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G.10. Innovative Learning Environment as devices for social justice

Researching with Schools Between Spaces and Didactics

Beate Christine Weyland (Libera Università di Bolzano, Italy) · Andrea Zini (Università di Modena e Reggio, Italy)

space, learning, action research, school development, wellbeing

Transformative processes are embedded in educational contexts (Scurati, 1997): human potential is cultivated and this endeavour currently presents itself as highly complex and dynamic.

With this contribution, we intend to present some methodological reflections around a path of accompaniment to the “ school development” (Schratz & Steiner Löffler, 1999) that deals with defining the plots of possible transformations related to questions of ethics, values, and the common good of the school. Staging the educational event, in fact, fundamentally consists of a work of understanding and therefore of creating the conditions so that the triangulation between teacher, pupil and knowledge gives space to the context, to the vast world that contains all the experiential, cognitive, relational knowledge.

Starting from a research path initiated in 2012 at the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano on the relationship between pedagogy and architecture in the design process of school buildings (Weyland, Attia, 2015; Weyland et al, 2019; Weyland, 2021; Weyland & Falanga, 2022), now interpreted by the interdisciplinary workshop EDEN, Educational Environments with Nature, between 2016 and 2018, an advisory support activity for schools was born, which combined the need to qualify the physical spaces of the school with the need to update teaching practices and develop school organisation with the aim of improving pupils’ and teachers’ sense of well-being (Hughes et al. 2019).

From these experiences, the idea of conveying through the university proposals to accompany the development of the school and its spaces through research-training paths has arisen (Asquini 2018). The object concerns the process of designing together pedagogical-didactic and architectural environments in which to stage the educational relationship, involving professionals from education, educational research, architecture and design, and local administration. Between 2019 and 2024, more than 30 school and educational communities throughout Italy have entered into research-training agreements with the university, focusing increasingly on the need to create spaces and teaching methods that are more just, that is, more consistent with current challenges and capable of imagining the school as a place of well-being and where cultural development can be presided over.

The presentation will focus on what Luigina Mortari (2007) calls the ‘posture of the researcher’ in her daily practice. The effort that is being put in place is in fact to process the data collected by the various collaborations on the three moments that Elisabetta Nigris (2018) describes as central: co-situating the research, that is, identifying a common objective that is relevant to all those involved; identifying the design, which must be agreed upon, according to the expertise of each, both by the teachers, who provide the data, and by the researchers, who assume responsibility for the research methodologies and tools; discussing and co-constructing the analysis and synthesis of the data, in order to establish the effectiveness of the change actions undertaken.