

Educational and pedagogic professions:
birth, development and legal recognition.
What is the role of pedagogical research?

*Le professioni di educatore e pedagista:
nascita, sviluppo e riconoscimento giuridico
E la ricerca pedagogica?*

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abstract

The growing social demand for education and training, coming from an increasingly complex social reality, has long led civil society to require professionals, not just teachers, to tackle other educational issues, including emergencies. Education professionals – albeit competent, rooted in all social settings and supported by specific university education – still lack the legal and social recognition needed to prevent their action from being replaceable by educational surrogates. The law of 14 January 2013, No. 4, Provisions concerning un-organized professions and professional associations, legislative decree 2656, Discipline of the profession of educator and pedagogist (currently in parliament as No. 2443), and the approval of the legislative decree of April 13, 2017 No. 65, An integrated education and training system for children and young children aged from birth up to six years (representing the most innovative and qualifying part of Law 107, that of the 'Good School'), have opened up important paths towards such recognition.

Keyword: *educators, pedagogists, legal recognition, pedagogical epistemology, educational research*

L'ampliamento della domanda sociale di educazione e formazione proveniente da una realtà sociale sempre più complessa ha portato da tempo la società civile a richiedere professionisti, non solo insegnanti, in grado di fronteggiare i problemi educativi altri, comprese le emergenze. Professionisti dell'educazione la cui azione, pur competente e radicata in tutti i contesti sociali e supportata da una formazione universitaria specifica, ancora oggi manca di quel riconoscimento giuridico e sociale necessario a rendere la loro azione non sostituibile da surrogati educativi. La legge del 14 gennaio 2013 n. 4. Disposizioni in materia di professioni non organizzate e le associazioni professionali, la proposta di legge 2656. Disciplina della professione di educatore e pedagista (oggi al senato con il n. 2443) e l'approvazione del Decreto legislativo del 13 aprile 2017 n. 65. Il sistema integrato di educazione e istruzione per i bambini e le bambine di età compresa dalla nascita fino a 6 anni (che rappresenta la parte più innovativa e qualificante della legge 107 cioè sulla Buona Scuola), hanno aperto strade importanti per tale riconoscimento.

Parole chiave: educatori, pedagogisti, riconoscimento giuridico, epistemologia pedagogica, ricerca educativa

Educational and pedagogic professions: birth, development and legal recognition. What is the role of pedagogical research?

1. The renewed interpretations of pedagogy

In order to grasp the meaning and value that today occupy the work of educators and pedagogists, it is necessary to start from an understanding of what constitutes education for man and what role it plays in pedagogy.

The starting point is that the history of man is also the history of education.

There is no 'education' in itself in an educational hyperuranium, but an education that can be and indeed is given numerous definitions. The only universally accepted certainty is that it is a process and a product; it connects to culture and is realized throughout life (Macchietti, 1998; Vico, 1995).

In social representation, the generic name of 'education' is used to mean the gigantic complex of activities with which those who have already reached a certain maturity seek to make possible and foster the same achievement to those who are still relatively immature. Broadly speaking, in this perspective, raising, training, educating, teaching and training are all activities whose more or less circumscribed goals fall within the broader scope of the educational process, i.e. that fall within the term 'education' (Calaprice, 2005; Laeng, 1992; Laporta, 1986, 1998).

Given this genericity, it is not difficult to find many common discourses around this concept that do not allow for rigour but only approximation and fluctuation, and thus interpretations are not always scientifically grounded.

Therefore, in order to be able to talk about education today, it is important to start from the fact that education always takes place *hic et nunc*: it is the time and place that always make man an educator in any situation. This means that his journey takes place not according to an ideal itinerary, a pattern to which everyone always adjusts, but starting from the conditions in which each one starts and with which each one actually comes to concretely confront (Calaprice, 2005; d'Arcais, 1987; Bruner, 1984).

For this reason pedagogy, the only science of education and training,

today faces a turning point: either to deal with the evolution of society, with new ways of thinking, with the needs of the new knowledge market, with the newest ever-advancing technologies and trying to put men and women in control of the changes that quickly envelop and shatter; or ignore all this and accept slowly seeing its ethical-socio-cultural influence erode, that which so greatly characterized other historical epochs.

The problematic node that today has to animate pedagogical research, besides the *why* and *nature*, must define *how* it should deal with all this.

The *why* and *nature* arise from the epistemological identity of pedagogy, that is, from its being a practical-descriptive science on one hand, as it reflects on action, and a practical-prescriptive science on the other hand, as the science of action (Calaprice, 2005).

A practical-descriptive science (practice), as it processes its reflections based on practice, from the phenomena it analyses and interprets. A science with a practical knowledge interest (Habermas, 1973) in the sense that it is aimed at acquiring knowledge oriented towards providing reasons, motivations and improved learning perspectives (Nanni, 1990). A science that is built on professional practice, such as that of educators, pedagogists, teachers and trainers, in the specificity of formal, informal and non-formal education and their internal differences.

A practical-prescriptive science (theory) as it is meant to give directions of meaning, prescriptions more or less binding on the choice of goals and the most appropriate ways to achieve them. Requirements, however, that aim to provide reasons and criteria to design and operate rather than rigid and binding schemes to imitate. Not a pre-dated, self-referential theory, but a reality for practice, one which comes from practice, that is, from the concrete reality which is the person who in every historical moment and existential situation is called upon to combine and conquer his own identity in the relationship differently (here is the fruitfulness of Ricoeur's *ipse / idem* relationship, [1986]). In fact, today's difficulty does not go unnoticed by anyone, even in the broader possibilities of thinking about personal identity in the massive and virtual technology. A theory, therefore, is understood not as an abstract approach to problems, educational facts, but as an interpretation, a mode, attaining to reality. To do this today, the various contributions from other disciplines such as philosophy of education, psychology, sociology, anthropology have to critically converge, to cite Dewey (1980), "as interdisciplinary or synthesis knowledge". For deep down, one knows that if correctly taught, one never forgets the unity and uniqueness of a subject.

The *why* and the *how* arise from the knowledge offered by educational practice and possibly also from the areas offered by the other human sci-

ences and disciplines involved. A practice that is increasingly faced with urgency is that of educational emergencies, and because it is the science of synthesis for the unity of the subject, it is up to her to face. If the current society is one that, as Morin says (2001), seems to be pushing for the propulsion of four unleashed cultural motors (science, technology, industry and profit), this is complex, problematic and even lacking in regard to educational and generational training (Bocchi, Cerruti, 2004) as it is characterized by a not easily decipherable cultural framework, increasingly oscillating between futuristic accelerations and tribal regression. For this reason, the present society has also altered the life of man and his relationship with time and space, and therefore also with work. The human action of Weberian memory (Weber, 1992) has now become hampered with social action: in fact, human action today appears more and more bereft of meaning and less oriented to other subjects in term of cause and effect, as it is fundamentally narcissistic and self-referential. Thus, the present society has replaced the centrality of the person with the centrality of the object, deploying increasingly dehumanizing processes (De Santis, 2000; Bruner, 1988; Mencarelli, 1986).

And that is what educators and pedagogists now face. They have been trying to respond to these changes by finding the way for the social, educational and training complexity to take on new responsibilities to help the person to live up to the challenges of precariousness, diversity, multiplicity of experiences and knowledge, and to develop the ability to organize knowledge, to move in network contexts and to break down barriers. They have intervened heuristically by searching for relationships and interaction between each phenomenon, its context and reciprocal relations (Chiosso, 2002; Serres, 2002).

Educators and pedagogists have greeted and responded responsibly to the new educational needs, guaranteeing the survival of the *human* and the *social*. In other words, through their professional work they have specified the kind of relationship between the *fact* (education) and the *reflection on the subject* (pedagogy), that is, the specific relationship that must lie between theory and practice. By abandoning this radical dualism, they replaced the logic of the *aut-aut* with that of the *et-et* by elaborating a synthesis between theory and practice.

In fact, as M. Laeng (Laeng, Ballanti, 2000) teaches, pedagogy is always in tension between theory and practice, and such tension, adds O. Cian (1996), can only be conceptually and artificially distributed in order to distinguish the plans and the differences, but you can never delete the report and add the synthesis.

2. Advent, development and training of educational professions

Confirmation of how such professionals slowly re-orientated their pedagogical epistemology can be acquired precisely from the ways in which they configured and developed the educational professions, including those related to teaching (Calaprice, 2011).

In fact, these began to shape when social and political claims during the 1960s and the start of the school reform in the 1970s highlighted the need for educational requirements beyond school contexts. Therefore, entities such as UNLA, the HUMANITARIAN Society, the Civic Cooperation Movement, the Cultural Service Centres, the ENAOLI, the Ministry of Grace and Justice, FIRAS (a private body) and the social centres that came into being after the war sought to satisfy them through a bid. Extracurricular education was designed to foster the development of adult education and local communities (Laporta, 1989). Thus, even though at the beginning of the seventies, the school still retained all the social and political burden of the education of younger generations, it was during this period that mention was first made of permanent education and the need to go beyond the notion of the school. Education, to think of something more complex, unitary and global, encompasses the subject and its community, the school and its complex of belonging, the family and the neighbourhood.

This idea, coupled with the decentralization of state powers, the birth of the regions (1970), the formation of new local socio-educational health units, mountain communities, school districts, administrative districts etc. highlighted the need to:

- help to experiment with new methods and approaches to local communities;
- define and train new professional profiles of local educators in response to emerging social and health-related educational issues (drugs, deviancy, handicaps, etc.);
- reallocate school education itself;
- attempt the global approach to local communities in order to involve them in a participatory approach to self-education.

Following the decentralization of state powers, local authorities, between the seventies and eighties, with wild insertions and no programming, were assigned educators and / or operators from the dissolution of many of these private entities or the transferral of others (IPAB, ECA) or from lay secular or religious volunteer situations in the 1960s, with oper-

ational frameworks unrelated to contractual logic. They were thus forced to engage them according to the socio-pedagogic interventions promoted and implemented in a differentiated way and with different professional denominations: educator, social-educational animator, rehab supervisor and others. All this without them being adequately trained.

In order to overcome such wild settlements, the 1980s saw the regeneration of regions in the reorganization of socio-educated and socio-sanitary services as a correction and the need to rethink the training of its operators. In fact, with regard to this latter aspect, there was no common prior education on the subject of education and only a few particular realities (the Faculty of Magisterium of the University of Rome, which had set up a special school for community educators, SFEC and the Magisterium 'Maria Assunta', again in Rome, LUMSA) presented a suitable three-year formative training.

None of the titles issued by the various educational establishments, however, had legal value, although they were usable for public competitions. Thus, in 1982, the DPR 162 which ordered the "reorganization of schools for special purposes, specialization schools and refresher courses" was the first to start such reorganization by attributing to the university all post-secondary education, and it was only in 1989 that the National University Council (CUN) at the meeting of 30th October 1989 with resolution No. 1222 stipulates both the new order of university schools, specially designed for professional educators (LUMSA and SPEC), and the degree course in education sciences.

The educational offering of the Department of Education Sciences today is the result of the cultural, social, political and institutional change that began in 1990 with the new University Orders (Ruberti 341/90), which:

- transformed the only Bachelor's Degree in Pedagogy into a four-year degree in Education Science (1992-93) tab. XV, by dividing it into two biennials (basic and specialist) with three target areas (secondary school teachers, extracurricular professional educators and experts in training processes);
- required a greater link between the system of training and the profession system.

During this course, however, law 520/98 was introduced, approved by the Ministry of Health (commonly known as the Bindi Law), which in order to place an order among professional healthcare professionals, also ruled that the Faculty of Medicine was the only one able to train profes-

sional educators over a three-year degree course. There were the only ones able to work in healthcare. This automatically created problems for graduates of the Faculty of Education Sciences (today the Department of Education Sciences) depriving them both of the 'professional' title close to the denominator of the educator and of the possibility of participating in public competitions issued by the health authorities and other bodies.

For this, when in 1999-2000 the D.M. 509 required the reorganization of the degree programs in 3 + 2 years, that is when:

- the four-year courses were transformed into three-year degrees (Table 18), still maintaining the offer of three fields of specialization;
- specialist degrees were activated +2 (56/S 87/S, 65/S);
- its training mission was redefined and rededicated in the light of the Bologna Agreement.

Despite the many organizational difficulties faced by the Faculty of Education, thanks to their ongoing research into synergy with the educational and training needs expressed by a constantly transforming society, they sought to ensure didactics suitable both for a training offer of high quality (Demetrio 1988, Scurati 1980) and for a professional figure, such as that of the professional non-dictator, but with a tendency towards clear and competent social formation. This was further defined when in 2004 law 270, following indications of the European Community:

- transformed universities of knowledge into 'universities of expertise';
- replaced the previous degrees;
- transformed tab. 18 into class L.19 (three years long) to train educators;
- transformed LM-50 (Education and Management of Educational Services) into Class LM-85 (Pedagogical Sciences), Class LM-57 (Adult Education and Continuing Education Sciences), Class LM-93 (Theories and Methodologies of e-learning and media education), which train pedagogues.

A training offer that focused more and more competently on:

- orientation for social and work integration;
- the efficiency-effectiveness of organizational models;
- a redefinition of curricula to make them qualitatively more valid and competence-focused.

In fact, the European Council in Lisbon in March 2000, identifying knowledge and innovation as one of the key strategic guidelines for achieving greater social cohesion and sustainable economic growth created by new and better jobs, indicated education and training as the foundations of this process. Then in March 2002, in Barcelona, the Council approved the *Education and Training 2010 Work Programme*, and in May 2009, with *Education and Training 2020*, established a solid framework for European cooperation in education and training, on the basis of common objectives. At the same time, in 2003, again in this direction, in support of lifelong learning, European policy makers urged for the elaboration of a 'European Qualifications Framework' (hereinafter referred to as the QEQ) with the aim of making education and training systems more and more integrated and transparent, which would be a point of common reference for the recognition and transferability of competences and an open and flexible tool for strengthening links between national and sectorial frameworks. Thus, Directive 2005/36 / EC of the European Parliament on the professions and the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications began a political and institutional acceleration for member states, requesting the adoption of appropriate adaptation measures of national rules regulating access to and the pursuit of professions.

Unfortunately, legal decree 270 on Graduates of the Education Sciences Departments, having no legislative regulation at a national level, created problems:

- for Educators (with a Bachelor Degree), as they were excluded from competitions issued by regions, provinces and municipalities, and replaced by Professional Educators who had graduated from the faculty of medicine,
- for the Pedagogist (master's degree and/or four-year degree), a professional figure for years now that, having no professional record, has been found and is still often overwhelmed by the roles and functions of other professional figures with a background such as that of the psychologist.

It should be noted, however, that even in the absence of a national framework law on these professions, this has not prevented regional welfare systems from qualifying services and social interventions, providing functional and professional operating standards that can guarantee uniform levels of performance, especially in the wake of Law 328, 2000 and under Title V of the Constitution.

What is the situation today?

Based on these changes and on the basis of the strategies and policies of economic, social and professional development urged by the European Commission (http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-your-country/italia/index_it.htm), also in Italy it became crucial to pay attention to the new educational professions and to the new research lines in this field, which in the meantime were being specified. Thus, in 2006, the national network – called SIPED (Italian Society of Pedagogy) – was established for educational and training professions, presenting the state of the art of such professions in Italy, through sharing processes and synergies with professional category associations, and together with the results of the national research study PRIN “for the recognition of educational and training professions in the European context: which professions, with which pedagogical profile and related training, and for which job” implemented from 2008 to 2011a. It also outlined the many open lines of research regarding three interconnected focal points for the recognition of the professional education and training chain: training, access to the profession and legal recognition.

From this moment on, political attention, thanks also to the presence of two pedagogical colleagues, Vanna Iori and Milena Santerini in Parliament, made it possible to turn the spotlight on the issue.

What is the state of the art and what actions may now be taken?

3. First Acknowledgments: Law 4/2013, Bill 2656 (Senate 2443) with First Signatory Hon. Vanna Iori, D.L. 65/2017 on nursery schools

The state of the art on the legal situation today of educational and pedagogical professions gives us hope to overcome those gaps (see Decree 520/98) that PRIN research highlighted that to date have hindered the affirmation of identity.

Indeed, the Law of 14 January 2013, No. 4, “Dispositions in the field of unstructured professions and professional associations” and bill 2656, “Discipline of the professions of educators and pedagogues” presented on 7 October 2014 and having been previously signed by Senator Vanna Iori, the approval of the Legislative Decree of April 13, 2017 No. 65 “The integrated education and training system for children over six” opened up major inroads for the legal recognition of such professionals.

Three cornerstones of the law of January 14, 2013, No. 4 are associations, forms of aggregation and certification. Of course, the most important aspect is that within the Italian system the ‘second pillar’ of a profes-

sional order was finally created, which, in addition to the 'orders', includes 'professional associations', i.e. private subjects who have the task to promote and enhance the skills of professionals who voluntarily adhere to it. For this reason, the law also opened up the possibility of regulation for educational professions as it recognizes and governs a second path for professions left out of the professional orders or colleges, and adapts to the European Directive on Competition and Freedom of Movement in Europe (Art. 1): training, professional work and services to the population, thus completing the rules of access to professions in Italy after graduation (Calaprice, 2016b).

Indeed, all new legislation revolves around 'professional associations' that have the task of enhancing the skills of associates, spreading compliance with deontological rules, favouring the choice and protection of users, and complying with competition rules. Professional associations are, in other words, conceived as the 'guarantors' of the associates' competence according to virtuous competition of Anglo-Saxon inspiration, in which numerous and authoritative associative bodies operate and to which professionals can adhere voluntarily.

Another important aspect is the attention that this law provides to "quality standards and innovative professional qualifications" (Articles 6 and 9), which provide for the establishment of conformity certification bodies accredited by ACCREDIA¹ and who may, at the request of the individual professional (even a non-member of the association), issue the certificate of conformity to the UNI technical standard defined for the single profession². Now perhaps the most difficult goal for all stakeholders is yet to be pursued: to verify that the 'self-regulatory' quality path of the professional association worldwide is implemented with fairness. Attention is therefore shifted from the legislative sphere to the ground of applying the rules. In this field, pedagogical research can and must be renewed through the implementation of an ongoing dialogue with the world of professions.

With regard to bill 2656, unified with proposal 3247, and first signed by Hon. Binetti, referring to and integrating the figure of the socio-health

- 1 ACCREDIA is the only recognized organization in Italy to certify that certification and inspection bodies have the skills to evaluate the conformity of products, processes and systems with reference standards.
- 2 The UNI (Italian Standardization Body) is the Italian Certification Body and is the body responsible for preparing technical standard manuals for certification and quality certification.

professional educator (today both in the Senate as bill No. 243), if approved, it will represent the answer to all the criticalities that the PRIN research on educational professions outlined. It in fact has a profile shared largely by all relevant stakeholders, professional associations and universities for research purposes, training of chain professionals and job placement. In fact, this proposal classifies these professionals as identities (socio-pedagogical educators and pedagogists) for areas where they can carry out educational activities in terms of beneficiaries (childhood, adolescence, adulthood: individually, in family groups and peers), by dimensions or sectors of beneficiary experience (schools, social, welfare, health, environmental, cultural, motoring, labour, justice, human development, etc.), for university and postgraduate education, for European skill qualifications and for the exercise of the profession and for professional placement. The qualification of a pedagogist attributed as a result of the awarding of a Bachelor's Degree gives reason to competent professionalism is essential.

A proposal, therefore, that fully responds to European demands and that PRIN research already focused on and urged. In fact, the scientific foundations of the training of figures within the European structure of university cycles and the European marketability of professional figures require the profiles of education and training professionals (like all other professions recognized in the second European standards) to be recognized on the basis of the knowledge and skills articulated within the same professional family through training and professionalism: the coherence between competencies leaving the university and the skills that enter the workplace must be guaranteed by the university curricula built on job opportunities, 'work placement' and professional internships and on attestation for the profession. All these things are fully contemplated by the law.

The approval of DL 65/2017 partially anticipates this proposal and represents the most innovative and qualifying part of the law 107 and how such a system, also legally declaring the important educational and training function of nursery and education services for 0-6 years old, institutionally requires early childhood educator graduates in L-19 class to be competent to carry out this role (Calaprice, 2017).

All this serves to support what those graduate courses have already done for years in universities.

3. And now? Pedagogical research rolls up its sleeves

Some significant issues, concerning both figures and their skill profiles, their scope of intervention and the recognition of such professional figures by the national SIPED networks of recent years, thanks to Law No 4/2013 and DL 65, on the basis of what has been said so far, we might say are over, or will hopefully be resolved with bill 2656.

On 24 June 2016, through the Consultation of the Directors of the Department of Education Sciences and its President prof. COURSES National Coordination of Presidents / Coordinators of the C.CdL, the Educational and Pedagogical Institution was established (henceforth CONCLEP), and on the same date CONCLEP unanimously elected me as coordinator.

This coordination, together with the group of educational professions, also coordinated by me together with my colleague Crispiani, has been dealing with politics and research questions since then, i.e. the issues that remained open and on which institutional and associative actors still have to work.

One of the first goals to be achieved is to strive for a clear and shared definition of the *professional profiles* of educators and pedagogists, in terms of competences, related to ECTS and ECVET. Specifically, the aim is to implement an ECTS test system linked to the ECVET framework by structuring a working protocol between co-beneficiary partners and associated partners to define the profile in terms of professional skills, sharing profile validation methods through ISCED standards.

The expected outcome is a pilot action for the recognition and certification of skills profiles in ECTS and ECVET cadres (Calaprice, 2016 b). Also, in terms of results, regarding the bridge between the ECTS / ECVET cadres, it is necessary:

- to contribute to the innovation of regional systems of competence standards;
- to improve access to professional qualifications;
- to increase the coherence between training, the requirements of training, the paths of the labour market and career development;
- to increase the transparency of acquired skills in learning environments;
- to provide more opportunities for job placement and professional growth.

Along with the definition of international standards for the certification of their performance, it is necessary to arrive at professional areas in relation to a labour market constraints/opportunities system (*employability*) and to hypothesize a transposition at national (EU) and national level regulations (*validation and transfer of results*).

Of course, to achieve this first goal, it is necessary to start to know, compare and possibly combine study courses for national-level educational professions to offer a proposal that responds to a professional figure able to live up to national and European expectations (which the CON-CLEP research group is doing).

All this needs to be in line with the requirements of 270/04 and its indicators, without which the degree programmes may be risking being closed, namely:

- Respect of the criteria dictated by the ANVUR;
- Respect of his card (D.C.'s unique annual card);
- Compared to RAD (D.C. didactic implementation regulation).

The second aim is to determine, on the basis of European certification standards, the procedures for the provision of the professional services provided (on the basis of the professional profile outlined). While Law no. 4/2013 helped to give value to our unregulated professions through the valorisation of professional associations, then:

- much of the validity and recognition of our degree programmes may depend on how we coordinate with associations;
- it may also depend on the professional profile that we can build with them and recognize them;
- and how we can also restructure our courses based on their training demand.

It is a goal that requires a profound cultural change both by universities and by associations as it seeks to find a possible agreement both on the discipline of traineeships for access to the profession and on the discipline of a possible examination of enabling.

The third objective is to participate as SIPED under Article 9 of Law no. 4/2013 in the UNI table to help define the criteria for certification of compliance with the recognition of our professions.

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