

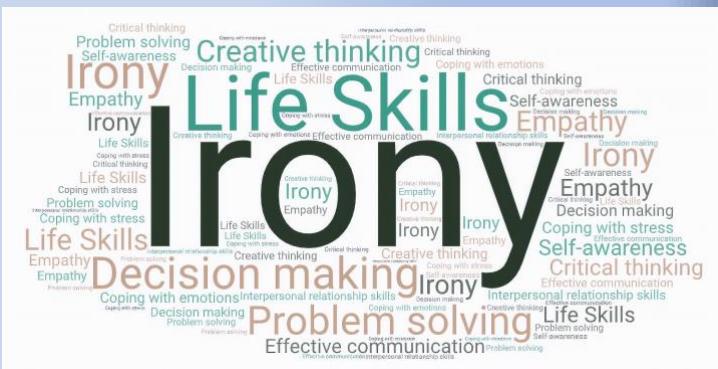


The pedagogical category of irony: a survey of its formative potential and its value in relational dynamics and in the development of life and soft skills

Dr.ssa Chiara Carletti

Introduction

The state of the art of the studies about "irony" reveals that we are faced with a pedagogical category still little investigated from the point of view of the human sciences, although it shows all the potential to be of great interest on the educational level, in terms of *life and soft skills* development. Cambi and Giambalvo in the book "Formarsi nell'ironia: un modello postmoderno" (Cambi, Giambalvo 2008), have recognized all of the potential. The research will develop on the basis of these reflections, with the aim of deepening and validating them within the formative contexts and in relation to the needs of a complex society. In particular, starting from a conception of irony as a pedagogical category, we will explore the term in its polymorphic and polysemic dimension, its meaning in the diachronic sense and its placement in the educational panorama. Efforts will also be made to highlight the potential of irony within training processes, verifying what could be its positive value in the development of the subject and what the risks of its use in the educational relationship are.



Hypothesis

The research project comes from the need to change the educational paradigm: we need an education that teaches us to come out of ourselves, to overcome our limits, to open ourselves to diversity and, above all, to change. Such an education might be able to promote the development of a complex thinking leading to the acquisition of those skills necessary for planetary citizenship. This citizenship is characterized by the ability to live in pluralism, by the willingness to confront, to dialogue, to encounter, overcoming the various belonging and closures, as well as any form of prejudice. In this sense, irony could make a personal contribution.

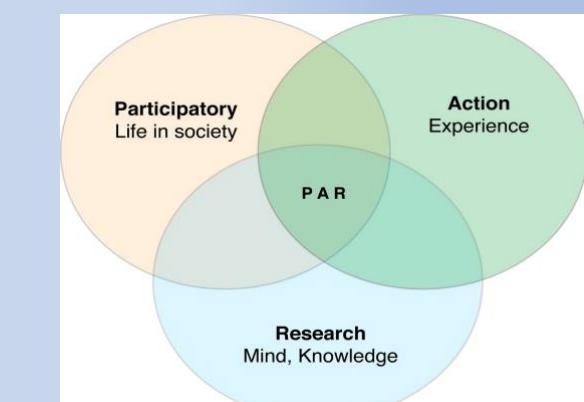
Objectives

- Analyze the pedagogical category of irony in its epistemological, cognitive and formative dimension;
- Observe the effects that irony could bring to the development of the subject who makes use of it, on the educational, relational, and professional level;
- Investigate the possible uses of the pedagogical category of irony within educational contexts, for the development of life and soft skills and in relation to the acquisition of a complex thinking;
- Underline any aspects of the irony that highlight its limitations regarding the development of the representation of ourselves and others.

Method

From a methodological point of view the activities are carried out through *Participatory action research* (PAR). It is an integrated socio-educational approach that unites three different moments: the research, the participatory and action, in order to release the cognitive potential of the individual and activate a change (Orefice, 2006).

The research will focus on qualitative analyses (Mantovani, 1998) of the data emerging from the interviews, focus groups and participant observation. Since research starts from the assumption that irony can be educated, especially through the use of environments and ironic subjects, the moment of the action—constitutive part of PAR—will be realized in the classroom context starting from the implementation of three different teaching methods: the heuristic-participative method, Peer Education and the Philosophy for Children. The target group will be pre-teens and adolescents, specifically between 10 and 18 years old.



Expected results

- Reconsideration of the concept of irony, taking into account its specificities and its multiple dimensions: epistemological, cognitive and formative;
- Participatory design of tools useful for the evaluation of educational and relational results achieved by students and teachers;
- Participated and shared elaboration of learning paths for life skills (*life and soft skills*) and in relation to a complex thought, starting from the use in the classroom of the pedagogical category of irony;
- Enhancement of integrated education that takes into account a variety of aspects and an organic vision of the person, starting with his or her cognitive and emotional development.

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