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Title

Inter-university cooperation and “social” education: multicultural frame and joint curricula

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Summary of paper 1. No doubt about being upper levels in education a prioritarian way for the universalization of knowledge, as the authors more than once argued (see their Presentation at the previous Conference on Education 2012) 2. Considering the building up of a multicultural frame in education, in today’s world, an unavoidable way and a shared aim across different countries, they synthetically delineate the possible contribution by the university. 3. Discussing the actual state of an inter-university cooperation Sapienza University of Rome/Moscow State University for Psychology and Education (MGPPU), they will comment upon the need for major economical involvement by Ministries of education and instruction, toward the organizing of joint Magister Curricula 4. In fact, is a more extended joint engagement by representatives of different cultures and ethnical communities required for this generalized new form of upper education, bringing about using major economic resources 5. Reference is made to a seminal way for rendering the historical cultural perspective in social science the main

mediation, in building up a new “historical cultural” and “social” education, exposed by Rubzov, Margolis and Guruzhapov .

Key words – Higher education, Internazionalization, multicultural frame in education, inter-university cooperation, double degree, universalization of knowledge, “historical cultural” and “social” education

1 Education, as the only medium responsible for the attaining of upper forms of behaviour and knowledge by humans, like the famous Italian scholar Maria Montessori discovered, should result, in its upper forms, the prioritarian way for realizing a true internationalization of human culture, and, therefore, somehow of its economic aspects as well. (Benvenuto & Veggetti 2012)

In fact, following the overall accredited theories of learning in psychology - every form of learning brings about a modification of the previous state of whatever living subject. (Hilgard E., 1962). However a preliminary condition for learning something, accepting the subsequent modification, is - willing to acquire, to assimilate, or, to use Vygotskij's expression, to appropriate it. (Vygotskij L.S. 1934) Educators and teachers, from different countries all over the world, know, that in no case can this condition be verbally transmitted to pupils of whatever age-range. The exposed considerations raise, therefore, the key-problem of instruction (and education), no matter whether primary, secondary or junior high school grades are focused upon.

2. Today's world is characterized by a growing dimension of what is called “globalization”, where the latter means a forced sharing of old social processes, more than an authentic option for sharing new social practices.

Therefore, has the building up of a multicultural frame in education ,in some way, to pre-dispose the possibility for cutting across globalized practices, in order to attain a truly shared aim of educating a knowing subject ,free from the constraints of globalized conditioning.

The authors maintain, that ,nowadays, seems the university be playing a meaningful role in managing the dialectic global/glocal in creating and disseminating new forms of culture. Inasmuch as the main aim of university activity should consist in doing research , instead of mainly transmitting the national culture to younger generations, as is generally supposed to have to do secondary education, it becomes more available teaching, forming and informing about the methodology of the “natural experiment” (Vygotskij L.S. 1926), consisting in creating opportunities for joint, shared, social experience. The latter, as we all know, cannot consist in the assuming transmitted knowledge by teachers or educators, or adults, which can be compared ,as the Russian epistemologist and philosopher Ilienkov (2002) did,

somehow to “eat already chewed food”, but in the becoming aware of the personal experience in the social context, which only gives way to the growth of the entire personality (V.V.Davydov, 1988,1996).

Though this methodology, according to the upper referred scholars, can indeed be considered a positive mean for all the levels of instruction, university didactics –and– research-practice, especially when it is aimed at providing multicultural exchange, may sooner give way to extended comparison and cross validation of obtained results. Nonetheless, this becomes effective if, and only if this happens – students and professors cooperate together in the evidentiating and formulating problems underpinning research and thoroughly elaborate the way for solving them. By means of discussing and debating a plurality of proposed solutions a more intensive and effective cognitive exchange takes place, which is particularly rich when the participants are representatives of different countries and cultural institutions. This explains why upper grades of university curricula (master degrees, doctoral courses) can, at the present-day state of affairs in instruction, allow themselves attempting to pursue this aim.

.In our master curriculum for Pedagogy and education attention is devoted to the preparing professional educators in using methods for empirical research, requiring the formation of high skills in the statistic analysis of educational contexts (Lucisano & Salerni 2002, Benvenuto G., 2003, Boncori G., 2008).

At the same time, the psycho-pedagogical conception, referred to above, is exhaustively analysed, since it is disseminated all over the world in education, due to its proved effectiveness. In Cuba, as we all know, the Chair “Vygotskij”, at the University of La Habana, headed by G. Arias Beaton, already subscribed an agreement for scientific cooperation with the Sapienza university of Rome (Arias Beaton G., 2005).

3. Let us expose, briefly, some first considerations about our ongoing experience of a joint degree between the MSUPE (Moscow State University for Psychology and Education, headed by prof. Rubtzov) and our magister programme. As first a research project – named “Sharing good practices in psycho-pedagogical sphere. Professional orientation and higher education as productive activities “ (Condivisione di buone pratiche in ambito psicopedagogico. L'orientamento alla scelta informata della professione e della formazione universitaria di allievi e studenti come attività produttiva) was presented to the Italian Ministry of University and Research, who supported by a grant (Cooperlink, 2010). Subsequently the new joint Magister Programme in “Pedagogy and psychology of the school learning” started in 2010/11 academic year. Its accomplishment took a biennial period, according to the rules defined by the Bologna model. Following to the first calling, 5 magister students at the MSUPE University and 3 magister students at the Sapienza started attending the new curriculum. In January 2011 – first academic year of the joint magister curriculum, courses of frontal lessons were predisposed, required by the didactical

plan of the students, approved by a joint Committee of the two partner Universities. In part however, lessons were also held at the MSUPE during provided stages, supported by the MIUR's grant, allowing the organizing of training activities for the Italian magister students, in April 2011. At the same time, at the Sapienza, encounters and frontal lessons were held by prof. Marina Egorova, head of the Russian Faculty of Psychology of Instruction of the partner university and by the Coordinator of the joint master degree at the MSUPE, prof. Guruzhapov.

For the improving of the pedagogical formation of Italian magisters had a great meaning the visits to the different Centers for special Needs in Education existing at the MSUPE. To quote but some: the Center for supporting of children with developmental problems (like delay or autism) and the University Center for the preparation of preschoolers to the school didactics. Moreover, some specific initiatives, realized at the partner university had, as well, a great role in the Italian magister's preparation, addressing a new role of the professional educator. It is the case of the Museum for Play and Toys organized at the MGPPU, in which a corner is predisposed, where "dangerous toys" for education are exposed. Visits to primary schools and other school typologies in the two countries were also organized. Special attention was deserved, in Moscow, to the Cadet's Music Middle School, with the pupils being at the same time players of a musical group and military corpus. At the MSUPE, during the same visit, lessons were attended by the Italian magisters, held by prof. Elena Jurevna Prijažnikova on the topic of school orientation, presenting her method of the "Crossed Professions", while Prof. Sokolov Vladimir Leonidovič held a seminary on the topic "Successful school diagnostic".

Similar initiatives were predisposed for the official visit at the Sapienza of the MSUPE magister students (October 2011), giving way to concrete encounters between magisters of both-universities. The MSUPE guests had the opportunity of attending the official presentation of the Courses provided for the new Academic year in the big Auditorium at the Sapienza Rectorate and to discuss the Presentation of the Magister programme held by prof. P. Lucisano as vice-Rector for the Student's affairs and responsible of the SOUL (Sistema Orientamento Università Lavoro), a system for predisposing a crossed mutual interchange between the market-requirements for professionals, and the university magister curricula).

Mutual visits at the main Museums of the two Cities, Moscow and Rome, were programmed, in order to share the competences in the field of Art history and art experiencing, according to the scientific perspective, stemming from both the psychopedagogical conceptions of A.S. Makarenko (2003) and L.S. Vygotskij (1926, 1934), representing a joint reference for both partner universities. During the second academic year (2011-12), all the magisters were deeply involved, in the home and in the partner university, in the preparing a double degree graduation thesis, underpinning an original research. As first started the Russian magisters, discussing their thesis in July 2012. Two, out of 5, were assessed at the maximum level 110/110 with laude (maximal score with congratulations). The Scientific

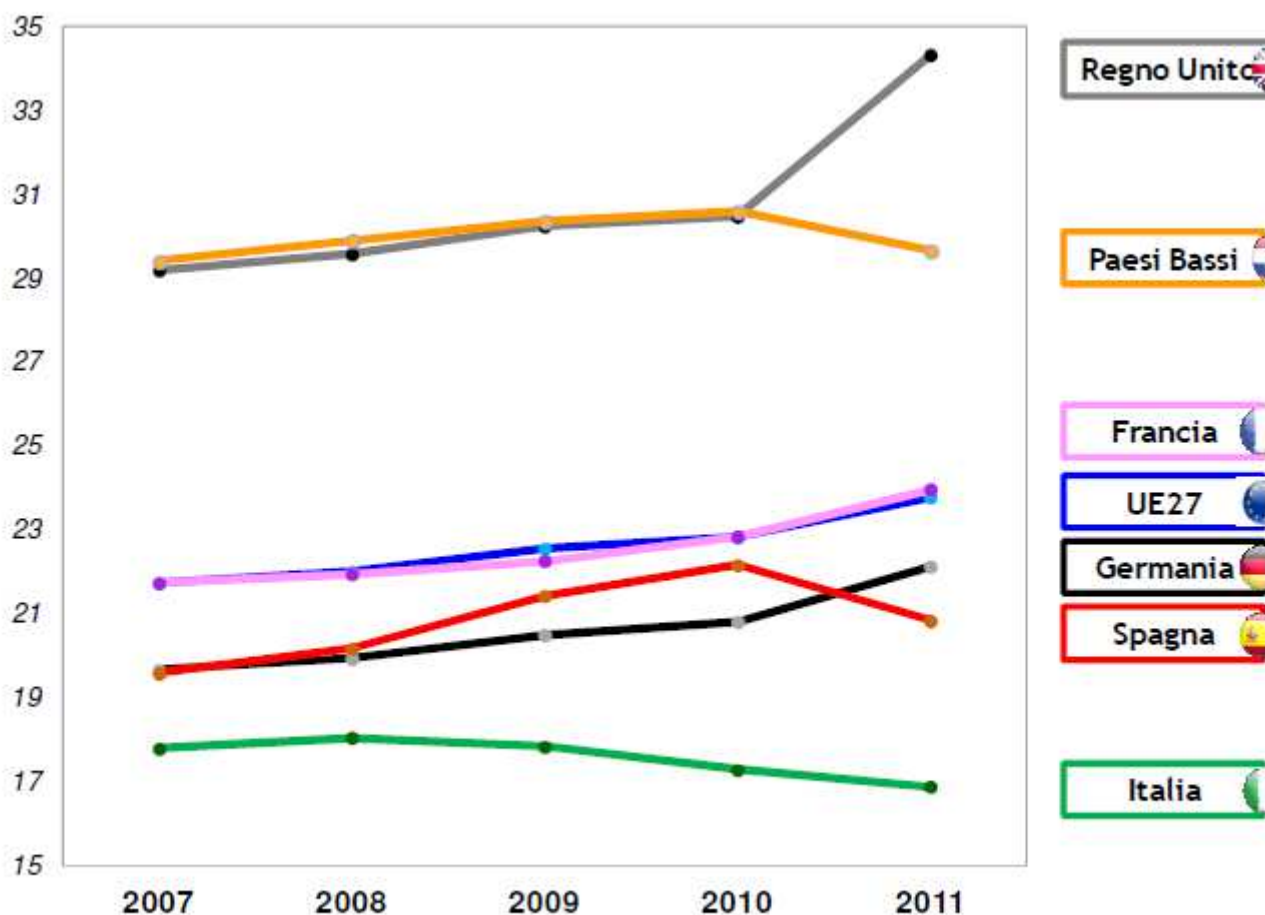
Committee, with members of the two universities, operated in full agreement in the evaluation, giving evidence of shared norms and professor's practice. At the end of October 2012 all the three Italian Magisters discussed their thesis at MSUPE. For them, as well, final congratulations were expressed. So came the first biennial experience of the double degree programme successful at end.

A new calling for double degree magisters was published (at the MGPPU and at the Sapienza) for the academic year 2012-13. A certain number of Russian magisters enrolled, with a final amount of 6 attending the courses. Due to the severe economic crisis in the economical situation of Italy, with a general falling down, on national plane, of enrolled university students (- 50.000) as compared with the previous academic year, the few persons willing to apply, out of the Italian magister students, assessing their scarce effective possibility, to join the double degree programme, decided not to participate. This was also due to the fact, that, unfortunately, no grants were provided by the Ministry, for repeating the experimental programme.

4. In fact, a more strong financial support is required for this new form of upper education, bringing about using major economic resources by teachers and students. The process of joint university curricula, as effective way for improving the mutual knowledge among institutions of Higher Education and among people, students, operators involved, has to build up a deeper acquaintance with the entire reality of the whole partner country and of the culture and history of the university. If students and teachers are supposed to provide by themselves for the travel and living expenses, universalization of culture becomes an unavailable policy. Moreover, summing up the costs of the entire procedure of "nostrification" (the recognizing equivalent) of the original certificates of the accomplished studies, with validated translation at the foreign consulary Office, makes up an amount of money, which can be seldom taken over by families and/or by the same magisters, often young people at their first job experience.

In October 2013, the 6 new incoming double degree magisters from Russia were welcome at the Sapienza, presenting different psychological and pedagogical topics involved in the school learning processes. Joint compared research were organized for the preparation of their future discussion in July, next year. But no Italian magister could enroll. This can be considered, in our opinion, consistent with the trend already evidenced by almalaura statistical data (A.Cammelli, 2012), demonstrating the lower percents of qualified professionals employed in Italy, in comparison with other European countries (see Table 1, below).

Table1 Employed professionals with University degree (% 2007-11)



Fonte: Elaborazioni ALMALAUREA su documentazione Eurostat

In fact, in Italy, seem the higher level professionals, to have less opportunities for finding a job than in all other EU countries Here evidence is given, about the fact ,that lower percents of young people, having a university degree, bachelor or magister, are employed in Italy. (2007-2011). Masters who have a job, commented A.Cammelli,(2012) abitually have no contract or guarantees, and often may continue working at the previous position).

5. As final consideration about the ongoing experience, the authors can remind the growing social responsibility, which the University can take over, in giving way to more extended forms of shared scientific practice in education, across different countries and/or cultures. Due to the specific type of the university- didactics, exposed above, becomes mutual exchange of social practice, or even, as Vygotskij wrote, of "social experiencing" closer, provided a stronger financial support for the realizing it in public institutions. This becomes a condition not only for extending the culture, typical of one major country on the international plane, but a means for mediating in a multicultural frame different university social experiences, as it was in our joint curriculum.

It seems meaningful to make reference, here, to the position of Rubzov, Margolis and Guruzhapov, where they have exhaustively analysed the historical cultural perspective in psychology, for attaining a possible more extended use of it in the educational field.

Their point of view seems to be possibly adopted in reference to our ongoing University experience, since they argue that, a specific social dimension has to be taken into account, along with the historical cultural line in education. A seminal way for concretely doing this, should be attempting at synergically operating with the historical and cultural aspects of the axes of history, in its macro-dimension, (to say it from a general methodological plane) catching the socially differentiated complexity of each of the new human communities. This will create a new multidimensional frame, more corresponding to the effective present-day new processes generating new social communities. These processes require, from the contemporary person, the overcoming the contradiction between pertaining and referring to a unique social community, with a unique form of consciousness and social activity, and to attain new means for acquiring and recognizing new social cultural organizations, with new forms of activity and consciousness. To quote their statements, the tasks of the new societal subject will be: "...to be able not of just one concrete aspect of activity, but of different,² to understand not just the principles explaining a unique social community, but different,³ to coordinate these different types of activity, being able of transforming them, preserving at the same time his personal identity, ⁴ to be able, if needed, to devise new forms of social communities, with new forms of pertaining activity .

This means concluding, to aim at forming knowledge not just theoretical but of concrete doing, in a intensive interaction with others.

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