

Empowering Persons with Intellectual Disabilities Through Work/School Alternation: a Positive Case study

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Abstract

Entry into the world of work is an important moment for people with disabilities and for their professional inclusion. Using a case study, This research presents the project of school/work alternation carried out with a student with intellectual disability within a supermarket during the frequency of the last year in a higher institute in northern Italy. This study intends to describe the process and highlight the strategies used in this experience.

The paper ends with an analysis of the factors that can favour a positive experience and which can be a starting-point for other, similar experiences. This experience shows that, with adequate training, people with intellectual disabilities can be protagonists of an experience that favors their well-being and social inclusion.

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Introduction

The United Nations Convention states that people with disabilities: "must be able to fully enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms in conditions of equality with respect to others" [1].

The OECD [2] declares that in various social, economic and cultural contexts in the world the search for means to stimulate social progress in a more inclusive way is active.

Saxton & Ghenis (2018) [3] stress that it is necessary to implement system actions that lead to the achievement of full inclusion and the construction of a society for all. This is why some social innovation projects were born based on an idea of community (both scholastic and territorial) that becomes welcoming and can carry out strategic functions of support and support. Innovation concerns new ideas to respond to urgent needs and problems that now have no response and, at the same time, create new social relationships or forms of collaboration.

Life Project and Professional Orientation

There are many authors who, thinking of people with disabilities, underline the importance of the life project, that is the need to think about the student as a person who can grow up and become an adult. The project is the place of possibility, imagination and creativity, it is a way through which the mind approaches reality to transform it concretely, leaving the door to the fantastic ajar. Each one needs a series of projects to realize one's own life, that is, a series of intentionally programmed actions capable of transforming the imagination into a completed work. Also the project is a way to anticipate the future but, unlike the dream, in the project we start by separating what is extraordinary from what is impossible. Within the project it is therefore possible to meet one's own potential but also one's own limits [4-5].

The main objective of the project is to allow the person with disability, according to his possibilities, to be able to venture independently in the world; every help should make the person with disabilities experience the autonomy, the effectiveness and the determination, finding the thrust to overcome the inevitable obstacles to reach a goal achieved autonomously [6].

The theme of the life project is indissolubly intertwined with that of orientation that is proposed as a path of individualized support and support of the person in the long, slow and extended process of construction of personal knowledge [7] necessary to "move" in the global and local labor market. In this sense, orienting means helping people to progressively define their own life project [8]. This is a very complex activity, which must propose and enhance different methods and subjective processes of learning within a conscious intentional formality of the actors involved [9].

The School/Work Alternation in Italy: Legislative Indications

The problem of professional orientation aimed at people with disabilities in Italy emerges, more significantly, since the early 80s. Already in 1989 De Anna referred to a contribution proposed by Mr Fadda in which he presented a plan for employment together with some vocational training projects for people with disabilities. It is not a question of adopting pressures that may fuel harmful expectations, but to recover and reinforce the sense of reality, without closures, limitations, conditioning, cultural, social, personal, through openness to real prospects, free from false meanings or possibilities not achievable. One of the main tools available to students with disabilities is the alternation path between school and work provided for by law 107/15. This is a mixed educational path that provides for the alternation of school / work within the educational program. During the school hours, pupils can attend a private and public institution to carry out training and work-related activities. This provision follows the Guidelines for the integration of students with disabilities issued by the Ministry of Education with the Note of August 4, 2009, which suggested the implementation of actions and projects able to favor the steps of these students from one order of school to another and suggest the adoption of initiatives for their accompaniment to adult life and work through experiences of school-work alternation, internships and collaboration with local companies [10].

The school/work alternation is an experience aimed at gaining an awareness of what the world of work demands and offers in terms of skills, responsibility and social role and intends to promote scholastic inclusion, autonomy in daily life and entry into the world of work [11].

The School/Work Alternation in Italy: Indications Deriving from Good Practices

Despite the importance of this opportunity from the point of view of the legislation, there seem to be some critical elements that can affect the outcome of the paths. The data collected by Dainese (2015) [12] testify that the school/work alternation, as well as internships and traineeships, is not widely practiced with pupils with disabilities. Moreover, in this same survey aimed at collecting the opinion of the teachers, 54% of those who answered the questionnaire are convinced that the future of their students with disabilities is released and far from their personal desires and expectations. Finally, these same teachers believe that most of the decisions are taken by the support teacher and the specialists, with little involvement by the curriculum teachers.

Pavoncello and colleagues (2018) [13] point out the good practices implemented in some Italian schools and a wide variety of proposals and initiatives have emerged that confirm the great sensitivity towards the issue of work-related inclusion but also a series of process fragilities. of consolidation of practices, with great difficulty, try to give continuity over time and concreteness to the procedures and support actions tested. From these practices there are excellent synergies between schools, communities and the territory and this contextual element seems to be a decisive factor and transversal to many projects, enhancing the ability of schools to use the resources already available within the institute and interacting in effective way with the resources of the territory (for example the companies). The schools try to plan and implement courses of welcome, orientation and tutoring to promote the learning of skills and the enhancement of student subjectivity in order to discover the productive and professional contexts where the person can represent his / her future and embark on a concrete path of professional and social inclusion [14].

From the analysis of the experiences the complexity of the projects emerges that requires the presence of professional skills and very broad sensitivities to effectively manage all actions, from reception to insertion. These actions lead to define an individual plan that takes into account the characteristics of the person with disabilities, the business environment, the tasks that the subject can perform and

the best contractual forms to achieve this type of work relationship. What unites the projects is the idea of bringing together all the resources that are normally spent and invested by different institutions, in the context of different activities of assistance and support to a single disabled person, within a single project managed by schools and local authorities involved, giving meaning to the various interventions and thus increasing the chances of success [15]. Furthermore, emphasis is given to accompanying actions, ie to all those activities implemented to facilitate and support the transition of children from educational to work contexts. They are a set of actions aimed at building the best conditions for starting work experience and providing adequate assistance in every phase of approaching the world of work, up to entry. The methods of accompaniment can take very different forms: from contact activities with companies to mentoring, from support to families to interviews with health and social workers. These actions promote a process of change and awareness in the student subject acquires a new professional identity, that of a worker, who is asked to perform a job independently [16]. A third aspect highlighted is the importance of the networks both at the beginning, when it is necessary to establish contacts with families and local authorities and at the time of entry into the production context. At first the network is activated in the school at a micro level and foresees a greater participation of the actors directly involved in the student's life project (parents, teachers, specialists). This internal dimension is the starting point for effectively managing openness to the outside, when the school comes into contact with external organizations (how can companies be) [17-18].

The literature clearly describes the importance of the life project for people with disabilities but much less emphasis is given to the strategies put in place to design and implement this project. The present study aims to describe and analyze a school / work alternation experience that has led a student with intellectual disability from the world of the school to the world of work. The activities implemented during this process testify to the possibility of building shared practices that can be replicated even within different contexts.

Methods

This qualitative study was guided by a single-case study. This case study was chosen for the

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positive outcome of the experience. In this way it was possible to describe and analyze the factors that contributed to this positive outcome.

A case study research is characterized as an approach "that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources." A case study is "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit" [19]. The case study's characteristics are: particularistic (focusing on particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon); descriptive (yielding a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study); and heuristic (illuminating the reader's understanding of phenomenon under study) [20]. Case studies are intensive analyses and descriptions of a single unit or system bounded by space and time. Through case studies, it is possible to gain in - depth understanding of situations and meaning for those involved. Researcher identifies topic or questions of interest, determines appropriate unit to represent it, and defines what is known based on careful analysis of multiple sources of information about the case. Research process is defined by systematic series of steps designed to provide careful analysis of the case [21].

Procedure

I realised 21 semi-structured interviews and 8 focus groups with all the actors involved in the project (boy with intellectual disability, his parents, the educator who accompanies him at school, the social worker) and direct observation. As Noor (2008) [22] noted: the choice of semi-structured interview allowed to better understand the perspective of the interviewees and offered sufficient flexibility to approach different respondents differently while still covering the same areas of data collection. The interviews were tape - recorded to secure an accurate account of the conversations and avoid losing data since not everything can be written down during interviews. The main questions of the interviews include: elements of strength and criticality encountered during the activity, strategies implemented to overcome the difficulties, benefits for the subject and for the organization, importance of the role of each actor in the construction of the experience and type of supports offered to people with disability.

Focus group discussion is a way to elicit multiple perspective on a given topic and is used to capture data on the attitudes of the different actors involved in the research. This method drives research through openness, which is about receiving multiple perspectives about the meaning of truth in situations where the observer cannot be separated from the phenomenon. The focus groups allowed to share the different opinions. In particular, we discussed: the decision-making procedures, the elements of strength and criticality of the project, the main elements emerged from the analysis of the interviews and from the observations and the elements that define the success of the experience [23]

Participant observation is where the researcher observed phenomena of interest in the environment studied to draw information which was not obtainable from other methods. What had been observed by the researcher was related to the strategies and accommodations used during the activities. Observation generated insight and better understanding on the phenomenon under studied.

The decision to combine the direct observation of activities with collecting the points of view of all the actors enables the triangulation of the data and denotes the will to give voice to all of the subjects involved and to bring out the different points of view.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is "the process of making sense out of the data which involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning". The collected data were analyzed using an interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA) aimed at exploring in detail the participants' views on their experiences. IPA can be used to analyze data in order to develop thick descriptions (i.e. not just behavior, but context as well) that may help to shed light on human experience. An IPA researcher must approach their data with two topics. The first aim is to try to understand the participants' world and opinion. The second aim is to develop a more overtly interpretative analysis, which positions the initial "description" in relation to a wider cultural, social, and theoretical context. This second-order account aims to provide a conceptual and critical commentary upon the participants' personal "sense-making" activities.

The first step involved a repeated reading of each transcript, then identifying, and finally writing down all the interesting and significant elements that emerge from the data. The second step was to identify patterns of recurring content (abstraction process) and organization of the patterns in emerging themes (from the comments to the issues).

Two independent raters conducted analysis. The two raters coded the data independently and then met to compare analyses. Any discrepancies were resolved through discussion. The themes were not selected on the basis of their frequency, but their meaning and their relevance and similarities and differences were highlighted between groups of participants. Then data were organized into thematic categories in order to capture the meaning of the experience. Finally, the last step was the identification of the relationship between the issues identified. Some themes are grouped, other categories become superordinate [24].

Ethical Approval

The research was carried out with the permission of all people involved; for example, people with disabilities, families, and representatives of the services. The data collected during the research were treated on a confidential basis. The anonymity of participants have been protected throughout the research process and thereafter in any future published work. The results come from a precise and detailed analysis of the collected materials. The answers of the interviews were not taken out of context and small parts of observation were not been discussed without putting them in the appropriate context.

Results

Initially I described the case by highlighting, with the help of examples, the different steps that characterized Andrea's experience. Subsequently, using the voice of the protagonists, I tried to highlight the elements that contributed to a positive outcome of the experience.

Description of the Process

The project was realized with Andrea (all names are invented), a student with intellectual disabilities during the last year of a Secondary Secondary School in the 2017/2018 school year, when he completed his studies at a technical institute in a school in northern

Italy. The choice of a student with intellectual disability is motivated by the desire to take into account disability, which according to the literature can hardly find and maintain a job (see for example [25-26 0è]).

Andrea lives in a small town in Northern Italy with his mum Antonella (55 years old), his dad Giorgio (59 years old) and his brother Filippo (28 years old). Antonella is a wifehouse while Vincenzo is pensioner, he was a bricklayer like Filippo.

As Evidenced by the Functional Diagnosis Written by the Neuropsychiatry Service:

Andrea is a boy with Down Syndrome with a severe level of intellectual disability (IQ 42). He takes care of his personal hygiene and dresses himself. He does move independently by foot and she does not uses public transport autonomously. He knows how to use money but he has problems with the rest he does not know the value of money.

At school he follows a individualised school planning with simplifications and reductions of the program. At the end of his scholastic path he will not receive a diploma but only a certificate of attendance because he will not support the state exam. He has attention problems and she needs a break between one activity and another.

Andrea has limitate cognitive and comprehension skills and he need that the language is simple and concrete. He has a good short- and long-term memory. She has a good motion skills but his execution times are long. He writes only in printed uppercase, he uses a very simple language and often tends to use dialect instead of Italian. Also in the mathematical sphere there are more critical issues, above all linked to the sphere of logic.

Andrea is very sociable, is open to relationships with other people. When it comes into confidence, however, it tends to put in place incorrect attitudes to attract attention and to be nice.

Choice of the Context

Initially there are a series of meetings with: parents, the social worker, the support teacher and the educator following Andrea at school. At these meetings only the mother participates, the father declares to feel uncomfortable because of his shy character and not inclined to talk to people. Andrea's mother is a lady in

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her fifties, brown hair and chubby face. Physically he remembers a lot Andrea, the same expression of the mouth and the same eyes. The social worker explains to the mother the reason for the first meeting: *"We are here to think of a professional path for Andrea, a new starting point after school, because now it's getting bigger, so we think he has the chance to do it."*

The Mother Accepts the Proposal, Expressing her Consent:

"I do not think I need a job, because my husband's pension is enough for everyone, but I think it's important for Andrea to do something, and then I trust you, if you say it's okay, go ahead." Although not particularly convinced, she decides to trust and proceed with the experience. At this point the question is: "Which context may be suitable for him?"

The next step is to evaluate Andrea's strengths and difficulties. Among the most positive elements emerge: his ability to read the emotions of his interlocutors, the availability to the relationship, the attention that shows towards those in difficulty. Among the critical issues, however, stand out: the need to have a reference point able to contain it and the presence of incorrect attitudes to attract attention or to appear more sympathetic in the eyes of its interlocutors. Given his propensity to be in contact with people he could work in a canteen or in a supermarket. Andrea is also involved in this reflection, it was already happened in the past to talk about his work and had shown to have the ideas a bit 'confused. In fact, he had gone to the dentist (to remove all his teeth) from the carpenter (profession of his father and brother) to the mechanic (to adjust all the machines). When asked if he would like to work in a canteen or in a supermarket he responds positively, and with a lot of enthusiasm:

"Nice the cafeteria, and even the supermarket, if we both do? First canteen and then supermarket, I'm fine, I take my pay at home and I'm fine"

The first organization that they decide to contact is a school canteen because it can be pleasant for Andrea to be in contact with children during meal time, which he adores by the way. The personnel manager, however, offers his availability only for an internship, without any possibility of recruitment. Then they opt for a supermarket; on the phone the contact person declares to be interested and, after having viewed a

presentation form for the boy, fixes an appointment in which support teacher and educator take part. The outcome of the meeting is positive, in the local area of the boy there is a branch and the referent has made himself available to welcome Andrea for an internship that could then lead to recruitment. However, they ask for constant support for the whole period.

In Summary, the Characteristics of the Experience are as Follows:

- type of organization: small neighborhood supermarket
- clientele: regular customers, especially residents in the country
- work organization: 2 mornings a week, part time, from October to June
- tasks: shelving, arrangement of products
- supervision methods: presence of the educator and a tutor identified in the organization

The outcome of the meeting is communicated to Andrea, who is looking forward to starting the social worker and the family. The outcome of the meeting is communicated to both Andrea, who is looking forward to starting the social worker and family

Training

Before starting his new work experience, Andrea traveled several times with the educator the journey that separates his house from the shop and that he will cover on foot. The support teacher and educator also meet the supermarket manager and share some rules:

- the management of the work is entrusted to Roberto (the manager) and Ilaria (his deputy) but initially the request is that the assistant educator is always present, so as to intervene in case of need. It must be a discreet presence that guarantees support without, however, hindering the interactions between Andrea and his colleagues;
- every task that Andrea must carry out, and any evaluation of his work, must always be shared, so that information and thoughts are common;
- at the end of each working day there will be a brief moment of verification with Andrea, on that occasion the positive aspects and the critical points will be highlighted;

- with the educator that will accompany Andrea it is also expected a short moment of confrontation at the beginning of the day, so as to plan together the activities to be carried out;
- the definition of verification indicators useful for evaluating how experience is going is hypothesised.

The First Day

The first day of work, Ilaria and Roberto declared themselves excited. Meanwhile, Andrea comes in front of two white front doors. The supermarket is small, family-run, everything seems to be "within reach". The path is practically obliged, on the right is followed by refrigerated shelf with biscuits and snacks expands (strictly in order: cocoa, cappuccino and strawberry), closes the series cereals. Continuing along the perimeter you meet the cold cuts and bread, then the chips and breadsticks and you reach the door of the small warehouse. The entrance is narrow, covered by a gray plastic curtain with small slits. A little further on you can see another door that leads into the small closet, equipped with a pc station. Between the two entrances there is the frigor counter, in a nice view there are packaged salami and a large quantity of milk and eggs. Further, there is a small shelf and then the bench blue Nestle, reminiscent of some clear and away the sea, opens the wide range of frozen. Near the exit there is a small red and gray case. At the center of the store, four shelves are arranged horizontally: the first is covered with pasta and rice, the second is devoted to soft drinks, detergents and the third, the last, contains everything you need for personal hygiene of adults and children. Andrea looks around, his attention is immediately captured by the charcuterie, of which he is a big fan. From the bottom of the shop Roberto calls him:

"Come on Andrea, I'll show you how the shop is made, then I'll tell you what we have to do today, but first place your stuff here, here's the warehouse, you stay with me today, all right, you're right 'agreement?'"
A: "Of course, you are the boss. Can I leave my things here?" *R: "Yes, look, here is the place we use to make orders, you can support things here, and here you can come for the break, do you want to take a break?"*
A: "See you, for me it's the same" *R: "Nice answer, of course you can take a break, now that there is work, come and download now"* *A: "I'm ready (and it lifts the sleeves of the sweatshirt), I have also put the*

comfortable trousers, so I can work better."

I Learn the Job

The first activity proposed, with a view to the gradual teaching described above, is that of the opening of the cartoons, one of the most repeated tasks during the day. Andrea, struggling with cellophane, seems to be a bit 'in difficulty because some packs are just strenuous to break. Roberto shows Andrea a "trick" that, with the knuckles of his fingers, allows to break the cardboard sheets without effort, as the following example shows: *R: "Look Andrea I'll show you, if you put your fingers like that, look how I do, here, if you do so, you'll see that they open, do you understand? Test"* *A: "How should I help me?"* *R: "Sure, look, I'll show you, take these cans"* *A: "Look, I did it"* *R: "Great, good"*

Once Andrea has learned to open the cellophane, Roberto explains that it is not necessary to open the whole package but it is sufficient to make cracks that allow the goods to be extracted. It introduces this new notion only when the previous one has been learned.

The Indicators that Make it Clear that the Goal has Been Achieved are:

- Andrea is able to break any package, paying due attention when needed;
- He is able to open the quantity of boxes expected for the day;
- The shelves are ordered and there are no positioning errors.

When Andrea carries out this task at a pace that Roberto and Ilaria judge fit for the standard they have planned, they add a new task, the arrangement of the shelves.

Let's Order: the Rule of the "Two Files" and of Pulling Forward

After opening the boxes, Andrea must place them on their shelves. The task is explained to him by two rules:

- the two files: each product must be placed on two rows in an orderly manner; in this way the shelf is full and there are no leftovers of goods;
- pull forward: before placing a new package, you must be careful and place those already on the shelf

forward, so that they are the first to be purchased.

Andrea begins to arrange the shelves but seems to be afraid of making mistakes, Ilaria notices and reassures him. Roberto, to help him, prepares the first product in the row, so that Andrea can follow his example and fill the entire lane. A second help are the boxes placed at the products. In this way Andrea can visually understand where it begins and where the row of products that has to settle ends. Ilaria also decides to try to work alongside him, in the same lane, but each with his own task. In this way he can control Andrea without interrupting his work. Once Andrea understands the operation of the two files and of pulling Avanti, Roberto decides to start letting him work independently.

And now try alone!

After the first weeks of work, Ilaria and Roberto decide to entrust Andrea with the first tasks independently. Andrea assigns the task of positioning the products on an entire lane and verifying that everything is in order. Once the task is completed, he must communicate to Ilaria when he ends. Andrea knows that in case of need he can contact Ilaria who initially controls him from afar:

I: "Did you manage to open it?" (The voice resounds in the distance)

A: "Yes, done"

I: "Good, now you can go to the next box "

A: "Ok, it's the croissant"

I: "Those then with the other croissant"

A: "Of course, I calmly do it"

I: "I'm coming to show you?"

A: "I know, stay there. Wait, can I also put it down? "

I: "Yes, yes, it's fine even lying down"

A: "Done"

I: "But you know you're really good"

A: "Thank you."

Ilaria and Roberto Seem Stupid (as well as Satisfied) of Andrea's Progress:

- he complete the requested activity;
- he is able to correctly answer the questions posed by colleagues and customers;
- he can explain clearly the problems and difficulties encountered in carrying out the task;
- he communicate clearly when he has completed the task;

- he recognize the verbal indications given by colleagues.

Again, the results are positive. Ilaria and Roberto manage to check Andrea's work through verbal exchange and, in the meantime, they can easily continue their work.

And Now What do I do?

The learning of the job is certainly one of the main elements that guarantee the success of a work experience. Andrea, day by day, is always faster and safer. Every so often, however, there is a hitch that slows down his work:

- an action that fails to complete: especially in the beginning, some operations (such as breaking cellophane) can be difficult;
- the difficulty in positioning products: there may be goods that he does not find or he does not know their location;
- problems related to shelf space: it can happen that the boxes are too many compared to the portion of pallet that he has available;
- failure to comply with some rules: sometimes Andrea may break some of the agreements envisaged (for example sometimes it is distracting, it raises the tone of the voice);
- unforeseen actions that surprise colleagues: some initiative, especially in the relationship with customers, can make Ilaria and Roberto feel uncomfortable.

Whenever one of these circumstances occurs, the indication of Ilaria and Roberto is to inform them and ask them for help, then waiting for one of them to reach it. The goal is to help Andrea to manage the unexpected and possible errors, managing to communicate their difficulties and building, with their help, new procedures to deal with the critical issues.

And Now, What I can do?

A particularly significant element is the management of contingencies both in the performance of the work activity and in the management of relationships with colleagues and customers.

When he fails to perform an action, Andrea's first reaction is to try to solve the question by himself. In

some cases it succeeds in solving the problem while in others, as agreed, he requires the intervention of colleagues who usually reach him and discuss with him to find the best solution to the problem or difficulty. The focus is always to understand the solutions that Andrea offers and discuss with him if they can be correct or not and why.

Other times, however, the unexpected can be caused by a difficulty in understanding, sometimes due to some inaccuracy in the language of Andrea. Compared to this, the agreement with Ilaria and Roberto is to ask Andrea for more information, looking for his help to understand. The assistant reassures them that he is not offended, but rather is happy to explain:

A: "Let's put the tea by hand?"

R: "What's the tea by hand?"

A: "It's the one in the envelope, is not I always buy the tea by hand, what you do by hand, you put the powder and mix it"

R: "Ah here, it is mixture to be added to the water and mixed and ready, his name is so-lu-bi-le"

A: "Oh well, soluble, by hand, do not you do it by hand?" (They both laugh)

In Another Circumstance, the Same Situation Occurs More or Less:

A: "Where do I put expired things?"

R: "EU, there are no expired things here, eh"

A: "But yes, the ones I have to keep going because we have to sell them before"

R: "Ah, then those are older, not expired, guy"

A: "Ah ok, the old ones"

R: "Well done"

Errors Can Happen

Errors management is also included in the sphere of unexpected events, the management methods are always agreed upon. This is an important moment because the emotions of both Andrea and his colleagues come into play. Andrea faced with an error tends to stop and close and needs reassurance.

On the other hand, however, even for his colleagues it is sometimes difficult to maintain a calm and calm attitude. And it is not always easy for them to find the right words to manage and reflect on the error along with Andrea.

Starting from the awareness that mistakes can

happen it is important to analyze the causes, to understand what has not worked and to define strategies together to avoid that mistakes can be repeated in the future.

The error is also an opportunity to experiment with the use of some tools, such as the cutter and the stool. Initially, especially Ilaria is a bit 'hesitant because he is afraid that we can do harm.

Compared to the use of the stool Andrea decides to try a different technique, using only the first step, thus avoiding the risk of falling: one foot on the stool, the other on the ground, then descends, bends, recovers only one product from the box and, with a jump, puts it on the shelf. At a certain point, however, he realizes that he can also grasp two packs at the same time, and times are reduced. The use of the stool stops being a problem insofar as the correct use is explained and, at least initially, it is monitored. Andrea also knows he has to pay attention and proves very focused.

The last series of elements concerning the management of errors has to do with those actions that surprise colleagues and that do not seem to have a logical explanation. The typical situation occurs when, after completing a task or waiting for colleagues, he wanders around the store, entertaining customers and putting in place excessive and incorrect attitudes to be nice. It happens that you start talking in dialect, that goes around screaming for the store and puts in the shopping cart of the customers of the items that they have not bought. When he is pointed out to him, the wrong attitude sometimes irritates, raises his voice and does not seem to want to recognize the error. It is necessary in these cases to help him calm down and resume the event with him, inviting him to reflect on the inability of these attitudes.

At the end of the period of alternation the balance is positive. Andrea knows the tasks he has to perform and is adored by customers, who turn to him to recover the products they can not find. He is happy, Ilaria and Roberto as well. After school, Andrea will be hired for a fixed term, but before he can sign the contract, his colleagues explain to him what his future goals are:

- always be more precise when it has to explain;
- be able to comply more with the rules.

Factors that Positively Affecting the Experience

After describing the steps that characterize Andrea's experience it is useful to identify the elements that contribute to a positive outcome of the experience. These elements are born from the triangulation of data between the observation and the interviews and the focus groups with the various actors.

Theme 1: What he can do, where and with what Autonomy

The First Important Element is the Choice of the Place in Which to Carry Out the Activity:

Social worker: "We decided for the supermarket starting from his skills and his interests and then we opted for a small place, which he could walk, and that offered him the opportunity to experience new relationships with people in his country"

Mother: "I'm glad it's nearby, I know the owners and they're kind, they're telling everyone that they go to that place to visit him"

Andrea: "I like the supermarket, I can see many people and do my job, I'm happy, I walk and I see many people greeting me on the street"

The identification of the task to be entrusted to Andrea is another decisive factor for building a positive experience:

Roberto: "One thing at a time and increase the tasks as Andrea internalizes the required sequence of actions. Once the task has been internalized, we have taken a step forward"

Ilaria: "Initially he only dealt with fixing the products, one type at a time, first those that did not break, then slowly we thought about other things he could do and we increased and experimented to understand if he could do it, and also experimented the use of tools like knives"

The job, therefore, is built by expanding and increasing both the number of tasks and the responsibility entrusted to him. The identification of the task necessarily also requires a phase of experimentation useful to understand the potential of the subject.

In addition to a greater consistency of tasks, a second element relating to the task is the autonomy in the performance. Initially, Andrea was assisted in the

performance of his duties, afterwards he was encouraged to work more and more autonomously, perhaps with verbal supervision from afar and finally worked completely on his own. This recognition is also important for him who feels valued:

Ilaria: "At the beginning we were with him, then I started working alongside him, maybe dealing with something else but in his own lane. But then I moved away, but I drove it verbally, with phrases like you remembered to fix the shelf well, you saw if all the products are aligned, and at the same time verifying that everything was quiet, understanding if everything is fine and work proceeded well"

Educator: "Working independently is a useful step for everyone, he feels capable and colleagues can continue their business without interruption"

Andrea: "I'm happy when I'm alone, I feel good"

Theme 2: What Kind of Support

The first form of support consists in explaining all that is happening and will happen in the future, with the attention of verifying that he has understood:

Educator: "The important thing is that you always explain to him first what he has to do, do not assume that he understood, because maybe he tells you yes but it is not clear. Ask to repeat, verify that he has understood, it is not obvious"

Roberto: "I realized that phrases like come and then do, now we do this and then that helps him to understand what he has to do and reassure him"

A second form of support consists in verbally explaining to Andrea what he has to do and describing the sequence of actions to be carried out, also highlighting the expectations towards him. In this way, he has the opportunity to mentally review the various steps and also to check if the sequence of actions is correct:

Ilaria: "We have seen that it helps him to give some references to see if it is going well, as for example to say that if he did well all the products find space in the shelf"

Andrea: "When they tell me what to do, it helps me remember what I did and what I still have to do"

It is also essential to offer examples, to show concrete actions, to allow Andrea to learn by imitation:

Roberto

"I saw that show works, if he sees then he does like the monsters and helps him to do well"

Ilaria

"We often use the formula of the look that I show you, look how I do, it is essential for him, he learns quickly and is safer"

Andrea

"I like it when I can see how things are done, it's nice"

Another form of support is the preparation of the environment to favor its organization:

Roberto

"Lasciare gli scatoloni per terra in corrispondenza degli scaffali è un piccolo gesto che a lui è servito molto, ha velocizzato il suo lavoro e lo ha reso più sicuro"

Andrea: "See the boxes helps me, I understand better and I'm faster, I do less effort"

Theme 3: Positive Reinforcement Both as Encouragement and as Praise

Another important element is positive and verbal reinforcement (for example "You are good" or with a gesture (for example a pat on the shoulder).

I "Andrea, have you seen how you have become good and fast"?

A: "I learned"

I: "Yes, you're really good"

A: "Thanks, now I'm going forward"

Mother

"When they compliment him, he comes home and tells us right away, he's really happy"

Roberto

"When we give him a compliment he resumes work with another force, we can see that he is pleased and puts much more determination in what he does"

Ilaria

Customers ask him for information and he helps them, that's very important for him. Of course then we must be careful because it tends to go further, to exceed and that is not good. But knowing that it is important for the customer is very satisfying"

Andrea

"When the client asks me for help, it's nice, I'm happy to help him, to accompany him to the product and to answer the question"

Finally, encouragement is also useful in the face of a difficulty, as an invitation to face even the critical issues:

Ilaria

"When he makes a mistake he needs to be consoled, to be told that it can happen and just pay more attention. The hug and the pat on the back work a lot with him"

Educator

"Encouragement is very important, but it must make sense. Andrea is able to understand the error and reassurance. He expects to be scolded if it is a mistake and understands the mood of his interlocutor. To encourage but sincerely and to resume, always just as sincerely"

Positive is also to ask for consent and ask Andrea if he agrees with respect to an affirmation and to take his opinion into account:

Ilaria

"I have seen that if I ask him if he agrees, he feels important and does things better, you can see that he is happy"

Roberto

"Ask how he thinks, listen to what he has to say and keep his opinion in mind, as well as being right to him he needs a lot, he changes his attitude and his availability"

Theme 4: How to Manage Problem

One of Andrea's main difficulties is respect for the rules. It often tends to be distracted especially in the presence of customers. In these cases, reminding him of the rules helps, as in the following example:

R: "Where are you?"

A: "Where there is milk"

R: "And what are you doing there that you had to wait here?"

A: "I'm talking to the lady"

R: "Do you remember that you have to wait here"

A: "Yes, but I was talking"

R: "You do not have to talk, you have to wait here, get

it"?

A: "Yes, okey"

Another element of criticality is the management of emotions. Andrea struggles to give a name to the emotions that he tries to show them through body language and with not always adequate attitudes. This attitude also makes his interlocutor uncomfortable:

Ilaria

"When it is happy exaggerates, when it is exaggerated, in short, emotions are a problem. Help to try to ask him, to tell him, if you are happy try to say that you are happy, angry, tired. Sometimes it works but some other time less. If you are happy you could for example make a gesture that helps to understand but without screaming"

Roberto

"Emotions are a problem, it is explosive and I recognize that it is difficult. Ilaria less but I struggle. I feel uncomfortable too, I do not know what to do. Ilaria manages this thing better"

Theme 5: Shared Evaluation of the Results

A last significant element for the construction of a positive experience is the shared evaluation of the results, ie the establishment of verification moments in which to evaluate with him the achievement or otherwise of the pre-set objectives and the identification of the following objectives:

Ilaria

"We set ourselves goals, complete the required activity and talk to him, we reason why there are those objectives and the standards we want to achieve. In practice the number of boxes to open, the lanes to fill, the time it takes. And then we'll see with him if they are reached or not and why"

Andrea

"I know what I have to do, how many boxes I have to open, what they ask me. And I understand if they are happy or not"

Roberto

"Giving goals helps, we have criteria to understand if things are going well or not and he too. So if things do not go we can reason and instead if they go we point out that he was good. Then we share the next step. This also helps him to feel responsible"

Conclusion

The period of school / work alternation during school attendance is an important moment in the life project of all students, including those with disabilities because it allows them to experiment with their attitudes and to consolidate their abilities. These are paths that have a significant formative value because they operate both in personal autonomy and in the social and cognitive sphere. In addition, they offer young people the opportunity to experience themselves as competent people in working contexts, improving both self-esteem and motivation to learn. From the analysis of the proposed case some important nodes emerge. First of all, the need to involve all the actors involved in the construction of the life project of the person who must be at the center together with his family. It is essential to understand the expectations, attitudes and desires even if, sometimes, these are not completely clear even to the subject himself. The choice must then take into account the physical location of the workplace, which must be accessible independently or with the use of public transport. Then it is a question of identifying the task to be entrusted to the subject and identifying the figure that will be his reference during the experience. It is important to define together the requests, the objectives to be achieved and the verification indicators that will be used to evaluate the experience. During daily activities it is important to identify strategies that are useful. First of all it is important to explain what is happened and will happen in the future.

A second form of support consists in verbally explaining to Andrea what he has to do and describing the sequence of actions to be carried out, also highlighting the expectations towards him. It is also essential to offer examples, to show concrete actions, to allow Andrea to learn by imitation. Other useful strategies are:

- introduction of visual supports, such as cartons in the ground or the first products placed directly on the shelf;
- "remote" supervision in order to guide the subject verbally but leaving him a margin of autonomy;

Another important point is the rule of positive reinforcement. useful both to underline progress and as a form of reassurance and incitement. It is also important to manage the unexpected events and

emotions that are a critical issue for Andrea, who often struggle to communicate what he feels. Finally, the fifth point is the sharing of results and the establishment of verification moments in which to assess whether the objectives have been achieved or not.

The methods of managing the work situation by the worker and his colleagues play a decisive role for the success of the experience. This case testified that Andrea, adequately trained, was able to perform the required tasks. Likewise, his colleagues also needed to receive support to accommodate the boy within their organization. In the report, then, many of the support strategies are shared. This is why training can be considered a key element for building welcoming work environments for people with intellectual disabilities.

Limitations and Further Research

The research has two limitations: the description of an individual case and the choice to stop the analysis at the end of the school/work alternation. This choice comes from the desire to make explicit the path, the resources put in place and the voices of the actors involved. In this way it is possible to remember the different phases of the activities, to reflect on different voices around the experience and to make sure that others, with adaptations linked to the specificity of the contexts, can be inspired to create new experiences.

It would be interesting to investigate Andrea's working situation after some time and gather his opinion and that of his colleagues

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