

NARRATIVE APPROACH AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING: WHAT CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF INCLUSIVE CONTEXTS?

APPROCCIO NARRATIVO E DIGITAL STORYTELLING: QUALE CONTRIBUTO PER LA COSTRUZIONE DI CONTESTI INCLUSIVI?



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ABSTRACT

Narration in special pedagogy is intricately connected to the category of educational care, understood as a founding element of the professional background of those who work in contact with human fragility and vulnerability. This approach, expressed as an autobiographical and/or digital storytelling method, is particularly functional in allowing all students to express themselves authentically. It also contributes significantly to develop inclusive contexts.

La narrazione in Pedagogia speciale è strettamente connessa alla categoria della cura educativa intesa come elemento fondativo del bagaglio professionale di chi lavora a contatto con le umane fragilità e vulnerabilità. Tale approccio, declinato come metodo autobiografico e digital storytelling, risulta particolarmente funzionale per consentire a tutte/i le/gli allieve/i di narrarsi e di esprimersi in modo autentico, contribuendo in modo significativo alla costruzione di contesti inclusivi.

KEYWORDS

Narration, Digital Storytelling, inclusion

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1. Narrative intertwining in inclusive education

The narrative approach represents a *method*, a *tool*, and a *formative* and *self-formative language* (Cambi, 2002; Demetrio, 1996, 1999; Gaspari, 2008, 2018, 2023; Mortari, 2013; Trisciuzzi, Zappaterra & Bichi, 2006) capable of interpreting and “connecting” a plurality of dimensions, knowledge, and understanding, exercising the fundamental role of a true historical-cultural and educational-didactic *paradigm*, capable of *transversely* “traversing” (Gaspari, 2020) multiple epistemological fields and sectors. In the current critical and scientific-cultural revisiting of Special Pedagogy, narration today constitutes a genuine *gesture* and *gaze* of educational *care* aimed at the planning construction of educational contexts with a high level of inclusivity, both within and outside of schools. The epistemological model of Special Pedagogy is deeply intertwined with the “plural” formative values of narration itself because both orient their research towards *qualitative* methods and perspectives, aiming to inquire into the complexity of individuals with disabilities and/or “special educational needs” using a plurality of non-reductionist models, theories, and paradigms, allowing themselves to be “contaminated” and productively guided by the significant contribution of phenomenological-hermeneutic, ecological-systemic, humanistic-existential approaches, etc., in constant dialogue with the intricate reality of events characterizing the human being understood as a “collection of stories” to be welcomed, understood, and valued. Innovative formative models characterized by the productive and evolutionary intertwining of a plurality of knowledge and understanding from multiple epistemological fields emerge from this; it must be interpreted according to the unifying interpretative keys offered by two guiding devices: narrativity and complexity, viewed from an inclusive perspective. As Bruner (2014) states, narration weaves stories, traces defined spaces and times, inhabits the vital world in which we act, think, remember, as it emerges as a language of rediscovered or reconstructed meaning, a place of further possibility, which is located beyond the given, as it interprets, aligns, interconnects strictly dialectical and interdependent events and contextual variables. A fundamental task of Special Pedagogy from an inclusive perspective is to provide individuals with disabilities the opportunity to effectively *tell* and *tell their own story* with their identity and experience, in the uniqueness of needs, existential expectations, and elements of difficulty. The experience of deficit and the gradual acceptance of certain disabling pathologies require the protagonists of the difficult situation to change their personal habits and lifestyles, social practices, affective-cognitive reference points, worldviews, and knowledge to learn, laboriously, other, *different*, innovative skills and ways of living. In this vast and delicate scenario of constant

critical and epistemological re-examination, the contribution of narration as a sensitive *language* and *tool* capable of fostering the identity *acceptance* of individuals with “special educational needs” is placed, as an undeniably important resource from the perspective of *educational care* and the *existential redesign* of autonomy and social inclusion paths for *all* individuals. Each subject does not have one story, but rather multiple stories and develops an inner narrative that gives meaning to existence: each of us constructs and lives a story, a personal narration, revealing the most secret nature of identity with the aid of functional autobiographical practices that allow *all* individuals, especially those with disabilities, to possess or, better yet, to re-possess, the history of personal, particular experiences (Gaspari, 2016). Professionals in the field of care and assistance, within inclusive Special Pedagogy, in daily contact with the most fragile and vulnerable categories, draw heavily from the narrative approach and the wide range of tools, methods, and techniques, considering it a fundamental *formative and self-formative medium* in the perspective of cultural and existential redesign of the different experiential lived realities of each and every subject, without exception (Ruggerini, Manzotti, Griffo & Veglia, 2013). «Narration, as an emancipatory act, legitimizing itself in its connection with self-representation, to be included in the broader concept of self-determination, pushes towards completely personal nuances, where everyone activates subjective strategies to achieve their own qualitative life project» (Del Bianco, 2019, p. 45).

The “telling” of people with disabilities represents a genuine expressive-communicative modality articulated in a plurality of verbal and non-verbal languages, an emancipatory “tool” to be understood as an actual revealing resource of needs, requirements, strengths, and weaknesses, which testifies to the renewed desire to “be there”, to want to provide, even if in a “special” way, a personal sign, an irreplaceable trace of oneself within common educational contexts. Narrative practices, in most cases, manage to *give* voice, word, dignity, and rights of expression-participation back to *all* individuals who, becoming aware of their level of marginalization, struggle to change and improve their existential conditions. The educational-didactic intervention is, therefore, a meeting of stories that start from the past, root themselves in the present projecting towards the future, in the constitutive and projectual dimension of the helping relationship, which allows the subject with “SEN” to overcome the immobility, the “givenness” of the immutable disabling pathology. «Human knowledge and personal identities are therefore continually constructed and revised. Experience of the world, like each person's perception of her- or himself, is a continuously developing narrative that is constantly forming and changing form. Here, human knowledge is regarded

as a plurality of small narratives, local and personal in nature, which are always under construction» (Heikkinen, 2002, p. 14). There is no single, dominant, or static reality but, rather, several realities that are constructed in the process of interactions and dialogues (Moen, 2006, p. 60). The design of good inclusive narrative practices implies taking responsibility because educational work is never neutral: thus, professionalism is always played out in the subtle balance between personal and professional experience. Hence the need to re-engage the skills, the training baggage of professionals in educational care and assistance, to design effective processes of *competent accompaniment* (Canevaro et al., 2021) of individuals with “SEN”, which require constant actions of reflection and re-elaboration of experiences, continuous repositioning and anchoring to draw from and then “restart”. At the center of the renewed training itinerary (Giaconi et al., 2021) is the adult-care professional, who not only always requires professionalizing training and knowledge, «but also training that goes *beyond* professionalization, sometimes, professionalizing zeal: training of the person that also plays a role and performs a function, but above all is a complex person, with a personal and professional history, which most of the time intertwine, influence each other, condition each other [...]» (Castiglioni, 2014, p. 25). Narration, thanks to its high formative and self-formative values, makes the teaching team increasingly capable of giving meaning to and shaping itself, to others and to the world around it, in the complex and precise “reading” of the formative and existential traces of *all* students and *each* student. Narrating means rewriting one’s own professional and life path, acquiring a renewed and more conscious biographical-professional reflexivity within a complex network of relationships and meanings. Those who narrate “shape” and “are shaped” in the incessant search for a new personal and professional identity, which are built daily *with* others and *for* others. It is an educational experience of co-education and co-formation, capable of involving the main protagonists of the inclusive educational context, immersing them in the fascinating adventure of the narrative dimension, which increasingly represents a significant resource in the affirmation of the inclusive perspective, characterized by a wide range of potentialities, abilities, and new directions of meaning. Therefore, education is a dynamic, non-linear process that, through the aid of the narrative approach, gradually takes shape and unfolds in dialectical processes of interaction and negotiation of experiences: the professional project is realized in projecting into what *is not yet*, in the incessant dialectical action of productive re-signification that guides activities, encounters, monitoring processes, evaluation, and hypotheses of growth, maturation, and change. From this perspective, “educating is narrating” (Demetrio, 2012), and *narrating itself is educating oneself to the*

reciprocity of human relationships, recognizing the indispensable value, not only formative but also *transformative*, emancipatory, and symbolic, of narration itself, understood as *educational care* and as a privileged method and tool of redesigning *different* life stories. Narration, as a method of *educational care* and *helping*, facilitates the encounter between the specialized teacher and the individual with disabilities, allowing the maintenance or regulation of the “right distance”, that is, designing that territory of the middle ground, that space of intersubjective co-ownership between one's own self (professional and personal) and the Other, with the aim of achieving an authentic helping relationship, in which each of the protagonists can recognize themselves, without getting confused. Narration facilitates the truth of the encounter with the other, offering itself as an emotional and cultural space, always open to new possibilities of knowledge. «Not too close, then, but not too far either, a dance that makes the relationship itself the object of intervention. In this sense, the educator's story is touched by the encounter with the other's story [...]. The other becomes a mirror that also reflects the representations of our past and, at the same time, reminds us that we have grown up, that we have become adults [...]. Think of working with disability: there are educational projects, medical diagnoses, administrative documents, social relations, and so on. Different writings that, in reality, do not tell the story of that person, lost among the labels and titles necessary for their categorization. The task of education, in all this, is perhaps also to restore to the individual their story, to tell it and to help them tell it not so much *beyond* those fragments, but starting from them, from the inevitably – and understandably – partial perspectives. Stitching the knots of history, giving it back to its author and protagonist» (Biffi, 2012, pp. 80-81). In the complexity of confronting the history of the other, of the “different”, it is possible to find a new horizon of meaning and significance, even for the most vulnerable, marginalized, denied existences. «Stories connect because they are always addressed and situated: they are always told to someone and they are told in certain contexts» (Meininger, 2010, p. 195). From the perspective of achieving quality inclusion, special Pedagogy, understood as the science of *recognition* and *narration* of diversities, revisits its specific epistemological territory by breaking down schematic approaches and symmetries to grasp possible articulations of meaning among elements that are apparently fragmented and disjointed, significantly relating project itineraries with the singularity and uniqueness of *life stories* and of *each life story*, especially if “difficult” and vulnerable. Narrating oneself, one's lived experience enhances, in *everyone*, the ability to choose and decide responsibly how to use one's cultural, social, and moral resources, etc., to question oneself and the world: the life stories of individuals with

“special educational needs” are like guiding lights because they orient existence towards the gradual conquest of new cognitive milestones. From this perspective, the contribution of the narrative-autobiographical approach to legitimize the rights of citizenship, belonging, full participation of *all* individuals becomes of fundamental importance, especially, to restructure the field of experience of the other (Bertolini et al., 2015), offering them authentic opportunities for human redemption and existential redesign. The adoption of the narrative approach from an inclusive perspective is aimed at legitimizing to the maximum the historical-cultural identity of the “different” person, to bring out the awareness of a renewed search for meaning, understood as a right-duty towards oneself and, first and foremost, as a constant commitment directed towards the maximum realization-extrusion of individual potentials, as an urgent need for those living in the condition of deficit, to re-found, to re-find, with the support of others, additional resources, languages, activities, emotions, future projects. The help offered by narration is aimed at *restoring-recomposing* the history of the other within a care relationship that is a place of encounter of identities and stories that need to be recognized, welcomed, and valued. «The personal history of each individual undergoes, in self-narration, a decomposition and a recomposition, which engages the subject in a path towards a problematization, a decentering, a reflection, a real understanding, and a possibility of intervention on reality» (Bocci & Franceschelli, 2014, p. 146). It becomes of fundamental importance, in current inclusive education, to overcome disciplinary fragmentation, the content fixation of notions and pseudo-immutable categories typical of obsolete methodological-didactic practices, to embrace the challenge of a knowledge in dynamic evolution and in constant search of innovative hybridizations. «Educational-didactic itineraries should be legitimized and strengthened, characterized by processes of osmotic hybridization, ecosystemic visions, interdependent and evolutionary, where the narrative approach builds new and significant interconnective networks between cultures, languages, disciplinary fields, implicit and explicit dimensions of integrated curricular design. In this way, it is possible to break that staticity, that sectoral and hyper-specialistic encyclopedism that do not allow adequate qualitative, *transversal*, multidisciplinary “reading” of the knowledge, understanding, and skills related to the complex situations of disability and “SEN”» (Gaspari, 2023, p. 21).

2. For a narrative philosophy: the role of autobiography

From a didactic point of view, the narrative approach finds its most complete expression in the autobiographical method, which constitutes a coherent set of

strategies, techniques, and procedures aimed at promoting, through targeted narrative inputs, the self-awareness of students, with disabilities and beyond, about their lived experiences (Moroni, 2006). Thanks to this methodology (Demetrio, 2008, 2012), “narrating” and “narrating oneself” contribute significantly to deconstructing and restructuring teaching-learning processes by creating a renewed environment in which time and space are not just simple accessories but constitute real formative places that allow those who inhabit them to access personal and collective narrative memory. Thus, it is possible to share memories, thoughts, experiences with others, in the most free and unconditional way possible, without fear of being judged or misunderstood. This inevitably has repercussions on the roles traditionally associated with teachers and students: between these two figures, a relationship of mutual trust and respect must be established, as they are considered indispensable elements to allow words to truly come to life, authentically touching those who listen to or tell them. The specialized support teacher, together with subject colleagues, acts as an agent of the inclusive narrative context: they are called, even before their students, to actively and participatively engage with their historical-professional and existential baggage. Designing disciplinary pathways through the autobiographical-narrative method requires the teacher to develop an innovative methodological-didactic perspective: its adoption in school contexts does not end with the application of a pre-coded set of steps to be followed pedantically, as «the heart of the autobiographical method lies in the constant process of narrative-making, through trials and errors, choices and reconsiderations, attempts and discoveries» (Biffi, 2015, p. 36).

The narrative language represents a key to activate critical-reflexive processes in all disciplines, including those that, according to common meaning, can only be understood through an abstract and logical-deductive approach. In this context, our interest is focused on the teaching of philosophy, which often, in curricula, pays careful attention to the study of authors, approached from a temporal perspective, rather than – as prompted by UNESCO (2007) – to the devices regulating thought, as well as the great questions that have always challenged humanity. Consequently, this teaching is often considered by students with “special educational needs” and beyond, as a series of content to be learned, rather than as an opportunity to reflect, through narration, on oneself and one's personal place in the world. According to the *National Guidelines for High School Courses* of 2010, philosophical reflection constitutes a «specific and fundamental modality of human reason that, in different epochs and in different cultural traditions, constantly raises questions about knowledge, about the existence of man and the meaning of being and existing» (MIUR, p. 20). However, it is important that the questions addressed are

investigated through a problematic, interrogative, and critical-reflexive approach that allows all students to go beyond the merely content-focused aspect. For this reason, narrative practice is significant from both a hermeneutic and methodological perspective. The latter, in fact, can change approaches to knowledge, relationships, and contexts from a self-transformative perspective (Mortari, 2019), assuming a plurality of functions: *heuristic-explanatory*, as it allows the individual to «redefine the role and meaning of objects, marker events, and people who have most influenced their existential trajectory» (Gaspari, 2008, p. 262), *formative*, as it impacts their identity path and, at the same time, *transformative*, as it acts as an agent of existential change (Gaspari, 2022).

Teaching philosophy through the autobiographical-narrative method implies the willingness of the inclusive teacher to combine transmissive methodologies with others that involve the adoption of narrative language interpreted as a transversal epistemic construct, of an interdisciplinary nature. Of particular relevance in the narrative approach is the use of myths and metaphors, which allow for a multi-perspective reading and sharing of reality: «the production of metaphors, going beyond a merely ordinary and objectivistic use of language, would guarantee the safeguarding of the constitutive differences of reality, of the thousand planes and the thousand perspective visions in which the dynamism of the real unfolds» (Farahi, 2020, p. 279).

Narration thrives on metaphors, suggestions, provocations, dilemmatic aspects, and opportunities for qualitative research, and, in this sense, represents a privileged didactic and organizational mediator to connect and tune disciplinary languages into concrete dimensions of experiential lived stories articulated from a circular perspective, free from rigid hierarchies of roles and functions.

Below are some training proposals to inspire didactic pathways that associate narrative values with phenomenological-hermeneutic readings of philosophical texts:

Narrative metaphors	Hermeneutical reading	Authors and reference texts
The journey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inner journey aimed at existential self-discovery; ● Form of escape from reality. 	Sartre, "Existentialism Is a Humanism" (1945) Bauman, "Liquid Modernity" (2022)

The Dream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • illusion; • what unveils the most authentic interiority of man 	<p>Schopenhauer, The World as will and representation (1819)</p> <p>Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams (1899)</p>
Aesthetic beauty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbol of pleasure, expression of life's emptiness; • Symbol of perfection and pure love. 	<p>Kierkegaard, Aut Aut (1843)</p> <p>Platone, Il Simposio (IV century a.C.)</p>
Utopia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • search and desire for a better society, where beauty, harmony, order, and justice reign. Utopia as a place that does not yet exist, but whose possibility of existence is not denied; • disillusionment and disenchantment regarding the precariousness of the world. Utopia as a place of perfection that will never be realized. 	<p>Moro, Utopia (1548); Campanella, The City of the Sun (1602)</p> <p>Horkheimer and Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment (1947)</p>
Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expression of human authenticity; • subordination of man to the dominant morality. 	<p>Heidegger, Being and Time (1927)</p> <p>Nietzsche, Thus spoke Zarathustra (1883-1885)</p>
The face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • call to the ethics of responsibility; • experience of alienation 	<p>Lévinas, Ethics and Infinity: The Face of the Other as ethical alterity and trace of the Infinite (1984)</p> <p>Sartre, No exit (1944)</p>

Tab. 1 Narrative Metaphors and Hermeneutic Approach

Problem-based learning encourages living and sharing seemingly antinomic topics from a transversal perspective, innovating teaching-learning processes, for example, through the following work phases:

1. *circle time*: students reflect on questions that have always questioned humanity, such as: what is happiness? Is man truly born free? Is authentic knowledge attainable? What is virtue? How to escape pain?
2. *narrative reports*: Students jot down spontaneous reflections on sticky notes, that are placed on a bulletin board (or inserted into a digital Padlet).

3. *personal memories*: Students access their repertoire of memories and experiences in a welcoming classroom environment, possibly with relaxing background music.
4. *experience re-elaboration*: students, choosing an expressive form of their choice, share what they discovered and rediscovered with others, leading to new directions of meaning.
5. *creation of a final product*: from the collaborative work, students engage in collective work that could involve creating a happiness decalogue, crafting a story, compiling a collective photo album, etc.
6. *hermeneutic reading of different identity-stories*: students relate to understanding the questions posed by different philosophers and their biographies over time in a completely renewed way. Students, including those with special educational needs, gradually become aware that the questions and inquiries posed by the studied authors in the texts are close to their life stories and existential needs. Philosophical texts are not mere subjects to study but rather narratives revealing the worldview of their authors. These ones are understood as a synthesis of their perception of the world and the context in which they lived. From this perspective, they represent narrative media of fundamental value not only for learning philosophy but also for restructuring the experiential field of *all* and *each student*, especially those with disabilities (Life Project).

In this way, teaching philosophy manages to «activate, in those involved through it in a formative path, the exercise of critical and speculative thinking» (Manara, 2004). Narrative philosophy thus means opening a space for authentic reflection, where everyone sees the other as both a constraint and a unique resource for mutual understanding. The classroom becomes an authentic narrative community, «fostering shared knowledge practices and identifying learning with the process of belonging to the community» (De Rossi, 2023, p. 53).

Philosophy can be taught by teachers in an authentically inclusive manner, however, as highlighted by the Universal Design for Learning perspective, if teaching processes are structured so to include the use of different languages (Savia, 2015; Cottini, 2019). The student must be able to express himself using a plurality of modes: iconic, gestural, textual, etc. It is about breaking down hierarchies between what is considered academic and non-academic and, above all, between those considered capable, as well as those deemed incapable due to impairments, of developing valid thoughts and reflections.

In summary, the autobiographical-narrative method, with its amplifying potential, uses diversified languages capable of deconstructing roles, functions, and hierarchies to represent an innovative method that contributes to the creation of inclusive contexts. It allows all students, *without exception*, to fully express and narrate themselves, involving a wide range of skills and resources, activating individual and collective processes of change, laden with meaning and therefore highly significant.

3. Narration and Digital Storytelling: constructing Digital Artifacts in Academic Contexts

School inclusion is a complex, evolving process that requires educational communities to focus on diversity as an ontological characteristic of the uniqueness of *every* human being. A democratic school promotes a constant restructuring of the previously *established* organizational structure and traditional ways of schooling, towards the adoption of pluralistic and alternative teaching methodologies that can respond to the heterogeneity of students' educational needs, including those with disabilities. This contribution reflects on the importance of the autobiographical-narrative approach (Bruner, 2006) and the multiple opportunities offered by *digital storytelling* to build more inclusive learning environments.

Some multimedia products created by a group of specialized trainees from the University of Urbino (TFA-VIII cycle) during their internship are considered. Technology amplifies the reading of multiple forms of reality representation, enhancing the narrative-expressive-communicative and artistic resources and values of students with disabilities. It allows them to work and learn collaboratively and creatively.

Technology allows the design, documentation, and dissemination of stories, transforming them into deeply humanistic and educational experiences. Digital storytelling (DS) is a new variant of this reflective process, in which «technology can be harnessed to create a safe and engaging space for storytellers to share and reflect on their experiences» (Saridaki, Meimaris, 2018, p. 161).

The narrative approach, combined with the valuable contribution of media, promotes the development and expression of multiple and multisensory intelligences (Gardner, 2015), enabling students with “special educational needs” to enhance their personal strengths and weaknesses to re-construct their own story and design alternative disciplinary narratives with their peers (Bocci, Castellana e De Angelis, 2023; Gaspari, 2008, 2021, 2023; Salis, 2018). The plurality of

multimedia languages used in digital narration represents a productive *inclusive medium*, supporting students with “special educational needs” who have difficulty communicating with peers and adults in expressing themselves creatively and effectively, promoting the acquisition of technical, socio-relational, reflective, logical-critical, and emotional skills.

Students are involved in both the project ideation phase, defining the purpose and objectives of the work, and the more operational and technical phase of editing and building the multimedia product. The digital storytelling methodology promotes cooperation and positive interdependence among students, allowing each to contribute to the co-construction of the artifact with their own resources and abilities, respecting *all* and *everyone's different* specificities. The digital autobiographical narrative, with a high inclusivity gradient, consists of an ideation phase, writing texts, storyboarding, and selecting the most functional technologies for its realization: each step is characterized by analysis, listening, and mutual critical confrontation within the workgroup. In each story, the narrator chooses the experiences to talk about and the defining and significant elements, organizes a new context, putting events in order to relocate them in space and time, in the renewed management of affective-emotional dimensions.

The autobiographical multimedia narrative approach allows students with disabilities to reflect on their experiences, identifying new interpretative trajectories of meaning, aiming to project them towards other possible worlds by assuming alternative, different ways of being, acting, and existing. «The possibility of re-accessing experience, reformulating its meaning is, as we have seen, a purely narrative declination of language» (Demetrio, 2012, p. 241). Specialized support teachers-in-training have assisted high school students with disabilities in using digital storytelling methodology to narrate their experiences. Following the principle of *story first, technology second*, they emphasized the expression of self-narration initially and later calibrated the choice of using the most suitable technological languages to construct it (Baschiera, 2014). Technology gives particular shape to the narration, which is *re-written* by adopting idiosyncratic expressive-communicative paths, not always linear but coherent with the most significant elements in view of designing possible future horizons. In each story, competencies, talents, passions, dreams, expectations, and potential future horizons emerge. The synthesis required by this work only allows us to report some inclusive experiences of digital autobiographical narration carried out by future specialized teachers during their internship, with the fundamental contribution of the narrative language and method, mediated by technological resources.

To create inclusive contexts with the support of multimedia technologies, digital skills alone are certainly not enough: these ones need to be integrated with relational, pedagogical-didactic, and disciplinary skills according to the Technology, Pedagogy, and Content Knowledge (TPACK) model (Di Blas et al., 2018). A fifth-year student at the art high school with developmental disorder, attention deficit, and emotional-behavioral dysregulation, who struggles in peer relationships and emotional management, found effective and engaging opportunities in creating a digital *book* and reconstructing her personal and artistic journey through technology. The emancipatory value of self-determination (Cottini, 2016) for this student manifested in retrieving, selecting, and cataloging her graphic-pictorial works, managing a complex process that required not just organizing the works but choosing a functional criterion to reinterpret her graphic-pictorial production, reconnecting and becoming aware of forgotten and disjointed parts of her identity-story. In the initial phase of the work, the future specialized teacher, through structured interviews, asked the struggling student to exegete the works, a particularly useful way to help her focus on the basic concepts to describe the work and reinterpret its meaning. The selected products, such as photos, images, drawings, videos, and texts were inserted into an interactive, dynamic, and hypertextual presentation (Genially), using a new way to express her “special” narrative plot. Digital storytelling allowed creating an inclusive context that facilitated communicative exchange between the student and her peers, overcoming prejudices about her disability. Thus, the student built an updated narrative-artistic profile adhering to her current sensitivity and became aware of acquiring skills applicable to her future professional path.

Another interesting experience involves the narration of a student with mild cognitive disability, attending the fourth year of a vocational school, who developed, with the help of the specialized teacher, a website (Google Sites) designed to collect narratives related to his school and extracurricular life experiences. The customization of the interface and the simplicity in adding or modifying content, along with the ease of managing the site itself, make Google Sites an ideal tool for sharing one's world. The site includes infographics, interactive presentations with dynamic and engaging animations, created with Genially and Canva, and in each section of the site, images, videos built with Movie Maker, audio files of stories played with Audacity, photos of experiences, contribute to telling an original and continuously updated autobiographical narrative. Through digital storytelling, the student with disabilities expresses himself and connects with his peers by sharing experiences, passions, emotions, and future perspectives. In the various sections of the site, the most significant elements of his story, the most

relevant school and work experiences are reported, and, to conclude, the works done individually and with classmates are shown also.

The site serves as a space where the student has inserted the valuable testimony of his personal journey, relating acquired knowledge to those reworked and recomposed using technological and multimedia languages. Based on what the specialized teachers report, the experiences of digital narration have allowed students with disabilities to:

- improve personal communicative-expressive and narrative skills;
- explore their emotions to mirror those of their peers, contributing to building a deeper emotional and cognitive dialogue with themselves and others;
- enhance critical reflection and re-reading of their life experiences, to make choices consciously and self-determine;
- consolidate the sense of belonging to the school community;
- learn indispensable technological skills for exercising active citizenship to encourage social participation;
- promote creative thinking to develop captivating and original digital narrative structures to address problems in unconventional and productive ways.

Technology amplifies expressive, communicative, and creative potentials of all students, motivating them to be active builders of their own narrative. Storytelling is a language that connects, creating links between individual experiences and cultural and social contexts. In narrative re-construction, the path is never one-way: one walks along a multiverse path, where it is possible, in dialogue with the listener, to re-read oneself, to glimpse new generative perspectives of existential meaning and significance. In conclusion, the experience with digital storytelling proves to be a powerful resource in inclusive education, as it allows structuring personalized learning paths that respond to specific individual needs, promoting, at the same time, collaboration and sharing of ideas and resources among students with “special educational needs”, peers, and teachers.

«The reality is that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities do have stories to tell, and multimedia tools like DST that are designed to be cognitively accessible can provide the means to enable them to share these rich and unique stories» (Davies, Stock, Davies & Wehmeyer, 2018, p. 37).

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