

COOPERATION PROGRAMS ON EDUCATION AND TEACHERS TRAINING: THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY AND EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION

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This panel outlines the analysis of international development cooperation projects on education and training, which involve the university both as a promoter and as a partner. The aim is to highlight the specific support by universities in developing multi level actions: some of the projects aim at promoting policies to grant everybody the right to schooling, others projects are focused on training professionals, and some others introduce direct tests, in scholastic or extra-scholastic environments characterized by generalized difficulties or by multiple risk factors. The panel collects experiences carried out in different countries, where converging issues can be found, both in the aims of the projects and their results, though on extremely different levels.

F. Zanetti's contribution shows the experience of the University of Bologna in Kosovo. The program, carried out by the Dipartimento di Scienze dell'educazione, funded by Save the Children and by the Italian Development Cooperation, was aimed at promoting processes of local development and specifically the culture for integration of impaired students. The project was carried out in collaboration with the Minister of Education Science and Technologies of the Republic of Kosovo and with Prishtina University. The initiative led to the realization of a strategic program for the comprehensive education of children with special needs and a coherent project of university training for special needs teachers. The perspective adopted is characterized by three main topics: the empowerment of the participants aimed at avoiding the creation of inferiority and subjection conditions in the targeted groups; the long term sustainability of the actions to counterbalance welfare dependency; the active involvement of the beneficiaries. The proposed model of training, therefore, enhances the teachers' social competences, turning them into innovation carriers, as active protagonists within the projects as well as subjects able to detect different needs throughout the territory and to provide comprehensive and adapted answers.

The contribution of C. Coggi and P. Ricchiardi from the University of Torino, on a similar theme, proposes an appraisal and sustainable training model for educators and teachers, tested in Brazil and in some countries of Central America and Africa. These training modules are tightly connected to empirical tests, aimed at detecting learning difficulties in students who grew up in multiple risk factor conditions, the most suitable programs and the training needs of the professors. The survey carried out focused on the specificities of the role of the university in a fruitful cooperation with NGOs and scholastic institutions based in the analyzed territories. The University should first of all *make an in-depth analysis of special needs*, concerning the training requirement, which often comes out as the teachers and educators' difficulty in dealing with complex learning problems as well as significant delays in *school readiness*. Observational studies and targeted surveys shall be carried out, aimed at outlining any specific student weaknesses and the needs of the professionals. Thus the research groups shall *elaborate on the identified issues, aligning them within a written international framework*, in order to *define innovative action programs* to propose to local professionals, so that these can access them and adapt them to the needs within their specific contexts. Hence, the University can start pilot studies, with the support of local professionals, in order to study and select the most effective actions to meet the required needs, checking both on short and medium term results. Based on empirical evidence, the constituted group of international research, also involving local universities in a profitable synergy, can organize *training sessions* for the professionals acting in the analyzed territory. Such actions are necessary to encourage the sustainability of the actions proposed and must be performed in compliance with the modalities of actively involving the people they are targeting. Concerning this item, the research group has tested two different models. The first is the responsive model, constructing knowledge and offering methodological directions to the people involved in training, starting from their requests for learning support. The second is the *training-research model*, foreseeing an initial sharing of the principles of the proposed method, in order to offer an orientation based horizon to those that these actions are targeted towards; a phase of familiarization and re-alignment of the materials of the group; some lab simulations and finally pilot experiments in classrooms and with the support, remotely, of the research group of the University, and of local NGOs. The University validates the approach and summary *assessment of the effectiveness* of the proposed interventions and actions, involving all the players, and the *socialization of the results*, through publications in the several involved Countries.

A research group from the University of Torino verified the model in Central and South America and Africa. The team carried out special studies on learning difficulties, developing consistent training actions, in order to develop within local professionals, strategies of cognitive and motivational empowerment of pupils with special needs. The proposed training model is aimed at increasing the competences of teachers in cognitive and emotional-affective mediation, by using a recreational approach to learning, which uses play-materials for pupils aged between 3-6 years and free online teaching software for pupils aged between 6-11. Teachers and trainers are offered an intuitive knowledge-based teaching structure, in small groups, through an involvement experience, focused on essential core

disciplines, in languages, mathematics and logic. The programs started in the countries where this cooperation is happening foresee, at least for the primary school, the use of computers, also improving digital awareness. Technology transfer though, creates several sustainability issues, mainly linked to the need to keep the hardware working, to update software and to access the web. Further difficulties the group of research had to deal with, in carrying out the programs of cooperation, concern above all, the selection of local skilled professionals ready to manage the coordination and to support the activities, once the training and pilot experimentations have been concluded. Institutions have not always been able to be in charge of the program. Where this happened (ex. Minas Gerais) it was clear that the teachers trained in several schools had accepted the principles of the method, substantially modifying their approach to the teaching criteria in their classes. This result was acknowledged and appreciated also by local authorities.

The panel illustrated the two formative models in an analytical way. T. Bonasso presented the training research-action presentation carried out Teofilo Otoni, in Minas Gerais. R. Trincherro presented the responsive model performed at Kigali in Rwanda.

Formative experiences have covered the themes of cognitive enhancement which exploited games on calculators. The intervention in Africa was divided into the following steps: 1) tracking of the expectations and preliminary knowledge of the participants; 2) software based re-aligning; 3) exposure of the basic concepts of cognitive enhancement; 4) comprehension test and feedback of participants-trainer and trainer-participants; 5) tracking of the problems met on the field by teachers, based on the acquired theoretical knowledge, with case studies; 6) isolation of paradigm problems and exposure of possible techniques and action strategies; 7) planning of class interventions and first preliminary experimentations; 8) final test with the request to participants to describe possible actions they would like to undertake in class, based on what they learnt during the course. In both situations, Rwanda and Minas Gerais, the activities are continuing thanks to the collaboration of NGOs and the involvement of local authorities.