

CRED in Verona – Italy

CRED (Centre for Educational and Didactic Research) – Department of Philosophy, Pedagogy and Psychology, University of Verona – headed by Professor Luigina Mortari.

The CRED was established in December 2008 with the aim of developing research, as well as educational practices involving close co-operation with professionals in the fields of education, lifelong learning, training and in the social sector, in a variety of educational and social settings within local organisations. The Centre is also open to co-operation with experts who work with the school and, more generally, with adults, such as teachers or parents, who are concerned with educational and teaching processes.

A further aim of the Centre is to explore and enhance the knowledge of practitioners and adults who are involved or interested in education and teaching and training or lifelong education processes, thus involving children and teenagers, as well as adults.

Theoretical and methodological framework of CRED

Through a reflexive approach to the research work that the centre conducts, CRED wants to create a research community which is able to generate meaningful educational discourse and establish effective research practices. The following presuppositions have inspired the Centre endeavours towards this goal:

- the significance of the educational research is to transform practice. A good research project should lead to beneficial changes in the practices it studied. The outlook of CRED is that research should lead to transformations rather than just to an increase in knowledge.

The researches intend to devise theories, which are useful for practitioners, i.e. the researchers' work should provide the practitioners with a service, by giving them meaningful suggestions.

- empirical research and educational theory have to dialectically cooperate towards meaningful results. On the one hand, theories have to produce experience, while, on the other, experience has to produce theories. In fact, while practices need to be informed by theories, theories growing away from practical experience are meaningless.

CRED is interested in investigating educational practices in different contexts, while putting the participants (teachers, parents, educators and children) at the centre of its research action, as protagonists.

The world of human experience is complex and researchers who want to focus on it as the object of their investigation face a bold task (Dahlberg et al., 2002, p. 18). From an epistemic perspective, the problem is identifying the most suitable method for investigating experience. The positivistic paradigm in human sciences has long prevailed, but, in the last few decades, other paradigms have been developed (Guba e Lincoln, 1985; Mortari, 2007) and the use of qualitative approaches has been increased.

Taking these new paradigms on board, CRED develops research on the basis of these tenets:

- a phenomenological philosophy of research, which essentially means being faithful to the phenomenon, that is to apprehend its original profile. In order to follow this phenomenological principle it is necessary to have a method of investigation, whose ultimate goal is understanding phenomena. Moving from this perspective, CRED, as a community of researchers gears its theoretical reflection towards the implementation of an effective philosophy of research, one that is aware of the educational processes and practices (Mortari, 2008);

- a participatory research, which means that the investigation has to be carried out *with* the participants, rather than *on* them. Therefore, all our projects are developed involving the

protagonists of educational experiences, both adults and children;

- CRED prefers working with qualitative methods (grounded theory, narrative inquiry, case-study, phenomenological method), thus making use of research strategies which are able to explore phenomena and experience with methodological congruence – i.e. making the research problem, the question, the data and the way of handling data fit together.

CRED, as a community of researchers, is interested in reflecting upon these heuristic and epistemological aspects of doing research, because reflexivity represents a pivotal element in the present-day research landscape and, in the perspective of CRED, only by cultivating their inner gaze, will researchers be capable of developing an outward gaze that allows them to understand the experience of others.

CRED's Main Research Topics:

- (a) Teacher Education;**
- (b) The research for children;**
- (c) Children's education and care;**
- (d) Ethical education;**
- (e) Emotional education;**
- (f) Philosophy of care.**

(A) TEACHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The last few decades have witnessed the emergence of a new field in educational and instructional research, both in Italian (Damiano 2006, 2004, 1993; Erdas 1991; Fabbri 1998; Grassilli, Fabbri 2003; Laneve 2005; Mortari 2009, 2003) and international literature (Day et al. 2006; Perrenoud 2001; Schön 1987; Blanchard-Laville, Fablet 2000; Connelly, Clandinin, He 1997; Zambrano Leal 2007). Published studies began to question a traditional view that recognizes theoretical knowledge as the only legitimate source of professional knowledge and have tried to foreground the specificity of teachers' practical wisdom. Consequently, practice has been acknowledged as the source of a specific, legitimate form of knowledge. A research strand known as "the study of teachers' thinking" (Tochon 2000) drew attention to the most inner aspects of instructional practice, which have been addressed through the investigation of teachers' perceptions and reasoning on education. More specifically, "the new instructional research" (Damiano 2006) got to a genuine turning point, by focusing on practice and by criticising the traditional 'divorce' between the researcher's theory-based knowledge and the teacher's experience-based wisdom.

Previous studies on this subject have fostered awareness that teachers' practice-grounded and often tacit, unarticulated knowledge is essential to research on teaching. It has also become clear that theoretical knowledge gained in initial teacher training is necessary, yet not sufficient, in order to develop professional skills. Actual professional know-how can only be acquired through direct involvement in practice, provided it is accompanied by a reflective process.

In spite of the growing awareness on these issues, calls for teacher training programmes, which recognise (also on a "theoretical" basis) the value of practice, remain largely unanswered. Research on initial teacher education (cf., for instance, Sikula, Buttery, Guyton 1997) reveals that models based on the transfer of school subjects are still prevalent.

In the course of their in-service training, teachers often encounter proposals that merely repeat the prevailing models that they had already met in their initial training, usually the so called "desk-lesson centred" education.

A new research orientation is needed in order to address the relation between "the analysis of teaching practices" and "teacher training", which are often treated as two separate research topics. On the one hand we need to improve our understanding of the nature and features of expert teachers' practical knowledge (Day et al. 2007). On the other hand, we need to find out how to

foster this kind of knowledge and how to “transfer” it to novice teachers. In other words, our efforts should be oriented to explore the possibility of translating the tenets of the new epistemology of professional practice, which has become prominent in the field of teacher training research, into a new epistemology of teacher professional education (Schön 1983; 1987), one that is capable of orienting curricula and instructional methods of both initial teacher training and ongoing teachers’ professional development. The crucial importance of such an epistemological shift is even more apparent, if we take into serious consideration the fact that, taking this epistemological shift on board, the way in which we teach becomes part of the content of the training given to teachers. In order to accomplish these goals we need to get over the traditional separation between universities and schools and the mistrust between researchers and teachers. Research itself should become a chance to build mutual trust and partnerships that can make teacher training more effective and meaningful. The research projects of CRED move in this direction.

1. «Saying the practice. The culture of teaching»

This research - which was conducted by Paola Dusi, Claudio Girelli, Chiara Sità and Giuseppe Tacconi under the co-ordination of Luigina Mortari - was carried out between 2007 and 2010.

35 teachers working at different grades of the schooling system – from early childhood services to high schools – were involved. These were all teachers that – each within his/her school – enjoyed informal recognition as “alpha teachers” on the part of their colleagues. This means that the colleagues relied on these teachers’ professional guidance.

As a research community we devote a considerable amount of time to methodological reflection, in order to identify the best ways to research on teachers’ practices. In order to get to the meaning of teachers’ experiences, researchers have to use methods allowing them to give voice to the teachers. «When the process of inquiry is preconceived inside a frame of too systematized categories and procedures, then it is difficult to let the object of research - that is, the lived experience - disclose in its essence» (Mortari 2008).

Furthermore, researching in a qualitative framework, we focus our reflection on the researcher-teacher relationship. This relationship is ethically oriented, because requires that the researcher is aware of his/her responsibility in building this relationship (i.e. welcoming the others and listening to their experience).

Giving voice to the teacher through the experience of involvement in research has allowed exploring and emphasizing the value of the wisdom gained through professional practice. Furthermore, the researchers’ outcomes underscore the implications of policies, particularly in settings which seemingly delegitimize the role and profession of teachers, like in the case of the present Italian political context.

2. «Teachers’ stories and successful cases in dealing with children’s difficulties at school»

(This research - which is being conducted by Claudio Girelli, Jessica Bertolani, Alessia Camerella, Valentina Mazzoni and Marco Pino under the co-ordination of Luigina Mortari – has been carried out between 2007 and 2010).

Today’s Italy is witnessing an increase in children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Teachers, in their daily practice, have to cope with them. Creating learning opportunities for all children, dealing with their off-task learning behaviour, maximizing the participation of pupils in mainstream classrooms and involving them in, as well as promoting their engagement with parents and communities are some of the strategies used by teachers to support these children’s learning and development.

What are the effective ways of supporting children in their difficulties? What are the strategies used by teachers in their daily work? And which of them are considered to be successful by the teachers? This research has been referred to as a ‘storytelling’ case study – an analytical account of narrative

stories and descriptive accounts of educational events, projects, programmes, institutions or systems, which deserve to be narrated to interested audiences, after carefully analyzing them. (Bassegy 1999). The Project aims to develop a comprehensive case study through the collection of narratives on the teachers' experience of children's difficulties in a school context.

The research aims to find out what are the best-practices created and managed by teachers to deal with pupil's difficulties, in order to construct exemplar cases, since, as Stake (1994, 238) argued, the best way to teach professional skills is to use the case method.

3. «Teaching Italian and Mathematics in the Vocational Education and Training System»

(This research project was started 2008 and is still being carried out under the coordination Luigina Mortari and Giuseppe Tacconi).

About 100 teachers from vocational schools have been involved. The schools are part of the Cnos-Fap¹ Federation, and are located in 8 different Italian regions.²

The research has been collecting individual and small-group interviews, and some narratives from teachers about their teaching practices (they have to report examples, episodes and anecdotes from real daily experience in which learners are engaged in learning situations).

The aim of the research is to show what working tools the teachers have devised and used for the benefit of teaching/learning practices.

The outcomes present some suggestions that may well guide teachers' practice in both subject areas under study- Italian and mathematics. The crucial importance of some directions in the teaching practice emerge from this study:

- being aware of the learners;
- taking care of the relationships with the learners;
- focusing teaching/learning practice on experience and vocational practice;
- arranging learning situations with authenticity.

The key-attitude that has emerged from these directions is that teachers are oriented to looking for a personal response from each of their students.

4. «Training teachers: supervising the traineeship»

(This research is being coordinated and conducted by Alberto Agosti and Giuseppe Tacconi).

The University of Padua, in conjunction with the University of Verona, offers a programme of initial training for teachers. Professor Alberto Agosti is part of the committee providing student supervision during traineeship.

A group of Italian Universities (the Universities of Bari, Perugia, Parma, Palermo, Turin, Macerata, Milan and Naples) started a research project on the practices of the supervisors, in order to identify the supervisors' professional expertise, from the ground up. The focus is on the features of the supervisor's work, i.e. the way in which the supervisor "guides" the students during their postings in schools.

The research involves both supervisors and tutors, because of their different roles and expertise. The researchers have collected the professional routines of the supervisors and the tutors (Garfinkel 1967; 2005) in each University in order to analyse their practices. The data are being collected both through individual writings and focus-groups with a small group of local supervisors. After the analysis, the results of the focus-groups will be compared within an audit.

The analysis process wants to identify a routine-index, allowing the researchers to pinpoint the core professional competences involved in the supervisor's role.

This work is part of an APRED research programme (www.apred.eu).

¹ The Cnos-Fap Federation is the National Centre of Salesian Institutions - Vocational Training and Updating. Cfr.: www.cnos-fap.it.

² This research is linked to other recent projects, all aiming to draw attention to topics related to vocational education. Indeed, in Italy, this particular area of education has been relatively underresearched. (Tacconi, 2009; Tacconi, Mejia Gomez, 2010).

APRED is a national group, made up of researchers from different Italian Universities, with the aim of developing research in Education, particularly in schools.

5. «School on screen»

(This research is being coordinated and conducted by Alberto Agosti and Giusi Messetti).

One of the main difficulties in doing research is getting the researchers and the professionals who work at school together. Some research projects highlighted the fact that teachers and researchers look at each other with suspicion and have prejudices ones against the others, which poses limitations to their collaboration. Some authors emphasised the need for research tools which enable a more effective collaboration (Damiano 2006).

In Italy, the gap between the world of university and the world of school is very wide and difficult to bridge, so much so that teachers and researchers, more often than not, keep at a distance from each other. The first step to be made, when a new research project starts is to build a sense of familiarity among the participants, who have to get to know and learn to trust one another enough to exchange ideas freely.

Watching films seems to be a good tool to get researchers and teachers together in order to reflect on teaching/learning practices. The films which are used for this purpose are carefully chosen, so as to avoid stereotypes, clichés, or the presentation of teachers' practices, which are biased from an ideological point of view. (Bocci 2002, Ellsmore 2005).

The purpose of the research is to compare and contrast the views of the teachers and those of the researchers, on the basis of the analysis of their reactions to the films. The characters in these films are shown as they get to grips with educational practices. The data consist of personal writings and subsequent reflective sessions where these written narratives are shared (Laneve 2009; Mortari 2003; 2009).

The outcomes of this research project will focus on the difference between educational and classroom practices.

(B) RESEARCH FOR CHILDREN

Policies regarding childhood as well as research on this topic are giving more and more consideration to the children's quality of life. We aim to explore how researchers can face issues concerning children, from a child's perspective. The focus on children's understanding was inspired by three important assumptions:

- the UN Charter (United Nations 1989), which assumes that children and young people have a right to say what they think about matters that affect them and a right to have those views taken into serious account;
- the recognition of children as competent agents in their own lives. Indeed, children can and do have valuable and relevant knowledge about their lifeworld; also, they have the competence to express their ideas. In particular, we refer to a research which considers children as sophisticated thinkers and communicators (Harcourt & Conroy 2005);
- the awareness that, while quantitative surveys and experimental studies are necessary, they cannot (on their own) provide sufficient information or the insight required to fully capture the nuanced complexity of children's experiences (Darbyshire et al. 2005). Because children deserve to be elicited, we work qualitatively, in order to explore children's experience and understand their own perspective.

In the perspective of CRED the construction of a reliable research design is related to *the quality of communication and interaction between researchers and children* (Mortari 2009; Samuelsson 2004). Indeed, Mortari has developed a framework for research involving children, drawing particular attention to both the educational and the ethical aspects of the researcher-child relationship: the 'research for children' approach (Mortari 2009).

CRED research with children is based on Mortari's approach as a framework for inspiration for the work of junior researchers and for designing research projects providing meaningful experiences to participants.

In other words, we attempt at putting into practice Dewey's pedagogical principle of giving children valuable experience, also in a research context, or, in Dewey's own words, in providing children with «experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences» (1939, 17). "Meaningful educational experiences" are experiences from which the children can learn something for life, thus offering true opportunities for their flourishing. The educational concern is also an ethical one. Offering meaningful experiences means to carefully consider the children's needs. Educational intentionality requires devising genuinely useful activities, where the children's time is not wasted. As a consequence, it is essential to focus our attention on the children all the time, so that we can adjust research design to their needs and difficulties.

Researching children becomes researching *for* children when the ethical stance the researcher takes on aims at giving children a meaningful experience. By meaningful experience we mean one, which will not just provide the children with some advantage in an undefined future, but is immediately beneficial for them, as the research is being developed and conducted.

CRED studies are carried out on the basis of a many-fold methodological framework and use a range of different languages (Punch 2002; Clark & Moss 2001). The research tools that we construct need to be grounded in activities familiar to children and are creatively developed, in order to offer children interesting experiences, which are advantageous for them (Mortari 2009).

These are the main areas we have researched in our work with the children in the last few years:

- environmental education;
- the quality of life from the children's perspective (Mortari and Mazzoni 2009; Mazzoni, 2009);
- the quality of the educational context in children education (Mortari 2009);
- ethical education (following a Virtue Approach) (Mortari and Mazzoni 2010).

Furthermore CRED aims at exploring the theories and methodologies of "research with children" through literature and systematic reviews in an international perspective.

(C) CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AND CARE

1. «Immigrant children and immigrant families: the teachers' standpoint»

(This research is being coordinated and conducted by Giusi Messetti)

The research aims at exploring the teachers' views on the growing presence of immigrant children and families within early childhood services. Studies on the same topic in the context of primary and secondary education have already been conducted (Ciccardi 2004; MIUR 2001); while the children services area has not been the focus of research so far.

The project involved 115 professionals from 8 different municipalities in the *Veneto*, a region in the north-east of Italy. The municipalities were chosen among the ones with the highest percentage of foreign residents on the basis of data from the Regional Observatory on New Generations and Families.

The study uses a mixed methodological approach: semi-structured and in-deep interviews in order to identify and explore the most significant topics.

The following relevant elements emerge from the analysis:

- the linguistic gap between the teachers and the immigrant children and their families is a limit in building an educational relationship both with children and families;
- the children show they have absorbed prejudices from the adults (teachers and families);
- the presence of different cultures is perceived as a resource, enriching both the teachers' and the children's experience.

The research highlights the prominence of the linguistic channel to communicate with children and their families. In early childhood the linguistic code is one of the hundred languages available to children, and developing new forms of communication has the potential of making educational experiences in early childhood services empowering experiences.

2. «Family foster care from the children's viewpoint»

(This research was started in 2010 and is being conducted by Paola Dusi and Chiara Sità under the coordination of Luigina Mortari).

Starting from a literature review on children's protection in Italy, France and Romania, the research examines the attitude of natural and fostered children towards their family configuration in these three countries. The different cultural approaches to family foster care in the three contexts (foster family status, family professionalism, training, relationship between family and social services, remuneration) will be related to the type of relational ties promoted by foster care. The aim is to single out effective support practices for children and families.

The research involves a second phase, which is an empirical investigation, i.e. interviewing 60 protagonists of foster care: 30 foster children between the ages of 12 and 18 years, 30 natural sons or daughters, aged between 12 and 18.

Finally, the results of the research conducted in each country (Italy, France and Romania) will be compared and contrasted.

(D) ETHICAL EDUCATION

The individualistic culture that permeates our society has contaminated the pedagogical practice, developing the so called 'banking model of education' (Marullo & Edwards, 2000), which underlines the growth of an impoverished and minimalist educational practice. That's why it is necessary to improve educative paths about what is necessary to life in order to make it flourish. It is necessary, thus, to promote in schools what Socrates called epimeleia, i.e. taking care of the soul and let it bloom in all its existing possibilities, within an intimate relational, ethical and political view of existence.

Starting from a philosophical reflection on ethics, according to classical and contemporary philosophers, we design educative paths on virtues, aimed at involving children in an "ethical thinking", intended as a reflection on virtuous actions recognized in their lived experience. These educative paths become the objects for our empirical qualitative researches aimed at understanding children's ethical thinking, and at identifying which are the activities able to nurture their thoughts.

1. «Educate to virtue»

(This research was conducted in the period 2009-2014 and was conducted by Luigina Mortari and Valentina Mazzoni).

Theoretical background: The starting point of our project is the idea of ethics whose conception is rooted in the ancient philosophy and in the European cultural tradition. That is a proposal considering ethics not as a mere learning of rules, rights and duties (that is a typical American vision) but a deep reflection on life and its meaning (Lobkowitz, 1983). In this ethical vision the discourse about virtues is central. Both Socrates and Aristotle affirm that virtue is a core concept for education. In the *Apology* Socrates affirms that the aim of education is to orient the young to care their soul (*Apology*, 30 a, b); Aristotle states that the good for a human being consists in acting according to virtue (*Nicomachean Ethics*, II).

These philosophical conceptions have been translated into an educative and research project: virtues are the key concept for an "educative research" in the primary school and kindergarten, a research following the perspective of the "research for children" (Mortari, 2009b). The main elements of this approach are: to work with children within an educational familiar context; the research methods

are mainly qualitative because they are more suitable for an inquiry on complex phenomena such as ethical education, i.e. able to collect and analyze participants' meanings, thoughts, ideas and perceptions; research is not intended as aimed at testing theories, but as a path aimed at understanding a phenomenon.

The research path is inductive and emerges step by step, working in the classroom with children. Moreover the project is aimed at increasing cooperation between university and school, building a team between academic researchers and school teachers: this cooperation is the only opportunity for activating a real and significant change in educational context.

2. «MelArete: educate to virtue ethics according to the philosophy of care»

(This research was started in 2016 and is being conducted by Luigina Mortari, Marco Ubbiali and Federica Valbusa).

The word "MelArete" originates from the union of the Greek terms "meléte" (which means "care") and "areté" (which means "virtue"). The project is aimed at educating children to virtue ethics and exploring their ethical thinking (Mortari and Mazzoni, 2014). The theoretical background is grounded in the Aristotelian and Socratic ethical visions. Important references are also found in the philosophy of care (Held, 2006; Mortari, 2015; Noddings, 1984, 1992) and in the concept of Ricoeur (1990) about the distinction between ethics and morality. MelArete can be considered an ethical educative theory because philosophers studying care consider virtue as an important element of that practice.

The activities designed to reach these educative aims and collect data for the research are the following: class conversations, narratives, and the "diary of virtue", a journal where children reflect on their everyday ethical experience.

As research, MelArete assumes the epistemological background of 'naturalistic inquiry' (Guba & Lincoln, 1985), according to which, the phenomenon under study should be investigated in the context of where it appears. Therefore, this study was conducted in the primary school and kindergarten classes.

Setting the research in a naturalistic context requires the capability to design the research method on the basis of the specific characteristics and necessities of the context that hosts the research. Since the educative context is unpredictable, because each classroom is unique and original, it is useful to avoid a formalistic and aprioristic conception of the method in favour of an emerging and evolutive one. This entails deciding in advance some key epistemological tenets, and then rethinking and redesigning the method by considering what occurs in the field (Mortari, 2006, 2007, 2009a).

In pedagogy, it is possible to find two typologies of empirical research: the cognitive-constatative one, which aims to increase scientific knowledge by investigating not yet explored aspects of a phenomenon; and the experiential-transformative one, which promotes and investigates new experiences in order to enhance people flourishing and improve the educative contexts (Mortari, 2007, 2009b). MelArete can be described as experiential-transformative research because it aims to design new activities for ethical education and then to investigate their educative effectiveness in schools. Furthermore, the project can also be defined as 'research for children' (Mortari, 2009b) and not merely as 'research with children', because it is designed to offer positive and significant experiences to the children involved. This purpose arises from the application of the care ethics to the research: the core principle is the necessity to promote the good of the participants.

Coherent with the characterisation of educative research, MelArete has both educative and heuristic aims by encouraging and exploring children's ethical thinking. For this reason, instruments are designed to have an educative and a heuristic valence: promoting children's ethical reflection and collecting data about their ethical ideas. All the data we collected through the different instruments were of a qualitative-type.

(E) EMOTIONAL EDUCATION

Our time is characterized by an increasing of emotional malaise (Benasayag & Schmit, 2003) and by the phenomenon of “emotional illiteracy” (Goleman, 1995). This situation makes evident that there is a need of emotional education that facilitates people to entertain a conscious relationship with their own emotional life starting from the first levels of schooling.

1. «The vegetable garden of emotions»

(This research was started in 2016 and is being conducted by Luigina Mortari and Federica Valbusa).

Our proposal is that the cognitive conception of emotions, according to which emotions are strictly connected with cognitive elements (Ellis, 1990; Harris, 1989; Oatley, 1992; Nussbaum, 2001), can be the theoretical basis of an educative experience aimed at educating children to the practice of affective self-understanding (Mortari, 2015). The research question is the following: what ways of affective self-understanding emerge from an educative experience structured on the basis of a cognitive conception of emotions?

The educative path implies nine meetings between the classes and the researcher, with the organization of different type of activities, such as reading of stories, conversations and also a game. The principal instruments we use are the following:

- the “journal of emotional life”, that children write daily, on alternate weeks, for four months, narrating one of the emotions they felt during the day;
- the metaphor of the “vegetable garden of emotions”, invented to help children to analyze their own emotions on the basis of the following elements: the *fact* which give rise to the emotion, the *manifestations* through which the emotion eventually expresses itself and the *thoughts* which are linked with the emotion.

(F) PHILOSOPHY OF CARE

Care is a fundamental phenomenon in human life: without care there is no possibility that existence will flourish. Nevertheless, this experience often has not an evident ontological meaning, such as many other fundamental ones. This research field wants to explore the philosophy of care in order to show its ethical essence, with the aim of looking for good, and a benefit for other people. When the ethical essence of care and its directions are shown, it is possible to develop a coherent pedagogy. This philosophy is intended within a political vision, looking for common good.

the problem to inquire. From an analysis of literature it resulted that there are many discourses on care, but no one is able to give a rigorous foundation to the thesis according to which care is primary in life. Many authors argues how to decline care in the field of education (Noddings), of ethics (Held), of politics (Tronto), of the dependency work (Kittay), but it lacks an analysis that grasps the essence of care and its ontological foundation. Moreover, these studies generally refers only to contemporary philosophy: it lacks a philosophical analysis that goes back to the roots of the discourses on care.

the conceptual nucleus: For facing this question the book focuses on the following thematic directions:

1. To search the ontological foundations of care. Through a phenomenological analysis the essential qualities of the human condition are focused: fragility and vulnerability, and relatedness.
2. To analyse the different way to practice care. Through an analysis of the ancient Greek words that indicate care (*merimna*, *epimeleia*, *therapeia*) it is explained the complexity of the practice

of care. Fundamental in this analysis is the philosophy of Plato that helps us to define that there is a type of care that is necessary to continue to live, a type of care that is necessary to the existence to give space to the tension towards transcendence and nurtures the being of the sense, and a care that repairs the being either material or spiritual when the body or the soul are sick. Thanks to Aristotle who states that the human being is an entity that is political by nature, it is possible to fund care as an answer to the rational consistency of being-there, considered in his/her vulnerability and fragility.

3. to define a method able to get the essence of care, describing both the general essence (“what is care?”) and the essence of concreteness (“what is the essence of this concrete act of care?”). Starting from Husserl’s phenomenology it is elaborated a method that gives voice to the lived experiences of people who act care, in order to elaborate a phenomenology of care. This method has not only a philosophical value, but it also draws a useful discourse for people dealing with care and to better implement their actions.
4. To define the ethical core of care and the concrete way of acting. The intention that orientates caring actions is the research of what is good for life, that means to give an ethical orientation to the existence. That’s why care has an ethical core, that is actualized in the postures of the being, that orientate singular caring actions. The phenomenological analysis gives as result that the postures of the being there of care are: the assumption of the responsibility towards the other’s being, that is orientated by the attentiveness for the other, feeling reverence for the other, nurturing the disposition to share the essential and the braveness in taking up initiatives.

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Topic (a)

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³ We offer two short thematic list in order to emphasize same of the works and authors we refer to, when we develop our research topics.

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