

School-mistresses learn from impasse

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Abstract

This article talks about the plan called *Working together.. One by one!*, realized since May until September 2011 in an Institute of Schools lies in Abruzzo-, composing the evolving stages of its journey, referring to the application of *pratique-à-plusieurs*' device in the work with groups of school-mistresses of the nursery and primary school. The need of opening a listening space in which new answers to the question of an institution being in trouble with the promotion of a collaborative culture between its operators could ripen and settle, established the possibility of doing this experience. The intervention was thought and planned on the importance to rebuild the educational speech and the scholastic field from the two dimensions of the subject and the desire, referring to the application of the lacanian psychoanalysis in social institutions. The practicality of this experience turns in the possibility of questioning them *one by one*, on *how invent* the way to *become a desiring équipe* in which *everyone takes is own place* from which contributes together with the others to find a logic of common working that finds in the workgroup that instance which supports and orients every teacher to not give in to the impasse on which the educative practice moves question. The article reflects in its expositive organization, the real need with which the plan has to compare itself to succeed in promoting the novelty of its proposal, in other words a policy that meets the disease of the Institution in which emerges, through a new view of the teachers' training entrusted to the psychologist that works at school. A training that doesn't give or prompt the way, in which the psychologist is in the position of the *third* that has *function to support teaching* and opens a field in which nobody teaches something to someone but it takes place the opening to saying that receives ideas and hypothesis able to allow everyone to meet in what they invent a point on which support themselves.

Key words: équipe, desire, pratique-à-plusieurs

At school there is someone that manages, someone that makes the teacher, someone that is in the position of student, and the responsibility assumed looks on being qualified to transmit an educational function that meets in the daily practice of teaching, that own point of impossibility that holds its working in check questioning it on what is going wrong with it. *Working together.. One by one!*, handled something of this impossible since May until September 2011, making operative for an Institute of schools lies in Abruzzo a new way of turning impasse into the point from it is possible to work. The plan involved three équipes of school-mistresses of the infant and primary school, consented to a question that in this scholastic reality was articulating itself around the difficulties met answering the institutional request of *making team* inside the own module of work. The criticalities came out regarded the management of the relations between colleagues, the activation of competitive

dynamics such as to mine the possibility of working together, and the experience of taking part to a team only *formally* that- in the presence of problematical situations presented by the institutional reality, of unmanageable students in the classroom, and the not communicative functionality with the families-, didn't support and found out them alone indeed at the mercy of an anomie that lost them as regards the eventuality to adopt a position. So teachers testified the failure of everyone's subjectiveness: it often happened that some of them facing to an impasse that questioned the workgroup's operation, prevaricated the others in the way to persuade them about their own mode of intervention as the only possible, as the *good for all*, even only to interdict colleagues from the possibility of being able to say their own. For the school institution the call on "making team" supports the work's organization and an easier issue of tasks but for teachers it revealed something of not functional indeed as regards what involves taking part in it and it is in the order of the renouncement to support and hold their positions in the name of preserving a *quiet life* as to the decisions that the leader or the couple of the group will take, supposing to know what is better to do. There is an occlusion resulted from this, of the confrontation's and debate's space that on the contrary allows in the interior of the group's field the development of its evolutionary and transformative potentialities: something for the teachers is wrong in the mode of working that asks them to make team and it goes beyond the interpretation that *being all women* contributes to sharpen these difficulties. So their request claimed that things at school could run not only for the institution but for each of them: thus the teachers' question appeals to the possibility of questioning themselves on *how to find the way to work together without have to "make group"*. It was functional to present the intervention proposal that was granted and supported by the school head, having found in the school plan (POF) all those points in which the project could have met its operative lines. The area called *Purposes and engagements of the whole Institute* (POF, a.s 2010-2011) delineates- laying stress on the importance to differentiate the educational interventions, to promote, boost and aid the relation, to guarantee the word right, and lastly to emphasize the inventiveness of students, teachers, and staff-, the field in which it could be taken the initiative to institute a listening space to which each teacher could feel to take part to, wondering about what is dysfunctional inside the workgroup, starting from the own subjective position. During the preparatory phase of the plan, it was important considering the identity of the institution and the organizational dimension of its management because it allowed to start the phases of ideation, activation and verification of hypothesis that supported the plan's fulfilment, giving place to each school-mistress in her right of being recognized as subject, as to the three dimensions of role, function and difficulty of their work(1). So results from this, the choice of organizing a time and space of word in which the school-mistresses' entry would have been guaranteed by the possibility of being received and called *one by one* to play the bet of working together with the others, on the difficulties, refusals, disagreements, oppositions, in a word on the *impasse*: Lacan in the work called *The English psychiatry and the war* (1947), referred to Bion about the importance to find the living force of the intervention in the same impasse of a situation. School-

mistresses awarded to the psychologist's presence at school, the *function to support teaching* able to appoints him as the interlocutor as to whom everyone could have been questioned about what is problematical for the educational practice and it involves the risk of not being recognized as subject: the psychologist acted as third that didn't occupy a position of knowledge but received the question, promoting conditions so that eventual answers could be elaborated. An *équipe* is not only the result of the whole staff's meeting that choose to engage themselves to find a way of sharing a unitary logic of running but also a methodology that promoting a culture of complexity, responsibility and thought's breeding, authorizes to create inside a collective dimension, new spaces of subjectiveness: it is also an entreat that orients, supports and legitimizes the acts of each operator that takes part to it, spreading the function of an intermediate third between subject and institution (De Smet, 2005). The mode of *working in équipe* can be read starting from having introduced and deployed these three dimensions, as a precious resource for the functioning of the scholastic institution that as such subject to reforms and decrees that cyclically subvert its organization, it is frequently involved with the one's own staff experience of dismay, regards to the educational function that they execute inside its context. When an operator feels taking part to an *équipe*, he can cope the anomie and at the same time he can ward off a rigid identification with his role: the re-establishment of the operative functionality of every *équipe* from a dimension of group's homogeneity in which it could be extracted something of the everyone's subjectiveness, was permitted by founding a field in which each operator bearing the blame of what doesn't run in his work team, can develop the possibility inside a listening dimension, to not legitimize himself from putting into practice prevailing behaviours. The mode of the *little group* as an operative tool, activated the field in which change processes could deploy themselves since the effects of interdependence between its members, making possible the analysis of the relation between the institution's logic and the needs of its operators as well as the redefinition of objectives and action's aims of each of them so that in the course of the time it could be produced, mediations and renovations of the same institution (Neri, 1976).

Story of an encounter

The bet on the work *équipe*'s reunion and debate as a time and space functional to question school-mistresses about the importance to find and elaborate a new *way to operate alone but not being alone* since asking themselves on *what it is possible to fail and why it is possible to learn*, it was permitted by referring the intervention running to *pratique-à-plusieurs*, a device founded in Belgium in 1974 by Antonio Di Ciaccia inside the clinic institution called *Antenne 110* and that since 1983 until today, it is used to work with teachers' *équipe* of many scholastic institutes of France, Spain and Italy. The application of this institutional device in the work with *équipe* made possible re-found the educational field and the scholastic speech from the two dimensions of the subject and the desire pointing on the importance of the continuous teachers' training, on the particularity of seeing, saying, thinking and working of each teacher, and on the ability to reflect critically on the tackled problems. About this, the

encounter of the Belgium teacher Noelle De Smet- president of the General Confederation of Teachers-, with the *Antenne 110*'s work and staff as well as the interest for Lacan's theory, it brought her to found a new mode to make pedagogy that read in the running of some hypothesis and tools used inside *Antenne*, something of functional to the possibility to re-found the educational field and the scholastic speech giving priority to the subject's dimension, favouring the function of the third to come out from the impasse of the dual relation involved in the educational practice and promoting the importance to feed in the classroom a desiring motion that could be guaranteed by receiving and recognizing students *one by one*. In the course of years, Noëlle De Smet's pedagogy was underlining its way to insist on what exists of the most singular in the student, introducing the importance for the Institution of becoming a place in which each operator occupies an own space and works from his own treat of particularity, as the first objective of a school's educational plan. Today it is always harder to teach anyway it is never possible doing it without an educational work: about this, Freud already told about the three impossible professions of governing, educating and curing to that Lacan suddenly referred substituting the curing with the psychoanalyzing. In so far as teaching is frequently more involved with the impossible of educating, it becomes fundamental the bet on difficulties so that it will possible to open a front such to allow teachers to not shrink from the classroom: the method proposed by De Smet works with what impedes teaching, considering the teacher's necessity to assume the position of *not having- knowledge about subject* if there is the will to recognize his particularity and not the intention to educate or to judge it. The question of the teacher's desire is what Lacan treated inside *Il seminario X*, underlining that when there is no question of it, it means that there is the professor: <<*The professor exist whenever the answer to this question is- so if I can tell already written-, written in its aspect or in its behaviour, for that kind of conditioning that we can situate at the level of the supposed preconscious, in other words at the level of something it can be elicited- from any part it comes- from institution or also from those things that are called his tendencies*>>(Lacan, 1963). In 1991, Adele Marcelli took interest to introduce in Italy the *pratique-à-plusieurs*' device in the primary and secondary schools of Offida and Castignano, inviting the psychoanalyst Virginio Baio to make several seminars with teachers and parents. In 1992, some teachers of Liceo Fermi in Milan also took interest to *pratique-à-plusieurs* that since that moment became their operative modality of working in équipe. In 1998, Noëlle De Smet after the conference made in Belgium for Cien (2) on her experience in the professional schools, founded with the colleague Claire Piette the teachers' lab called *Maitre-désir* pointed on the importance to include in the practice of teaching, the subject's dimension so that it could be possible make something of the impossible of the educative art as *not complete schoolmasters* or rather as *who don't know anything about it*. In 2007, the Antenne of the freudian field in Pisa inaugurated with the De Smet's conference *The impossibile art of teaching*, the *SOS' teachers Lab*: in that day the Fermi's équipe could met her for the first time. After a year Fermi's Institute in occasion of the 50° anniversary of its foundation, edited the Italian translation of her book titled *Au front des classes*, published in Italy by Quodlibet as

In classe come al fronte. It is from the story of this good encounter between pedagogy and applied psychoanalysis that results a new view of teachers' training that institution can choose to commit to the psychologist that works at school: a training that doesn't ordain or suggest the way but invites teachers to present a situation that keeps them in check, as it showed itself in the says, behaviours, experiences that came with it with the aim to support them in the finding of the operative lines to which they could refer. In this way *Working together.. One by one!*, could found a field in which nobody teaches something to someone but takes place the opening to a saying that receives ideas and hypothesis able to allow everyone to meet in what they invent, a reference on which supports themselves: who says and not what he says, made place to the subject.

A window opened on lack

Pratique-à-plusieurs- as a working operative mode applied to reunions of teachers' équipes-, raises the necessity of a useful time in which considering *from what position of knowledge*, it is possible answer to impasse with the aim to work alone but not being alone on the hairpin bend in which the social bond's structure marries at the same time the contingency, the fate, the singular condition of each subject. This device was able to question school-mistresses on how invent their way to become a *desiring équipe* that is an équipe in which *each one has a place and contributes with the others to find the way to follow*. In each meeting school-mistresses choose to occupy this place ferried by the possibility to discuss the impasse met in the educational practice that finds them questioning about "*What am I doing in this place?*". So it was since *what they could be and can be wrong*, that they could start a work that permitted them as teachers to occupy a position of *not knowing about the subject*, questioning me on how I will support in their équipe, their attempt to put desire in operation. So their involvement it was possible at the condition of the desire deployed in the forms of a:

1) *Desire towards an Elsewhere*: someone looking for something that doesn't know and someone else is in the position of the Elsewhere, knowing how to intervene producing a motion of the others.

2) *Determined desire*: everyone wondering about how desiring without deciding, giving up to make who interprets.

The principle about *there is always something to try* supported then the possibility to turn difficulties into the bet on which gambling on and what makes trouble into the thing on which it is possible to work. The meetings were five, lasted one hour and thirty minutes, and their structure was thought in three times:

1) *Impasse*, in which teachers were asked to describe a situation that had questioned them on what they have failed in their mode to work together.

2) *What doesn't go*, in which every teacher shares with the group, her reflections on where they failed in the management of a problematic situation, on the limits of their équipe's intervention and on what influenced the possibility to cope it.

3) *How to change*, it was the third time of discussion that permitted through the debate and the comparison, that each one of them gave an own contribute to elaborate an

alternative hypothesis on how *après coup* it could be managed the same situation. From the event's tale as it happened, everyone could authorize and legitimized herself to communicate her opinion regards to what was wrong. It was not to judge what didn't work but the aim to reflect together on how the situation could be coped differently, maturing a new mode to support themselves on own role and in relation to the other colleagues. This work *après coup* permitted to elaborate a future planning about the eventuality of problematic situations that could happen again: it follows from this, the aim to carve something of the repetition of a working modality that doesn't operate. During each meeting some specific goals were identifies and described as the awareness of own limit, the right *to have a place*, the respect of the other's word, the invention as the possibility to cope the impasse, and it was chosen to work a theme:

- 1) during the first it was introduced the *function of schoolmaster as student at the school* or student of what is problematic for teaching;
- 2) during the second the *making schoolmaster* questioned each of the school-mistresses about the mode in which they deployed their particular passion in the profession;
- 3) during the third it was presented *the invention since the subject* as a modality that supports the fact that *there is always something to try* regards the impossible met in the educative practice and for which the educational task is succeeding to make something of the impossibility not yielding to the matter. There is always something to try regards an impossible situation that impedes the educational practice;
- 4) during the fourth it was deployed the relation between the desire of being recognized and the right to authorized oneself at the own role in relation with the calling into question that frequently the scholastic Institution makes of it;
- 5) finally, during the fifth meeting school-mistresses questioned themselves on the *knowing to operate* from which the importance to land at a *new mode to treat the word at school*. At the end of the intervention, each *équipe* in its unique and particular mode was able to realize the plan's aim to make conditions so that each one of them could elaborate three principles to which orient the ethic and the logic that could support each of them in the own mode to work with others.

Conclusions

So, *Working together.. One by one!*, had the aim of introducing teachers to the possibility of re-inventing their own art of teaching: if in the listening, it is the capability of reading the initiative, it is not possible to think teaching through comprehension but being already to ear something that is unknown. It is not a coincidence that when we were student we found ourselves waiting those lessons in which the teacher's enthusiasm and passion captured our attention, with his particular mode, such to feed every time a re-new curiosity: when it is taught it bakes away oneself to make an empty place to the subject's desire and the cure of the teacher is to make particular his practice to provoke a taste and to make possible that the educative work underlying it traduces itself in the way of rousing desires to learn, teaching themselves. Each teacher is invested by the function of *subject supposed knowing* and

interpreted supposed having answers: he will be able to differentiate his own function by that of a parent only not demanding to know at the place of another. So we learn because the other could recognize us as persons having right to the word, and we teach when we conducted the other to teach himself: <<*It is not useless to note that the professor is then defined as the one who teaches on teachings. In other words he cuts out from teachings. If this truth that is about something of analogous to the collage should be known better, professors could apply on it with a bigger skill, following the way showed by the use of collage in the artwork. If they might made their collage being less worried, in a way less measured, about the union, they could have a chance to reach the result aimed by collage or that to evoke that lack which constitutes the whole value of the figurative art when it is obviously succeeded. And so through this way they should succeed in reaching the own effect of what is just a teaching*>> (Lacan, 1963).

Notes

(1) In the school plan POF (y.s. 2010-2011) the Institute was described as a place in which persons can occupy a space felt as own, and in which the “will” and the “doing”, realize actions full of signification and desire.

(2) The Interdisciplinary Centre of studies on child (Cien- Buenos Aires), was founded in 1996 by Jacques Alain Miller with the aim of opening psychoanalysis to the possibility of its questioning and its intervention in the social field, from promoting a dimension of change, dialogue and debate with others speeches that have influence on child.

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