

## **Pedagogy of emergency and teacher training after a catastrophe. Autobiographical narrative and resilience for supporting teacher professionalism**

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### **Abstract**

In the scenario of the frequent catastrophes occurring in the Italian territory, the figure of the pedagogist allows to address systematically the needs of the individuals, communities and educational institutions involved. Without stopping at only one aspect of the "care" idea, pedagogy can play a central role in combining, within the context of educational emergencies, the psychological, social, and community dimensions that are usually kept separate within specific fields of intervention. The article, also through evidences collected among the operators, aims to propose a theoretical perspective and a model for intervention useful to frame the most general aspects of pedagogical work in emergencies.

Nello scenario delle frequenti catastrofi che colpiscono il territorio italiano, la figura del pedagogista consente di affrontare in maniera sistemica e sistematica numerosi bisogni degli individui, delle comunità e delle istituzioni educative coinvolte. Non fermandosi ad un solo aspetto dell’idea di “cura”, la pedagogia può assumere un ruolo centrale nel coniugare, dentro i contesti educativi emergenziali, le dimensioni psicologiche, sociali, comunitarie solitamente tenute separate all’interno degli specifici interventi messi in campo. L’articolo, anche attraverso testimonianze raccolte tra gli insegnanti, intende proporre una prospettiva teorica e di intervento utile ad inquadrare gli aspetti più generali del lavoro pedagogico *in emergenza*.

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### **Pedagogists in emergency**

On 24 August 2016, a 6.0 magnitude earthquake on the Richter scale occurred in the town of Amatrice. Hundreds of injured, thousands of people displaced between the tent cities and the hotels on the Adriatic coast: a scenario of mourning, destruction, uncertainty in which a community has been precipitated in the tragic reckoning of so many human and material losses and in anxiety for its housing, territorial, economic and social future. A task force of pedagogists and educators from the University of L'Aquila, experienced in the earthquake and post-earthquake of L'Aquila, on the invitation of the Comunità Montana del Velino, has been already active from the third day of emergency to reach the needs of children, teenagers and their families, and successively of the school staff. The "Velino for Children Project" started in this context: it is a project recognized by the Italian Society of Pedagogy (SIPED), that sponsored the initiative and participated to the lines of action. In addition, it was hired by the MIUR as a reference project for the Istituto Onnicomprensivo of Amatrice (see All. 1)<sup>1</sup>.

The juxtaposition between pedagogy and earthquakes (and other kinds of catastrophes) has only recently attracted the attention of scholars, with the exception of famous authors who, nevertheless, didn't have such a great audience on these issues<sup>2</sup>. Yet this juxtaposition seems to be fruitful if we think of *aid* in catastrophic situations, then in a broader perspective, and not

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<sup>1</sup> Also worthy of note is the film by Pietro De Gennaro "A scuola per ricostruire", which amply documents the initial activities of the "Velino for Children" project, visible on the Rai Scuola website, at the following link: <http://www.raiscuola.rai.it/articoli/gli-speciali-di-rai-scuola-a-scuola-per-ricostruire/34772/default.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> We refer, for example, to Rousseau, Maria Montessori and other great protagonists of the history of pedagogy and of the history of education. For a more in-depth analysis, see Isidori, M., V., Vaccarelli, A., 20013.

only as a medical and psychological relief; moreover, it is fruitful if we tackle issues related to theories and practices that allow us to explore new territories of the pedagogical knowledge, with the aim of enriching the idea of a militant pedagogy, able to challenge the complexities of the social world (Tomarchio, Ulivieri, 2015). The adoption of this new perspective can be crucial in countries like Italy, where the hydro-geological and vulcanological risk is significant and the preventive actions to avoid the risk haven't been sufficiently explored. This seems to be important, especially in terms of the correct management of the reconstruction process of the affected resources.

Where there is education, we find the idea of *care* and the practices of *care*. Disasters and emergencies become contexts in which this idea is not limited to restrictive meanings, such as those of medical or psychological nature, and extends the edges of education (hence its formal and informal dimensions), providing a global attention to the possibility of a systemic and systematic intervention on subjects, considered in their individuality, social relationships, educational institutions, and communities. Moreover, according to the concept of *Clinic Pedagogy* by Riccardo Massa, refusing from a strictly therapeutic destination does not mean that it is not possible to recognize “the latent therapeutic function of formation, as well as the latent educational function of any therapeutic relationship” (Massa, 2004, p. 27). Along with this idea of educational care, that we will analyze later on, we find two other concepts related to catastrophes: *resilience* and *resistance*, that, as we will see, are the one related to individual challenges, the other to community challenges, characterized by plots of ethical and political nature.

The pedagogist should assume a central role in emergencies, joining in a networking job the other actors involved. Among the pedagogist's tasks there are: the recognition of people and educational institutions' needs, the coordination of the different actions (psychological listening, educational, sociocultural approach, etc.), the school work (which is a symbol of community resilience and as a potential place for establishing educational alliances with children, but also with families), the training intended as a support the professional or parental resilience. The systematization of the figure of the emergency pedagogist could promote, even in the organizations operating in emergency field, the idea of its centrality (often reserved to psychologists) in all matters relating to childhood, adolescence, training of workers,

parenting support, school reorganization, and educational services. In this perspective, the “Velino for Children” project, in its first year of activity, also represented a test to demonstrate that pedagogy can assume these complex tasks, which in fact refer to the *proprium* of its field of action.

## 2. “Thrown” in the disasters: emergencies and educational care

The theme of “Thrownness” (Geworfenheit), introduced by Martin Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit*, has greatly influenced the contemporary pedagogical thinking, especially when it comes to the idea of “care” (eg: Contini, 2009; Palmieri, 2000; Fadda, 2005). *Being thrown into the world*, each with its own “destiny”, is an ontological condition for human being, which unites us, but which also distinguishes us in the innumerable possibilities of being: of being born into a healthy or sick body, to find ourselves in a “here” and in an “hour”, in a historical time and in a geographic space rather than in others, to get the conditions assigned by the case. As Contini pointed out, the consideration of “Thrownness”, also intended as a “condition given” - between subjective structures of personality and objective conditions imposed by the world on the subject - questions the fundamental task of education: that is, the opening of possibilities, the overcoming of the condition given through the faculty of choice (as the result and the relapse of education on the existence of the subjects), and through the possibility of emancipation (as the task, commitment and responsibility that education assumes especially towards those who are disadvantaged and weaker because of the “Thrownness”) (Contini, 2009). The catastrophe has the extraordinary power to generate, in people who live it, the intuition of “being-thrown”: the world so far perceived with the detachment of those who implicitly feel to dominate it - by subtracting the perception of risk and attributing to the *other from itself* (cognitively and geographically far) the iper-objectivized image of the victim of the superior-of-us-events (the earthquake, the displaced, the bombing victim, etc.) - is a world that suddenly, crumbling under our eyes, or fallen on us, reveals itself and is actually revealed to us as the world that belongs to us and to which we belong.

A world of uncertainty, of material and immaterial vulnerability, of precariousness, of transformation. Elsewhere, it has been said that this not only

affects the perception of the world in its natural dimension, but also in its historical dimension: the sensation of the end of history is reduced to the illusion that our system of life, our well-being, our conditions of security are suspended in a temporal void, in an a-historical indefiniteness, and that therefore they will never be overwhelmed by the History itself (Vaccarelli, 2016). A world that, paradoxically, is the result of a rather recent cultural process, typical of opulent, hedonistic, technical-rational societies, marked by an idea of interiorized welfare as a "natural condition" rather than as a "historical result". In other times, the presence of the "world" - filtered by mythological and religious conceptions – conditioned, on the contrary, the human subject pervasively, and there was the radicality of the experience of death, which was not intended as a private, intimate matter, to be hidden from the world, but as a socialized experience, projected in a "public" dimension (see Mantegazza, 2000), always remembering the caducity of things and the existence of a higher order. The disaster experience, as we said, reveals to a human subject that "it is not only choice, action, intention, but also, in a not-negligible way, case and destiny"<sup>3</sup>, as stated by Fadda (2005, p. 102); it therefore reveals the "nakedness" of the human subject who cannot foresee and control such events. Within a few moments, the catastrophe can bring men and women to a "primordial" state of nudity in front of the reality and to the pain of *annihilation* and *reset*. If, according to Fadda, "a formarci non è solo l'atto intenzionale (l'educazione) ma anche e in misura notevole il caso, l'evento it is not only the intentional act (education) that forms us, but also, and in a considerable way, the event"<sup>4</sup> (2005, p. 102), then we could say that the catastrophe itself has a trans-formative power that can take very different directions. It can form the individual to the fold, to the gloomy "petrification of experience" (Ligi, 2013), to the resignation for a life voted to sufferance, loss, negation or retreat, or may push the individual to reformulate the experience of life, in the search for new equilibriums and in the reconstruction of projects, with a completely new confidence and knowledge.

It is not by chance that we have used the two figures of *annihilation* and *reset*: the first "petrifies" and brings to regression; the other, however complex and painful, is potentially loaded with progression, relaunch, future

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<sup>3</sup> My translation.

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project but also resilience. “Leaping back to take another direction” is the meaning of the term *resilire*, from which the word *resilience* takes shape (see Malaguti, 2005, Vaccarelli, 2016). It is a backward jump, then it implies returning at the initial point or at a turning point, characterized not only by pain, disorientation, weakness, but also by new challenges and possibilities of training. Catastrophe and resilience contain, in their etymological roots, the general idea of change, of turning point in the human affairs. The etymological derivation from the Greek language<sup>5</sup> denotes an ancient use of the term within the dramatic language, indicating the solution of the drama, the stroke of scene, the turning point and the junction of a story (Tagliapietra, 2004). René Thom, the French mathematician creator of the contemporary theory of disasters, indicates the disaster as “the ‘jump’ from one state to another or from one path to another. Catastrophe, therefore, does not mean at all an end, but a form of mutation, perhaps re-adaptation”<sup>6</sup> (in Woodcock, Davis, 1982, p. 47).

Being thrown into a catastrophe implies many other conditions of “Thrownness”: I can be a child or an adult, I can be a member of the community or a passenger, I can be a native or a migrant, I can do my job in a place overwhelmed by an earthquake, a flood, a bombing. Education is intended as an emancipatory response that takes into account all ramifications of trauma (traumas, individual or collective ones) to allow individuals and communities to re-establish (and rediscover) the relationship with their world bared from the radical “truths” of the catastrophe. Pedagogy in emergent contexts then drives to nourish better and more consciously any educational relationship to that “existential structure” - the cure - that allows the “formation, the individual novel, the subjective construction of existence”<sup>7</sup> (Palmieri, 2000, p. 38). Care, in emergency, recalls different types of relationships, from those that are defined within strictly therapeutic settings (medical and psychological settings *in primis*), to those that are motivated by the educational relationship (formal, informal, institutional and not). In this direction, as noted by Fadda, the most general definition of *care* and its

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<sup>5</sup> The verb *strépho*, which has, among its different meanings, those of: “turning” in the sense of “turning the tiller”, changing course, or “turning the gaze”, “turning the pupils”, “changing the view” (Tagliapietra, 2004, p. XVIII).

<sup>6</sup> My translation.

<sup>7</sup> My translation.

directions – on the self, on the other, on the world – should be described (Fadda, 2002). *Care* for the self and the other strongly implies the relationship of help and the development of resilience. From the point of view of the pedagogist and the educator, this means *caring the self* and the proper personal and professional resilience: whether an educator /teacher/pedagogist is a direct victim of the catastrophe (as a member of the affected community), whether is a second-class victim (subsequently, in the strict sense of “rescuer”). Caring for the *self* and the promotion of its resilience means also to guarantee the resilience of others (of the pupil, of the vulnerable family, of the colleague, in general of the actors involved) to be not only a resilient subject, but, according to Cyrulnik, a “resilience guardian” (2005). The *care of the world*, in the contexts of emergency, certainly refers to the community dimension and to the *resilience-together* (the resilience experienced as an identity group) that, when it is charged with ethical-political valours, becomes *resistance* (Contini, 2009): resistance, and therefore community responses to the perverse logics that often, in periods of *shock economy* (Klein, 2007), characterize the reconstruction processes, the housing and territorial policies. But resistance even to face upstream choices (settlement choices, unsafe construction techniques involving school buildings, lack of prevention, etc.), which if for victims can represent the “hindsight”, for the rest of a country at risk may be the warning and the spur to finally take other directions. “Before” the emergency there are prevention, risk education, ethical sense, without which we cannot go too far from a *status quo* that only contemplates, after every seismic event, the catastrophe that could be contained, the deaths and the destruction that could be avoided. Risk prevention and education stimulate pedagogy to widen the idea of space to include and explore several dimensions (school, life, urban, work), in which the same idea of *care* goes from the intimate and immaterial dimension of the relationship to the material and tangible dimension of the context of life and formation. Pedagogy, if heard, could fruitfully explore this dimension. As argued by Simonetta Ulivieri, school and education have precise and important responsibilities on this regard:

It is necessary to ripen an active and responsible participation in problems and relationships solving, thus promoting the development of a new fundamental, relevant and necessary knowledge, a human and environmental ethics, both and local and global, in which a man



can daily recognize himself in his individuality, in his community and in his society (Ulivieri, 2015, p. 16).<sup>8</sup>

It is common to hear, in earthquake situations, students of every rank and grade stating words like “I want to be an engineer, to build safe houses”, “I really want to do the geologist to better understand what is going on and where it is possible to build”, “I want to work as a medical doctor to save many lives”. These are the impulses of resilience and resistance, around which, within which, the very education can efficiently act.

### **3. Training, education and the “essence of things”: the impact of the catastrophe on teachers’ professionalism**

Disaster and trauma, which takes on both the form of individual trauma and the form of collective trauma, cast people and communities into a state of great confusion, nudity compared to a “before”, and of disenchantment compared to an “after” that suddenly, drastically, radically, becomes an extreme reality: from the normal passing of existence (which tells us things of the kind: “I was happy without knowing it”) to the change of stage, to the new *set* (broken affections, rubble, the noises of relief, tent cities, chronicization of housing emergencies, anxiety and fears to manage) where life takes place. Nudity, first experienced in the forms of primary needs and in the emotional state of loss, always brings us to the heart of the problems and, in the swirling of events (not only catastrophic events, but also those who intervene later) to feel the need for *essentiality*. The proposal of a pedagogy of the emergency then is aligned with this idea. An essentiality that is identified as an urgent need in material and immaterial dimensions of education. To organize an educational space in precarious situations (a tent, a container, a kit for didactics), to select the objectives and contents of a training project with restrictions related to lost time or altered time of attention and learning (Isidori, Vaccarelli, 2012), to fill the relationship of authenticity and listening, to merge with the life the processes of building knowledge. Elsewhere, it has been said that the emergency is *liquid*, with reference to the concept of liquidity introduced by Z. Bauman (Vaccarelli, 2017). And it

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<sup>8</sup> My translation.



is also liquid because “voracious”, elusive; it envisages a continuous adaptation to situations and conditions that change rapidly, with respect to both the victim and the figure of the “rescue” operator experiencing the anguished sensation of restarting from the head, of anticipating so many and continuous changes in the decision-making process.

Antonella, teacher from L’Aquila who in 2009 saw and felt her own house banging on her, experienced the mourning in the form of the loss of very young broken lives, her pupils, and fell into the school of a wounded city and a disoriented, dispersed community, claims:

Everything is reviewed: relationships with children, relationships with parents, how to do school and didactic. You change yourself as a teacher and maybe change your own idea of teaching. Everything becomes more essential. You are led to cut, look at things in other ways, to take away so many frills and so many things that you realize are useless if not harmful. You become essential in relationships but also in teaching ... in how you teach and organize your work.... You realize that there are important things to work hard on, and things that are less important. Educating essentially, teaching essentially ... Eventually, you discover a world ...<sup>9</sup>

The catastrophe impacts on educational figures when they are resilient, so as to reinforce the ability to reflect, to read critically about the meaning of educational activity, to skim their own professionalism from the jumble of technicalities that reduce the actions in fulfilment, projects in aseptic building, poor of relationships, to rediscover the foundations (of culture, of knowledge, of relationship, of the value dimension). The catastrophe then educates us and forms us to rediscover the most authentic meanings of education and training. This is actually important in front of the “frenzy” which affects us not only in case of emergencies, when a feeling of impotence prevails, with a consequent overactivation of energies and resources; but also in “times of peace”, in the face of a school and a training system that daily seems to not give sufficient attention to some fundamental issues (for example, basic skills and quality of the relation), focusing on continuous innovations that do not have time to settle, on ever-changing paths that deteriorate and worn out the temporal equilibrium of teaching and learning.

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<sup>9</sup> My translation.

Barbara, a teacher of Rocca Santa Maria (TE), after the strong earthquake that occurred between 2016 and 2017 and the devastating snowfall of January 2017, simultaneous with some intense seismic events, says:

(All this experience) has led me a bit more to ... has prepared me more to listen. I have the impression that they need to talk so I lose more time, in quotes, because I work in a multi-grade class so the time is really little, because we have a class that is divided into 3 so while one does one thing, another group has to do another and another group has to do another one. Nevertheless, we arrive, we stop, we talk.<sup>10</sup>

The catastrophe, as we said previously, often implies to understand the need for essentiality, which from our point of view refers both to the value of choosing what the school is promoting in terms of knowledge and skills, as well as the authenticity of the educational relationship. Teachers, in emergencies and in catastrophes, often find new senses and meanings of their professionalism. Moreover, they grasp intuitions that might be useful for re-thinking the school in a historical moment in which there are several risks, such as: to institutionalize processes, to override them in protocols and technicalisms, to cover too many areas that, despite of enriching knowledge, are likely to weaken it, at the expense of relationships, contents and basic skills. The document of the Italian Society of Pedagogy (SIPED) "Ripensare la scuola nella società di oggi. Punti salienti per una *vision* innovativa, concreta e lungimirante"(Ulivieri, 2015) converges precisely in this direction, especially with 10 highlighted salient points that focus on: training on relationship, affectivity and well-being, quality of curriculum and the essence of knowledge, a new idea of teacher training.

#### **4. The narrations in the center: stimuli for teacher training and support for resilience**

Teachers' training should aim at putting teachers in the right place to build appropriate learning environments, so that they can achieve welfare situations in school. It is necessary to work on the ability of teachers to 'hold together' content and educational relationship, knowledge and listening to young persons. There is no longer a need for a teacher training that keeps these two aspects divided, because they must absolutely be together.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> My translation.

We read the statements above in the 2014 SIPED document. A document that shows its great flexibility, adapting heavily to a specific and extraordinary situation as that of a particularly complex and traumatic post-earthquake. The reflection contained in the passage just quoted, together with some of the identified objectives ("to let teachers explore their motivation to teach"; "to train teachers to know themselves and their own well-being"; "to train teachers to know the signals of pupils' needs, fears and difficulties", "to train teachers to deal with conflicts and forms of aggression"), clarifies not only how the emotional world of teachers is linked to that of the pupils, but also how their respective motivations merge in a work of signification and re-signification of the teacher's educational role. Then it clarifies also of how successful learning does not succeed unless environmentally friendly conditions and contexts are created relationally. Trauma is not only a painful experience in itself, but also a psychological condition that must be guided so that it does not become an existential condition and must be contextualized at school as a factor explaining so many behaviours that in catastrophic situations can slow down learning processes, altering behaviours and social relationships, creating conflict. The commonplace that "children rapidly get over" is denied by research and, in terms of resilience, it has been demonstrated that the children themselves are disadvantaged compared to adults for the *appraisal* and *coping* ability, that is still immature from an evolutive point of view (Feo et al., 2014). The children and adolescents' resilience should therefore be sustained by adult figures who are not only resilient but also aware of how to self-sustain their (professional or parental) resilience and how to promote it in the educational relationship (cf. Vaccarelli, 2017).

The action of the "Velino for Children Project" for the teacher training comes from these premises. It has been conceived for the teachers of the Istituto Omnicomprensivo di Amatrice and then, after the further seismic events and the emergencies caused by the bad weather and strong snowfalls, on the proposal of MIUR Task Force on Emergency and School Offices, has been extended to the training of 904 teachers from Lazio and Abruzzo, through seven editions of the course. "A school of resilience: learning and

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.siped.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/DOCUMENTO-SIPED-ripensare-la-scuola.pdf?v=2>. My translation.

teaching after a catastrophe" was the title chosen to give a clear identity to the course, attended not only by academic lecturers with a different disciplinary approach, but also by psychologists, educators, teachers, experts in the world of volunteering.

Below the route diagram of the course, which lasted 50 hours, and the title of the interventions proposed on the different training days:

**The training of the Amatrice's teachers after the 2017 earthquake in the "Velino for Children" project**

*Course Title: A scuola di resilienza: apprendere e insegnare dopo una catastrofe (English translation: At School of Resilience: Learning and Teaching After a Catastrophe)*

- Initial focus group: "La scuola riapre: le aspettative dei docenti" (English translation: "The school reopens: the expectations of teachers") - Carla Iorio (psychologist), Alessandro Vaccarelli (pedagogue).
- Educare dopo una catastrofe: pedagogia della relazione di aiuto per la promozione della resilienza (English translation: "Educating after a catastrophe: pedagogy of the relationship of aid for the promotion of resilience" - Alessandro Vaccarelli (University of L'Aquila).
- Stress, trauma, gestione del lutto: ciò che gli insegnanti devono sapere (English translation: "Stress, trauma, mourning management: what teachers need to know") - Carla Iorio (ASPIC L'Aquila).
- Questioni di didattica e di didattica speciale: apprendimento, metodo di studio, criticità nelle situazioni post-traumatiche (English translation: "Didactic and specialty issues: learning, study method, criticality in post-traumatic situations") - Maria Vittoria Isidori (University of L'Aquila), Ornella Contestabile (support teacher-L'Aquila).
- Focus group intermedio sull'andamento delle attività scolastiche sulle relazioni educative (English translation: "Intermediate focus group on school activities and educational relations") - Carla Iorio (psychologist), Alessandro Vaccarelli (pedagogue)
- Un gioco per la narrazione e la resilienza: "Itaca" (English translation: A play for narrative and resilience: "Itaca") - Leaders: Silvia Nanni (University of L'Aquila), Alessandro Vaccarelli

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(University of L'Aquila), Elena Zizioli (University of RomaTre)  
- “Emotica”: un gioco per raccontare le emozioni con bambine e bambini, ragazze e ragazzi (English translation: "Emotica": a play to tell emotions with children, girls and boys) - Nicoletta Di Genova, Federica Scappa, Veronica Valerio (operators Velino for Children).  
- Focus group intermedio sull'andamento delle attività scolastiche sulle relazioni educative (English translation: Intermediate focus group on school activities and educational relations) - Carla Iorio (psychologist), Alessandro Vaccarelli (pedagogue)  
- Sull'arte del raccontare storie: educare alla lettura e alla narrazione cinematografica (English translation: About the art of telling stories: educating to read and to film narrations) ARCI and Umberto Caraccia (Caritas psychologist).  
- Scuola, territorio, comunità: percorsi di didattica della geografia nel post-catastrofe (English translation: School, Territory, Community: Geography Didactics in Post-Disaster) Lina Calandra (University of L'Aquila)  
- Focus group conclusivo sull'andamento delle attività scolastiche e sulle relazioni educative (English translation: Final focus group on school activities and educational relations) - Carla Iorio (psychologist), Alessandro Vaccarelli (pedagogue)

Once again, the centrality of pedagogy - and of the pedagogue - must be emphasized in the training project and in the building of professional network to be involved. If the emergency pedagogue is a key subject in solving complex issues related to education, pedagogy assumes a strategic and systemic function, in the full respect of all other perspectives. The training itinerary in Amatrice involved active, laboratorial and reflective methods (Schön, 1993); it also included the narration of personal experiences, highlighting among teachers the need to focus on the educational relationship with their pupils (see, among others, Demetrio, 1991; Riva, 2008; Franceschini, 2016; Zizioli, 2014).

The first meeting with the teachers took place in early September 2017 in conditions of great uncertainty and fear. In the group there were new appointments professors, who did not experience the earthquake, appointed teachers, some of whom directly involved in the catastrophe as citizens of

Amatrice or neighbouring municipalities, and commuters, these latter residing in sites sufficiently far away from the earthquake epicentre. Technically, they were first and second level victims. Different positions, therefore, that bring us to reflect on educational professionalism in emergencies, taking in due consideration the differences between those - educators, teachers, pedagogists - who arrive at the site of the catastrophe (in the role of "rescuer") and those who already are in the place of the catastrophe (and hence in the role of "victim" and "rescuer" at the same time). Subjects, therefore, with a different emotional experience, with interior and external fears: there are those who cry for the dead students, there are those who are afraid of how to deal with the fear or mourning of traumatized pupils, there are those who are strained for the fear of new earthquakes, there are those who come from other Regions (such as Campania) and find it difficult to face the situation, there are those who prefer to be assigned elsewhere. We may say that there is the "fear of the first day of school", in other words uncertainty: they do not know what to say, what to do, how to handle their emotions. This latter is the starting point. The pedagogist and the psychologist conducting this first encounter feel that the questions of the group of teachers are the heart of the problem and that their emotions must find some direction (meaning, perspective, outlet future) in order to ease the state of anxiety, fear and sometimes impotence accompanying the expectation of re-opening the school. The "resilient" message launched at the end of the first training session was: "It will be an unforgettable, tiring, painful year but also rich in humanity and you will recall it perhaps as the most beautiful or anyway more significant and intense year of your career and, in some cases, your life. You may find so many important meanings in your 'being' teachers".

Resilience, as has been argued elsewhere (Vaccarelli, 2016), is closely linked to the ability, opportunity, occasions to tell and to tell the self, whether it involves exploring internal resources in face of the chaos of emotions and things that seem bigger than us, whether because they are in fact also opportunities to search for and reconstruct the joys, the meaning of the experience, even if it does not seem to have sense and meaning. Narration therefore helps to position the self in the boundary between untreated suffering (covering the life of rancour, anger, resignation, apathy) and a suffering that instead is opened to "new things", change, future directions that allow people to enrich the different projections of existence (of me as a person, as

a teacher, parent, citizen). *Being thrown* into the catastrophe thus finds in the word - in its immaterial power - the possibility of resilient redemption, of pain that, far from being erased, can become, slowly, transforming energy. "Experience is accomplished when it is narrated," says Paolo Jedlowski (2009, p. 9). Teachers who tell their experience and share it at school follow an autobiographical narrative perspective, which becomes an educational strategy to be inserted in informal and formal relationships, such as in schooling. This work on narration, as a central and transversal moment of teacher training, has therefore firstly concerned teachers' professional resilience, a condition necessary to become "resilience tutors" of their pupils. The job of a whole day "playing" at "Itaca" (Vaccarelli, 2015) has been central in this direction, being possible to work on an important dimension of resilience: self-esteem. Itaca is a game born to be included in training contexts, which, starting from autobiographical data, allows participants to reflect, through the figure-metaphor of hero and heroine, on their inner resources and share experience (re-lived, re-elaborated, re-built). Educational care, as previously said, allows the construction of the story, of the individual novel and becomes "formation" (Massa, 2004), making people aware and conscient of their potentialities. A school year as teachers of Amatrice may be afford passively or, on the contrary, with a more active involvement, being a protagonist of an educational and pedagogical history, on a horizon surely rich in vicissitudes and suffering, but also of "adventures" that brings to re-elaborate the experience, to consider it a strength rather than a weakness and to acquire strong skills, to be spent anywhere, with anyone, at any time of professional life.

So, visibly excited, on the last day of school, Prof. Andrea is pointing to the situation of a school year just spent at Amatrice:

Along with you, we have been able to deal with deadly issues such as empty benches, traumas, and so many things we have never faced. I understand that perhaps the best way to carry on pupils was to listen to them. And I did this, I stayed there, I tried to understand their needs and from there I started my work (...). Today, the last day of school, I can watch my students with satisfaction, because I see them more smiling, I see them less lost ... I see less absent faces. Of course, when they come back home, they live in pain, they have housing problems, but then they feel definitely better at school (...). I do not do it just for them, I also do it also for myself. The feedback coming from them makes me feel good<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> My translation.



## Appendix<sup>13</sup> The plan actions of the "Velino for Children" project

### The “VELINO FOR CHILDREN” Project

*Scientific Responsible: Alessandro Vaccarelli (University of L'Aquila)*

*Technical Manager: Stefania Mariantoni (Mountain Community of Velino)*

*Scientific Committee: Teresa GonzálezAja (Polytechnic University of Madrid), Fabio Bocci (University of Rome Tre), Lina Calandra (Università dell'Aquila), Marco Catarci (University of RomeTre), Massimiliano Fiorucci (University of Rome Tre), Rosella Frasca University of L'Aquila), Maria Vittoria Isidori (University of L'Aquila), Stefania Mariantoni (Mountain Community of Velino), Silvia Nanni (University of L'Aquila), Maria Rita Pitoni (Amatrice's Omnicomprensivo Institute), Simonetta Ulivieri Florence, Italian Society of Pedagogy), Alessandro Vaccarelli (University of L'Aquila), Elena Zizioli (University of Rome Tre).*

*Organization chart:*

- *Scientific and Pedagogical Coordinator (University of L'Aquila): Alessandro Vaccarelli*
- *Technical Implementation Coordinator (Mountain Community of Velino): Stefania Mariantoni*
- *School Manager (Amatrice Omnicomprensivo Institute): Maria Teresa Pitoni*
- *2 Educators*
- *1 Psychologist*
- *1 Social Assistant*

<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>Analysis of needs</b>	<b>Description of actions</b>
<i>Interventions at school September-November 2016</i>	<p><i>Amatrice's Omnicomprensivo Institute, placed in a prefabricated structure, restarts its activities on September 13, 2017, in the presence of Minister Giannini.</i></p> <p><i>Many teachers express a need for support to cope with the situation of pupils and mourners who have directly and indirectly touched the school. The staff is affected by ministerial delays, so some places remain open for several days and several teachers alternate for obtaining temporary assignment and new appointments.</i></p> <p><i>Pupils of all ages show great</i></p>	<p><i>Teacher Emergency Training. Two formative meetings on classroom reception and the management of the educational relationship in stress and traumatic situations (L'Aquila University and ASPIC L'Aquila).</i></p> <p><i>Welcome project at school: Educational and didactic laboratories working on verbal and nonverbal languages with the aim of promoting resilience. Laboratories have tried to activate the elaboration of experiences (through the various forms of narrations), and the repetition of school routines through playful activities.</i></p> <p><i>Subjects involved: Bibliobus (ARCI L'Aquila) -Cartolab (University of L'Aquila) - Ludobus (L'Aquila and Frosinone) - Alchemic Theater (Rieti) - Graduates and graduates of the training area (Università</i></p>

<sup>13</sup>

The scheme is resumed and adapted from Vaccarelli, 2017

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	<i>signs of discomfort linked to trauma, family losses, and schoolmates.</i>	<i>dell'Aquila) - Born in the notes (L'Aquila) - Psychologists and counselor (ASPIC L'Aquila) - Caritas of Rieti).</i>
<i>Psycho-pedagogical listening center and activities on the territory, August 2016 – 2017</i>	<i>The project addresses to children and adolescents not only through direct interventions to children, girls and boys, but also through support for parenting and teaching professions. In this, it was considered necessary to work on the resilience of reference adults, as an important condition for the development of child resilience.</i>	<i>Support for children with previous social vulnerability through a territorial service to support the social activities of the Mountain Community of Velino (educators, psychologists, social workers contracted under the Velino for Children project).</i>
<i>Research, monitoring, documentation</i>	<i>Teachers and parents were the main targets of specific actions of empowerment and training.</i>  <i>Teachers have offered training courses on resilience and learning / teaching processes in stress and trauma situations. They also offered a pedagogical counseling service.</i>  <i>Parents express a strong concern about their children's emotional experiences, the management of fear and mourning. All in the context of the strong housing discomfort and the continuous repetition of earthquake shocks.</i>	<i>Teacher support in the form of pedagogical and didactic advice (University of L'Aquila). Training course "At School of Resilience: Learning and Teaching After a Catastrophe". Periodic Focus Groups to verify and support the performance of school activities.</i>  <i>Psychosocial groups (parents and teachers) for parenting support, the alliance-school family in supporting the resilience of children and teenagers. The earthquakes that followed to those of August 2016 have extended the intervention throughout the Velino's valley. (Aspic L'Aquila - Psychologists for the Peoples of L'Aquila).</i>
	<i>The project of construction and implementation project has contemplated a simultaneous research activity, which involved different types of methodologies and techniques: participatory research, research-action, quantitative approaches.</i>	<i>Research on the Impact of Emergency on Teacher Professionalism, by gathering interviews and conducting focus groups (Amatrice).</i>  <i>Research on Resilient Strategies and Teacher Training Outcomes by collecting more than 500 questionnaires on a sample referring to teachers in the provinces of Rieti, L'Aquila, Teramo, affected by a seismic event.</i>

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