

Publicato il: aprile 2024

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Registrazione Tribunale di Frosinone N. 564/09 VG

The importance of a dialogue between School and Family guiding Specific Learning Difficulty

L'importanza del dialogo Scuola-Famiglia nella gestione del Disturbo Specifico dell'Apprendimento

di

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Abstract:

The revelation of a specific learning difficulty often occurs during a child's school journey, causing concern among parents. Many struggle to accept their child's different developmental path, leading them to deny the problem's existence and adopt an attitude of perpetual expectation, hoping that difficulties will naturally resolve as the child grows. Studies indicate a worrying link between parental depressive and anxious disorders and their child's condition, often prompting them to seek “responsibility” within the school or among teachers. However, specific learning difficulties (SpLD) are neurobiological disorders necessitating a collaborative approach involving the school, family, and student. This contribution aims to emphasize the importance of dialogue between the school and family, promoting effective intervention strategies and best practices crucial for the student's well-being and educational success.

Keywords: well-being, educational success, Specific learning difficulty, Inclusion, School-Family relationship.

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QTimes – webmagazine

Anno XVI - n. 2, 2024

www.qtimes.it

Doi: 10.14668/QTimes_16206

Abstract:

La rilevazione del disturbo specifico dell'apprendimento è spesso comunicata per la prima volta dalla scuola, generando preoccupazione tra i genitori. In molti faticano ad accogliere l'idea che il loro figlio possa avere una traiettoria di sviluppo differente, portandoli a rifiutare l'esistenza del problema e ad assumere un atteggiamento di costante attesa, sperando che le difficoltà si risolvano con la crescita. Alcuni studi evidenziano un nesso preoccupante tra disturbi depressivi e ansiosi nei genitori in relazione alla condizione del figlio, spingendoli spesso alla ricerca del "colpevole" nella scuola o negli insegnanti. Tuttavia, i DSA, essendo disturbi di natura neurobiologica, richiedono un approccio collaborativo tra scuola, famiglia e studente. Il presente contributo ha l'obiettivo di far luce sull'importanza del dialogo tra scuola e famiglia, attraverso la valorizzazione di strategie di intervento e buone pratiche fondamentali per il benessere e il successo formativo dello studente.

Parole Chiave: benessere, successo formativo, Disturbo Specifico dell'Apprendimento, Inclusione, Rapporto scuola-Famiglia.

1. Introduction

The inclusive merit of the Italian Education, often meant as the drop ship of the international stage, presents all the profiles, necessary to offer each student the fundamental tools able to achieve a full personal development and a full participation in education and social life. There have been numerous laws that have followed over time, aimed at regulating educational activity in an inclusive perspective. At the same time some schools still have separated classrooms in which special education teachers works with students that often remind the "differential classroom" of the past. The presence of classrooms dedicated to support activities damages the inclusive value that the Italian education has the task of covering, creating differentiation among students (Canevaro & Ianes 2024). From this point of view, rather than creating a context based on equality, distinctions persist among students, based on disabilities or difficulties of various kinds (Santi & Ruzzante, 2016). Fortunately, there are very few cases, so the Italian stage pursues the goal of encouraging full access and full inclusion of all students, no one excluded. In this work, we try to shed light on the educational issue of students with Specific Learning Disabilities, making a critical reflection on the importance of the dialogue between school and family as main educational agencies. Students with SpLD are part of the macro-area of Special Educational Needs, which includes all those situations of difficulty, temporary or irreversible, that need special educational support (Sacuti, 2024). To understand at the best the degree of relevance that the disorder has in relation to the well-being of the student, it is necessary to analyse it from the point of view of the International Classification of Functioning introduced by the WHO. Through a bio-psycho-social approach, the ICF focuses on the functioning of the person and not on the related disorder. In Italy, with the introduction of the Law n° 170/2010 entitled "*New rules on specific learning disabilities in the school environment*", to students with Specific Learning Disabilities are granted the right to enjoy the educational activity in the same way of others. Through the elaboration of a Personalized Educational Plan, the student has at his disposal compensatory tools and dispensatory measures that allow him to have an equal inclusion within the school context. These

students, in fact, although they do not have the opportunity to be supported by special education teachers, need tools and educational actions that offer them the opportunity to enjoy the teaching activity taking into account their own particularities and needs. The Law n° 170/2010, therefore, recognizes in the macro area of SpDL dyslexia, dysgraphia, dysortography and dyscalculia, providing that Schools are ready to let accessible, with tools and methodologies necessary to include them in the educational context and for the acquisition of the correct skills related to it (Fiorucci & Bianquin, 2023). With references to the above, it is so important to have a collaborative approach between school and family, to manage at most students with SpLD. The synergy between the different actors involved is fundamental to create an inclusive and personalized learning environment, able to enhance the potential of the student and support him in achieving educational formative outcome.

2. Educational co-responsibility as a necessary strategy for achieving the well-being of students with Specific Learning Disorders.

2.1 The student and the comprehension of his difficulty

The psychophysical well-being of the student with Learning Specific Disorders is directly proportional to the level of comprehension he receives compared to his difficulties. In this context, school and family, together with the group of peers, represent the pillars on which the student's life is based (Palmonari, 1997) thus influencing the development of a safe and inclusive environment in which the student can feel valued and guided. The result emerging from the combination of these elements, in fact, can positively or negatively affect the construction of oneself and self-esteem, where a negative experience inevitably affects the concept of self and the relationship with the surrounding context. Beyond the relationship that the student has with the adult sphere, the connection that he establishes with other students is often the most influential. It is particularly relevant because the peer group is a benchmark by which it measures its own abilities, trying to emulate others to be accepted, and what comes out from it inevitably will influence its own socio-emotional development (Tobia & Marzocchi, 2015).

In a situation of difficulty such as that relating to SpLD, the student, not being able to complete with the same effort the tasks related to the school routine, feels frustrated. The lack of attention and care what happens, the lack or a very few awareness of their abilities, very often causes a failure at school. According to Tobia and Marzocchi (2015), in fact, around the concept of perceived self-effectiveness, rotates the self-assessment that the student performs in relation to his own way of understanding himself and the surrounding world. Self-efficacy reflects what he perceives of himself in relation to the emotional, cognitive and relational spheres (Giaconi et alii, 2023). In this regard, in fact, it is essential to value the metacognition and awareness of the self and its cognitive processes. This is important as an instrument to fight failure and the outbreak of psychological and relational problems, that, if it is not treated with the right precautions, issues in aggressive attitudes or a total rejection of the educational stage (Molisso et alii, 2019). It is also necessary to take a look at the disorder in a perspective not only confined to the present, but in a future perspective, in order to provide the right tools able to achieve all the targets related to the personal growth and adult life. Providing support in the knowledge and comprehension of its peculiarities provides in fact an opportunity for the growth of the person in its entirety, which achieves an appropriate degree of understanding of what is happening and consequently is able to grow and experience adult life focused on achieving significant

development (Molisso et alii, 2019). Even if these difficulties persist over time, they can overcome through compensatory tools and dispensatory measures, so as to improve performance and achieve the correct results (Guaraldi & Marco 2023). In fact, these disorders have the possibility to improve over time, regardless of the level of severity (Molisso & Bonfiglio, 2018).

2.2 The contribution of school and family in the inclusion of students with Specific Learning Disorders

To overcome the problems just highlighted, it is essential to build an educational community based on dialogue, through an active collaboration between family and school. The attention they pay to the student's disorder often leads to neglect of the psychophysical well-being of the student. Moreover, a failure or late diagnosis of the difficulty leads the person to have a wrong and negative perception of himself, which damages the sense of his own value and abilities. Elements of low self-esteem can therefore lead to depression and anxiety, increasingly distancing the student from the school context and increasing the risk of dispersion (Marchetti et alii, 2023). From the point of view of the family, discovering that a child has the characteristics of the specific learning disorder is a moment of discomfort. In this case, parents often place themselves in a defensive position towards the school and teachers, who are usually the first to recognize the signs of the problem and to expose the revelation, generating a sense of astonishment in the family.

This question, if not addressed in the right way, leads the parent to move away and reject the new reality that they are suddenly discovering, with the hope that the condition of the child can be resolved within a short time. This, in addition to adversely affect the student, affects the psychological well-being of parents, who, rather than understanding the situation and placing themselves in a welcoming position, raise a wall against the school, perceived a threat.

Several studies demonstrate a link between early school leaving and SpLD (Marfoggia et alii, 2023) and a strong frustration in parents, who do not have the right tools to understand their son's difficulties, and as a consequence embrace hostile attitudes towards school. At the same time, the uncomfortable situation also affects emotionally, generating depressive disorders that increase the uncomfortable condition. The right recognition of the problem-situation is fundamental to ensure that the student can face his difficulties at best, to overcome them and grow in the right way.

As mentioned above, in order to better educate and grow future citizens, it is necessary to educate and train to have a dialogue and a correct listening, where everyone has the task of best performing his role as an educator, in which cooperation is the basis for a better result. The importance of collaboration is now a fact, especially when we talk about growing students, which need to be guided and supported by the completely educational community, where family and school play an important role. The need to promote a dialogue education between family and school stems from the introduction of the Pact of Co-responsibility, through the Decree of the President of the Republic n. 235 of 21 November 2007. The mentioned pact expressly states: "*Together with the attendance at school institution, parents and students must sign an educational pact of co-responsibility, which defines, in a detailed and shared way, rights and duties, through a collaboration between autonomous school institution, students and families*" (President of the Italian Republic, 2007). This Law highlights the need to foster an equal relationship, where everyone has rights and duties, and that all,

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QTimes – webmagazine

Anno XVI - n. 2, 2024

www.qtimes.it

Doi: 10.14668/QTimes_16206

through collaboration, are required to respect their role, being all co-responsible for the progress of the school relationship between all educational community members.

The need to recognize one's responsibilities concerns one of the primary and fundamental aim for the successful cooperation between school and family. On the contrary, the lack of a dialogue and the lack of recognition of the roles that everyone plays in this context opens the way to situations of conflict that lead to marginalization and exclusion. Building a quality relationship, with solid and lasting foundations, depends on the type of approach that all the related members take to make this happen. The strong emotional value, together with communication, understanding, trust, support, cooperation (Capperucci et alii, 2018) and recognition of roles, is fundamental to recognize the work of others and therefore accept and value it. The parent needs to know and recognize himself, to open up and recognize the figure of the teacher, not as a threat but as an ally. At the same time, the teacher has the task of collaborating and sharing with the parent his work and achievements, in order to strengthen the educational alliance (Capperucci et alii, 2018). The participation and involvement of the family in the school activity leads the student to feel supported and guided during his path of growth. Being understood and supported by the family increases self-esteem and the feeling of competence in students. Family involvement in educational processes can be extremely beneficial for the growth and educational success of the person (Chiusaroli, 2021).

Finally, yet importantly, is the degree of understanding and collaboration between teachers themselves, in which the activity of the teacher, both curricular and supportive, represents an action that has as its main target the full success of each student, regardless of its peculiarities. The inclusive aim is the principal goal of education; therefore, all teachers, without any distinction, must pursue it. The aim is to have the correct skills necessary to respond to the needs of students, where the participation of each actor of the didactic action is necessary to ensure that you achieve the goal you have set. Acting with a collaborative and co-responsible spirit, not only with the family but also within the school itself, is necessary for the success of the educational process (Santi & Ruzzante, 2016).

3. Conclusions

The task of the school-family relationship is to understand every student supporting them in achieving a mature awareness of his needs. Through compensatory tools and dispensatory measures, the school provides the learner with access to teaching and achieving the same objectives as all other students, without any distinction. The use of speech synthesis, calculator and word processor represent a set of measures that the teacher can take, giving the chance to students with specific learning disorders to participate in the teaching action, through a combination of measures that adapt the curriculum in relation to the ways and times of student learning (Zappaterra, 2019). In fact, several intervention strategies and good practices must be adopted to encourage the inclusion of students with difficulties. Beyond compensatory tools and dispensatory measures, widely dealt in the literature, the contribution focused on the importance of a dialogue relationship that family and school have the task of establishing, to make the student feel understood, supported and valued, to consolidate self-esteem and motivation necessary for his well-being. In the contemporary scenario, although in a society that is inclusive and attentive to the needs of each, we need to rethink to the relationship with the other, with a perspective of comprehension and valuing the peculiarities of each. The Italian school, although it is one of the most inclusive in terms of comparison with other international contexts, needs

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Anno XVI - n. 2, 2024

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Doi: 10.14668/QTimes_16206

to pay more and more attention to the relationship with families, valuing the need to establish a high-performance educational network. The solid school-family relationship, in fact, allows to create an environment of learning and growth that leads the student, not only to achieve the educational outcomes, but that promotes a serene and stimulating process, providing him with the correct tools for boosting self-esteem and self-concept. Fostering the psychophysical well-being of the student, through an active and participatory collaboration between family and school, is a fundamental prerogative to ensure that he achieves the well-being necessary for the educational and formative success. Therefore, school and family have the task of building an educational path that shares the same targets and recognizes the methods and reasons of the other, in order to foster an inclusive environment that gives everyone the opportunity to be free to learn and grow in the best way.

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