

Qualitative analysis of disability models: the perspectives of parents, teachers and professional educators.

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Introduction. Identifying proper disability models that inform social and educational relationships of pupils with disabilities is an important step forward in the analysis of those “communicative stimuli” that affect the development of young people with disabilities (Federici, 2003), even beyond parental relationships. Moreover, a survey aimed to know the points of view of parents, teachers and educators might offer precious and rare information on the dissemination of principles stated in the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF; WHO, 2002) as well as on the biopsychosocial model for different categories of people living in the same educational environment, but coming from different cultural and social backgrounds.

Objectives. To explore any possible representation of disability which would orient opinions, attitudes, and behaviours in 83 individuals (teachers in regular schools and special teachers, parents of children with or without disabilities, social and medical staff, professional educators) in order to investigate the relationship between disability, adaptation, socialization and development as well as to contribute to the dissemination of the biopsychosocial model introduced by the ICF.

Method. The experimental objective has been checked through qualitative analyses, by means of the Atlas.ti software, for text coding and interpreting on 16 *focus group*, a tool purposefully chosen to detect all those aspects connected with the primary objective, which, by means of quantitative analyses, uses the *chi-square* distributions.

Results. The social model of disability is a very well known model to all professional groups, except for specialized teachers. Nevertheless, only parents of children with disabilities and regular-class teachers seem to strongly be willing to adhere to such a model. Whereas specialized teachers, social and medical staff and professional educators claim for a “transition model” which oscillates between the social and the biopsychosocial models, parents of children with no disabilities start from a different perspective oscillating between medical and social models.

Conclusions. Results from the qualitative analysis, using both manual and computerized (Atlas.ti software) procedures, show varying perspectives on disabilities, other than medical, social and biopsychosocial models. The poor dissemination of the biopsychosocial model among parents highlights the lack of a vision which is “open” to personal development, social growth, improvement of the standards in the quality of life. This suggests a priority: the need for extending training and educational occasions also to parents, in order to promote a more effective management of personal and environmental resources to face disabilities of their children, in the aim of developing and actually promoting a new “culture of diversities”.

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