

**<<THE EDUCATIONAL PROJECT IN ACTION
AND
THE PROMOTION OF THE WELL-BEING
IN THE SCHOOL:
Training and consultation
in an Italian school through
Cooperative Learning>>**



Stefania Pollice

School Psychologist

e.mail lunastef@libero.it

spollux@tele2.it

ISTITUTO CARLO AMORE

In partnership with: CENTRO STUDI BRUNER

ABSTRACT

⇒ THE MAIN AIM OF THE PRESENTATION

The main aim of this poster is to describe a project of training and consultation in service that involved teachers' and students' teams of an Italian school in order to validate Cooperative Learning activities, considered as model of an intervention on students and an opportunity of professional development for teachers.

Among the different effects of Cooperative Learning the focus was kept on the social relations, related to the development of prosocial behaviour in the class team.

⇒ THE ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED

This poster describes the structure and the process followed during the management of the project. The structure contains a plan subdivided in areas referring to the training of the teachers, the planning and the carrying out of the interventions, the validation and the spreading of results. Each area refers to objectives, activities, tools and time required.

⇒ **THE PROSPECTIVE BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS**

Participants gained the opportunity to understand the success and the failure of the model carried out, thanks to a consultation activity with the school psychologist that took throughout the whole the project.

INTRODUCTION

The Project started on the following issues:

- ⇒ The promotion of social well-being of students can be a way of the prevention of dangerous behaviours
- ⇒ The educational project in action can be a good organiser of the didactic activities
- ⇒ The group can be one of the main educational and didactic resources
- ⇒ The importance of the consultation and training plan referred in the theory and in the practice of Cooperative Learning as a method:
 - applied to social and cognitive skills
 - with effects at different levels: motivation
 - psycho-social
 - social
 - cognitive

COOPERATIVE LEARNING: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

POSITIVE INTERDEPENDENCE

+

INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

WARNING: NOT EVERY GROUP IS A COOPERATIVE GROUP!

FALSE COOPERATIVE GROUPS

- The teacher acts as the direct supervisor of the group activity
- Group activity is a result of a subdivision of the skills in different parts
- Homogenous levels groups for learning recovery and abilities' improvement

WHY?

Teachers

- To give them the opportunity to learn a good classroom management
- To give them good observational tools and strategies
- Support them in daily difficulties, in particular concerning the relationship with problematic students

Students

Among the effects of Cooperative Learning at the following different levels

- Motivation
- Psycho-social
- Cognitive

...the focus has been kept on the social relations:

- To give the opportunity to act out and to promote prosocial development

WHO?

- **6 teachers including: 3 of primary school level and 3 of secondary school level.**
 - **6 classrooms including: 3 of primary school level(10/11 years old) and 3 of secondary school level (11/12 years old and 12/13 years old).**
- The total number of students involved has been 118.**

WHERE ?

An Inclusive Institute of Varese -Italy

WHEN ?

From October 2003 to April 2004.

METHODOLOGY

HOW ?

The methodology contains a plan subdivided in areas referring to the training of the teachers, the planning and the carrying out of the interventions and finally the evaluation.

Each area has its own specific objectives, activities, tools and time required.

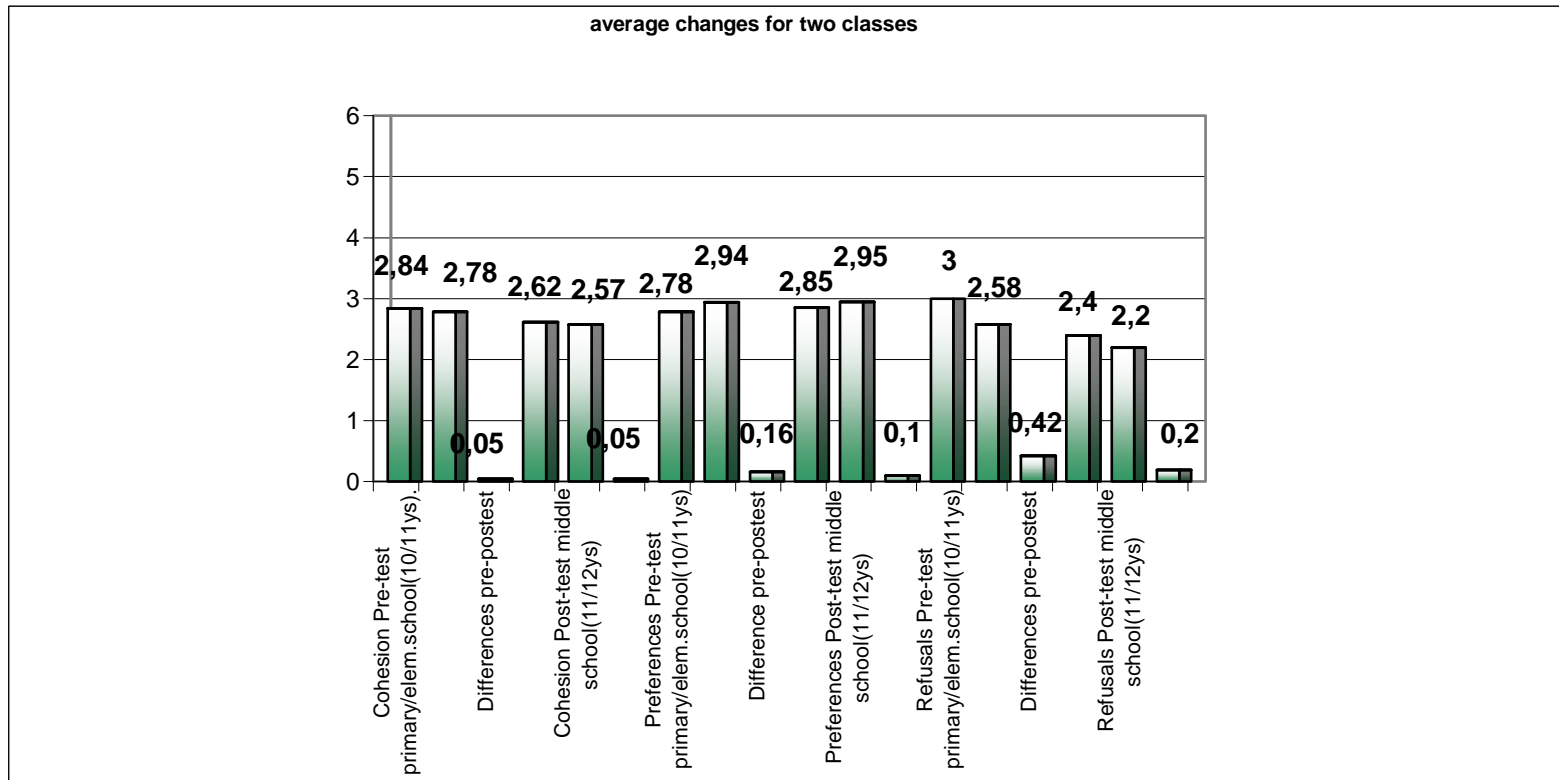
Area	Objectives	Activities	Tools	Time
T R A I N I N G	The teachers learn and practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ the team building➤ the Cooperative Learning method	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Presentation of the main techniques of the team building➤ Theoretical review of the main issues of Cooperative Learning referred to the primary and secondary school context➤ Cooperative group activities on different types of positive interdependence	Material to work in little cooperative group	4 meetings of 2h with all the teachers involved + 1 meeting of 1h with each teacher involved

Area	Objectives	Activities	Tools	Time
A P P L I C A T I O N	<p>The teachers and the counsellor Check through the application in class a series of activities to move up the positive interdependence among the students and to celebrate diversity in the classroom</p>	<p>The teacher and the counsellor project and manage the application of a series of activities connected with different subjects and different types of groups to improve the relationships among the students and between the students and the teacher</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sociogram for class assessment ➤ Prototype of activity planned by the counsellor 	<p>8 meetings(1 a week)with each classroom</p>

Area	Objectives	Activities	Tools	Time
E V A L U A T I O N	The teacher under the supervision of the counsellor thinks about the application and makes an evaluation of it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The teacher and the counsellor manage altogether the application of the activity(they alternate each other in the observation role on the base of a guidelines sheet planned by the counsellor and play different roles-didactic and educational task-) ➤ Follow up on the application ➤ The counsellor collects the critical points to evaluate them and to find problem solving strategies ➤ The counsellor meets all the teachers to do a collective evaluation 	Guidelines sheet for the follow up of the classroom application	1 meeting of 2h with each teacher involved (individual evaluation) + 1 meeting of 2h with all the teachers (collective evaluation)

RESULTS AND CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING

The analysis of the results shows the average changes in term of cohesion, preference and refusal before and after the intervention.



The outcomes have been divided on the basis of strengths and limitations. The teacher and the counsellor discussed also about the possible strategies of resolution

Strengths

- **An opportunity for the teachers to meet colleagues of other schools and to compare with them their professional life sharing experiences, opinions and emotions**
- **An opportunity for the teachers to practice and to measure oneself in the application of a new teaching method**
- **An opportunity to vary the teaching and the learning activity**
- **An opportunity for the teachers to extend the knowledge of their students to the social and psychological aspects, that influenced the final evaluation**
- **The sharing between the teacher and the counsellor throughout the project**

- **An opportunity for the students to learn together: to change some relationships, to extend them to new students, to include in the classroom system isolated students, to create links between males and females**
- **The ability of the teacher to manage the classroom establishing a positive educational relationship with each student**
- **The positive attitude of the class towards the teacher**

Critical points

- **Due to absences from school or involvement in other school planned activities some students missed out**
- **Difficulty of involving some problematic students on complex skills**
- **Difficulty for the teachers to communicate to colleagues who give an input in class in the meetings about the project**
- **Strength of each intervention(1h)**
- **Difficulty to manage the training and the planning and monitoring meetings out of the duty service**

What to do?

- **Problematic students should be better involved in other activities that give them opportunity to improve the individual responsibility and to contribute to the success of the group: this situation could better improve the self- esteem and the social relationships**
- **The counsellor, rather than delegate, should refer directly the situation to the teaching staff so that the others could be much more motivated to share this experience and to try this method**
- **Strength of each intervention should be longer(at least 2h each one)**
- **Teachers should be involved in all the activities instead of teaching or to receive an adequate sum of money**

CONCLUSION

The **teachers** have pointed out the positive experience of being involved in this project: they would carry on this new method and share it with the colleagues; they expect it would be followed by all the teaching staff in class; if they relived this experience they would focus the attention and the validation too in the cognitive effects of Cooperative Learning; they would possibly do the training in service; they find this experience has been positive for the **students** too as they refer by the “brain storming” because they had the opportunity to vary the activity, to feel involved in it by the cooperation with the others, to change some opinions of the schoolmates and to feel nearer some of them.

Personally I found this a good opportunity to practice as school psychologist in a field that I found interesting since the theory and the practice have been presented by one of my master’s teachers(Prof. Gentile) and a good chance to meet different teachers and students that means different ways to think, to react, to feel in a same experience.

REFERENCES

- Cohen E.G.(1994).*Designing groupwork,2nd ed.* New York: Columbia University
- Comoglio M. e Cardoso M.A.(1996).*Insegnare e apprendere in gruppo.* Roma: LAS
- De Beni M.(1998).*Prosocialità e altruismo: Guida all'educazione socio-affettiva.* Trento: Erickson
- Gentile M.(1999).*La formazione in servizio degli insegnanti: Indicazioni e scelte operative.ISRE,6(2), pp46-58*
- Gentile M.(2000). *Effetti prosociali, cognitivi e motivazionali del Cooperative Learning.* Dissertazione dottorale. Roma: Università Pontificia e Salesiana, Facoltà di scienze dell'Educazione.
- Gentile M. e Salvatore S.(2001). *Modelli culturali di rappresentazione del servizio scolastico espressi da docenti e famiglie.* Primi dati del Progetto FA.S.S. Veneto. *ISRE 8(3), 9-28*
- Gentile M.(2001-2002)*Innovazione didattica per la scuola: Un progetto di ricerca-intervento realizzato in Bassa Val d'Elsa*
- Gentile M.(2003).*Contesto.* In Cerini G. e Spinosi (a cura di).*Voci della scuola.* Napoli: Tecnodid

- **Gentile M.(2003).Metodologia di consulenza a supporto dell'agire didattico: Struttura e realizzazione, in Gentile M. e Petracca C.(A cura di)(2003). *Apprendimento Cooperativo: Spunti per l'innovazione didattica*. Torino: Paravia Bruno Mondadori**
- **Gentile M.(2003).*I prodotti della consulenza per il miglioramento dell'istruzione scolastica, in Contesto Cultura Intervento: Quale psicologia per la scuola del futuro*. Lecce 2003,Atti del Convegno**
- **Gentile M. e Petracca C.(2003). *Apprendimento Cooperativo e sviluppo professionale dei docenti: Spunti per esercitazioni didattiche*. Torino: Paravia Bruno Mondadori**
- **Iaccarino C.(2003).*La formazione dei gruppi nell'Apprendimento Cooperativo: Caratteristiche dei Gruppi Efficaci e Tecniche di formazione*. Roma: LIDEA(Laboratorio di Innovazione Didattico Educativa)**
- **Iaccarino C. e Gentile M.(2002).*La ricerca- intervento nella scuola a supporto dell'agire didattico*. Psicologia Scolastica,2002,1(1)**
- **Johnson D.W., Johnson R.T. e Holubec E.(1994).*The nuts and boltz of cooperative learning*. Interaction Book Company**
- **Petracca C.(2003).L'apprendimento cooperativo come metodologia per migliorare gli apprendimenti, in Gentile M. e Petracca C.(acura di)*Apprendimento***

Cooperativo: Spunti per l'innovazione didattica. Torino: Paravia Bruno Mondadori

- ***Polito M.(2000).Attivare le risorse del gruppo classe: Nuove strategie per l'apprendimento reciproco e la crescita personale.*** Trento: Erickson