

## Article

# The Methodology of Psychological Clinical Intervention in School Settings: Case Studies with Students with Special Emotional and Educational Needs

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**Abstract:** The school context, following an overall complexification of society, presents several situations in which it is necessary to build a transformative setting based on the suspension of educational action and the use of in-depth interpretations of divergent behaviors. Method: Two teachers with psychological training present and discuss cases studies of psychological intervention based on the analysis of demand methodology. Results: The two case studies presented concern, respectively, a difficult inclusion of a foreign pupil in the classroom and a school phobia of a student before graduating. In both cases, the classes are reconceived as clinical settings thereby giving new meaning to the psycho-social relationships of the students. The teachers promoted an overcoming of critical events: in the first case the pupil reaches school inclusion in a short time; in the second case the pupil reaches the diploma. Conclusion: The method of psychological intervention is proposed as an innovative practice of negotiation of new emotional symbolic structures in which to reproduce a coexistence in the scholastic context. It therefore appears necessary to equip schools with professional skills in the analysis of demand in order to train teachers to recognize the emotional dimensions within the class context.

**Keywords:** psychological intervention; school; teacher; clinical report; social resources; school dropout risk; analysis of demand



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## 1. Introduction

This article explores the theme of psycho-educational interventions aimed at students with special educational needs. Within the vast panorama of intervention models used in the school environment, this paper focuses on presenting a specific method of psycho-analytic consulting aimed at organizations [1–3], in particular the psychological clinical intervention method (PCI) [4,5] and its theoretical foundations [6,7]. In order to underline its peculiarities and potentialities, the authors, two teachers trained in psychology, present and analytically discuss two case studies of PCI within the schools where they teach; the cases concern emotional difficulties in the relationship between two students with special educational needs and other members of the class group.

In recent years in Italy, the number of students with special educational needs (SEN) has had an enormous growth within schools at all levels. Istituto Italiano Nazionale di Statistica [8] shows that if a high number of disabled students with serious diagnoses follows a uniform trend, with a slight increase, then it is the quantity of students with special educational needs attributable to conditions of socio-cultural disadvantage that has grown vigorously.

In accordance with the data and reflections suggested by Paniccia et al. [9] in a recent research study of Italian teachers, the increasingly growing number of “diagnoses” of special educational needs within the school should be considered as a cultural issue [9].

From this psychological clinical point of view, the spread of the diagnostic culture within schools is a reaction to the attempt of homologation of the pupils that the school proposes and also a way to reduce the conflict between school and family who find a new agreement and within a collusive arrangement in the attribute to the diagnosed “a hope of reduced success”, legitimizing a disinvestment towards the latter. We can affirm that the universality of the right to inclusion, established starting from the 1970s and with the closure of special schools, in recent years has transformed from a desire to a demand mainly by families with no hope towards school, moreover, the object of further delegations by the other agencies of the territory, impoverished by their own efficacy [9].

Precisely starting from the inescapable failure of any form of homologation of the students, as well as of any form of intervention that does not take into account the specificity of the psycho-social dimensions of the case, we present psychological clinical intervention as a competent practice aimed at change in assuming and reorganizing the emotional/collusive structures that the case proposes within the relationships with the author of the intervention.

### *1.1. The Culture of Special Educational Needs in Italy*

Recently, the sudden social transformation that has made our society precarious in recent years in aspects such as health and economic well-being, in addition to the complexification of the school's mission, no longer limited to instruction but also to education and training, has implied the request for a radical change and advancement in teachers' skills. The unraveling of social ties, as well as the weakening of the family, together with an involution of the health and welfare system, have entailed for the school the heavy burden of probably being the only public institution to develop skills in the pursuit of autonomy, entry into the labor market, and the facilitation of the transition to adulthood. Faced with this condition of social anomie, most of the time the school is forced to deal with situations of social unease that arise in common emotional disturbances, behavioral disturbances, up to more profound impairments of psychic and relational functioning (condition of disability). With regard to the inclusion and integration of pupils with special conditions [10], important legislative reforms were drawn up in the last decades of the last century, which for example gave children and adolescents with disabilities the full right to attend “ordinary” schools. In Italy the most relevant legislative norm is the Law n. 104 of 1992 [11], the framework law for assistance and social integration for the disabled, in favor of the protection of human dignity.

In the following years it was realized that the existence of a portion of discomfort in the relational and learning processes in the school could not be categorised in the category of disability, but rather in other forms of discomfort, including specific learning disabilities and other forms of discomfort ascribable to contextual deprivation dimensions and conditions, which while differing from disability, are also able, in some way, to alter school performance [10].

This awareness resulted in the law n.170 of 2010 [12], which established in the Italian education settings the concept and the category of special educational needs (SEN). This classification, considered more as a spectrum than a defined category, includes: (1) disabilities, (2) specific learning disabilities, and (3) conditions of socio-economic and cultural disadvantage.

While for the first two, diagnosis is required that certifies a condition of disability and the presence of a specific learning disability, in the last case, SEN due to disadvantaged conditions can be recognized by the school itself in the absence of a diagnosis.

SEN without a medical diagnosis (thereby excluding the diagnosis of disability and specific learning disability) are often called “other SEN” [13], in other words, a subthreshold (non-medicalising) diagnosis of disability. This includes a wide range of situations, from students suffering from anxiety, to students living in a community for minors, to immigrant students, up to students living in conditions of economic disadvantage. Although the relevant legislation (law) allows for promoting learning for these students through the use of ad hoc dispensatory measures and compensatory tools, the multiplicity of situations

that fall within the SEN category is so broad that standardized indications are generalistic and not very effective in their applicability with respect to the form that the disadvantage socio-economic level assumes within the functioning of each individual student within the school context. Due to the inconsistency between the characteristics of the discomfort and related symptoms, generically called “SEN”, and the proposed intervention, plus the lack of presence of a teacher of support, as in cases of disability, students who fall within the category of “other SEN” are faced with school failures, chronicity of discomfort, and early school dropout.

### 1.2. *The Psychological Clinical Intervention*

Psychological clinical intervention (PCI) is method based on the following: (a) the understanding of relationships and their emotional connotations, and (b) the transformation of the collusive arrangements between the questioner and a professional through the construction of development objectives within relational dynamics. The method of the psychological clinical intervention places its theoretical foundations within the principles of the first Freudian topology which postulates a model of functioning of the mind based on principles of non-Aristotelian logic of the unconscious and of sensemaking of reality through processes of emotional symbolization and replacement of external reality with internal reality [4].

The study of emotions taken into consideration by PCI is based on the analysis of demand [5], a model of analysis of the emotional component on which the relationship is based and not of a psychopathological emotional connotation attributable to the individual (i.e., anxiety, depression, panic, etc.). The authors of the method, Rosa Maria Paniccia and Renzo Carli [5], propose a difference between emotions that promote homeostasis and violence within a relationship (such as controlling, possessing, distrusting) and those that, on the contrary, propose the development of competence aimed at the construction and pursuit of objectives such as exchanging and sharing [14]. PCI consists precisely in transforming a relational dynamic based on incompetent emotions into an emotional structure aimed at building “third” things within the dynamic within a relationship. Fundamental to support this process is the psychologist’s ability to “think emotions” to acquire an awareness of them within relationships, interpret them, and make sense of them together with those who participate in that relationship. The model of analysis of demand and PCI, as they are based on the study and development of relationships, cannot be used exclusively within the relationship of psychotherapy, but are aimed at being used to grasp and map the emotional dimensions within social, organizational, institutional contexts. On the subject of clinical psychological consulting in school contexts, numerous studies and publications have been devoted [15–17], as well as the foundation of a specific journal entitled “*psicologia Scolastica*” [School Psychology] edited by Sergio Salvatore and Maria Francesca Freda.

## 2. Case Studies

Hereinafter, two psychological clinical interventions promoted by two teachers, respectively in a primary school and in a high school, with psychology degrees and trained in analysis of demand methodology are presented and discussed. The context in which the two experiences are based is a large city in Italy. The case studies involved taking charge of a primary school pupil and a secondary school student with educational and learning difficulties, mainly attributable to emotional factors (isolation, social, exclusion, devaluation, etc.), and required ad hoc interventions. In both cases, the schools categorized the learners as students with special educational needs (“other SEN”).

The first case involved an intervention to develop the competence to understand and communicate in Italian for a girl who arrived in Italy in the fourth year of primary school from Bangladesh. In that situation, attributable to what is commonly identified as a linguistic SEN, the teacher, after initially reluctant to face a difficult case in which learning seemed to be potentially compromised, sensitized the class group to deal with the

Bangladeshi girl (hereinafter referred to as R.) by promoting participatory activities with high emotional involvement that have accelerated the pupil's acquisition of the expressive-communicative foundations of the Italian language. In this situation, the teacher also organized a language laboratory thanks to the voluntary activity of a retired teacher, who further enhanced the learning of the Italian language for this child.

By contrast, the second case deals with the taking charge of a fifth year high school student suffering from school phobia, for which the school had activated, through the recognition of the phobia as a special educational need, a home school service, an intervention which gradually transformed into a space in which the teacher of philosophy and human sciences and the student, through didactic activity, gave voice to the student's self-devaluing fantasies and concern to be evaluated.

Both situations required different attention from the teachers, who, in order to deal with these cases, had to question the meaning of SEN within the diagnostic culture present in the school and in the school regulations. In fact, in carrying out the interventions, the relationship between the context and the school was considered, with particular attention to its social mandate [5].

Both cases seem to highlight an evolutionary function of the school, far from that paradigm whereby the application of dispensatory measures and the use of compensatory tools constitute themselves an effective intervention.

### 2.1. Case Study 1—*The Foreign Schoolgirl*

This case involves a nine-year-old Bangladeshi girl who had recently moved to Italy and, therefore, who did not speak Italian. Given the impossibility of additional human resources to support her in learning, I, a class teacher, firstly involved the group of students with planned forms of tutoring and later organized a language recovery project for students in difficulty, "Itali-Amo", calling on the help of a retired teacher as an external expert, through voluntary service. The project worked well and has been extended to the whole complex where I work.

"R. comes from Bangladesh and is here in Rome with her mother, father and two brothers. The youngest started first grade this year; the oldest is in middle school. Upon her arrival, the child did not pronounce any words in Italian, except her name in response to the question, "What's your name?". Changing the stimulus formula to "what is your name?" R. continues to remain silent. She has reached the end of the first quarter of the fourth class and there is only a year and a half left for middle school, a period that I consider not sufficient to achieve adequate preparation to manage the next school cycle.

"I raise this issue in a meeting of the working group for inclusion, in which I participate, imagining a more profitable insertion into a third class, but I am told that in cases of this kind you must only think in terms of the child's age and at nine a child must stay in the fourth. I am not convinced by the answer, but I accept the feedback given to me and I adapt to the situation.

"At the same time, I ask that a linguistic mediator be requested, given the pupil's difficulty in communicating with all of us, but it seems that there are not enough resources, that mine is an unacceptable proposal. I therefore ask that 'hours of strengthening' be given to the class, that is, hours of co-presence with another teacher, in order to facilitate the child in teaching her, but the requests promptly fall on deaf ears. A Personalized Didactic Plan (PDP) is soon drawn up for the pupil and, due to the linguistic disadvantage, she is included in the SEN. I realize, then, that with respect to its inclusion in the class, no form of development is conceived and proposed, in the sense of an intervention aimed at compensating and bridging the gap with the rest of the class-group, or even just facilitating the inclusion of the little girl in the new environment. Accepting the situation, I take stock.

"I feel very disheartened by the new situation; this is the time of the year, if not the entire five-year cycle, in which I would like to push the class to make a qualitative leap, to try to work at a faster pace, to stay longer on products. Instead, I find myself starting over with the vowels A-E-I-O-U, with the awareness that the pupil would not have

associated any meaning to the words, unless possibly in written form. Therefore, in total darkness, we learn the first syllables and, to follow, gradually form simple words with their relative meanings.

“I am very clear with the whole class, also because hiding my initial discouragement would be an impossible undertaking; I involve the children in this all-round teaching of the Italian language, asking them to collaborate with me, to try in turn to tutor the newcomer, who is joined in this differentiated form of programming by another child in distress; a Roma child. R. turns out to be very active in tutoring; helping another pupil to learn does not make her feel so much in difficulty as she did before. The reaction of the class group is astounding, everyone tries to do their part, helping R. in memorizing the first sounds as well as the most common words with their meaning; non-verbal language certainly prevails and the child, feeling welcomed and pampered, immediately fits into the group and into the most diverse games. It is in this friendly context, in fact, that she says her first words, which I still remember. We are in the garden and, in a game similar to the catcher, she shouts loudly, “Help me Elena!”. The school climate, and R.’s desire to be in relationship with all of us and vice versa, works miracles: in just twenty days the child can read the first disyllable words and write them under dictation. However, this is not enough; yet more help is needed for a faster learning pace.

“Visiting a shop near the school during a break, I happen to run into a retired teacher to whom I have several times referred a number of bilingual children with difficulties in learning Italian. The teacher now volunteers for an after-school service that helps students. I tell her about the situation of the class and of this new pupil and we agree to propose a project to the head of the school. The project would involve the teacher helping R. and other pupils in difficulty on the school premises after hours. The manager welcomes the project, which is subsequently extended to other pupils in the complex where I work. We draw up a schedule and the project works well, achieves good results and will be repeated the following year.

“At this point I would like to draw attention to some aspects that emerged from the project: who the volunteer of the project is; what procedure and legislation is to be followed in order to achieve a positive outcome; and, finally, which school paradigm voluntary collaboration falls into. The external expert in question, a former teacher now retired, is called A., a well-known teacher in the neighborhood where I work; she is known for having taught us as a teacher since the school was built, about fifty years ago, and for taking care of the catechism of children in the local parish. On previous occasions, I contacted her for a volunteer after-school service for bilingual children, struggling with their homework. A. told me about her last year as a teacher and that, for bureaucratic reasons, she would have to leave teaching and retire. A. described this departure as a “tear”, a decision suffered rather than desired. This project represented the possibility for her to “mend” that tear; to feel, even more, able to benefit pupils in need to help and to be of value to her neighborhood; to have the opportunity to embrace her passion again. A. thanked me for sharing this project with her, and I was amazed because I thought it was only *me* who had to thank *her* for the help she gives to my students. Eventually, however, I understood the reciprocity of interests and gratitude involved.”

## 2.2. Case Study 2—*The Student Who Does Not Want to Grow Up*

Below is presented a further case study of PCI within educational settings, this time the setting is the last year of high school.

“E. is an 18-year-old girl who attends the fifth grade of a linguistic high school in the center of Rome. In the middle of the year, she decides not to attend school anymore; her fear overcomes her and setting foot in her school causes her an anguish so disruptive that she does not even allow herself to enter the classroom. When E. removes herself from the school, her mother makes contact with the school and suggests a proposal. Her proposal is to consider E. as a person suffering from a psychological pathology. She adds that were it not for E.’s psychological issue, E. would be willing to complete the

school year. The school deliberates for a long time about how to deal with the case, how to carry out its educational mission and therefore help the student to graduate. In the absence of thought on the emotional dynamics of E's situation, the school experiences the case exclusively as an obstacle to achieving the final goal, the diploma, rather than as a relationship modality, vehicle of an experience of discomfort in relationship to the educational success and socialization dynamics that being in school can bring about. Her mother takes the place of the silence and confusion that E. is experiencing, who otherwise attributes to her daughter the will to continue her studies despite her "little problem". The school context implicitly colludes with the mother's proposal to consider her daughter as a person affected by a (psycho) pathology. The action that follows is that E. is attributed a Special Educational Need, but everything remains the same: E. hides at home and wants to leave school; her mother wants him to graduate. The action of diagnosis in itself does not constitute an event aimed at instituting a transformative process.

"The action of attributing a SEN to E. is mainly functional to the school, a way of reacting to the impotence proposed by this case. Within the legislation that allows the school to promote personalized teaching strategies for students with SEN, the school decides to activate a home schooling service, an activity usually foreseen for students who are hospitalized or following an accident that renders them temporarily disabled. This project takes place through the agreement between the manager and the class coordinator; the proposal is not discussed in the class council. The question, in fact, seems to be hardly debatable: some teachers are of the opinion that the girl is faking her malaise; others believe it is better to leave her alone, respect her malaise and make her repeat the fifth year. The topic is discussed by expressing opinions on E.'s situation, letting the prejudices about mental illness speak for themselves. There are no criteria for developing an intervention. To this anomie, the management responds by bypassing the debate within a formal context such as the class council and assuming full responsibility for preparing an outcome to the case.

"The home teaching project consists of a total number of hours of 20 teaching hours. Some of the teachers in the class refuse. They do not believe that the girl is really ill; they have seen her walking the streets of Rome. Surely a person with social phobia should be locked in the house?

"At this point in the situation, I am asked to replace the philosophy teacher colleague who does not adhere to the initiative. I am assigned a six-hour package (three meetings), one for the entire second quarter, at the end of which the student will be able to take the final exam. I decide to accept and try to deal with the psychological aspects of the case while still in the role of teacher. Before accepting the post, I had in fact proposed to build an intervention project for E. through the function of the head office of the school's psychological desk, a function that I share with another teacher and psychologist colleague. Together we hypothesized an intervention aimed at understanding E.'s feelings of discomfort in relation to the school experience that had, as yet, been left unexplored. This proposal had not been taken into consideration by the management and I therefore assume that the school believes that thinking about E.'s problems can hinder the expectations of the mother, expectations that the school itself has, who wants E. to graduate at all costs.

"At the end of the usual working hours at school, I head to E's home. She is waiting for me and I find her looking very thin, pale and tired. I had never seen her before, but I think she recognizes me. She doesn't ask me anything; I'm a teacher, and so this may be enough. She makes me sit at a round table in the house, set like a counter. There are pens, notebooks and philosophy books, but the latter are turned towards me, as if I had to read them to her and explain them. She tells me that at a certain point she felt she didn't have to go to school anymore, especially because of her classmates, who she believes hate her and who always seem to have her a little isolated from the group. However, while she talks about it, this hypothesis doesn't seem to convince either her or me. With respect to school, she tells me that she would also like to try home teaching, although she expresses concern about the programs, because she feels very behind. She says she was always a reserved

and yet studious girl and, were it not for the problem that locks her up in the house, she could have aspired to a 90 at the end of the course, but now she believes that she will have to settle for a score between 70–80/100. I feel that these grades are the way in which she adheres to the school's proposal to have attributed a "deficit" to her, making her fall into the category of SEN.

"How far are you with respect to the study of philosophy?" Schopenhauer asks. So, we start with Schopenhauer. I hypothesize that the pupil may think that she is in a school situation, imagining that she is working in parallel with her classmates. We work in stages. The student manages to read a few pages of the book, and we discuss the evil of living and boredom according to Schopenhauer's ideas. The topic seems to interest her; I ask her what she thinks of one of the author's maxims: "Human life is like a pendulum that swings incessantly between pain and boredom, passing through the fleeting, and moreover illusory, interval of pleasure and joy". E. smiles. 'Suffering' and 'boredom' seem familiar words, which she can relate to. She tells me that she is happy not to be the only one to experience these emotions and agrees with the author. I ask if she remembers any "fleeting interval" of pleasure or joy. She replies yes, even if she can't think of anything specific. At the end of the lesson, I ask her, in anticipation of the next one, to think about what we have studied together and to reread, if she wants, the pages of the manual to be studied. The girl's reaction is ambiguous; if on the one hand she feels relieved from having to carry out who-knows-what task; on the other, she expresses the concern that if I did not assign her more to study, she would fall behind with the program. E. seems to expect that I am going to force her to do something. However, I tell her not to worry about the program and to follow what I had told her previously.

"In the following days the school is overtaken by a concern about E. and a teacher being alone during the home lessons. The school fears that the girl may invent a story about being harassed by the teacher. It had happened, a few days before, that the student had not opened the door of the house to a colleague at the time of the lesson because she was afraid of her. I understand that E.'s unpredictability confuses and jeopardizes the relationship of trust between the school, the teachers and the pupil. I advise my colleagues not to worry and, in any case, to tolerate the girl's attitude. On hearing about the issue, some colleagues seem to be very distressed at the impossibility of "recovering the lost program" and obsessed with having to teach everything possible for E.'s benefit. I think that E.'s refusals can be very much in relation to this formative persistence.

"At the time of the second meeting, I wonder if E. will let me in. I ring the intercom. The person on the other end does not say anything when I announce who I am, but she opens the door for me. I go up to E.'s house. E. is waiting for me behind the steamed-up door; as we walk to the usual table in the living room, looking around me, I notice a large TV in the room under which a huge pile of cartoon videotapes is crammed. This leads me to imagine that E. spends a lot of her time looking at and getting lost in "Disney fairy tales". After this brief distraction, E. brings me back to the reason for our meeting, and immediately tells me that she has not been able to do much except a small one-page summary of the topics previously discussed. I read it, and it seems to me complete, albeit very brief. I express my satisfaction and give her a mark of 7 on the register. The girl says that she could do more, that this is not her best of her, and so on. I believe instead that the student has spent some time in working on the summary, although, I estimate that the emotional confusion partially compromises her ability to concentrate, given how much she has been able to produce (the formulation of the sentences is really very simple). Before starting to tackle a new topic, I ask her what she has been doing since the last meeting; she replies that she went to the cinema one day with a class friend, but this was a problem for her, because at this point the other classmates might have thought that her "fear of the outside world" was an excuse not to go to school. I ask her if anyone had ever said anything to her about it. She replies no, and I understand that after this excursion questions have been raised as to why she should not return to school. I tell her that she can go back

to school when she feels like it and if she wants to. At the end of the lesson, we make an appointment for the next time, with the promise of going over today's material again.

"The third meeting takes place after about a month, just after the Easter holidays. It is shortly before the end of the school year. When I arrive, E. is a bit down in the dumps, and is worried about her final exams. She doesn't think she's been able to recover, and she doesn't know how to do so. I ask her what other teachers think of this. She tells me that many have told her that maybe she will make it. Bringing her back to this thought of hers allows her to dispel the pervasive experience of 'never being enough'. I remind her that this is the last meeting and ask her if she would like to address any topic and if she has had any news of the class. She tells me that her classmates are studying Nietzsche. So we start with this. At the end of the lesson, I ask her what reminds her of the fact that her time has run out and what goals she has set for the future. E. tells me about a thought that haunts her, about a bad teacher the memory of which has stayed with her. I ask her who comes to mind when she thinks about it. She tells me that her name is Mary, who is just like the elementary school maths teacher that she hated. At the end of the lesson, she says goodbye and she tells me that now she is able to silence her thoughts about Mary. In leaving E.'s house, I feel that she has been able to offload an emotional burden, to give voice to an asphyxiated and cumbersome experience. Arriving at the time of the final exams, half of the class commission is internal, half is external as per legislation. An unusual situation arises: I am not part of the commission, not because the philosophy member is not internal, but because I am not part of the class council despite having been the teacher of E. Among the internal members there are also some teachers who had refused to participate in home education and therefore have not seen E. since last December.

"I imagine that this unusual situation certainly did not facilitate the passing of the final exams for E. I am told that during the written part of the exam, the girl took the test in a space away from the rest of her friends, while for the oral it is established that she was the last to be examined in an ad hoc session. During the oral test, the commission chairman is forced to chase E. down the stairs while she tries to escape before being questioned. E. Graduates with 61/100.

"I believe that in these hours of home lessons E. managed to feel less alone, and to experience learning in a way that made her feel less persecuted."

This case highlights how it is possible to activate a psychological function within the role of teacher. In particular, the proposed methodology is that of the psychological clinical intervention based on the analysis of the demand [1] within a school context.

The home intervention at E.'s home starts from an institutional act of the school who decides, in agreement with E.'s mother, that for the good of the girl it is important that she graduate within the established time frame. One wonders what organizational model this school embodies. The difficulty of E. is felt to be an impertinence; the school is opposed to an experience of helplessness in a student who feels this way without goals in training and is forced to take a powerful course of action, prescribing, in this case, home teaching. E. is not listened to, nor are her teachers. Within this framework with limited margins for intervention, the teacher promoted a development of the relationship between himself and the student, proposing a new symbolization of the value of study and evaluation experienced as fulfilments to be avoided. This is thanks to the creation of a clinical training setting in which it was possible for the student to suspend, through the relationship with the philosophy teacher, an emotional experience of guilt for not being a "perfect student".

### 3. Discussion

Presenting the two school situations had the aim of showing how many behavioral problems in the school context sometimes require a complex reading of relational aspects and subsequently a psychological clinical intervention model, based on the individual-context paradigm. The events experienced as "critical" within the school context cannot be treated exclusively through interventions that are individualistic and orthopedic.



We see that in the case of the Bangladeshi girl, the psychological clinical function made possible to create a context favorable to the pupil's learning, in principle totally extraneous to that context of belonging, due to language, customs, and habits. This took place through the construction of a welcoming relational context, stimulated and built by the teacher together with the class group. This meant that R. participated in a context interested in teaching her, in this case the Italian language, and within this expectation of belonging, the child formulated her first words very quickly, much to everyone's surprise. To reinforce this feeling of care, of taking charge of the problem brought by the pupil, there was then the activation of a "tailor-made" workshop for bilingual children, gathering the interest of a retired teacher to mend his relationship with the school in a new and unexpected function.

In the situation of the high school student, the psychological clinical function was organized in the proposal of the philosophy teacher to establish, through home visits, a symbolic space within which E. was more able to become aware of her own experiences of inadequacy and ambiguity [5] with regard to the obvious aim of obtaining the diploma and at the same time becoming an adult. This was the objective on which the school and E.'s mother had agreed through a cumbersome conformism and from which the student tried to escape in order not to be overwhelmed.

Following these conclusions, the need is emphasized for the school to rethink the relationship of its social mandate with the transformations of the community it encounters, a relationship for which it sometimes has no models for reading and understanding and therefore struggles to take charge of, if not through a process that diagnoses, attributes socio-cultural deficits, and prescribes interventions. Diagnosing a special educational need (SEN) appears to be an action which, if on the one hand it lightens expectations on school performance and legitimizes dispensatory measures or compensatory tools, does not in itself develop an intervention, as there is a lack of competence within the school to organize objectives on affective and learning processes.

For example, we are witnessing the difficulty of the school in coping with the needs imposed by the pandemic in reconfiguring the provision of teaching and re-establishing its meaning within a completely unusual routine and socialization events.

Another reflection concerns the further clients of the intervention, parents and work colleagues; building a client relationship with them remains an important objective for any intervention in schools. In each of these two cases, the parents exist in the shadows, and it seems that their problems (settling in a new country in the first case; in the second case, in becoming aware of their daughter's discomfort) prevent them from building a commitment to the school in order to shape the future of their children. Their absence is the premise of school interventions, but also the ultimate goal of interventions, as in these cases of combating early school leaving, in which it is necessary to develop ad hoc interventions with parents in unprecedented settings. As far as the relationship with fellow teachers is concerned, in both cases the school "thinks" that it does not have enough resources for these problematic cases, both economic resources and in terms of competence. Once this first moment of stalemate has been overcome, colleagues (or some of them) appreciate the outcome of the intervention.

We conclude by noting the almost absence in the psycho-pedagogical scientific literature of reports of interventions aimed at the so-called other SEN, contrary to the flourishing of diagnoses [9] and interventions aimed at students with SLD [18–25]. The hypothesis we propose in this regard is that intervening in students with neurodevelopmental disorders, such as DSA (dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dysorthography) involves the use of more standardized and common compensatory tools and dispensatory measures. Conversely, in the cases of "otherSEN" psycho-social factors, as well as socio-economic disadvantage, social and cultural deprivation, anxiety disorders, reactive emotional disorders, etc., conditions which by their nature are multifactorial and to which it is not possible to apply standardized interventions to improve their inclusion.

This opens up the need to personalize the intervention aimed at them taking into account the complexity with which these “other” special educational needs manifest themselves and the disadvantaged conditions from which they derive and take shape.

#### 4. Conclusions

The method of psychological intervention [4] is not to be understood as a competence or knowledge pertaining only to psychologists but as training aimed at trainers and teachers, in which an individualistic paradigm is overcome within the training processes to give space instead to an approach that takes into account the relational and emotional aspects to facilitate the learning process.

This case study has highlighted which are the structural components of psychological intervention: have, regarding the suspension of the acting out and the analysis of the demand, elements that Renzo Carli reminds us are the foundations of PCI in one of his recent papers [4]. The cases presented, like many situations within the school context, present situations that undermine a common emotional assessment based on conformity and common rules; the difficult management of these situations often generates disinvestment and devaluation of the pupils they propose, in this case, suspending the acting out really implies assuming an internal structure capable of “thinking the emotions” put into play, clearing the mind of the anguish of impotence and assuming a position in which to take into account the needs of the other. From here, then, the analysis of demand intervenes, the method that has allowed us to read the symptoms proposed by the two cases, within relational dynamics and to promote within the teacher–student relationship a new structure in which it has been possible to promote an advance in scope of goals, learning, and inclusion.

The understanding of the affective dynamics within the class context allowed the development of the students who presented themselves as problematic cases within the school and of the teachers. The promotion in this logic allows a strengthening, an empowerment of teachers and their decision-making abilities, and at the same time reduces the medicalisation of problems within training relationships.

#### 5. Limits and Future Directions

The first limit concerns the generalizability of the interventions proposed and discussed in this manuscript; the reflections resulting from the analysis of the reported cases and the intervention strategies are based on an ideographic model of social behavior, interested in the peculiarities of the personal and contextual dimensions involved in the “here and now” of the case, and therefore not aimed at understanding the stability of behavior with respect to a given condition. The case studies are so understandable only within the school culture and the inclusion of the context examined, in this case the Italian one.

The second limit concerns a possible difficulty for the reader to understand the foundations of the epistemological model used. As highlighted in the introduction, the methodology of psychological intervention based on demand analysis is not based on common sense models of social functioning, but on a specific model of the relationship in which the emotional and “unconscious” dimension of the mind has a pre-eminent role of representing and symbolizing reality and directing behavior (cf. par. 1); this aspect can be complex for a reader who wants to understand/apply the interventions described without knowing the underlying epistemology. A third limitation concerns the fact that the two houses of study reveal themselves at two different levels of education, the first concerning primary school, the second, high school.

Certainly future research should: (a) address the issue of teachers’ emotional competences through quantitative studies and larger samples; (b) study the transformations of students’ needs following a complexification of the social system, especially the Italian one; and (c) take into account the protective and risk effects of the use of social media and the Internet by pupils and adolescents, in particular in relation to the phenomenon of social isolation and exclusion [26,27]. Another dimension in which to invest the next lines of research certainly concerns collecting and modeling the perceptions of school leaders of the

emergence of problematic cases within the school and which coping strategies are applied in these cases. Specifically, it would be useful to explore if and how psychological skills or roles (school psychology) intervened for the resolution of critical cases. This can provide the basis for promoting a policy of implementing psychologists in schools, investing in PCI training for them.

Cross-referencing data on early school leaving with indicators of social hardship and mental hardship of adolescents is now the first step in being able to get to know the areas most at psycho-social risk and therefore strengthen schools and services in the most fragile areas.

## 6. Policy Implications

The training of teachers in the psychological field is limited; even if in recent years in Italy there is an awareness of this lack, especially following the onset of the pandemic. The large presence of precariously situated/temporary teachers/teachers on temporary contracts on the one hand, and on the other a pedagogical Christian tradition, do not ensure a robust training on the psychodynamics within social relationships and therefore in considering the class as a group within which the students experience socialization processes. Many teachers enter schools without having had specific educational or psychological training. For the remainder, the training for tenured teachers is mostly oriented towards a medicalising model of atypical relationships and behaviors within the classroom, an approach that does not allow for the analysis and interpretation of the role of emotions in forming the learning relationship and among peers. The only battlefield for psychology in schools is the school counseling desk for students, a policy that is not regulated in Italy, however, and, moreover, which does not even make it compulsory in school settings.

The “Recovery and Resilience Plan: Next Generation Italy” PNRR financed by the European Commission has programmed a series of substantial investments for the development of national educational policies, aimed at strengthening structural aspects of the school and teacher training, and at combating dropping out of school through peer tutoring, mentoring and counseling activities. A budget of EUR 18 billion has been financed for this plan. These actions aim to build a cultural scaffolding in Italian societies starting from a reaffirmation of the transformative power of the school and the promotion of teachers capable of reading the social and emotional transformations in which the school and its pupils are immersed, such as for example the impoverishment of families, the difficulty of entering the world of work following the diploma [28], immigration, the presence of new sexualities [29–31], and the difficulty of imagining and promoting within the training processes a future of autonomy for students with disabilities throughout their life span [32,33].

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