensions. Refugees are becoming more and more victims of violent behavior, as evidenced by the growing number of reports of verbal and physical harassment. Such trends, accompanied by national decisions and communal initiatives that are progressively reducing the protection space for refugees in Lebanon - such as collective evictions and orders to dismantle structures - make peace-building efforts highly difficult.

In this context, the Lebanese Ministry of Education has played a key role in the implementation of the RACE (Reaching All Children with Education) program. In 2017, phase 2 of RACE (RACE II, 2017-2022) was launched with the aim of facilitating access to education for vulnerable Syrian and Lebanese children by increasing as much as possible the number of classes in the first round (in the morning) and creating a second round (in the afternoon) for Syrian children. The school system in Lebanon is heavily privatized and only 30% of Lebanese children attend public schools. The high influx of Syrian refugees in recent years has evidently increased the demand for access to the school system and in particular to the public system - since its cost is much lower than that of private schools - putting the Lebanese public schools to the test.

The preliminary analysis conducted by WW-GVC shows that, in Northern Bekaa and Akkar, school drop-out rates are among the

highest in Lebanon, mainly due to the poverty of families who cannot afford the tuition fee, transport costs (to and from schools) and poor infrastructure and hygiene conditions in public schools (in the latter case, a high drop-out rate concerns girls). As a result, families are led to take defensive mechanisms, often with a negative impact, such as child labor and early marriage, thus exposing boys and girls to the risk of violence and abuse. With regard to the Syrian refugee population, in addition to the factors of early school leaving mentioned above, 44% of Syrian children with disabilities living in Lebanon declare not to attend school due to inadequate school infrastructure and lack of specific programs. Therefore, school drop-out rates have further increased.

On the other hand, given the influx of Syrian refugee children, in many schools the number of students enrolled has increased by 50% compared to the school year 2013/2014. However, schools do not have the infrastructural capacity to cope with such a large number of new students. In this context, support for schools and families to improve conditions of access to education clearly remains a priority.

The unprecedented economic crisis of 2020 was characterized by rapid price increases, supply shocks, informal exchange rate devaluation and loss of livelihoods for many households in different population groups. The further deterioration of social and economic conditions in the Akkar and Northern Bekaa regions led to a sharp increase in poverty among both host communities and refugees. The World Bank estimates an increase in the proportion of Lebanese living in poverty in 2019, with the projection to reach 40% in 2020 (about 10% more than in 2011).

The three schools involved in the intervention - Tall Bireh Mixed Public School and Bebnine Public School for Girls in Akkar Governorate, and Nabi Osmane Intermediate Public School in Baalbek/Hermel - host children from 3 to 17 years old, and their classes are from G1 to G7 in Bebnine and Tall Bireh, and from KG1 to G9 in Nabi Osmane.

According to the AICS - SCALE assessments on socio-economic vulnerabilities and disabilities awareness, the three targeted schools' communities face common challenges and issues in terms of children's access to school and average level of education, due to common difficulties linked to the economic deprivation and poor living conditions of most of the families in the concerned areas.

Indeed, poverty constitutes a major factor limiting access to

education, which has a significant impact on many aspects and family choices. Early marriage is one of these, a general trend that mainly affects girls over 11 years of age, with no difference between Syrians and Lebanese.

Added to the financial barriers is the problem of transportation to school (according to 31% of the families) and, in some cases, the challenge of the school curriculum (3%), whose level of difficulty is further increased, according to many families, by French as a second language, which leads a high number of children to repeat their class. Anyway, others perceive this to be related to their children's disability, while few perceive this to be related to other factors such as families' living conditions or being bullying at school by students or teachers.

On the other side, a high level of domestic violence against women and children has also been detected, with physical and verbal abuse, which, though not apparently having an impact on school attendance, has a strong influence on children's behavior at school, who tend to be impulsive and to not recognize the consequences of their actions. Furthermore, several episodes of bullying occur within classes.

The component of mistrust particularly applies to families with PWD as member, which tend to perceive the school system as inconvenient and inaccessible for their children under many aspects. 9% of these families recognize the schools as not properly equipped for PWD children or state that the school culture conveys problems (8%), as well as the school curriculum is too difficult for their children (4%). Widespread concern has also emerged around the ability of students to accept them and towards the harm PWD can be exposed to, as there is a lacking knowledge and awareness of PWD's and their rights both in education settings and outside.

In general, there are only few children with disability enrolled in the schools, and, according to more than half the interviewees (62%) this is due to the unsuitability of school facilities at the infrastructural level, the architectural barriers limiting access to individuals with physical disabilities and lack of internal school policies or education plans designed to include children with special needs. Similarly, also students with learning difficulties are involved at a low extent or not at all. This makes children and their families adopt negative coping strategies already mentioned, such as school dropout, child labor and early marriage.

Children often happen to hear their parents complaining about the

economic situation at home and to talk about the same problems at school among themselves. This affects their psychological well-being and, consequently, their ability to concentrate in class. In addition, sometimes children arrive at school without eating first and this affects their attention.

Finally, there is a lack of adequate space and recreational activities for boys and girls outside the public garden, since even school does not provide for them. This implies that children necessarily spend their leisure time and holidays at home and, therefore, hardly find opportunities for recreation with respect to the domestic dynamics mentioned above.



## 2. Sport and disability, UISP's approach for inclusion

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*"Disabled children are born twice:  
the first time they are unprepared for the world,  
the second time they are born again entrusted to the love and intelligence of others.  
Still, this rebirth also requires in others  
an integral change towards disability:  
a physical or mental limit that,  
directly or indirectly,  
sooner or later, involves us all.  
And that, in an age where the challenge, as an end in itself, is exalted  
as overcoming the limit,  
it imposes the most important challenge,  
which is the awareness and acceptance of the limit"*  
**Giuseppe Pontiggia**

### Introduction

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UISP, Unione Italiana Sport per tutti ('Sport for all' Italian Union), is a sports promotional body, recognized by CONI (Italian Olympic Committee), which in its associative mission provides for the commitment to people with disabilities as a priority, in full coherence with its values and social aims.

UISP promotes and spreads sport in all places, squares, streets, lands torn by bloody wars and without distinction of race, gender, economic and social conditions, political choices and redefines the rules of sport practice, to encourage the full participation of individuals regardless of their abilities.

'Sport for all' puts the person, and not the performance, at the center and opens up in front of us many possible ways to reach all people indiscriminately, with their strengths and weaknesses, with their resources and with their dreams to achieve.

UISP values diversity and builds on differences: if diversity is a value and a richness, one should not tend to eliminate differences. Valuing diversity, however, does not mean emphasizing inequalities, but it means creating the necessary conditions to respect the originality and uniqueness of each one.

Only the positive acceptance of diversity can make a disabled person welcome as a person and not as "chance", it can make possible to create a social egalitarian project and develop a culture of integration.

*"Sport has the power to change the world,  
to create hope where there is despair,  
it is more powerful than governments to break down racial barriers  
and is capable of laughing in the face of all the discrimination..."*  
**Nelson Mandela**

### Game, Sport and Disability

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Sport is a game and game is a right, so it must be for everyone, otherwise it becomes a privilege. But when disability encounters sport, often the consequences of motor deficits have very limiting impacts on social integration among children, even in those disabilities that apparently have no specific impact on motor skills, such as mental retardation.

If we are not aware of how much the facets of sociality and sport can become a guarantor of an adequate and satisfactory integration of disabled children in the social context, we could risk that every children learn in the framework of school and rehabilitation would be lost: indeed, without a good generalization of the skills acquired in rehabilitation or at school, the fate of disabled children and adults would be that of social isolation and loneliness.

For this reason, even with children with disabilities it is important to educate them to the concepts of encounter and play in all its forms; these activities represent a fundamental strategy to achieve inclusion, being they characterized, by nature, by a reciprocity between identity and difference and teaching how to manage the essential components of the relationship with others, such as competitiveness, frustration, anxiety and respect. To propose something to children, disabled or not, in a playful way aims both at making learning fun and, above all, at stimulating the real participation of all, not only from a cognitive point of view but mainly emotionally; by playing, indeed, we are forced to get involved, because inside a game one cannot pretend to play, nor can one play halfway.

However, unfortunately the presence of a deficit prevents the regular play of a game; when more importance is given to the game than to the search for pleasure and meaning in it, then the disabled child is excluded.

When the game becomes absolute in itself and the rules, measures and abilities overcome the rest, a process of exclusion is triggered. Another feasible way is to play the same game by adapting it, changing the rules, introducing tools and allowing the child to play in a very similar way to the original game. Many of the sports that see the participation of many people with different skills come from the adaptation of a game: Baskin, Wheelchair Basketball, Walking Football, Torball.

Alternatively, another strategy is to invent a new game, a special game that takes into account everyone's skills and that can be "played" by everyone. What counts, for all children, disabled or not, is playing, because the game is fundamental for the experimentation and activation of many learning processes. A key strategy for the inclusion of disabled children is the path of the special play, a game which is invented on the basis of the needs and abilities of each one. What counts in the motor game is that there is always a balance between disability and limit, which are represented by the rules of the game: if during the game the disability increases or decreases too much, there is no more fun.

## The importance of sport in the social inclusion of disable people

Sport plays a fundamental role in the physical and social development of the person. Practicing a physical activity allows to acquire - through the rules of sport - the social rules, promoting integration. Precisely for this reason, sport has always been used as an educational means.

Practicing sport for a disabled person or doing psychomotor activities for a disabled child is an opportunity to "rebuild oneself", to regain one's autonomy, to realize oneself at a social level and to recover concreteness in the mobility.

Sport for disabled people allows them to deepen their knowledge of themselves and their body; it has a therapeutic value and represents a moment of growth and training that allows them to achieve an important inner well-being. Besides having the value of rehabilitative path, sports have a profound impact on the lives of people with disabilities, because it is about activities that help recognize the potential of one's body and rediscover one's dignity as a human and social person.

## Needs of the disable person

*"To look further, to look away,  
It means to take the children by the hand.  
It means "stay" but don't pull me.  
It means at times to stop for "not doing"  
It means making room for their thought,  
It means being there and showing them that you "see".  
It means opening up to the unexpected  
It means wondering until you lose your breath.  
It means to be there, but sometimes even "too much"  
It means to value the hitch.  
It means stopping and being capable of waiting  
It means, often, to train our look."*

**Carola Castoldi**

In order for the disabled person to be integrated and included in motor and sports activities, it is necessary to get out of the logic of help as an end in itself, of 'non-required' help, the one that takes us to anticipate and carry out actions that the disabled person can do independently, or, in the worst case, to deny the disabled person all the activities that, according to the collective imagination, can only be carried out by normal people.

The attitude of others is, in fact, one of the most discussed and difficult barriers to break down. On the other hand, it is necessary for the disabled person to leave the logic of demanding continuous assistance if not necessary.

Among the most significant internal barriers there are the attitudes and motivations of the disabled person who may have a low awareness of his/her own abilities and a low level of self-esteem. This lack of security, indeed, may translate into feelings of inadequacy to practice sport, fear of making mistakes and inability to ask for help.

Therefore, normality, in a perfect world, must welcome the diversity and the diversity must welcome normality as well as both must accept their own limits. In this way only can there be growth and change.

Much progress has been made with regard to the social approach to disability; nevertheless, the culture of infantilization remains, often even in an exaggerated way.

In reality the disabled person needs normality and specifically emotional normality, educational normality and experiential

normality.

The adults of reference, parents for example, may have great difficulty in guaranteeing this normality. Let's think about the emotional normality that a disabled child can experience: in order for us all to become an adult it is crucial that someone imagines us as adults and walks together with us along our growth; when it comes to a disabled person, it is often difficult to plan or even dream of his/her growth, therefore the emotional normality is compromised.

Educational normality, on the other hand, in order to be such, must be a process with a term, permanent education must be avoided; but if the educational efforts address a child who cannot grow and cannot learn like others, they will be infinitely dilated in time; and so, for a disabled person, educational normality is lost.

Finally, experiential normality is the one that allows us to have a role in society and unfortunately this role is not always taken into account when it comes to disabled people. Not implementing a "normality of roles" condemns the disabled person to remain in a marginal position; so, also in this case experiential normality is not implemented.

## The method: the oblique approach

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In order to create contexts of experience that allow the coexistence of diversities and respect the different characteristics of the subjects, the experiences of movement must be proposed through a teaching approach that, while taking into account the specific objectives of motor education, offers opportunities to support the positive image of themselves.

Our UISP didactic proposal is called oblique and is based on the stimulus.

It differs from the horizontal didactics, which is commonly used in education and provides for the exercises and deliveries which are the same for all the children in the group: the oblique didactics, instead, allows to work on the personal skills of each one.

It is extremely necessary, especially in the field of disability, to always propose contexts of experience where everyone, starting from their starting level, can experience the success of their actions. In the oblique didactics the demand is not about assignments but "stimuli",

which therefore define framework of research in which there can be different possible interpretations.

Oblique contexts also have another fundamental value: they force one to choose what to do. And the fact of putting the child in the position to choose, it helps him/her to build his/her own autonomy.

This method stimulates ways of experimentation in which everyone can work at his/her own level, so that each child can experience the "value of him/herself", because he/she feels he/she can succeed in any case, obtaining pleasant sensations of "success". By responding properly to the adult's request, the child feels satisfaction and the result of his/her actions leads him/her to go through other challenges, acquiring more and more confidence.

This methodological approach is crucial for the inclusion because it is based on the concept of 'group', which can be defined as a non-random set of people with shared needs, motivations and values, who find themselves in a relationship of positive interdependence with each other for the achievement of a common goal. Being in positive interdependence means that each member of the group is dependent on a partner and at the same time constitutes a resource for him or her. So while the horizontal methodology relies on the assignment and on the adult in a perspective of "I tell you what to do and you do it", the oblique methodology relies on the stimulus and the need of the child in a perspective of "I offer you a context of experience where you can look for possible solutions". In order to represent the idea of obliquity in the practice, let's imagine we have to jump an obstacle: the rope (obstacle) is not positioned horizontally but obliquely; in this way, everyone jumps to the level they want, without having to raise or lower the pole (i.e. change the situation) according to who jumps: by proposing one single situation, we understand the possibilities and abilities of everyone.

In order to encourage to do it harder, when you repeat the game, you can insert the rule that everyone has to jump in a different point from the one previously chosen, in order to accustom children and teens to choose independently.

## Spaces, times and game's equipment

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*"Not the one ready-made.  
But the game you find and make up.  
The one that knows neither space nor time.*

*Anyone, anywhere in the world,  
can play without a video.  
Which the longer it stays on, the more it turns you off."*  
**Anonymous**

According to the 'sport for all' methodological model and the oblique methodology, when it comes to propose an activity there is no specific setting to comply with in order to be able to make motor and sport experiences, but rather any space and any time, both in terms of duration and frequency, can be suitable to play and to do sport. With regard to the space in which to do motor activity, the aim of an educator has to be that of offering the most opportunities for practicing and experimentation. In fact, the first time the child experiences the concept of space happens when he/she leaves the sensation of fusion with the mother figure and recognizes it as something else; through physical development the child can move away to conquer the space, taking pleasure from such action that means his/her active presence in the world; but in order to achieve this you need desire and courage: the insecure child, for example, tends to stay in the range of action of the educator, often even maintaining physical contact; he/she needs gradual experiences of autonomy and estrangement supported by meaningful actions. Entering and leaving one's own space reinforces one's perception of oneself and predisposes one to other steps and challenges. The space, indeed, beyond the objectivity of the situation, can be perceived as very large or as suffocating. But what to do when there is no space, when it does not seem adequate to propose a motor experience? The first trivial answer is this: let's involve children in the definition of the play space. This simple action will give them a way to affect the reality that surrounds them, and at the same time they will define rules to be respected. In emergency situations, such as an open space or in a classroom, it is necessary to create the most suitable conditions for carrying out activities in a safe situation. The educator has always to redefine the space and give clear reference points to children (which can be built together with them even with poor material, by structuring limits in too wide spaces, for example, or by taking only some of the lines of a traced field as reference points - if there is a traced field). In doing so, the educator must be aware that, by playing on spaces, the relationship between subjects and between them and any object and material proposed for the activity is limited or dilated; moreover, shaping the environment means allowing the child to adhere more easily to the adult's intentions within a frame that provides containment.

By 'materials' we mean all those objects that can be used for the

activity and that, in some situations, can become the pivot of a meeting or a set of meetings. In oblique didactics the poor material is privileged, as its ductility characteristics are not present in the structured material - the circles, the tiles, the balls, the plastic bricks - built for a specific educational purpose. The poor material is easy to find and the child can be involved in the action of finding it, a way to make him/her participate already in the preparation and planning of the activities.

Poor materials abound: the fact of having "so much material" available often facilitates exploration and searching activities. Moreover, they are changeable: unstructured materials are easily transformable, not only symbolically but also physically: paper, for example, can be rolled up and become a ball or made into strips and give life to a web. Such handling can encourage the child in becoming aware of his/her ability to intervene in reality, transforming it according to the needs of the game; the same material can also be used in the phase of reworking of the experience.

Finally, poor materials are distinctive for certain characteristics, for example hardness or softness, a condition that promotes child's creativity and that in itself gives directions for use and solicitations to the imagination.

## Ways of conducting

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*"If I listen, I forget...  
If I see, I remember...  
If I do, I learn..."*  
**Confucio**

When we make children play, the question we must always ask ourselves is the following: are we putting the adult's need before the child's need? Are we putting our beliefs at the core of our actions as educators or the child with his/her search for pleasure and meaning, his/her curiosity and creative interpretation of the movement? The first rule is to learn to look at children, and in this look there has to be an understanding of their needs. Indeed, the child grows up under the gaze of the adult who continuously gives him confirmation and limits; the gaze transmits thoughts, orders, and communicates emotions before words. The gaze, therefore, has the function of support, reassurance, containment and mirror because the child needs to feel that the emotions he/she perceives are confirmed by

the figure to which he/she is affectively bonded and therefore he/she also recognizes them as true. For example: the child who falls, he looks at the adult as he were asking “tell me what I feel” and it is the expression of the adult which gives gravity or lightness to what happened. There are children who constantly seek attention and others who instead tend to eclipse themselves: both show the need to be “seen” more, demonstrating that they do not have yet a well-structured ego which allows them to play peacefully on their own for a while. With lively children, who use to grab all the attention and energy, it is useful to give them “assignments” asking them to do small things on their own, by guaranteeing them to “go back to them after a while”. For example: “Do this wall on your own and I will come over in a moment”. Gradually, this dynamic of leaving him and coming back will increase the child’s ability to wait, which relies on a basis of trust, which in turn supports the moments of distance through thoughts and assurances that guarantee emotional permanence. Children who are “too calm” can be inhibited in expressing their emotions. It is not a matter of those who play quietly on their own, but of those who show inner tension that can be seen in the muscle tone, in the way they look around or look at an object, in being on the edge of the game. The adult’s gaze, even before its proactive or supportive action, can bring understanding and stimulation. Sometimes instead the teacher’s gaze can be involuntarily inquisitive, it happens when he/she waits insistently for an answer during a verbalization or a game, so sometimes lowering the eyes while maintaining the relationship with words or touch, can relax the child and create openings. Games providing for the use of the gaze allow you to reflect on one’s need to be recognized, appreciated, protected and to become more aware of different ways of looking. The teacher, the technician, the sports operator, the educator, the parent himself therefore, they are not just about transmitting techniques and knowledge, but they have the task of ensuring that each child expresses his/her potential, giving him/her the necessary space “to be” and thus establishing his/her sacred right to play and to move as he/she can and wants to. This means looking at diversity while emphasizing everyone’s creative abilities.

This is why it is important for the adult to know how to conduct a motor, sport or creative activity specially designed for children. There are three ways of conducting:

**Unstructured Leadership:** The adult is “at the service” of the game to help individuals and the group to play well, in the sense of being able to design, share, grow the game. He naturally maintains the

role of controller and guarantor of the rules and is concerned with helping everyone to develop their skills and the group to collaborate and give meaning to doing, but he keeps himself free from pre-constituted programming. He is in charge of giving the materials that are required or that he believes can help the game. It is very useful when experimenting with new materials to allow children to use them creatively;

**Semi-structured conduction:** the adult, with a non-invasive presence, offers children stimuli for searching, makes proposals for the social and cognitive evolution of the experience, creates the condition for “divergent” responses, offers opportunities for exchange of information and discoveries;

**Structured conduction:** the teacher shows the children the rules of the games and what to do with the equipment; it is an activity in which the aims and actions are clear, it gives deliveries, records the steps forward with respect to the specific objectives of the area and induces the children to reflect on the actions to carry out, encouraging the consolidation of skills and the reworking of experience to integrate knowledge. It is widely used at the end of a set of meetings in which it is necessary to evaluate the acquired skills. The most frequently used method with regard to the oblique approach is certainly the semi-structured one, but promoting one method over another does not mean that the others are not used.

## The body in disability

*“You don’t teach what you know or what you think you know:  
You teach and you can only teach what you are.”*

**Jean Léon Laurès**

Body and motor education is crucial in the process of building the identity of each individual. The body permeates every dimensions of the subject’s personality: functional, cognitive, affective and relational.

This conviction must drive the action of any educator, especially if the subjects we work with are fragile children, and even more so if certain motor functions are compromised. For every child, indeed, corporeity and movement represent the context of life experience, which is not only characterized by what one does, but also by what one processes, experiences, observes, feels, perceives and is when



with others. The body represents the primary form of communication for the child; but if there is a body that speaks there must be another body capable of listening to it: the body of the educator. Indeed, disability is often exploited because there is a tendency to deny the condition of difficulty, and there are some invisible aspects that the adult who deals with it voluntarily creates.

When relating to disabled people you often have to go to places in which you have never been and always question yourself, working to develop the skills proper to the educator, even before the skills of disabled children.

### 3. The world of disability: words and meanings

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*Kid, you're asking me what love is?  
Grow up and you'll know  
Kid, you're asking me what happiness is?  
Stay a kid and you'll know*  
**Chinese proverb**

Disability is defined as a complex relationship between an individual's state of health, personal and social factors. Therefore, different environments will have different consequences on each person with a certain state of health. The healthier the surrounding environment is, the more the individual will benefit. If the environment is more restrictive, limitations in activities will arise and participation will be more difficult as a result. A society can therefore facilitate or hinder people with disabilities; this depends on the resources we employ and the measures we take. It has always been difficult to find a unanimous consensus to understand the concept of disability. The difficulty arises when aspects such as equality, social justice and alienation have to be highlighted or overcome, trying to avoid negative terminology or definitions. It follows that any person in this condition has the right to be called in the way he/she sees fit. International organizations are trying to unify concepts and establish common criteria. There is currently no unanimous consensus on how to refer to people who, at any level, suffer from limitations. The most accredited model provided by the International Classification defines the concepts of impairment, disability, handicap and describes the consequences of an illness.

Impairment is the loss or abnormality of a psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function. It also extends to anatomical loss; for example, the loss of a hand is not a disorder but an impairment. It includes abnormalities (Down's syndrome is a chromosomal anomaly), defects or losses of limbs, organs, tissues or other structures of the psychic and physical organism. One can either be born impaired or become impaired as a result of accidents.

Disability is the practical consequence of impairment and this term indicates what you are able to do and what you are not: disability, therefore, concerns the sphere of activities and competences. For example, a speech impairment leads to a disability in speech. A hearing impairment produces a hearing disability. A visual impairment leads to a disability in seeing. A psychological impairment (schizophrenia, psychosis, etc.) causes a disability in living with others.

Handicap is a social phenomenon: it is the condition of disadvantage, resulting from an impairment or disability, which limits or prevents the fulfilment of a social role considered "normal". Disability can be interpreted as the result of the encounter between disability and the physical and social environment: the more welcoming and suitable the physical and social environment is for each individual, the smaller the disability will be. For example, a small disability in walking becomes a severe handicap on a steep mountain path, while it is mild on a flat, uneven road. A blind person in the dark does not show a handicap: it is in the presence of light, which allows everyone else to see, that his blindness becomes a handicap. And so a hearing impaired person with a prosthesis that compensates well for his deficit is a hearing impaired person, but not necessarily a handicapped person. In an insane asylum a madman is one like any other. In everyday reality, in which everyone lives according to rules that he breaks, he becomes "the madman". If even Ulysses had only one eye, perhaps he wouldn't have got off so cheaply with Polyphemus.

#### Types of disability

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There are three types of disability:

- **Physical disabilities** resulting from motor impairment or brain damage; difficulties can occur with delay in the acquisition of the first motor skills (crawling, sitting, walking) and with behaviours such as ease in dropping objects, "clumsiness", poor sports skills and difficulty in writing. The term physical disability may refer to all motor impairment resulting from brain damage at an early age. Although it is mainly characterized by problems of motor functions, various disabilities are associated: perceptual, sensory, practical, intellectual, communicative, relational. The child with a physical disability cannot learn normality but can learn and modify its functions to make them more and more suitable. As educators it is necessary to understand and to know how to distinguish what children want to do, what they can do and how in order to achieve their goal, to try to modify the material or the situation, to make the task feasible for themselves; and if needed, it is necessary to become his/her hand (physical guide), but only in order to become the executor of his/her intentions. In physical disability it is important to know that motor activities

can be adapted to the child's residual functions, trying to act on strengths in order to develop weaknesses.

- **Psychical disabilities** resulting from impairments of the psychic apparatus such as mental retardation, or disorders of psychic functioning. Generally, these factors occur:
  1. **general intellectual functioning level below average**
  2. **inability or difficulty of adaptation**
  3. **onset in the age of development (within 18 years).**

As a direct consequence we also see a level of ability below average, compared to the typical development in terms of communication, autonomy, school skills and leisure time management. While formerly mental retardation was classified through the measurement of the Intellectual Quotient, today it is appropriate to consider a more complex reality taking into account other skills such as communication, autonomy, sociality, understood as the ability to interact with others, and the level of participation in a group activity. Some children with mental disabilities have difficulties in managing their behaviour, due to a series of shortcomings in the development of executive functions such as: inaccuracy in collecting and encoding data; processing information coming from outside, memorizing patterns, inability to solve problems without the help of others. Usually we are talking about children whose motility is intact and often active in moving. However, they are incapable of reflecting on their own movements, i.e. they are unconscious; for them movement is acted upon but not represented in the mind as an action that takes place in a space, with a direction, a form and an objective (i.e. they do not have space-time organization).

- **Sensorial disabilities** resulting from visual and auditory sensory impairment. Visual impairments lead to consequences not only on all areas of development related to sight, such as visual-motor coordination, fine manual dexterity, but also on areas of postural, social-emotional and linguistic control development. Hearing impairment, depending on the damage, which can be more or less serious and even completely compensated by a hearing aid, leads to more or less serious difficulties in school learning, linked to the limited linguistic competence developed.

## Motor activities and the development of executive functions: a possible way

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Participation in a motor or sports activity represents for all children and young people with disabilities an important opportunity to grow both from a social and cognitive point of view. In fact, recent studies on the subject show that motor activities and sport have a strong positive impact on the development of the executive functions that are mostly lacking in disabled people, who, therefore, need to be trained and to increased in their development.

Sport can improve memory, problem solving, creativity and reduce behavioural disorders (Tomprowsky and Coles, 2008) with positive effects on school performance despite the reduction of time spent on traditional subjects (Shepard, 1987; Trudeau and Shepard, 2008). Intense physical activity produces better school performance than moderate or non-activity (Coe, Pivarmik and Womack, 2006). Poor performance is a common denominator of neurodevelopmental disorders, but also of the general difficulties of children with typical development.

## What are executive functions and what are they for

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The term "executive functions" is used to refer to upper cortical and sub cortical functions responsible for controlling and planning behaviour. They represent a set of mental abilities that act as the command center of the brain, which are essential to deal with new situations. Indeed, they allow an individual to plan and implement projects aimed at achieving a goal, but they are also necessary to monitor and modify one's behaviour when necessary, to adapt it to changes in the context. Executive functions help individuals to plan, manage and organize their time, control emotions, manipulate information in order to carry out a given task. They are also important for staying focused and solving problems. We are talking about:

- **Attention**, which is fundamental to any learning and can be of various kinds:
  - **Alertness** is about responsiveness to stimuli;

- **Divided attention** is the ability to distribute one's attentive resources between two or more tasks to be performed at the same time, e.g. when putting motor and verbal together;
  - **Focused attention** is direct attention to a stimulus and its details;
  - **Sustained attention** is the attention needed to complete a task.
- **Planning and scheduling**, which is the ability to formulate a general plan of action and schedules actions according to hierarchical sequence of objectives.
  - **Inhibition**, which is the ability to control the interference of stimuli that are irrelevant to the task being performed and to diminish such interference in order to functionally achieve the intended goal. Its development involves the control of the impulsive response.
  - **Emotional self-regulation**, which is the ability to regulate one's impulses, regulate one's emotions and postpone gratification; it is essential to effectively manage daily demands both as children and as adults.
  - **Shifting** is the ability to change perspective (spatial or interpersonal), the ability to adapt to changes in the surrounding environment and to change behaviour patterns as a result of external feedback.
  - **Working memory**, which allows us to keep information in mind and to be able to process, work and manipulate it, is a function that is used in calculating in mind, understanding complex oral instructions and understanding a written text, when we prepare a suitcase, when we perform a choreography ...
  - **Problem solving** is the ability to solve problems.

## The importance of motor activity in the development of executive functions

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Executive functions are necessary for successful schooling. Throughout the day, the child must be able to carry out a number of basic learning tasks: organising the material, managing the written work and notes, moving from one delivery to another, adapting his/her behaviour to the situation, inhibiting irrelevant information, controlling the work he/she is doing. In order to build his knowledge, the student must organize the information, structure it, link it to the knowledge that he/she already has. But in order for the body to support the performance of schoolwork, different motor skills are needed. Postural stability allows to maintain a functional and constant sitting position throughout the day and is necessary to develop effective eye-hand coordination (Case-Smith, 2009). Stability, mobility of the upper limb and hand are the basis for the use of school equipment and are necessary for the development of readable, fast and accurate writing. Eye mobility enables the development of reading speed, copying from the blackboard and spatial orientation (Gentile, 2005). The automation of gestures, which is important to perform gestures quickly and without the need for cognitive control over the task, is linked to the good functioning of the proprioceptive system, which also participates in the regulation of the state of alert and therefore in the development of sustained attention (Bundy, Lane and Murray, 2002). In addition to school learning, executive functions are involved every time we have the occasion to learn new actions and sequences of actions that need planning, in actions where it is necessary to control the action and correct errors, in activities where it is necessary to regulate ourselves with a constant monitoring of our own behaviour, in actions where we need to overcome habitual responses by inhibiting them in favour of others. All these functions are necessary for all school learning and develop naturally with motor activity.

## Guidelines for the development of executive functions in disability through sport

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Motor experience can become significant as cognitive enhancement when it is not simply about the repetition of exercises that train a

particular muscle, but when the focus of action is on:

- **The executive functions:** when you program a type of motor activity that trains a certain function.
- **The sense of competence,** because the activity has to be involving and within everyone's reach, has to be perceived as a "challenge" that everyone can face.
- **The proximal development zone:** when you change the activity after the child has learned a relevant skill, in order not to bore him/her and to stimulate him/her through activities that gradually increase the difficulties.
- **Metacognition:** when you promote self-reflection both during the activities and afterwards; by defining rules that lead to respect each other and the adult: to start once a sign is given, to wait for the partner to finish; to count the equipment while placing it; to reflect all together on the strategies used and the best ones to reach the goal.



## 4. Training: the pedagogical and educational approach used

*"Education should inculcate the idea that humanity is one family with common interests. That consequently collaboration is more important than competition."*

**Bertrand Russell**

The educational intervention of the project aimed at encouraging the implementation of inclusive sports and recreational activities, not only for children with physical difficulties but also for children from vulnerable families. On the one hand, parents, teachers, and representatives of social organizations participated to the training with the intent to promote the specific contents of the course. On the other hand, they focused also on the promotion of active parenting, on raising collective awareness about the issue of inclusion, on creating social cohesion within the communities, and on bringing together the different groups within the different school establishments.

During the training we met with 81 people, including parents, teachers, social workers and institutional representatives.

### Methodology

The primary objective of the training course was a theoretical and practical study of the importance of movement, play and sport. The analysis aimed at providing the personnel dealing with minors with operational tools in order to foster their adaptation to their individual social context. The training course has supported the experimentation of motor and psychomotor protocols related to the implementation and development of executive functions to be applied in the cognitive field.

The meetings were conducted using different types of training:

- Lectures
- Presentation and group discussion of problems/case studies
- Practical exercises by the participants of practical or technical activities
- Role playing
- Work in small groups

The above-mentioned typologies followed the Circle Time dynamics. Conceptualized by Humanistic Psychology, it became an effective tool to increase emotional closeness and to solve conflicts. This methodology, which goes hand in hand with the idea of the group, has proved particularly useful, since the concept of a cooperating group

is inherent in the same conception of the educational community.

This group dynamic:

- allows pupils to express themselves and get to know each other better, making the most of the differences;
- facilitates inclusion;
- allows the trainers to get to know the members of the group and the group as a whole better;
- can be a tool for conflict prevention and conflict management.

### Circle time – how it unfolded

The participants were seated in a circle so that everyone could see and be seen by everyone. The trainers were seated, like the participants, in the same circle.

The communication occurred respecting the rules shared at the beginning, whose purpose was promoting active listening and active participation.

The shared rules were:

- **"We speak one at a time"** (Rule of respect for the other)
- **"We try not to judge what others say, but to listen in an empathic way"** (Rule of active and empathic listening)
- **"What is said in the circle must not leave the room"** (Privacy rule)

The duration of the Circle time activity was set at the beginning of the meeting. The topics to be treated as well as the modalities and the activities to be carried out were also clearly communicated. In the circle, the trainers acted as communication enablers, not taking sides. Nonetheless, they adopted listening strategies and were careful in respecting the needs of the participants.

The ultimate objective of the Circle Time activity was to facilitate the cooperation among all the members of the group. Furthermore, it aimed at helping create a space where everyone is included and participates actively - taking into consideration each one's ways and timing. Consequently, the need to belong and the individuality, both identified by Psychology as fundamental elements for a balanced psychic development of the person, are respected.

## “Do you want to play with me?”

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Each participant was asked this question when experiential activities were proposed. The question has a considerable importance: on the one hand, it makes possible to assess the willingness to participate; on the other hand, it introduces the game concept.

The game is undoubtedly the main activity characterizing childhood. For this reason, it has been studied in its various declinations, at the pedagogical and didactic level, as a psychological function in the development process, as a catalyst in learning processes, as a metaphor of life itself. Moreover, numerous classifications have been proposed based on the function of the game rather than on the different types, determined by their set of rules.

The participants had been given the time to learn about the games in order to have a ready-for-use “tool box”.

It is true that the primary objective of a game is to make the player enjoy themselves. However, the game should also make the facilitator enjoy themselves just the same. This idea of mutual amusement is a pedagogical and educational concept. The other person's welfare derives from my own welfare, firstly as an individual, secondly as an instructor, teacher, parents. There is no denying that a shift of the general mentality and of the systemic approach is necessary. Nonetheless, it is crucial for everyone to have a “tool box” in order to overcome the difficulties and the possibilities of the disability. The “tool box” starts with the game, with the meaning the children give to it and with its observation. It is essential to be conscious of the fact that the mere presence of an impairment prevents the normal game flow. Yet, this doesn't mean that the inevitable solution is to exclude the disabled person from the game. Just think how much time during childhood each one of us has spent playing, making stories up, make-believing, building... This reveals how fundamental the game is for a well-balanced child development. It also shows that playing should be guaranteed at all educational levels.

Furthermore, let's not forget how important it is to have playmates, to have friends to play with and to share moments of joy.

Hence, the reason for this training course is to include so as to play together. Indeed, playing together creates positive feelings, such as joy which, in turn, helps develop the child's self-esteem and, more importantly, the child's harmonious development.

In a nutshell, it is important to understand how fundamental the game is, how inalienable, and how valuable it is at the pedagogical, educational, sports and systemic level in the field of education.

It is now essential that the school as well as the family become the main actors and use the game as part of the pedagogical and

educational process.

## The training course

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In addition to the Circle Time technique, we worked in small groups, for the planning and design of the games, engaging the course participants in the structuring of games and activities dedicated to the children of the school.

All groups had the opportunity to plan and propose their activities, which were evaluated by the trainers, taking into account some parameters such as: teamwork, adequacy and consistency of the proposal according to the age group and the time frame to be achieved and the effectiveness of communication, the inclusion of all participants.

Before the start of the course, the trainers had an interview with the headmasters to explain in detail the contents, aims, objectives and methodologies of the training activity. The module started with the presentation of the trainers and participants who were also asked what the expectations of the training were, each of them gave conflicting answers but united by a single common denominator: that of not having tools to promote the integration of children with physical disabilities but also children in situations of emotional fragility with manifest hyperactivity and aggressive attitudes. It was therefore necessary to adapt topics and activities to meet the different educational needs of the group of participants. The knowledge games started the actual activities: the path was developed by carrying out playful, educational and sports activities, correlating them to the different contexts and individual roles occupied by the participants with reference to children's education, and to the more general concept of integration. The theoretical part has deepened in detail the issues related to the psycho-pedagogical vision of play, cognitive, motor and relational development of the child, whose knowledge allows to propose activities suitable for each age group. A range of motor and sports games was provided, including cooperative, role-playing, imitation, motor adaptation, perceptive sense, with different aims and characteristics for the enhancement of each child, bearer of individual needs and resources and for the achievement of an adequate relational and emotional balance in the group of children. The educational methods and strategies used in practice were specified and analyzed in frontal work through active teaching. The last day of the training course was dedicated to the presentation and implementation of the activities with the children, carried out over a period of 2 hours. Subsequently, the final part of the training was dedicated to the final restitution of the experience with all the participants and where advice was needed from the

trainers regarding the best organization of the activities both from an organizational and educational point of view.

## The goals achieved

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The training program has made it possible to achieve very important goals in a fragile socio-cultural reality. To know the basic concepts of recreational and sports activities, such as group management and the game for inclusion and to use them for children who have no other possibilities of entertainment; to succeed in using practical tools and educational techniques that can be used both indoors and outdoors in planning and implementing sports activities even in places where spaces are not coded; to increase the skills of operators, parents and teachers in the planning and implementation of recreational and sports activities by teaching them to observe and understand the world of children by encouraging the use of a new approach, based on the enhancement of the person and the strengthening of everyone's skills.

In general, parents in Akkar and Nord Bekaa demonstrated a very good ability to draw from popular games as an inclusive and educational experience and a focus on the concept of inclusion of disability and (especially for participants in Nord Bekaa) the ability to plan games. In relation to the management of the games, there was a good involvement of all participants, very adequate proposals for children, an attention to all, successful launch of the game and different levels of communication within the group.

Differently from parents, teachers have drawn more from games related to physical education with a more "competitive" view of the game, in relation to the ability to plan the games. As far as the management of games is concerned, it has been observed in teachers (as well as in some social workers) the possibility to improve the attention to the needs of movement and freedom of creativity. In relation to participation in the games, it was also found that several teachers may have a more or less divergent thinking about the institutional and didactic discipline, while parents generally showed an excellent understanding of the potential of games in all socio-educational aspects.

## Analysis and feedbacks of the training path

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The group of trainees participated with great involvement and interest in each training module ensuring consistency and punctuality, adequacy in behavior and clothing.

Although the background was different, we can say that this training experience was effective because it represented, for everyone, a something new.

First of all, in terms of approach: a range of operational tools useful for field work was offered, starting from the assumption that every child must be enhanced and strengthened in his or her abilities. This conceptual and operational basis allows an adequate management of groups to prevent conflicting situations regarding relational dynamics and to create a climate of well-being. It also encourages the inclusion of everyone without disadvantaging or excluding anyone from both a motor and cognitive point of view.

Moreover, the set of activities proposed aims to respond to the well-being of the child at a global level: for this reason the training has not been limited to the offer of games, but has deepened the knowledge of the motor consequences of disability in general, and as far as the school context is concerned, on how to use motor and game tools within the different disciplines. In this way the participants developed a better ability to offer playful sports proposals, valid and effective to meet the different needs of their community

## 5. The Game as a Universe

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From the training and the addressed topics, it emerged that adults need to recover the sense of play as a tool for social integration.

When we talk about games, we obviously also talk about the intrinsic characteristics that shape sports. Sport in fact is game, and through play sport becomes great. But it is necessary to lay the foundations of education in the game, prior to competition and competition, otherwise the risk is to build a sandcastle being destroyed at the first sea storm.

Especially when dealing with issues of disability, inclusion, social cohesion it becomes essential to understand what is the key element that brings people together, rather than separating or excluding them from the community.

### Historical hints: pedagogical theories

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To better understand the game universe, it is necessary to briefly make a historical excursus on the subject.

In the educational tradition we can trace two opposing approaches: on the one hand, a so-called “game pedagogy” which has made the play dimension the centre of educational activity and on the other hand, a tendency to apply the game in a more flexible and essentially didactic way.

The first trend began with Fröbel and can still be found in today's socio-cultural animation; in the “Education of Man” of 1826 Fröbel places play at the foundation of the learning process in childhood. Through it, according to the author, the child discovers, by manipulating some basic objects such as the sphere, the laws of nature and the universe<sup>1</sup>.

While the second one, under the influence of functionalistic psychology, finds its supporters in Montessori and Decroly. According to Maria Montessori, building materials, for example, play a pragmatic role in training the senses and perception. While according to John Dewey, the game is primarily functional to provide

cognitive and pragmatic stimuli such as increasing problem-solving skills or helping to tolerate frustration in view of achieving a goal.

According to Maria Montessori, the foundation of scientific pedagogy is the observation of spontaneous manifestations to modify the educational work; the concept of self-education is fundamental; sensory exercises are used as a prerequisite for spontaneous activity; the mind is defined as being “absorbent” since it is always open to experience.

In the philosophical sphere, man is defined as *homo ludens*<sup>2</sup> because he has always played. Plato himself states that “children need amusements, the game is spontaneous when they gather together”. There are many theories on the game that follow one another over the last two centuries: for Schiller, the game is the need for a disinterested activity with immediate and direct aims; it is a need for seriousness, it is the generator of physical, intellectual, emotional forms, characterized by a sense of rhythm and harmony of the figure; of lightness. Spencer affirms that the excess of energy gathered in the centers of the brain is the actual source that creates the game.

For Groos, playful activity is to children exactly what it is to puppies: a training of skills; by playing the child uses and develops those physical and mental abilities that will be needed in adulthood.

From a psychological point of view, we can find the fundamental contribution to the analysis of play provided by Jean Piaget, who analyses the role of play in the cognitive and affective development of the child. Piaget highlights the difficulties that the child encounters in the process of adapting to an adult world whose rules he still ignores, and to a physical world he still does not fully understand. Piaget also offers a categorization of the diachronic development of the game: in the sense-motor age an exercise game takes place, which consists in repeating activities already acquired; between two-three and five-six years a symbolic game takes place in which reality is suspended and recreated at another level of meaning; in an operative-concrete phase (from seven to eleven years old), a game made up of rules that allows the overcoming of childish egocentricity in favour of submission to a shared rule in the social sphere takes place.

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1. F. Fröbel, *The education of man*, La Nuova Italia, 1993

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2. J. Huizinga, *Homo ludens*, Einaudi, 1946

Lev Vygotskij stressed the aspect that concerns the evolution of the rules in the game, pointing out that it would be paradoxical that the child, while playing for pleasure, surrenders to the rules, which actually prevent him from acting in complete freedom. Such subjection, however, together with the renunciation to follow an immediate impulse, represents in the game, in his view, the path that leads to the highest pleasure.

The game not only stimulates cognitive activity and reinvents reality, positioning itself as a privileged area of potential development (zone of proximal development), but also stimulates adaptive behaviour, convergent thinking, problem solving skills; moreover, the game, in the psychomotor field, allows the acquisition of coordination and perception of the body scheme, the strengthening of postural control and the refining of the perception of time and space. In general, it can be stated that the cognitive component of the game triggers intelligence in a phenomenal way through a series of features: exploratory, constructive, communicative, creative and inventive.

Freud refers<sup>3</sup> to play as a function of the Ego that helps the child to overcome the difficulties linked to growth: in fact, according to Freud's theory, the child must learn to subordinate the immediate satisfaction of his needs to the principle of reality, i.e. the environmental conditions that often frustrate these needs or delay their satisfaction. In play, the child has the possibility of overturning this situation.

Melanie Klein grounds her infantile analysis technique on the observation of the game which, according to her, would be equivalent to the free associations of the adult. Trying to shed light on the processes involved in the game, Klein highlights some of its components. According to her, the human mind from the very beginning thinks in terms of objects in relation to each other and to the subject, the child seeks relief from his inner world by outsourcing the most persecutory situations (and therefore objects); moreover, in his development he tries to replace toys and playmates with the previous objects, source of conflict, thus promoting a new symbolization and the creation of a more congenial psychic world<sup>4</sup>.

Donald W. Winnocott<sup>5</sup> departs clearly from this vision, inserting play into a series of fundamental activities to allow the child to move from the phase of addiction to that of autonomy. If the environment (mother) has been "good enough", the child will gradually learn that he or she is not one with the mother and will begin to symbolize reality autonomously. The child basically learns that he or she can stay alone, supported by the internal confidence of the continuity of a "good presence" that assists him or her. The so-called "transactional phenomena", among which we remember the game, the teddy bears or the creative experiences, act as a bridge in this delicate moment of passage, providing the necessary confidence to face a new reality. The greatest contribution of psychoanalysis to this theme concerns precisely the concept of symbolic play and its value for both the intellectual and affective development of the child: being able to actively manipulate reality, regardless of the laws that rule it, through play, would in fact enable a better acceptance of reality itself and, at the same time, a better distinction between the latter and the level of fantasy and fiction. Finally, through the game there would also be a cathartic action of elaboration of aggressiveness.

The question "Do you want to play with me?" is therefore underpinned by an in-depth search for a connection with the needs of the participants. It is implicit that this question can be asked to children, when starting a game, and to adults themselves, when in training. But the intrinsic pedagogical value is the same. "Are you willing to put yourself out there? Are you willing to accept the space and the rules of the game? What need are we fulfilling?"

Especially on needs, during training, we have searched for usefulness. Starting from the analysis of one's own needs we could arrive and connect to the needs of the other. This process of raising awareness is fundamental for the creation of the educational and pedagogical conditions that allow the educator to be more pertinent in his action.

## The Pedagogical Decalogue

We could decline pedagogical planning into ten main objectives that must necessarily guide the activity of all those involved in education:

- **Development:** taking into account Piaget's psychogenetic

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3. S. Freud, *Al di là del principio del piacere*, 1920, in Opere, cit., vol. IX, Universale Scientifica Boringhieri, 1986

4. R.D. Hinshelwood, *Dizionario di psicoanalisi kleiniana*, Raffaello Cortina Editore, 1989

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5. D. Winnicott, *Game and reality*, Armando Editore, 1990



research, the author highlighted the irregular and discontinuous development as a process in continuous evolution. The child finds, in the “opening of the world” and in the possibility of “appropriating” and “modifying” it, the chance of its identity realisation. Learning is therefore configured as the condition through which the child processes reality in an original way, transforming it into symbolic systems. Strengthening the characteristics of complexity and multidimensionality of development in all its aspects involves the preparation of a pedagogical project able to offer multiple and differentiated learning opportunities in a continuous and permanent form.

- **The game:** it is a totalising experience, capable of satisfying the urge to do, to know and experiment, the very need to structure, deconstruct and restructure reality. Its being - at the same time - free and regulated, adaptive and transgressive, individual and group, offers children an extraordinary cognitive, emotional and social richness. Its two fundamental dimensions, the cognitive one, which activates the exploratory, constructive, communicative, creative and inventive function of intelligence, and the emotional-affective one, which concerns the symbolic function of the game itself, highlight the game’s fundamental role in the construction of personal identity, for the promotion of autonomy and social and affective relationships.
- **Diversity:** it crosses the individual subjectivity at all levels, from the biological, psychological, ethnic - linguistic - cultural point of view. Each child is characterized by a specific and unique cognitive and affective identity. This is achieved through the uniqueness of doing and elaborating experiences. The first “otherness” that the child knows is the mother, then all the social relationships that the child lives strengthen the values of respect and diversity itself. The school is therefore a “laboratory of experiences” as a place and opportunity to meet and engage with diversity, where beliefs, stereotypes, prejudices, one’s own ways of being, thinking and reasoning are challenged.
- **Autonomy:** is highlighted as an exercise of self-government and direct responsibility of the child. Man is born in conditions of total dependence on others, man will have to go a long way to achieve experiences of “progressive autonomisation” by meaningful adults. They will gradually experience the detachment (sometimes traumatic) from people and protective situations, they will slowly build that basic security that will allow them to

face life with confidence and enthusiasm, autonomously. Schools have a responsibility to make children discover that they can rely on their own strengths, but also that they can count on others. The conquest of autonomy is a complex process, but preparing a place, where to implement strategies to promote this goal through vigilant, discreet, non-intrusive, facilitating attitudes, becomes fundamental for the natural pedagogical development of the child. So the educator, the teacher, the parent himself will have to spark curiosity, to activate the child’s cognitive resources, encouraging him/her towards that divergent thought, guiding him/her towards new and alternative solutions, favouring the peer comparison, accepting the relational divergence and promoting the willingness to cross convictions, ideas, multiple and different thoughts.

- **Creativity:** is the ability to see “beyond the end of one’s nose”, beyond the dimension of everyday life, beyond the cognitive and intellectual routine, to reconcile convergence and divergence, logical thinking and imaginary thinking, continuity and rupture, the ordinary with the extraordinary, the conscious and the unconscious. Creativity is the essence of problem-solving, it is the continuous restructuring of intelligence. It is a process triggered almost biologically, in situations of “stress”, for the biological, mental and cultural survival of the human being. It is a characteristic of mental life that must be supported and increased. Therefore, fostering creative thinking is an important objective for the educational community itself, encouraging curiosity, the fluidity of ideas, flexibility, originality, and the use of divergent thinking. The environment in which the child lives and the quality of the context are therefore essential. The school can be part of that environment where the child concentrates, reflects, thinks, finds the “silence”, discovers it and uses it to create.
- **Intellectual education:** it is the ability to reason in a versatile way on any problem. It is about flexibility, readiness, constructiveness of forms and processes of thought processing. It therefore invests both body and language, through environmental and social stimuli, it intersects with the rules of logic, with the contribution of intuitive thought and imagination, becoming a continuous and permanent process. The whole educational community must therefore be an instrument of interconnection between the environment and the child itself. Observing objects and situations, reflecting on what surrounds him, expressing and communicating feelings and emotions, taking contact with reality, allows the child to actively interact with the world, modifying and reconstructing it, and

solving personal and collective problems. A creative intellectual education plays an indispensable role in breaking prejudices and stereotypes, in soliciting criticality, curiosity, investigative creativity, it offers solutions for a more responsible living together that results in social progress, solidarity, collaboration and democracy.

- **Aesthetic education:** it invests the sensory, rational and imaginative experiences through which the child interacts with the environment. Sounds, shapes, colours, readings, everything related to experience is part of aesthetic education, like the relationship between the child, others and nature. Therefore, the school has to constantly create opportunities for “assembling and disassembling” of reality, through artistic production, but also through the connection with the cultural and social structures of the country. In this way the world is redefined, revising it and soliciting it as the child himself likes. Searching for new and exciting situations, browsing through comparison and exchange with others, means being aesthetically creative: this must be a primary objective of the educational action.
- **Body and movement development:** it means a correct interpretation of oneself, by connecting body and mind into one systemic unit. It is therefore a reformulation of the concept of the body as a facilitator of knowledge and communication with oneself, with others and with the environment. Rousseau, Montessori, Piaget and Gardner identify the body and the senses as a learning tool. But they all emphasize the intentional and creative use of the body as a fundamental teaching for the full education of the child. Therefore, the educating community and the school first and foremost, has the duty to act as a place and space for the body and the movement, contributing with the play-motor activity to the sharpening of the sense-perceptive skills, by developing the basic postural patterns, educating to the respect of the group rules, bringing out the knowledge of the rules of social communication and democratic coexistence. Moreover, it allows to control forms of aggressiveness and prevarication, to use games as empathic occasions towards others, to enhance vitality, the joy of movement, the free use of the body, and to offer food, environmental and ecological education in a cross-cutting way.
- **Affective and relational education:** it concerns feelings and emotions, needs (in the meaning intended by Maslow). Affectivity is at the basis of all behaviors, of motivations to learn, it invests the ethical- social dimension. The child at birth has a physiological

need for his mother. Psychoanalytic theories have highlighted the complexity and the conflictuality of the affective experience in childhood. During growth, however, he/she acquires the capacity for “emotional decentralization”, strengthening his/her identity and widening the emotional tension towards others and the environment. If the family is the natural place where the affective needs of the child are fulfilled, these needs, right afterwards, need further life contexts that safeguard and satisfy these needs. Schools should strive to ensure that the child can find himself or herself in others. It is therefore desirable that the school is an emotionally welcoming environment through the use of educational methods based on positivity, placing the child at the centre of every space in which he or she lives, where he or she can freely express and confront his or her emotions.

- **Education of sociality and ethics:** sociality is the ability to live “together” with others, mediating (ethics) the reasons of the individual with the collective reasons of society. The others are thus the “litmus test” of the individual’s behaviour. This sociological approach also raises the environmental question as a function of the ecological responsibility of each individual. Sociality and ethics meet together in the common field of social solidarity. The construction of the “social self” is therefore a critical moment that begins in the family but then converges in the school and in all the educational agencies of the territory. The whole educational community must allow children to come out of the typical childish egocentricity, by valuing being together and thinking together. Through education to plurality (of intelligences, of feelings, of ideas and values, of faith, of cultures), the school can be an instrument for the promotion of multiculturalism, multi-ethnicity, multi-confessionality. This work should be done day by day, patiently, through continuous exchange and by sharing with others oneself.

The ten keywords objective are therefore to be kept in mind for the construction and implementation of a functional path that places the child at the centre of the educational action. These are a practical decalogue of indications and objectives to be pursued for the healthy growth of children who will attend school, educational agencies, projects aimed at the development of a good citizen of the world and at the inclusion of everyone.

From theory to practice

After analysing the general pedagogical fundamentals of the concept of the game, we will now try to go deeper into the didactic aspect of the game in the school itself. First of all, we must talk about the affirmation of the fundamental method that refers to the pedagogy of the game which, by fostering creativity, is translated through the categorical imperative of learning and growing by playing, which is constantly disregarded.

The objective of this type of methodology is aimed at educating people to divergent thinking, as the development of creativity, as the valorisation of individual differences. The playful methodology therefore has the value of a “strategic place”, which includes various activities: free and symbolic play, dramatization, graphic-pictorial and plastic-manipulating activities, game-sport and motor activity, reading and meditation.

In this way the game itself reflects the educational style of the school, as a centre of global education, but above all as an actor of the educational community that we will talk about later. It is therefore configured not only as an instrument of entertainment but also as a method of learning. It is therefore important to be aware of how much the game represents a fundamental value, an inalienable right of every person, of how much its pedagogical and educational, sporting and systemic meaning is necessary in the field of education. A child who has played fully will be an adult who will face his or her life in a more harmonious, balanced and serene way.

Game functions

It should always be kept in mind that the first function of the game is just playing, so have fun teaching and facilitating the games themselves. The functions of the game are different and they are

Table 1. Game schedule

وصف اللعبة ( لعبة جماعية ، تعاونية ، تعبير جسدي او تقليد		الاهداف الرئيسية (عواطف ، تعبير جسدي ، اللغة، الخ	
		الاهداف الثانوية (التعاون ، حركة الجسد ، التحكم بالنفس ، احترام الدور ، الخ	
الفئة العمرية	عدد الاطفال/المراهقين	العمر	مدة/توقيت النشاط (بداية النشاط، نهاية النشاط، قبل/بعد نشاط عالي الحركة، قبل/بعد نشاط خالي الحركة
دور الراشد	المواد الضرورية لهذا النشاط	خصائص مكان النشاط	الوقت
١__			
٢__			
٣__			
٤__			

absolutely important. In order to keep in mind what are the objectives of play in the pedagogical field, it is important to reflect on these functions and to observe how important they are in the educational and pedagogical process of learning and developing of the child. A useful tool is offered by a programming of games that defines their objectives, spaces, times, various adaptations for special children and in function of psychomotor development, as shown table 1.

Starting with fun, the importance of the game as a learning tool is evident.

We define the functions of the game, the possibilities that the game provides us to observe, to learn, to listen, to choose but, above all, to have fun together with children.

## Dilemmas and delights of the game

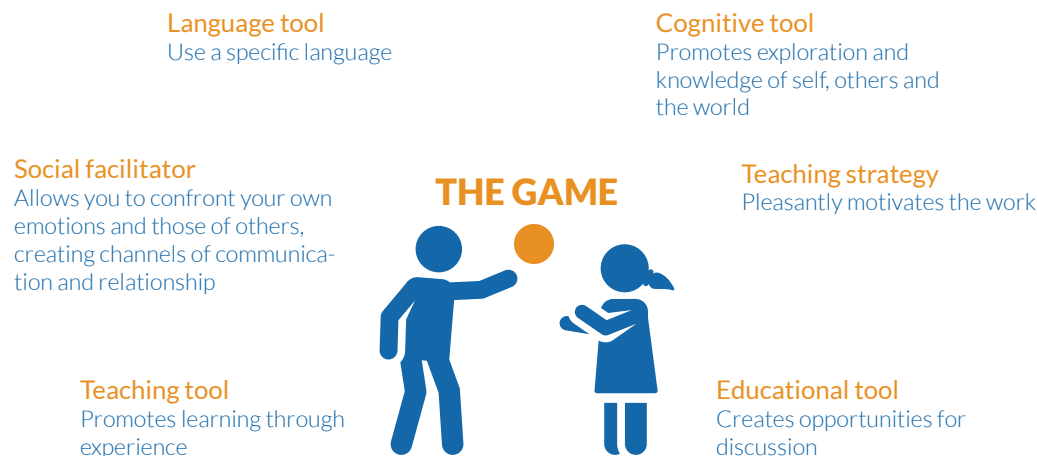
An important aspect of the symbolic game is aggressiveness. In this specific function, the game represents an action full of meaning in order to be able to gradually rework non-positive experiences, fears, anxieties and anger that find in the game an opportunity to vent. If we give some paper sticks it is clear that they must be given together with the rule that no one can get hurt and the children are very careful to simulate the action of their swords for example because

they know that they are pretending. Even when you play as part of a story game proposed by the adult, the situation has a progress, which frames the attacks against the wolf or the witch, in a game that foresees a closure, in which time is given to talk and enjoy sharing the pleasure. Certain adults consider these games as inspiring of negative feelings and behaviors, but on the contrary, the child needs to find occasions to process impulses and emotions, without feeling guilty for what he or she expresses. Good guys win, bad guys always lose, and this brings serenity. Where the game's made-up story requires it, it's nice to have an ugly-dangerous-terrible-monstrous enemy, who embodies all the fears put into play in that case, to be unleashed against all at once. After a great beating, what you feel is a sense of joy. It doesn't grow anger or other negative feelings, but rather they turn into "victory" and therefore pleasure, increased by the fact of sharing it with friends, who show the same emotions. And then a feeling of relaxation rises up, which is not only tiredness from the external force but a sense of satisfaction.

*«A child can always teach an adult three things: to be happy for no reason, to always be busy with something, and to know how to demand with all his might that which he desires»*

**Paulo Coelho**

Figure 1. Dilemmas and delights of the game



# 6. The educator, teacher, parent and sport educator: social actors of change

If I were to make a contribution today to the rewriting of the International Charter of the Rights of the Child, I would certainly add these rights among the “fundamental” ones:

The right to indolence: to live moments of time not scheduled by adults.

The right to use your hands: to plant nails, saw and rasp wood, discard wood, to glue, shape clay, tie ropes, light a fire.

The right to smell: to perceive the taste of smells, recognize the scents that the nature offers.

The right to dialogue: to listen and to be able to speak, to talk and converse.

The right to get dirty: to play with sand, earth, grass, leaves, water, stones, twigs.

The right to a good start: to eat healthy food from birth, drink clean water and breathe fresh air.

The right to the street: to play freely in the squares, to walk the streets.

The right to the wild: to build a game-hut in the thickets, to have needs to hide in, trees to climb.

The right to silence: to listen to the breath of the wind, the birdsong, the gurgling of water.

The right to shades: to see the sun rise and set, to admire the moon and the stars at night.

Gianfranco Zavalloni

## The role of the educator

The relational and emotional aspect in the role of the educator is of fundamental importance, both for the specific and practical competences. The strengths of the “Master” are: the ability to observe in order to understand: not so much to diagnose, not to label at all, but to ask the right questions, to try to listen to the needs of the group and the individual, to find adequate strategies in order for the group to be both a resource and a strength for the single individual as well; the possibility of being authentic: we can also choose to wear a mask (for example, that of the authoritarian “teacher”, or that of the sympathetic “teacher”, or that of the academic), but the key to the “success” of the educational relationship is being ourselves, with our own resources and difficulties. Being authentic is a strength for the group as it allows to be sincere, honest and empathic as well. Empathy means putting oneself in the shoes of others, trying to feel other’s emotions, to be sharing feelings and to be compassionate. In this context this is crucial.

Table 2. Significant qualities of an educator

FUNCTION	ACTION	EXPLANATION
CONTROL	Structures Adjusts Arranges Suggests	Indicates what has to be done Lays down an activity plan Students Indicates "the right way"
IMPOSITION	Breaks the conflict off Intervenes Moralizes Identifies needs Gives information Imposes his/her point of view	Among and with students Takes the student's place On conduct, on opinions Not from real findings Not requested Ignoring other's
FACILITATION	Clarifies Demonstrates Checks information Monitors routine Monitors interactions	The way, explains further Rules' and procedure's accuracy Asking for students assistance Adjust class' habits With rhetorical questions
CONTAINED PERFORMANCE	Approves Stimulates Appreciates Offers aid requested	By repeating what the student said With questions, suggestions In a positive, not neutral, way Being available to student's needs.
PERSONAL ANSWERS	Answers Accepts and discusses Interpretes Recognizes	To students questions Students' personal experiences A situation His/her own mistakes
POSITIVE AFFECTIVITY	Praises He/she's prompt Encourages	Students, their ideas, their behaviours Takes an interest, is concerned, sympathizes (EMPATHY)
NEGATIVE AFFECTIVITY	Warns Blames Criticizes Refuses Postpones	Demanding changes in behaviour  A behaviour Considering others' considerations Acceptation of others' requests



The role of the educator is as beautiful as it is complex: his role gathers fundamental functions and actions related to these functions. The teacher may also have a very negative function for the well-being of the child if the function he exercises is one of imposition or control, as shown through the examples in the table below.

## Teaching functions

This table analyses the constituent elements of an educator. It is like a complex but absolutely “customizable” recipe. We could also define the case of the theoretical tools. The possibilities of being. Ingredients that mixed together can give the right recipe to be a good teacher in practice. In principle, the percentages could be defined as follows: control from 20 to 40 %, imposition from 1 to 3 %, facilitation from 5 to 15 %, content from 20 to 40 %, personal responses from 8 to 20 %, positive affectivity from 10 to 20 %, negative affectivity from 3 to 10 %, constantly asking how much we are authentic in these functions and behaviors. A good educator needs to have a mix of all these ingredients.

## From the educator to the education

The educator has an enormous power in his hands, many possibilities to do “good”, but also to “do evil”. Be careful not to fall into the trap of being convinced that a good teacher cannot make mistakes. The educator, as well as the child, can and has to make mistakes. Because error is a full-fledged learning tool. It makes me aware that I cannot do what I did anymore. This is the way of motor learning for children younger than 18 months. By trial and error. Even Archimedes discovered his principle by mistake. And after the mistake, he shouted “Eureka”! Focusing precisely on the feelings and emotions of an educator, how important is it to recognize the role of the game, like sport, as an instrument of well-being? How much do I recognize this tool as a tool for motor, cognitive and relational autonomy? How important an authentic approach that doesn’t fear the physical contact, nor to put oneself in the shoes of others, nor to listen to others’ feelings and emotions is, for the creation of a significant relation – from the pedagogical, educational and relational point of view? With this regard, it is very important to listen to our own needs and to the needs of others, and, above all, it is important to recognize how this process contributes to our own personal growth and to the others’ one, encouraging the flows of emotions themselves.

*“You cannot teach what you know or what you think to know: you teach and you can only teach what you are”*  
**Jean Jaurès**

## The educator and the encounter with the world of disability

In a relationship with people with disabilities, you often have to go to places you have never been to and always question yourself, working to develop your own skills, even before than the skills of disabled children. In the educational relationship it is important to always stay calm, especially in times of conflict and crisis; never forget that problematic behaviours can be improved but not completely eliminated; when doing an activity, you have to make sure of the level of attention of the children, amending your behavior and your way of relating with the child accordingly in order to keep the interest alive. The educator’s attitude must always be positive because a negative climate generates nervousness and difficulties in relationships, especially with disabled children who are much more sensitive to changes in the environment and in the people around them. Any change must be implemented progressively and gradually, encouraging and supporting even the slightest progress with adequate attention. When we explain a game or activity we must give few rules that are clear and understandable; even deliveries must be short and simple.

When working with motor disabilities, we must look at limits in a positive way, helping the subject to organize his/her own limits so as not to suffer them, encouraging him/her to cope with them and to overcome them when possible. We can never organize the life of others, but make others capable of organizing their own life. When we talk about educating in the field of disability, the term “educating” takes on a beautiful declination, whose meaning is “taking care”. Some failures in educational contexts are due to adults’ lack of care for children. In every care practice, traditionally understood, it is central to take care of the body. Any practice starting from the body and putting it in the foreground automatically becomes educational care.

In this respect, the sports educator has to:

- be aware of the limitations of the people he works with, so that his work is calibrated and adapted to the situation.

- always stimulate the strengths of people with disabilities.
- make progress in the objectives by small steps, because learning will be reinforced in this way.
- give responsibility tasks to disabled people, so that they can actively participate and increase their self-confidence.
- put itself in a position of empathy, listen to the needs, interests, concerns of the people in front of it and consider all this when planning the work.
- pay attention to reactions, feelings and sensations even if they are not verbally expressed
- talk to disabled people; never talk about them, in their presence, as if they were not present.
- work on motivation, because disabled people tend to get discouraged. Disabled people don't need compassion but to be treated like all other people.
- Always encourage autonomy. Disabled people may need more time to understand information or to transmit it, and time must be given to them.

## The encounter between school and disability

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Educational care starts from school, which must be a tool and a place for everyone and everyone. Obviously one cannot disregard the structural problems that this postulate assumes in the construction of a space within which children with different physical, mental, cultural and social characteristics meet and confront each other.

We could define "diversity" in two ways: one is the condition of disadvantage, in which the child expresses deficiencies in the structuring of personality and in the exercise of experience, this condition is of "environmental" derivation; the other is the condition of handicap, in which the child presents psychophysical, motor, sensory, intellectual pathologies. Now, as far as the first condition is concerned, it is essential that the school is equipped with a variety

of strategies and interventions to promote the development and real integration of these children; as far as the second condition is concerned (the one related to the handicap) it is necessary that all the social actors, especially the teachers, evaluate on a case by case basis, not falling into the deception of making therapy or labelling the child by making a diagnosis, but working to ensure that the peer group, the family and the school as a whole, try to achieve inclusion. Obviously the structural place must be adequate for the reception and use of such spaces for the disabled. The main task of the school is to educate. The most common definition of this word refers to the meaning of the word (verb) to educate to the Latin roots *ex ducere* = to bring out, to make feasible (visible) what is possible, what is implicit in every person, since childhood: his power, his potential, his value as a person, his human dignity. But it is not enough. To educate means above all an act of reciprocity. He who educates is also educated and his knowledge is played out in the act of education. To educate is not only to form. To educate is to build together identity and future. For this reason the school, in an educating community, plays a primary role towards the students, who must certainly learn the contents of the official program, but also creative, synthetic and above all ethical thinking. For this reason, great is the role of the teachers who are the first models, but certainly essential is also the role that the community can play, not only to integrate, but to confirm and expand the concepts and values through good practices and good work.

When the school welcomes the didactically disabled child, specific strategies are needed: first of all the contribution of a specialized educator, who implements flexible strategies, developing an integral project within the school and with the family; secondly there must be a close interconnection between the specialized educator and the school itself. The incoming, in itinere and final evaluation in this case are fundamental for the success of the integration project. The implementation of these principles takes place following these basic guidelines: animate, situate, give meaning, guide, integrate and commit. The subject of these guidelines is the educator, the object is the "special" child. To affirm that the "special" child is the object of the orientation does not imply passivity and welfarism, but encloses the concept of the integrity of the intervention, placing the child in its complexity at the centre of the pedagogical process. After all, every child is special! What's essential is the evaluation of the specific case and the pedagogical "honesty" of taking care of it.

These basic guidelines should be combined with the five guiding ideas listed below:

1. To reject in advance any argumentative assumption based on simple opinions;
2. To take on the principle of opportunity, i.e. to ensure all the conditions to achieve a fruitful educational process;
3. To evaluate critically the integration project;
4. To differentiate the approach according to the complexity of the handicap
5. To program, experiment, monitor and evaluate the intervention and the whole process

*"The most important thing in life  
is to see through the child eyes".*  
**Albert Einstein**

## The educational community

The educational community is the whole of the subjects involved in the growth and education of children. First and foremost, the school and the family, but also local organisations, the private social sector, institutions, civil society, churches, universities and the kids themselves. Educational community is the whole collectivity that revolves around the youngest. A community that grows "with" them, and not only for them; that educates the adults of tomorrow, but that also gets educated and changed by them. To give birth to an educating community it is necessary to involve all the subjects of the territory in the projects to bring children and their families back to the centre of public interest. By sharing tools, ideas and good practices, it is possible to achieve the common goal of improving the living conditions of children and young people, who become not only recipients of the services, but above all protagonists and active subjects of the planned and activated initiatives.

The most popular definition refers to the meaning of the verb "to educate" to the Latin roots *ex ducere* = to bring out, to make feasible (visible) what is possible, what is implicit in every person, since childhood: his power, his potential, his value as a person, his human dignity. But it is not enough. To educate means above all an act of reciprocity. He who educates is also educated and his knowledge is played out in the act of education. To educate is not only to form. To educate is to build together identity and future. For this reason, the school, in an educating community, plays a primary role towards

the students, who must certainly learn the contents of the official program, but also creative, synthetic and above all ethical thinking. For this reason, great is the role of the teachers who are the first models, but certainly essential is also the role that the community can play, not only to integrate, but to confirm and expand the concepts and values through good practices and good work.

Ethical thinking, like synthetic or creative thinking, can only be learned through action, a context that becomes good, i.e. ethical; a context in which people have the right to understand why they do/learn what they do and how this knowledge can be put at the service of constructive ends. Therefore, institutions must be the first to guarantee and guarantee that they are ethical places also to offer themselves as benchmarks to all those workplaces, public and voluntary associations that intend to act in order to be above all educational places. It therefore becomes central to reflect on the fundamental relationship that exists between education and democracy.

Education is the most important task of democracy. In fact, the greatest danger for democracy is ignorance. The dangerous ignorance, the one that undermines at the roots the sense of education and democracy itself, is that of the person who is unable to change, to persuade and to be persuaded because he recognizes no other identity and truth than his own. A plural society like the one in which we live needs, as never before, people who know how to take responsibility for their own opinions, but who know how to accept that their own opinions can change in comparison with those of others. An educating community is therefore a community that allows times and places where processes (of confrontation and debate) can take place.

It is a community in which the concept of solidarity is flanked, to the point of integrating it, by that of participation. In fact, there is no true solidarity if there is no knowledge and gratitude, and a relationship of reciprocity is not created. Solidarity is not to give oneself or offer oneself to someone who is or feels excluded, limited, but rather to recognize oneself in someone, giving them and giving us dignity. Then the bond that binds me to the other is not only care but curiosity, desire for knowledge, responsibility. The widespread responsibility of a society of relationships. An educational community and city educates its citizens but also let itself be educated and changed by its citizens.

*"A child can always teach an adult three things.  
To be happy for no reason.  
To always be busy with something.  
To claim what he wants with all his might"*  
**Paulo Coelho**

## Adapting sport with a view to a community that becomes educative

Making sport suitable for a person with a disability means changing, modifying, in relation to the potential of the disabled person. As mentioned in the European Charter of Sport for All (Council of Europe, 1987), people with disabilities have the right to access to motor and sport activity.

Sport adapts to the person, and these adaptations can be either:

- **educational/methodological (didactics and methodology);**
- **technical (rules and regulations);**
- **structural (motor activity created for a specific type of disability, such as, for example, torball)**

Adaptations may be of different degrees in relation to the characteristics of the disability and the individual's potential. Adaptations promote safety, fun and success in activities in the disabled person. They may concern the environment and materials, organization, executive conditions, methodological choices. Adaptations can be minimal, moderate and considerable. The sports teacher, in his design, must look for goals for the disabled pupil that are as close as possible to those of the class or, vice versa, in a reciprocal relationship.

Such inclusive didactics can be achieved through:

- **The culture of the task**, which involves the whole learning group participating in the teaching-learning process.
- **Task analysis**, in which complex tasks are deconstructed and broken down into simpler tasks. Those who deal with sport with a disabled person must set themselves objectives regarding the development of sense-perception, motor skills, physical condition, autonomy, relational skills, respect for the rules.

Designing a motor path for a disabled person means following

fundamental and subsequent steps that respect these items:

- **Analysis of the situation, needs, potential and difficulties of the subject;**
- **Skills, abilities and knowledge possessed at the motor level;**
- **Definition of objectives;**
- **Planning of activities;**
- **Description of the activities, contents of the route;**
- **Adaptations to the activities (correction, assistance, language);**
- **Methodological indications;**
- **Planning modifications (minimal, partial, total);**
- **Evaluation tools and criteria;**
- **Verification and evaluation**

## Human universal values and needs

The awareness of our own needs and the recognition of the needs of others pass through the recognition of our own and others' emotions, of the feelings we feel when we are satisfied or not. It is not easy to identify inner or group needs, but it is a fundamental action in order to deeply reach out to yourself when you are in connection with others.

Table 3. Feelings related to universal values and needs

Feelings when our needs are NOT satisfied
SHOCKED - ASTONISHED - SCARED - FRIGHTENED - WORRIED - ANXIOUS - CONFUSED - UNDECIDED - TORN - LOST - UPSET - DISTRUSTFUL - DUBIOUS - ANGRY - EXASPERATED - DISPLEASED - DISGUSTED - ANNOYED - NERVOUS - IN A BAD MOOD - UNDER PRESSURE - RESTLESS - IMPATIENT - EMBARRASSED - GUILTY - ASHAMED - SORRY - BORED - DISTANT - INDIFFERENT - LISTLESS - FED UP - JEALOUS/ENVOIOUS - DISSATISFIED - TIRED - EXHAUSTED - WITH NO ENERGY - WORN OUT - SAD - DEPRESSED - UNHAPPY - RESIGNED - DISHEARTENED - DISCOURAGED - GRIEVING - BITTER - ALONE - SUFFERING - IN MOURNING
Feelings when our needs are satisfied
AFFECTIONATE - FRIENDLY - LOVING - WARM - SENSITIVE - FULL OF AFFECTION - FULL OF FRIENDSHIP - FULL OF GRATITUDE - PROUD - RELIEVED - CAREFREE - LIGHT - SURE - ATTENTIVE - INTERESTED - CONCENTRATED - COMMITTED - READY - CURIOUS - GRATEFUL - EXCITED - FASCINATED - ENCHANTED - AMAZED - SURPRISED - LIVELY - FULL OF VITAL ENERGY - ENTHUSIASTIC - EUPHORIC - IN PEACE - AT MY EASE - CALM/QUIET - IN HARMONY - OPEN - CONFIDENT - ENCOURAGED - OPTIMISTIC - HOPEFUL - INSPIRED - FULL OF CREATIVITY - FREE - INVOLVED - STUNNED - HAPPY/CONTENT - CHEERFUL - AMUSED - PLAYFUL - SERENE - RELAXED - SATISFIED - CENTERED - RESTED - FRESH - IMPATIENT

These tables identify, in a non-exhaustive way, the needs and feelings of oneself and others.

There are no positive or negative feelings, but feelings that tell us whether our needs are met or not.

Table 4. Human universal values and needs

VALUES	UNIVERSAL NEEDS
AUTONOMY	Freedom of choice, of decision - participation in the decision/realization - responsibility, to carry out meaningful activities - independence, own space, spontaneity, freedom to choose their projects in order to achieve their dreams, objectives, values - to be active and productive
CELEBRATION	Of live - of dreams that have come true - of losses (loved ones, dreams)
INTEGRITY	(to be oneself, one's values reflect one's actions) authenticity, self fulfilment, creativity, to give meaning, learning, personal growth, self-esteems, self-confidence
SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP	Harmony, beauty, inspiration, order, peace
GAME	Entertainment, laughing, joking
INTERDEPENDENCE	acceptance, love, understanding appreciation, consideration, esteem, respect trust, to be taken seriously intimacy, human warmth, gentleness, sense of belonging, friendship, social contact, sharing (news, lives, food...) compassion (attentive presence to pain) to contribute to life, to bring joy, to contribute to the welfare of others, to help, to support, collaboration, clarity, awareness, understanding, empathy, honesty, sincerity, reliability lightness, calm, justice, to have the same value, equality balance between giving and taking, between talking and listening, efficiency, efficient and sensible use of time, safety
INTERCONNECTION	Harmony, beauty, inspiration, order, peace
PHYSIOLOGICAL NEEDS	air - water - food sunlight human touch emotional connection expression sexual mouvement, rest protection (personal, others, nature), health

## 7. Do you want to play with me? - Games for everyone

*"Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them"*

**The Little Prince, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry**

### Games for everyone

**Ice breaker games:** they are used to start playing, to observe, to create a atmosphere of collaboration and to go "beyond" one's own identity by relying on the group.

**The game of emotions:** participants are blindfolded and have to look for each other by moving their hand according to the emotions they feel, trying not to leave anyone out (no one should be left behind). You can also use a rope.

**Variant: walking with emotions:** participants walk in space, blindfolded, accompanied by a musical background. The conductor gives emotional directions: (happy, sad, angry, bored, in a hurry, as calm), then they have to look for each other and join together in a circle.

**Objective:** to express personal emotions, to identify the group

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and counting up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** bandages, rope, music

**Mobility games:** observe the possibility of each participant within the basic motor schemes

**Explorers in the Jungle:** the participants walk in the space, free to move as they want... as soon as the music starts, they will have to move suspiciously as if they are exploring the jungle.... At some point everyone will turn into... Tigers (4-legged gait), then butterflies (moving arms), then snakes (crawling), then frogs (jumping on 4 legs), then hares (jumping on 2 legs), then flamingos (on one leg), then wild horses (trotting race), then gorillas (heavier gait) and elephants (slow and heavy gait) or turtles (very slow gait).

In this game the educator has a privileged point of view: he or she can observe the children in a simple mobility game, without filters, since everyone can move as he or she wishes, following only the indications about the animal. Each child can simulate the animal

as he or she wishes, but some dynamics will emerge and, if we pay attention, we will be able to explore them. For example, there could be children, confused by the great movement, or confused because they do not know how to move (they will imitate someone else). Some others might not even move or get so scared that they get out of the game and get close to the educator.

**Objective:** Observation of the educator

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and counting up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** music

**The Dance of the Little Bears:** With a musical background to the game, the participants move freely in space. From time to time, the game leader nominates a body part which is the one that each little bear has to "scratch" with the help of a companion. For example, at the indication "Back!" two little bears meet and "scratch" back to back; at the indication "Arms" or "Legs!" the two of them rub each other's. At a second pre-established signal, the contact is interrupted, and one can move freely again.

With younger children, not used to working in pairs, you can start with the individual proposal: each little bear on its own scratches the part of the body that is being called.

**Objective:** this activity leads the child to pay attention to the different parts of the body through a perceptive experience built on a very precise type of contact: the "scratching" within a couple's relational dynamics.

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and counting up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** music

**The game of holes:** get organized in pairs: one of the two components starts to make "the hole" and the other "the hole explorer". The "hole" has these characteristics: it must be able to get the explorer in and out "completely" and it must change every time it has been explored. The game can also be repeated in pairs (two "holes" that intertwine

and two “explorers” at the same time) and in small groups, therefore the “holes” become a kind of human spider’s web.

This game helps the child in the structuring of the body scheme, i.e. in that path of body and neurological growth that ends in the age of puberty, which will lead him to an immediate knowledge of his body in a static and dynamic situation, in relation to the different parts between them and in their relationship with the space and the objects that surround it. In fact, the game is linked to the re-elaboration of the information collected by the visual and tactile receptors during the actions of entry and exit from holes of different shapes and sizes.

**Objective:** the activity offers the child a context in which he or she can experience the overall dimensions of his or her body through the passage into “human holes”.

**N° di partecipanti:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** Un’area abbastanza ampia, senza ingombri, la misura almeno di un cerchio composto dal numero dei partecipanti

**Materials:** music

**The rolling dive:** some mattresses are set up on the ground, which form the “landing strip” for diving. The child is first wrapped with a sheet, leaving his head and feet outside, and then laid on the edge of a mattress. An adult grabs the edge of the sheet and, pulling it to himself, makes the child “unroll” on the carpet. More or less force can be applied to the unrolling action according to the child’s wishes, so that the activity is always a source of enjoyment and not fear.

**Objective:** body awareness

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** mattresses, sheet

**The city of coloured dots:** coloured dots the size of a CD, made by cutting out coloured paper or cardboard, are used. You need at least four colours, with about thirty dots per colour. After placing them on the floor, children are asked to walk or run through the coloured stamps, avoiding them. Then children are told to walk over dots of the same colour: the action involves precise steps and the use of balance.

**Objective:** body awareness, attention, balance

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** cardboard or paper stamps in 4 different colours

**Forward backwards up and down:** the adult jumps forward, then backwards, then right and then left, squats down and jumps up and each time he accompanies the jumps saying: “forward, backwards, left, right, down and up”. The players must imitate him. When everyone has learned how to do the jumps properly, the animator says one thing but does another: for example, he jumps left and says forward, jumps up and says “down” and so on. Players at this point have to do what he says and not what he does. After a while, you can reverse the order: instead of doing what the animator says, they have to do what he does, while he says a different thing.

**Objective:** body awareness, attention, balance

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**The tied walk:** Couples are tied with a rope around their waist. Keeping the rope taut between them they go for a walk and every time they meet an obstacle (another couple) they have to overcome it by passing under or over the rope of the others. Variant: instead of the rope, the pairs are tied with an elastic, first to the wrists, then to the ankles and as the game progresses, the position of the elastic is changed (knees, thighs, neck, chest, waist).

**Objective:** body awareness, attention, balance, collaboration, problem solving

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** rope, elastic

**Material observation games:** it enables the conductor to observe the use of the proposed materials, the mobility skills, the energy levels of children.

**The 4 worlds:** Space is divided into 4 zones. The participants are divided into 4 groups. At the beginning, each group is placed in a zone of the playing field and uses the tools that are present, then the playing zone is changed.

**Objective:** observation, mobility skills, space and materials



management.

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** circles, pins, different balls, colored ribbons

**Inclusion games:** to each their own game: These games, if proposed carefully observing the needs of each participant, are highly inclusive games.

**Horizontal and oblique rope play:** The conductor asks the participants to jump a rope held horizontally at half height. Some will jump, others will fail and will experience the emotions that children experience when they are subjected to demands that do not correspond to their specific needs. Participants will think about how, while working on the jump goal, we can change the method, obviously putting the rope at an angle so that everyone can work at their own level. This game will demonstrate to the participants with a rope held by the conductors at half height.

**Objective:** to experience the emotions involved when they are subjected to demands that do not correspond to their specific needs. It is a metacognitive game.

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** rope

**Elastic band game:** each participant has an instruction written on a card (e.g. touch the wall, crawl on the floor, open a window, sit down, high five someone else, write a number on a piece of paper, jump, etc.) but the whole group is tied with a wide circular elastic band... everyone has a different need but everyone participates in everyone's needs..... I nearly forgot that you can't talk!

**Objective:** This is a metacognitive and collaborative game.

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** long elastic band, cards with deliveries

**The tightening room:** A rope is placed on the floor in the shape of a circle, and the conductors will keep it tighter and tighter, while still asking the participants to move in various directions. At a certain point the rope will be opened and you can get out of the rope, then

the movement can be wide, free or on request.

**Objective:** to experience free movement and contained movement

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** rope

**The streets game:** Participants build routes using newspaper sheets, clearly defining the space. In this way, by walking in the streets there can be different types of answers: the road may force you to meet someone or leave you free to choose whether or not to meet someone.

**Objective:** The game of the streets refers to the concept that building roads means going off to conquer space, going far away, separating but also being able to return. Road means to go from-to, right - twisted, but also to create bridges to visit friends. Road means meeting someone else on your road, so greetings, avoidance, hugs, touches...The road is chosen according to the crossroads. Building roads is therefore an experience of the body, of the intellect and of emotion.

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** newspaper sheets

**The sticks:** the newspapers we used to build the streets can be turned into sticks. Everybody will have a stick in their hands and, one at a time, each one will say what it can become and then everybody will use their stick in this way. The stick can become the handlebars of a bicycle, a telescope, a microphone, a real stick to hit specific parts of the body of the companions, a sword, etc..

**Objective:** to transform an "ephemeral" material into an object of reality, to hit without hurting

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and counting up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** newspaper sheets

**Paper balls:** with newspapers used for the previous games you can build big "balls" made with black plastic bags filled with newspaper and among the various game opportunities you can also represent

fantastic enemies that can be beaten with sticks made with newspaper roll.

**Objective:** to transform an “ephemeral” material into an object of reality, to hit without hurting, symbolic transformation of the “enemy”.

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** newspaper sheets, black plastic bags

**Cricket jumping game:** children lie down with their eyes closed and the adult touches a point on the child’s body with an object. The child identifies the place where he has felt the touch of a bird or of a jumping cricket...The child with his hand, always with eyes closed, pushes it away.

**Objective:** This game allows the children to represent a mental body map as he must identify on his body the place of the sensation perceived.

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and counting up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**The little train:** groups of 4-5 children, all blindfolded except the last one. They are supposed to turn in space, not to crash, and arrive in a specific point... Obviously without talking...(tutoring)

**Objective:** to cooperate, to find a common language.

**No. of participants:** from 8 players and counting up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** bandages

**Staring game:** In this game the look works like a magnet that holds and binds relationships. In pairs, walking freely in space, one tries to maintain eye contact with a chosen partner: it’s like there is an invisible thread between the two that soon tries to reconnect when the passage of other people breaks it. The conductor gives indications on the speed to keep, which makes the task of keeping contact harder.

**Variant:** on request, one member of the couple hides between people and the other quickly seeks him or her using only his or her

eyes to find each other. Walking then with their eyes on the ground, one can concentrate on the feeling of loneliness and on maintaining the “object-affective” as a mental image.

**Objective:** The experience brings out feelings about separation and the permanence in the thought of the reference figures. The game can be proposed to 5 years old children as a pleasant activity of “visual magnet”, without exceeding in duration since it requires effort.

**No. of participants:** from 8 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**The carriage:** two classmates, with their eyes closed, drag the blanket where a person is lying on. The pulling movement gradually becomes stronger and stronger, with shots that the lying body perceives as abrupt variations. In this game, which can be nicely called “going in a carriage”, the perceived sensations are interesting. You can then organize a race to carry all the passengers (one at a time) from one side of the playing field to the other by carriage.

**Objective:** cooperation, perceptions of motor sensations

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** sheet

**Imitation games:** allow you to observe through imitation but also to understand the movement itself

**Stoffolo and Salterello:** are respectively a piece of cloth and a piece of accordion folded paper. Stoffolo and Salterello are moved by the conductor according to the rhythm of the music. The children will have to imitate them.

**Objective:** To use this material for the dynamics of imitation allows to act in a context that is always and implicitly oblique since a piece of cloth or paper, having shapes and characteristics of movement different from the human body, always has to be interpreted and this gives everyone the possibility to personalize the imitation.

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** Stoffolo and Salterello, music

**Colored ribbons game:** the conductor distributes coloured ribbons.

Then the children move freely with music. If we simply provide visual instructions, with the tapes, using them as unconventional and unstructured objects, imitating objects, imitating animals, the children will automatically imitate us.

**Objective:** To use this material for the dynamics of imitation allows to act in a context that is always and implicitly oblique since a piece of cloth or paper, having shapes and characteristics of movement different from the human body, always has to be interpreted and this gives everyone the possibility to personalize the imitation.

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** Coloured ribbons, music

**"Emotional" games:** are games that allow you to connect with your own emotions and with the emotions of others, to have more awareness of your body.

**Breath sounds:** the couple is sitting on the chairs, one in front of the other. One closes his or her eyes, the other tries to observe the other's breathing according to the various parts of the body (nose, throat, face, chest, belly, abdomen). Whenever he sees a movement, his pulse sounds, either with the sound bar or with the triangle.

**Objective:** learn to observe, to empathize, to understand others

**No. of participants:** from 8 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** sound bars or triangles

**Rocking group:** one person stands in the middle. The others stand around him or her (groups are composed of 6 – 5 people standing around and 1 in the middle). People around rock the one in the middle.

**Objective:** empathy, to understand each other.

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** music

**Group cuddling:** always groups of 5-6 people, one in the centre lying down, the others around who, with a cuddle music, make a dance like "in water".

**Objective:** empathy, to understand each other and to care for each other.

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** music

**The rhythm of the heart:** while lying on the floor with eyes closed, children try to perceive the beat of their heart and the rhythm of their breath. Having perceived these factors, the conductor invites children to run very fast, then they lie down again on the blanket to feel how their heartbeat and breathing have changed. By using a marker pen and a plastic plate, a basic but effective drum is created and children can play walking and running "in a heartbeat", beating the rhythm on the simulated tambourine.

**Objective:** to know and listen to your heart, to perceive change.

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and counting up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** blankets, markers, plastic plate (tambourine)

**Anger balls:** the big "balls" previously presented, made with black plastic bags filled with newspaper, can also represent fantastic enemies that can be beaten with sticks made of newspaper roll.

**Objective:** to recognize and deal with anger

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Material:** newspaper, black plastic bags

**The ogre with a stick:** A person plays a naughty ogre armed with a soft stick made of rolled up newspaper. Loudly, the ogre says an aggressive phrase like: "I'm the ogre with the stick, if I catch you I will make soup!". All the children run away, he chases them by beating them with a stick, (only hitting them on the butt, legs or back). Those who are hit fall to the ground and remain there as an obstacle to others' running. The person who hasn't been hit, wins the game and becomes the ogre.

**Objective:** mobility game, with emotional purpose, space management

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring

at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** newspaper

**Building and knocking down a tower:** Knock down walls and foam towers for fun, without any risk.

**Objective:** physical and emotional ability, which allows children to know their body through a strong and positive action.

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** foam rubber cubes, cardboard boxes of different sizes

Children often build very tall towers with cubes that they then decide to knock down: it's a power, challenge and transformation game. The teacher, in order to increase the challenge, stands behind the tower or the wall to make it even more difficult to knock them down, so the children try and try again their own strength and even the most hesitant take up courage to act with their whole body in a powerful action, which some have never experienced before. The towers are quickly rebuilt over and over again and often it is necessary to do some shifts in order to involve all those interested in participating. The Ego is strengthened in these audacious acts in which the experience of building, breaking and recreating gives space to natural impulses that find in the game a meaningful way of expression.

## Games on Executive Functions

### Inhibition

**On the shore of the pond:** a large circle is drawn on the floor. Children are placed outside the circle representing the shore, while the inside of the circle represents the pond. As the conductor says: "On the shore!" Children must jump out of the circle; when he says, "In the pond!" children must jump into the pond. The inhibition will be triggered by the fact that the conductor jumps wherever he wants to jump, so the behaviour that should be inhibited will be the conductor's imitation.

**Objective:** inhibition of imitation

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** a marker or a chalk for drawing, or a rope

**The disobedient ones:** children stand in random order and, since they are going to be disobedient, they have to do the exact opposite of what the conductor says. E.g. "3 steps forward" - they must take 3 steps backwards; "Two steps to the right" - they must take 2 steps to the left; "touch the ground" - they must stretch up, etc. What is to be inhibited is the behaviour of doing what the conductor says and not the opposite.

**Objective:** inhibition of the order of the conductor

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

### Attention

**"Uno" card game:** 4 players. A player holding "Uno" cards in his hand, shows them one after the other; the player in front of him or her, between the other two players, calls the number. If the number is even, he or she turns right and gives a 10 to the partner; if the number is odd, he or she turns left and gives a 10 to the other partner. When the partner who is holding the cards says "CHANGE", you have to say the color of the card (not the number). **Variants:** he has to do it while jumping up and down, on one foot...

**Objective:** attention-grabbing game

**No. of participants:** from 4 players and counting up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** "Uno" cards

**Balloons and Circles:** Each child holds a balloon and they put various circles on the ground: the children moving around in space will tap the balloon when they enter a circle. however, while they are moving around, they will have to stomp hard with their feet inside the circle without stopping the balloon (and only when they are inside the circle).

**Objective:** attention-grabbing game. Attention is stimulated in a disjointed way: on the one hand a light material to hit with the upper limbs, on the other hand a firm movement to do with the lower ones, without stopping neither the movement nor the object.

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** balloons and circles

## Working memory

**The names game:** In a circle each person executes this sequence: say their name, the recipient's name and the third name

**Objective:** to remember deliveries and sequences of deliveries while engaging in movement and in the challenge

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Balls, cones and circles:** relay game: two teams yellow cone, circle, red cone, circle on a row. Each cone has a tennis ball on its top. Place each ball on the opposite row of circles and cones, at the beginning, as you want, then, following the rule: from red cone to red cone, from yellow cone to yellow cone, from circle to circle. They start on the two halves of the field, (one team in each field). Once the teacher, who is standing in the middle, drops the balls, the first ones of the respective teams can start running, placing the balls in the right places. Once the balls have finished, they must be returned to the teacher. The point goes to the player who drops the ball first.

On the two halves of the field: 4 cones (yellow and red) arranged at the corners of an imaginary square; in the middle: a circle with 4 balls. The child arranges the balls one at a time on the cones, first as he wants then following some rules: first the yellows, then the reds.

**Variant:** 4 circles of different colours, following the chosen colours (green, blue, yellow, red)/ in pairs/ on 4 legs... Two lines of cones to shoot a basketball. Before shooting a basketball, I shoot the ball alongside the line of red and yellow cones and, every time I meet the yellow cone, I shoot as many laps around as there are red cones I met up to that moment (updating my working memory). "Team Easy basketball" score: 3 points for shooting a basketball, 2 for hitting the iron, 1 for the basketball net.

**Objective:** remember deliveries and sequences of deliveries, while engaging in movement and in challenge

**No. of participants:** from 6 players and counting up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** cones, tennis balls, circles

## Disciplinary Games

**Fun mathematical operations:** 2 teams. Each team stands on the starting line, they start in pairs, one standing on a brick, the other one

placing another brick in front of him or her. On the finish line there are, for each team, two circles, one with the number 2 and the other with the number 3 (multiples of 2 and multiples of 3). The teacher says out loud an operation ( $5 \times 2$ ) and the couple of children must go towards the circle with the number 2. The point goes to the team whose child enters the right circle first. If a competitor falls or loses his balance, he has to go back and start again.

**Objective:** additions, subtractions, multiplications and divisions, multiples

**No. of participants:** from 8 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** 4 circles, 4 bricks

**Crazy addition:** 2 teams. Teams have to go from the starting line to the finishing line. On the right and left lines there are about 2-4 children carrying the ball. Behind each team there is a circle with pieces of paper with lots of numbers, or addition. When starting, each child of the 2 teams takes a piece of paper trying to arrive to the circle of his team on the finish line and lay down the piece of paper. The child throwers must try to hit all the children inside the field; the children hit, before returning to the starting line, must go to one of the pitchers child and high five. At the end of the game (5 minutes) all the numbers inside each circle are added up.

**Objective:** additions, subtractions, multiplications and divisions, multiples

**No. of participants:** from 8 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants

**Materials:** 4 balls, 4 circles, 10x2 pieces of paper with numbers and operations

**Conquered sentences:** The players of the two teams are placed on the two opposite lines of the field inside circles. Inside a circle behind each team there are little pieces of paper containing words. In the middle of them there are cones with a ball on top. On the teacher's go, children of each couple go to catch the ball, the first one who catches it tries to hit the rival before he or she gets back into his or her circle. The child who has been hit must give a piece of paper to his or her adversary who will put it in his or her team's circle. After 5 minutes each team tries to form sentences with the words they have conquered.

**Objective:** to form sentences

**No. of participants:** from 8 players and up

**Space needed:** A fairly large area, without encumbrances, measuring at least one circle made up of the number of participants numero dei partecipanti

**Materials:** 10 cones, 2 circles, 20x2 pieces of paper

Figure 2. Classification of Piaget's games

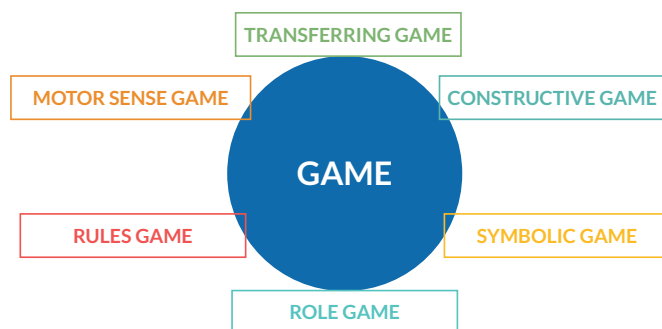
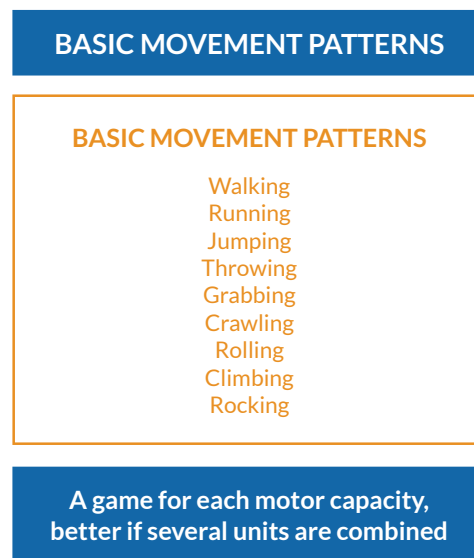


Figure 3. Basic movement patterns



## Games for little ones

It is important to always keep in mind the games classification of Piaget. We can simplify it quite briefly in this way:

1. **Mobility game:** this is the first level, the one that the child knows as an "explorer" of the world.
2. **Decanting game:** sand, water, liquids. Children find it very entertaining, satisfying, but above all, cognitively very important.
3. **Constructional game:** build, stack, put in and out, create, design
4. **Symbolic game:** the function of abstract conceptualization is fundamental in growth phases. A stick that becomes a sword, but also a horse, a microphone to sing, a guitar.
5. **Role-play:** pretending to ... "let's play mommy and daddy", "let's play the doctor", "let's play the doctor", "let's play the doctor"...
6. **Rules Games:** Invent a game with fixed and shared rules.

It is also important to classify games according to the motor objective they develop:

## 8. The history of educational and sports inclusion in Italy: a model of inclusion

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*"It is necessary for the teacher to guide the child without letting him feel her presence too much, so that she may always be ready to supply the desired help but may never be the obstacle between the child and his experience."*

**Maria Montessori**

### Introduction

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Today, Italian school teachers are required to respond to the different and specific needs of each and every student. The current educational and didactic guidelines, in fact, affirm the dignity of diversity, valuing it as a resource for the entire class group able, through the enhancement of the potential of each one, to become an inclusive class. An inclusive school is a school that thinks and plans keeping everyone in mind, starting from the modification of the context and not only acting on the subject, but finding specific strategies, suitable for disability, useful to the community. In an inclusive school all students have the right and dignity to personalize and individualize themselves as people. However, the road has been a long and difficult one.

Most of the input needed to change regulations, the laws protecting the rights of people with disabilities came from the grassroots level, i.e. from the social actors of change:

- **educators and teachers** who work in the field in close contact with people with disabilities;
- **the family** who, through a collaborative dialogue, question the community about the deep motivations that push people with disabilities to the margins of social life;
- **non-profit organizations, NGOs, associations and social cooperatives** carry out projects in support of social inclusion;
- **schools**, the most important engine of change, which, besides being the center of education, have the power to move the political choices of institutions towards decisions that favor the concrete affirmation of the principles of equal opportunities.

All the initiatives carried out to promote a culture of rights for people with disabilities: social inclusion, equal treatment, equal opportunities, non-discrimination, independent living were the elements that provided the opportunity for a change of perspective towards the social inclusion of people with disabilities.

### From special schools to admission

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Up to the 18th century, people with disabilities had no rights at all. The Declaration of Human and Citizen's Rights (1789), drawn up during the French Revolution, established the right to equality for all human beings regardless of class, race, sex, physical or mental condition. In Italy the first centres for people with disabilities were founded in the 19th century with the creation of a centre for the care and rehabilitation of children with psychophysical deficits, by Sante De Sanctis, and with the first Orthophrenic Magistral School directed by Maria Montessori. Later on, special schools were created by religious and charitable organizations. In 1923, the Gentile Reformation sanctioned compulsory schooling only for the blind and deaf-mute.

Article 3 of the Italian Constitution states that all citizens are equal before the law without distinction of their personal and social conditions. The word "admission" is a term that appears in Italy at the end of the 60s when pupils with physical or mental impairments were for the first time placed in common classes. Until then, special classes for the differently-abled and discriminating classes continued to exist in Italy. This fact, meaningful, was greeted with the term "admission" and put an end to the exclusion of disabled people from the social context. Until that moment, disability was in fact considered only from the point of view of medicalisation and no social project with the same age was taken into consideration. In fact, even the admission of pupils with disabilities in the common classes of compulsory school was done without considering the potential development or resources of the pupil; no special path in the field of didactics was foreseen. The pupil with disabilities who entered the common classes at that particular time simply had to adapt.



Law 118/71, art. 28, provided that compulsory education for people with disabilities could take place in normal classes of public school, but not for all disabilities. In order to facilitate integration, transport, access to school buildings by overcoming architectural barriers, assistance during school hours of the most serious pupils was ensured. This law overcame the model of special schools, but they were not abolished.

## From admission to integration...

It was only after the Falcucci Document (1975) that integration began to be debated and with Law 517/77, the preconditions, conditions, instruments and aims for the school integration of pupils with disabilities were clearly established, within a framework of school reform: planning, flexibility, integrative activities, the educational function of evaluation, the abolition of remedial examinations. It is finally recognized that even in subjects with developmental, learning and adaptation difficulties, there are cognitive, operational and relational potentials that are often blocked by the schemes of current culture. But it is only with the Framework Law of February 5, 1992, n. 104 "Framework Law for assistance, social integration and rights of disabled people" that a real normative reference point for school and social integration was born in Italy. With this law, local authorities are obliged to provide assistance for the autonomy and personal communication of pupils with physical and sensory disabilities. This law guarantees educational support activities carried out by specialized tutors who take over the co-ownership of the sections and classes in which they operate. The law indicates the concrete instruments with which the right to education and education is exercised:

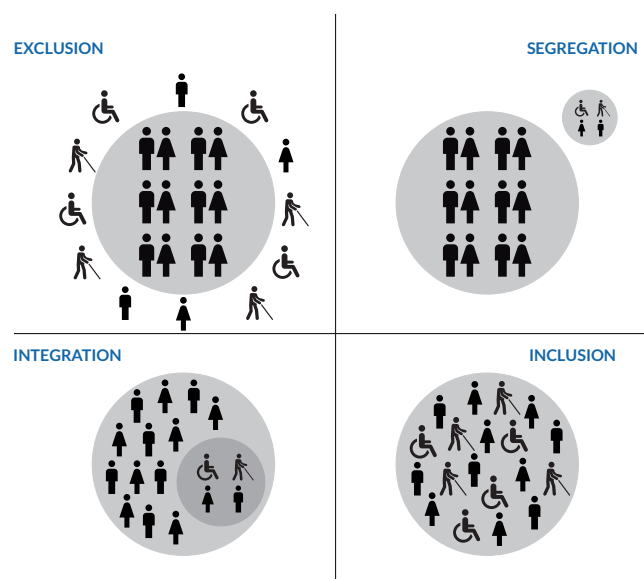
- the Functional Diagnosis (DF)
- the Functional Dynamic Profile (PDF)
- the Individualized Educational Plan (P.E.I.)

Integration therefore becomes the coordinated planning of school services with health, social welfare, cultural, recreational and sports services. The word is used when we want to highlight the complementary changes of the environment and of the disabled person in order to guarantee a good integration. A real integration must in fact involve also the actors of the territory, in order to become social and, in time, professional. The aim of integration is to achieve diversity as a value and to make each disabled person the

protagonist of his or her own life, in all its aspects.

It is therefore necessary to constantly experiment the skills, the residual abilities, the dynamism of the potential, in a constant educational training that, starting from family and school, guides early towards the acquisition of social skills, in view of a life project. From that historical moment on, many legislative decrees have expanded the rules already in place, such as the extension and guarantee of the right to education and training for at least twelve years or, in any case, until the attainment of a qualification by the age of 18 (Law n. 53/2003).

Figure 4. Differences between integration and discrimination models



## From integration to inclusion...

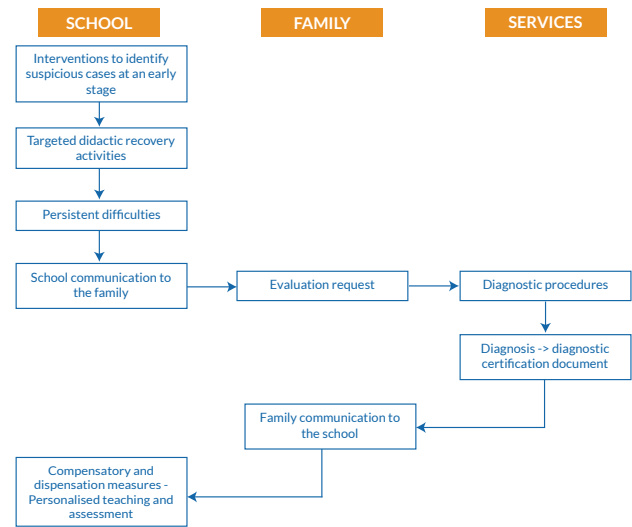
It is with the Declaration of Salamanca (UNESCO 1994) that it is possible to start talking about inclusion in Italy. This declaration can be considered the foundation of the school of inclusion because it lays down the right to education of all children in respect of the diversity (personal, socio-environmental, cultural and etc.) of which everyone is the bearer. Precisely with a view to enshrining this right to diversity and to enhance diversity, Law 170/2010 and Guidelines on DSA, 2011 (Specific Learning Disorders) recognizes the Specific

Learning Disorders, which until then were ignored and above all were the cause of the high rate of early school leaving. Italy strives to foster children's success at school by introducing dispensation measures and compensatory tools.

The following year, with the MINISTERIAL DIRECTIVE 27/12/2012 the Intervention Tools for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and territorial organization for school inclusion are established. With the recognition of Special Educational Needs, we overcome the dualistic and simplistic concept between pupils with disabilities and pupils without disabilities and we start aiming at an educational reasoning focused on the whole person, in a biopsycho-

able to develop them through paths identified in agreement with all specialists of public, private or affiliated structures that follow the pupils recognized as disabled. While at first all the attention was focused on school and rehabilitation as factors ensuring the proper social inclusion of people with disabilities, today the aspects of leisure time such as sport are very relevant to create an inclusive social environment leading to inclusion in the social context. The transition from admission to integration and inclusion, in fact, is represented by the integration of services. Indeed, the educational process cannot be managed and governed exclusively by the school institution: the intervention of all services is needed, the different experiences must be networked through connections between school and extra-school, a network of professions is needed for a single function: the implementation of the right to education for all.

Figure 5. Identification procedures of students with SEN



social perspective, i.e. looking at the person as a person with a disadvantaged situation deriving from the context in which he/she lives and works. The pupil can manifest SEN for physical, biological, physiological or even psychological, social reasons, to which it is necessary that schools offer adequate and personalized response. They fall into the category of SEN: **pupils with disabilities** (Law 104/92) for whom the PEP (personalized educational plan) is drawn up, **pupils with specific learning disorders** and **pupils with socio-economic, linguistic and cultural disadvantage** for whom the PDP is drawn up, with Law 107/2015 extends the improvement of school inclusion especially through a change in the lines of certification, which must be aimed at identifying residual skills in order to be

In the process of individualisation of teaching, pupils with disabilities are provided with the necessary activities so that it is possible to achieve knowledge and skills shared by the rest of the class. Common objectives, therefore, in the class group, but different methodologies, individualized, taking into account the potential, skills and personal abilities of the disabled pupil, which become a resource, trying to eliminate the factors that originate or maintain the difficulty. Personalized teaching, on the other hand, involves the achievement of objectives different from those of the class, because they are built ad hoc on the individual student's disability, enhancing their strengths. In this way, considering specifically the different ability of the student as a peculiarity of his own, the student will be given the opportunity to develop his full potential and give him the opportunity to transmit his different ability to others. On what we will be able to do as teachers and educators in terms of integration and inclusion will depend the loneliness of the adult disabled person.

## 9. Distance and proximity education in the Coronavirus era

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*"Saw an ant on a cold and sad day donate to cicada half of his supplies. Everything changes: clouds, fairy tales, people. The ant gets generous: It's a revolution."*

**Gianni Rodari**

### Introduction

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The measures to contain the Covid-19 contagion have affected our lives, our relationships, our minds.

However, the spirit that has always distinguished Uisp, its cross-cutting method, the overturning of ideas to meet everyone's needs, have ensured that even in particularly difficult times like this, the idea of physical place was replaced by the idea of community.

Uisp can reinvent the rules of sport by adapting them to everyone, Uisp makes people play basketball with two cardboard boxes instead of baskets in refugee camps, Uisp plays championships where no one is excluded...

A movement of people was born in Uisp in the times of Covid-19, a movement of people who mobilize themselves to bring about the best possible life in the time we are living, putting themselves out there and using tools never used before.

It was not easy. We faced some limits, instrumental and skills, but we tried.

The UISP initiative "The gym is our home" has resulted in a series of diversified activities aimed at the most fragile population groups. We did it to stay close to children who were living in situations of great economic and educational hardship, with online games, live and recorded video lessons, whatsapp groups etc..

Some educators used platforms and tools also used by the school, both to teach children to master the tool, to give a playful and entertaining form to school teaching, and to continue to have "Distance Educational Liaisons" where it was not possible to create a real Remote Teaching.

In fact, no educator, especially in these times, should be affected by lazy realism that paralyzes thoughts; no one should feel dispensed from continuing to provide help services in response to the needs that this moment requires.

It is only with this thinking that the DISTANCE in our work can become a reflection of NEARNESS, only if this moment, for which none of us were prepared, is approached with maturity and lucidity.

Today more than ever, we must use that marvelous function of the mind which is called proactive memory, and which, with the activation of the mind, makes the present as best as possible in the situation we are experiencing.

### Distance Education and Resilience

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This is the same concept of Resilience: to know how to cultivate self-esteem and to surround oneself with friendly people, face the world with the desire to learn to accept a situation - which may not be optimal - not in order to suffer it, but to react effectively by returning to feeling good, indeed better than before.

Thus, we mean the ability to react and get up stronger, without ever allowing oneself to be overwhelmed by the difficulties encountered in our daily life, whether they are small or big.

Just look at the trees: they adapt to the wind and storms and resist by developing strong roots, without giving up growing, but with flexible branches that allow them to adapt to the future.

It is immediate to associate this word with the ability to cope with stress or trauma or unforeseen changes, taking the opportunity to review our life and improve it further. When you succeed in educating yourself to Resilience you almost automatically become optimistic, flexible and creative, willing to work as a team collaborating and sharing experiences and skills.

Attitude is everything, it's not easy but that's how it is: learning to accept change, which is inevitable in life, and trying to change as you wish, being clear that it's impossible for everything to remain

unchanged forever, in us and around us; making a decision and not panicking at the crossroads, and if fear comes, it's important to ask for help, indeed never forgetting to listen to yourself.

Resilience teaches us how for everything there is a solution, it is only a matter of finding the best one, surely it is to be found among those that make us feel good about ourselves. When faced with a problem or a misfortune, let us look on the positive side. It is essential to remember that we are living to learn from the many challenges we face.

## Distance education: between difficulties and opportunities

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The COVID-19 emergency has put the whole world to the test, but something has remained active thanks to technologies such as computers, smartphones, tablets, and thanks to these technologies we have tried to move forward with school and education. Despite the many limitations of distance education, people who have an educational role and who, in various ways, take care of children, must become promoters of learning and of their cultural education, by putting in place technical, pedagogical and creative skills. And this must be done by any possible means, even if in the awareness that it cannot replace classroom teaching in presence, but it is only a temporary instrument in emergency that serves to keep the thread of the relationship between the various educational institutions and the children.

The objectives of distance education were to carry out school, sports, educational and rehabilitation programmes in the best possible way, and above all to continue to maintain a human relationship with children, especially at this time conditioned by fears and social isolation.

The advantages of distance education: an advantage in emergencies

The first action that confinement can produce is an alliance of purpose between government, associations, local administrations, which must commit themselves to provide the appropriate tools to make this education possible; this fact could become for all children, especially the most fragile ones, an opportunity for inclusion and equal opportunities. In fact, the presence of computers and wi-fi

in the homes of all children is not so obvious, and this is one of the fundamental problems to be solved.

The moment of difficulty can turn into an opportunity to enhance the tools in children's possession that can learn to use these computer tools, through video tutorials. Because although today's young people are part of the so-called digital natives' generation, they are able to juggle well with smartphones and tablets but sometimes not with computers. Many of them do not have a computer and if they have one, maybe they have never created a text file or a presentation with any program.

Distance education should not create social discrimination but should make us aware of the needs of students with disabilities and that it is an opportunity for education and social cohesion.

## The disadvantages of distance education

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This way of organizing activities reduces students' attention, so one of the difficulties is to make sure that everyone participates in the classes. This should be very clear to educators who need to find the right tools to make this teaching experience enjoyable.

Distance Education (DE) also implies the lack of social relationships, sharing, peer interaction, which are fundamental for the development of social skills, emotional development and managing relationships with others.

Distance Education is often quite excluding, because not all students have the opportunity to constantly attend the classes live, due to the lack of a stable internet connection.

Some children and teenagers, due to a disability, cannot access the multimedia tool independently, but only through their parents. If an educational deal with the parents is not initially drawn up, it won't be possible to have assiduous and constant access to information and proposals remotely sent.

A further risk that arises from distance education is that of forgetting the multiple ways in which children learn. Distance education must meet the minimum requirement of computer accessibility, a factor that often does not exist.

Distance learning cannot be understood only as a mechanic exchange of assignments and performances that can be evaluated, i.e. a series of tasks to be carried out with the support of certain materials. It must work on the emotions that children are feeling, it must aim at activating all those relationship tools such as voice and look, also through videos, which are essential for human relationships.

## Distance education tools

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Since the beginning of the Coronavirus emergency, we have been called to a new challenge: to stay close to our students, accompanying them on their learning path using computer systems against which the school environment has shown resistance for a long time.

Recorded and live video lessons can be useful tools to be use in distance education. However, in order to successfully recreate the teaching environment and to try to reproduce the interaction that makes each class dynamic, it is necessary to split the online interventions into two parts: on the one hand, the recorded video lessons, in which the contents are exposed, and on the other hand, the live video lessons, in which to build a face-to-face dialogue with the children: this is the space of the children and of their questions, in which it is necessary to try to dedicate as much time as possible to their participation.

It would be appropriate to record these live lessons so as to provide them on a later date when needed. The recorded video lessons should not exceed the duration of 10-14 minutes because, since they are not attended in presence, you easily risk to lose the student's attention.

Considering the different stages of learning and above all the different skills, it is necessary to always use multi-channel teaching in the production of materials: the video lesson with frontal explanation will prefer the auditory channel; a text that will use the oral channel; a map with images will activate the visual-verbal channel. Especially in activities that require long explanations, it would be preferable to avoid very long explanations in order to leave more time for procedural maps.

## Appendix. Responses from the participants

“Participating in this training was very important. It has enabled me to learn new and useful things, especially in relation to “sport and body language” and how we can ensure that everyone participates in the game regardless of their skills and needs.

“Participating in the training strengthened me and helped me acknowledge my physical and intellectual skills, as well as my creative sensitivity in interacting with children, especially since this is my first experience as a social worker in the Child Protection Department, and the world of children is full of differences and peculiarities in terms of needs, notions, fantasies, movements etc.

“Furthermore, the training has provided me with useful information which I can also draw on as a mother, a role which we know is often exposed to pressure and difficulties when it comes to understand the feelings and needs of one's children. It is also great to be able to use sport as a means of communication with children, through our bodies, sign language, and to learn to understand the needs and desires of children, playing with them and making sure that no one is left out.

“Overall, the training has been something new and useful for me: what I have learned is enriching my experience in my field of work, especially in communication with children.

“This kind of training is suitable to be offered to the many activists and social educators who have direct contact with children, as well as to teachers in schools: this training teaches us that it is always possible to improve our skills and abilities in dealing with children through practice and concrete work in the educational and social field, benefiting from their feedback”.



Parents in the UISP training in Tal Bire ©Marta Castillo/WeWorld-GVC

“As GVC staff, we took part in the training held in Nabi Othman. It was an experience that gave us and taught us many different ways to relate to people through play and creativity. The experts told us about the importance of the goals of the games we make and create, and how they affect the group socially, educationally and behaviourally. The importance of play lies in the way we design, manage and ensure everyone's participation. In the design phase, then, it is crucial to focus on the purpose and objectives of the game, and what they can convey to participants. We also learned the importance



of collaboration, without which the game would lose its significance.

“The participation of everyone in the game is essential, everyone should be able to join in and demonstrate their own value and effectiveness. The games we played showed us that all present were able to play (teachers, parents, even pregnant women). We must always guarantee everyone's participation in every game we play.”



Loredana Barra (UISP Sassari) in the UISP training in Nabi Osmane ©Marta Castillo/WeWorld-GVC

“The methodology adopted by UISP has encouraged the active participation of all those present, through a sharing of ideas and through collaboration.

“This training has allowed to break the ice barrier between adults and children, transmitting to all those present the basic notions and skills of the sport.

“It also taught us how to encourage more active participation of children in the game, and how our participation makes them happier. Teachers and parents can easily replicate this type of game with their students and children in schools or at home.

“This activity is particularly useful for the inclusion and relationship with people with disabilities, as it opens up new possibilities for them to socialize and be accessible to new environments and movements”.

“The objective of the training was to understand how important it is to play with children, all of them, and especially those with disabilities.

“It taught us that we can design and make any game inclusive, so that everyone can participate, even those with disabilities.

“It also taught us that it is possible to design a game with cheap and easily available materials.

“As far as I'm concerned, the training was very useful because we played and the play lightened the burden of the work and also made us have fun. We learned how important playing is to a child, and even more, that he has the right to do it regardless of his abilities. It emerged that through play it is possible to achieve equality between all participants, without discrimination, giving space to everyone's skills and abilities.

“In order to play and have fun you don't need money or expensive materials, you can build beautiful games simply with whatever you find in nature or what you



can find at home. The participants had both positive and negative experiences: positive because this contributed to the exchange of experiences; the teachers were in direct contact with the students and therefore had the opportunity to get to know them better, and, for our part, we specialists had the opportunity to relate with the children. Negative with regard to some dynamics that could be observed in the activity with the children, in which they behaved unkindly to each other".

“ LUDP team took part in the training proposed by UISP called "Games and sports for social inclusion: strategies, obstacles and intervention practices". The training was very interesting both in terms of the content and the exercises proposed, which could help teachers and educators in their supporting role to the students.

“ I felt comfortable sharing my experience of PWD and my reflections on respect and acceptance of others and diversity.

“ What I have most benefited from was the focus on children with disabilities. In addition, the activities were very creative and it was nice to be able to contribute to their design. I have just one suggestion: it would have been better to start with a basic training on inclusion and disability".

“ Different tools and ways emerged that teachers can use to meet the different needs of students. Moreover, the proposed methodology proved to be really useful and effective. I just have a couple of suggestions: The participants had quite different levels of education, backgrounds and interests in the training goals, which created some gaps in the acquisition of knowledge. It would have been better to start with a basic training on inclusion and disability. The place of training should be more accessible (heating, audio and seating)".

“ In February 2020, GVC launched the first training session "Games and sports for social inclusion: strategies, obstacles and intervention practices" organised by UISP. The training was proposed for four days in each area, and the fourth training included the implementation of

the games in schools, with children from each of the areas.

“ As general feedback, I can say that the training was fun and useful at the same time. It was very interesting from the point of view of content and activities, which can help teachers and educators in their supporting role to the students.

“ In particular, it emerged how important it is for the team and teachers to test the game before proposing it to the children; suggestions and ideas came out about inclusive games involving all participants regardless of their skills and functionality; moreover, the methodology proposed by the trainers proved to be very effective and was able to facilitate the active participation of all present. The day of the training replication also went well, there was a face-to-face with the UISP team and the feedback was positive".

“ This training was important and full of stimuli and useful and fun games. Moreover, it allowed us to "think" like children and to find different ways to play.

“ It taught us that we as adults have to try the games, before presenting them to children, and more importantly, all children can play them regardless of their abilities: the games can be built and modified so that everyone can take part".

“ By attending the training, I learned that: Sport has a huge and relevant role in education; Sport can help children to gain a greater level of focus and concentration; Sport also plays an important role in the dynamics between groups, children and teacher, and in rehabilitation treatments;

“ The activity has raised several suggestions for teachers, in the way they approach the different needs of the students. My suggestions are: all teachers should participate in the training without exception; it would be important to define and deepen the concept of disability and to search for a more suitable and accessible environment".



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*The publication was produced with the contribution of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation. The contents of the publication are the sole responsibility of We World - GVC and do not necessarily represent the point of view of the Agency.*



