

REPRESENTATIONS AND MEANINGS of students with Specific Learning Disabilities. An explorative qualitative study.

Author: Lampugnani Giulia

Purpose

The research is aimed to explore representations and meanings given by students with Specific Learning Disability on their scholastic, learning and life experiences.

Due to the mayor risk for psychopathological diseases (cfr. review Vecchini (2012) and to a supposed more widespread existential worrying for those students –denying of SpLD influence, refusing help or support, expressing “adhesiveness” of self-representation with SpLD image (Ferrazzi et al, 2013 – Lampugnani, 2014)-, a deeper knowledge of their point of view about their learning experience and relationships could give a contribute to a pedagogical approach at the problem of SpLD with preventing measures.

Method

It was used a qualitative methodology, in a participant action research (Rapoport, 1970; Whyte, 1991; Baldacci, 2001) to develop a bottom-up process.

Work was developed with 10 groups (109 SpLD students, 10-18) involved in theatre laboratories (Boal, 1977) to produce scenes about themes of research - school, relationship with teachers and peers, use of technologies, learning strategies- and after to discuss in focus groups (Pranee Liamputtong 2011) contents come to notice in the improvisation, - life experiences, feelings and emotions connected with scenes, and strategies they used to cope with such experiences-.

Each work session was video-recorded, transcribed and analysed thematically with software for qualitative analysis T-Lab.

Results/conclusions

For students involved in the research the most important area seemed to be relationship with peers – e.g. they worry about being ridiculed or insulted; they look for being included by peers avoiding the use of computer or different didactical measures. Difficulties in relationship with teachers seemed to be related both to difficulty of expressing their learning needs and accepting differentiations, or to not effective approaches of their teachers.

Results can drive to considerations about a different model of pedagogical approach to SpLD in the school.

Research is going to be widened, in an ongoing research, to teachers', parents' and peers' representations and their influence on SpLD students.