

Pedagogy of the Snail: A rebellion in favour of slowness

La Pedagogía del Caracol.

Una rebelión a favor de la lentitud

Silvia SÁNCHEZ-SERRANO, PhD. Lecturer. Universidad Antonio de Nebrija (ssanchezse@nebrija.es).

Abstract:

Different studies show that western society is living at a frenetic pace. Paradoxically, despite having many tools for managing and saving time, we find that we increasingly have less of it. To challenge this dizzying environment, movements have arisen that seek to rebel against this accelerated pace, such as the so-called 'slow movement'. The educational field is not oblivious to this problem and pedagogical initiatives and approaches have arisen that try to combat said pace at school level, including the so-called 'slow education'. Based on a study carried out in Italy on *Pedagogia della Lumaca*, devised by the teacher, Gianfranco Zavalloni, an attempt is made to develop his pedagogy by identifying those who influenced his educational proposal, known in Spain as *La Pedagogía del Caracol* (Pedagogy of the Snail). Furthermore, this study also aims to reveal how the proposal could be established, identify the

principles on which it would be based and to outline some of its educational purposes. The study has been carried out under a qualitative methodology, through techniques such as a bibliographic and documentary review of Zavalloni's works, and several interviews with his closest personal and professional acquaintances. According to the data obtained, it can be said that, more than an approach, a pedagogical model or a methodology, it is a pedagogical trend from which an educational method, from a child-centred perspective, can be established. As with slow education, one of the aims of Pedagogy of the Snail is to offer a framework to those pedagogues who value time in education and who seek to provide their children with the values required to be masters of their own time.

Keywords: educative time, pedagogical methods, educational theories, alternative pedagogy, teaching models.

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Resumen:

Diversos estudios ponen de manifiesto que la sociedad occidental está sometida a una anormal velocidad. Paradójicamente, disponemos de numerosas herramientas para gestionar y economizar nuestro tiempo y, sin embargo, cada vez carecemos más de él. Ante este clima de vertiginosidad surgen movimientos que pretenden rebelarse contra la aceleración, como el denominado «movimiento por la lentitud». El ámbito educativo no es ajeno a esta problemática y también desde él surgen iniciativas y propuestas pedagógicas que tratan de combatir este acelerado ritmo desde la escuela, como la denominada «Educación Lenta». A partir del estudio realizado en Italia sobre la *Pedagogia della Lumaca*, se pretende desarrollar el pensamiento pedagógico de su ideólogo, el maestro Gianfranco Zavalloni, a través de la identificación de los que fueron los referentes para la configuración de su propuesta educativa, conocida en España como la «Pedagogía del Caracol». A su vez, se tratará de desvelar cómo podría ser definida

tal propuesta, identificar los principios sobre los que se sustentaría, y enunciar algunas de sus finalidades educativas. Tal estudio se ha llevado a cabo desde una metodología de corte cualitativo, a través de técnicas, como la revisión bibliográfica y documental de las obras del maestro Zavalloni, así como de diversas entrevistas a su entorno personal y profesional. A la luz de los datos obtenidos, cabe afirmar que, más que un enfoque, un modelo pedagógico o una metodología, la Pedagogía del Caracol resulta ser una corriente pedagógica a partir de la cual se puede configurar un método educativo desde una mirada paidocéntrica. La Pedagogía del Caracol, al igual que la Educación Lenta, tendría entre sus finalidades enmarcar a aquellas pedagogías que valorizan el tiempo en la educación y persiguen dotar a los niños y a las niñas de las habilidades y los valores necesarios para ser dueños y dueñas de su tiempo.

Descriptor: tiempo educativo, métodos pedagógicos, teorías educativas, pedagogías alternativas, modelos de enseñanza.

1. Time of childhood: from simple working energy, to an insurmountable garden

The concept of time is not a homogeneous matter, but rather a historical construct subject to a specific social imagination (Ramos, 1992). As such, interpretations and experiences of it are different at each historical point in time and in every society. The same occurs with time (and periods of time) in education. Throughout history, perspectives have ranged

from using the time of childhood as a mere source of working energy, to considering —like in the era of Romanticism— it and childhood itself as a garden in bloom that will never return.

In the mid-18th century, with the emergence of the Industrial Revolution, children were considered as small adults and they formed part of the workforce just like other workers. Towards the end of the century, along with Romanticism, another

understanding of childhood emerged in Europe, which saw it as a stage characterised by imagination and innocence. Despite this new idea of childhood, over another one hundred years would have to go by before the consequences of child labour would be seen, and it wasn't until the end of the 19th century that children started to be taken out of factories and put into schools (Ariès, 1987; DeMause, 1991).

In the 21st century, characterised by progress and innovation, we can find some defects —differences aside—, in that period of time. It is a type of schooling governed by stringent timetables, predetermined calendars, set goals, and successes and failures assessed, ultimately, by external bodies. In short, it regards a production-line system in the purest Taylorism style, where the resource stolen from childhood is one of the most precious: time.

2. Slow education to reintegrate time into childhood

The idea of slowing down the pace in schools that slow education provides for, while bringing with it a historical legacy from other methodological approaches, is backed by different studies (Caride, 2012; Levstik, 2014; Mattozzi, 2002; Pàges and Santisteban, 2008; Pérez, 1993). These studies justify the need to slow down the teaching-learning processes to the benefit of the entire education community. In terms of school time, there are studies that demonstrate that the learning construct largely depends on how time is organised in the education centre, as well as on the quality of the student-teacher interaction du-

ring said time (Carnoy 2010; Carroll, 1963; Fisher and Berliner, 1985). Other studies suggest that it is the appropriate use of time in schools that enhances its benefits as an educational resource (Abadzi, 2007; Scheerens, 2014).

Over the last decade, there has been an increase in the number of studies conducted on the use and management of time in education, based, mainly, on the exploration of quality. These studies go so far as to question the authenticity of quick learning and even cast doubt on the ethics of such practice (Lewis, 2017). Similarly, other studies point to the need for qualitative rather than chronological time, and set out the benefits that, in the educational field, 'wasting time' may have, based on the work of prestigious authors, such as Rousseau (Shuffelton, 2017). Furthermore, research, such as that of Burbules (2020), which also acknowledges slowness as a virtue, stresses the importance of having the knowledge to determine the degree of slowness appropriate for each task and/or situation.

This vision of time as a quality rather than a quantity has developed and become one of the principles of so-called alternative teaching, which includes slow education.

3. The emergence of slow education

As with the slow movement, the scope of slow education is extensive, although this is due more to its renegade nature than to the corresponding scientific

theorisation and systemisation (Quiroga and Sánchez-Serrano, 2019).

Slow education has arisen almost simultaneously in different countries and for essentially similar reasons. Despite that simultaneity, it has its origin in Italy, given that both its history and the most significant pioneers of it can be traced back there.

3.1. Italy and *La Pedagogia della Lumaca*. The origins of slow education

In the educational field, an extensive number of pedagogues, such as d'Aquino, da Feltre, Don Bosco, the Agazzi sisters, Don Milani and Montessori, have placed Italian pedagogy in an outstanding position in the history of Western education (Moreu, 2014).

Italy has also played a decisive role in terms of the emergence of the recent slow education. That is due not only to the fact that it is where the slow movement originated in 1986 (Honoré, 2005), but also to the fact that a large part of the foundations of slow education can be found in the pedagogical contributions of the Italian teacher, Gianfranco Zavalloni, in his book *Pedagogia della Lumaca*.

This paper will set out the data that, through the research conducted, are considered most relevant as regards the emergence of slow education. Through the documental analysis and interviews carried out with those in his closest personal and professional circles, the figure of Gianfranco Zavalloni (1957-2012) and his pedagogical proposal, known in Spain

as *La Pedagogía del Caracol* (hereinafter referred to as Pedagogy of the Snail or PS), are analysed.

Studying its characteristics, slow education reflects certain traits shared with different methodologies that have materialised throughout the history of education in Italy. The everyday nature it fosters (Ritscher, 2017) resembles the educational approach of the Agazzi sisters, whereas the interest in fostering autonomy — respecting individual paces —, resembles that of their contemporary, Maria Montessori, who, in turn, based a large part of her work on Froebel (Bruce, et al., 2018).

Slow education has also absorbed other influences from Italy, including the pedagogy of Don Milani at his full-time Barbiana school and that of Loris Malaguzzi at his Reggio Emilia schools, where both time and space are constituent elements of learning. Said educational approaches, together with the emergence of the slow movement in Italy and the presence of the unique *Pedagogia della Lumaca*, allow us to establish Italy as the origin of slow education.

In Italy, we find someone who, due to being, in part, its creator and, largely, its implementer, could be considered the greatest exponent of slow education, the teacher, Gianfranco Zavalloni. His book, *Pedagogy of the Snail (Pedagogia della Lumaca)* (2008b), is the purest representation of slow education in Italy. In it, the teacher developed a didactic proposal on how to slow down time at school, which offers inspiration today to those who want to educate at another pace.

4. Gianfranco Zavalloni. Pedagogical characteristics and teacher identity¹

To achieve one of the objectives of this study, we will look at the figure of Gianfranco Zavalloni, developing the most significant characteristics of his pedagogical thinking and seeking to uncover his teacher identity by identifying his inspirations and analysing his most relevant work: *Pedagogy of the Snail*.

Zavalloni obtained a degree in economic sciences in 1983. Through one of the teachers he most admired, Carlo Doglio, he came to know the man who would greatly inspire his thinking, the economist, Friedrich Schumacher. The Italian teacher shared the same ideas as the transcendentalist, Henry David Thoreau. He also shared Ivan Illich's ideology on the deschooling of education, a man he would meet at a seminar in Bologna in 1998. These two figures were the seeds of Zavalloni's *forma mentis* and, as a result, of his pedagogy.

The ecologist movement influenced Zavalloni's thinking and action. The teacher was one of the founders of Ecoistituto, a not-for-profit organisation founded in Cesena in 1986. The centre was open to the entire education community and it was dedicated to study and praxis. Conferences, seminars and meetings relating to education, particularly regarding technology and ecology, were also held there (Magno lini, 2013).

Throughout his career, Zavalloni highlighted the community nature of artisan

technology, relating it to the teamwork done by land workers. Rabitti recalls:

He always said that he considered the exchange between people to be the simplest and easiest technology that human beings can and should make the most of, particularly in our era in which the tendency is to separate individualities, experiences and memories (Rabitti, 2013, p. 37).

Through his connection to the ecologist movement, Zavalloni also backed the degrowth movement, coming to consider his book, *Pedagogy of the Snail*, the pedagogy manual for 'happy degrowth'.²

The happy degrowth perspective mirrors my own and I think *Pedagogy of the Snail* could be the pedagogy manual for happy degrowth. I believe it to be a very important movement and I hope it gains increasing traction [...], it will likely be a prophetic movement (Tabellini, 2002).

Given the current situation, where the movement for a sustainable planet seems to be gaining more importance at the political and social level, and almost two decades after Zavalloni expressed such ideas, we can confirm that the teacher was not mistaken in labelling these movements as 'prophetic'.

Zavalloni grew up surrounded by nature, which made him appreciate its pace and find interest in the value of time.

Country life is connected to cyclic time: sowing, waiting and harvesting. Time there is adapted to the four seasons. (...) I reflected on it reading texts entirely dedicated to the relationship that man has with

time. Jeremy Rifkin and his book *Time Wars: The Primary Conflict in Human History* (1989) (...), and David Le Breton's book *Eloge de la marche* (2000), a reflection on the importance of walking, helped my thinking (Zavalloni, 2008b, p. 36).

The outcome of Zavalloni's reflections can be seen throughout his life, establishing his lines of thought and, subsequently, of his pedagogy. Zavalloni's essence of time was closely connected to that of nature. With its pace, he learned to be aware of the need to respect it, as well as the importance of 'idle time', which he would also incorporate into his pedagogy.

The idea of 'wasting time', of patiently waiting for a specific cycle to finish, is characteristic of the work of land workers, the land itself and of the countryside. Furthermore, if we think about it, there are no pauses on the land that not productive; wasted time is biologically necessary and it is often filled with preparatory work for other cyclical events, such as harvesting and sowing (Zavalloni, 2008b, p. 37).

Zavalloni's temporal conception was evidently cyclical, assuming that the arrow of time was that which commanded the consumer society by means of the imposition of quick passing time.

(...) speed is connected to linear time, to industrial production based on using and discarding, on a model of society that consumes and is not concerned about returning to natural cycles insofar as goods and energy, and raw materials and people. It is an 'arrow of time' that does not wait (ibid).

Zavalloni's greatest contributions were no doubt to the education field. Those who had the chance to work with him believe that it was in school where the teacher unleashed all his charisma and creativity. His teacher profile was child-focussed, subscribing to the experimental, naturalist or romantic pedagogy model, as was fostered by Rousseau, Illich and Neill.

As with his thinking, the teacher's pedagogical training stemmed from many sources. Although PS is new way of understanding education, it too is based on prior sources and incorporates elements from others that share the same principles. We refer, mainly, to pedagogy focussed on respecting the pace of development and learning, and, in general, to those that establish a different way of managing time within the educational process. In this regard, we could mention Lorenzo Milani, one of the inspirations behind the pedagogical overhaul in Italy and an important point of reference for Zavalloni; albeit the pedagogy implemented by the parish priest was rather more strict than that of the Cesena teacher.

We could also point to Maria Montessori as another point of reference for Zavalloni on, e.g., his goals on 'education for peace' (Britton, 2000) or in undertaking certain activities, such as that of silence, that Zavalloni, following in the footsteps of Montessori, carried out at least once a week (Michellini, 2017b). Both had the same rigorous criteria in terms of choosing the quality of the material used, although Montessori was rather more structured and methodical

when working with it. Furthermore, Montessori dedicated most of the day to individual work in order to develop certain skills (Montessori, 1913). This aspect of her pedagogy differed from that of Zavalloni, which advocated teamwork. In this regard, as confirmed by Ivana Lombardini,³ the teacher was more aligned to other lesser-known Italian pedagogues, like Alberto Manzi, who worked with the didactic garden and drawing.⁴

There are resemblances of the pedagogy of Reggio Emilia, for example, in Zavalloni's tendency to document and in the importance that time and space acquire within educational development. That said, there are significant differences between the Reggio schools and that of PS, such as ownership, as Malaguzzi's is of a private nature.

The use of the natural environment as a main element in the educational process also leads us to relate PS with Waldorf education, albeit the model created by Steiner regards a set structure of the teaching-learning process, which distances it somewhat from Zavalloni's proposal.

However, the influences of PS are not only found in figures of the educational field. Architects, such as Frank Lloyd Wright (Zavalloni, 2008b), forefather of bio-architecture and fosterer of the Prairie School, was also a source of inspiration for his ideology.⁵ In Rabitti's words: "Our projects, from the workshops for children up to those for adults, are based on constant continuity between architecture, art and pedagogy" (Rabitti, 2013, p. 34).

On delving into the background and influences of PS, we find that the educational models, in which the teaching-learning process is adapted to the time and pace of child learning and not the other way around, served as sources of inspiration for Gianfranco Zavalloni.

5. Pedagogy of the Snail

In 2002, Zavalloni attended a training course organised by Gruppo Educhiamoci alla Pace (GEP)⁶ in Bari. The activities carried out on the course included drawing, writing with ink and a nib pen, hand building, talking in the local language, playing, walking, resting, etc. Through these and other tasks, he was able to reflect on the idea of 'slowing school down' and, from that, the pedagogical proposal arose that the teacher would metaphorically call *Pedagogia della Lumaca* (Pedagogy of the Snail).

After several years compiling information and documents, Zavalloni, encouraged by his life partner, Stefania Fenizi, also a teacher, decided to put his teaching ideas and experience into a book:

One afternoon, we were at home, which is on a hill in Cesena. I was lying in the hammock, doing nothing (apparently) (...), he said to me: "What are you doing?". I said: "Nothing." | "Can you really not do anything?" | "Yes." | And what do you call that 'not doing anything'? | "I call it creative leisure, Gianfranco." Later, I gave him a book called 'Ozio, Lentezza e Nostalgia'.⁷ As a result, he got the urge to put his thinking into a book.⁸

The scene described by Fenizi reminds one of the slow thinking referred to by Claxton (1999), with no set goal that does not seek discovery and is associated to leisure time.

Zavalloni's thoughts on time and education were included in his book *Pedagogy of the Snail* and further established in what he called 'didactic strategies of slowing down'. These entailed nine guidelines to challenge, at school, the dizzying pace of Western society: 1) spend time talking; 2) go back to pen and ink; 3) stroll, walk and move on foot; 4) draw instead of photocopying; 5) look at the clouds in the sky and out of windows; 6) write letters and postcards; 7) learn to whistle; 8) grow a vegetable garden (Zavalloni, 2008b).

The strategies provided by Zavalloni, albeit resulting in a somewhat naive-style, encompass the principles of a kind of pedagogy that has changed a large part of the Italian education scene over the last decade (Guerra & Zucconi, 2017; Michelini, 2017b). Exploring those strategies, together with the PS study and Zavalloni's other written works, as well as those regarding him as a person and the analysis conducted on the accounts obtained in the interviews, has helped us to achieve the second objective proposed in this paper: identifying the principles that underpin PS. Those principles, which we will call the fundamental principles of Pedagogy of the Snail, are as follows: 0) unitary educational time; 1) using our hands; 2) ecology and territoriality; 3) documenting; 4)

appropriate technologies; 5) suitability of material and space; 6) teacher identity and training. These principles are not presented here as fixed guideline, but rather as key PS starting points.

0. Unitary educational time

PS considers time as a fundamental element in the education process and one of the main matters is the way in which time is allocated in schools. Zavalloni suggests that schooling does not exceed 24 hours per week and he considers that, for the learning throughout the week to be meaningful, the hours must be equally divided between activities that involve pleasure, commitment and skills.

To undertake such time management, Zavalloni divides the school day/week into three equal parts: 1) play time (pleasure); 2) time for sharing/acquiring the cultural components of symbolisation and communication, such as reading, writing and talking (commitment); time for manual work and learning to live responsibly in the world (skills).

The school day/week proposed by the Italian teacher may at first seem rigid, but PS specifically involves, within those three areas, the non-existence of time subdivisions or the partitioning of knowledge in subjects. It is in this aspect where the essence of unitary time lies.

This vision of time in the school of Zavalloni is clearly reminiscent of qualitative time, of the Greek *Kairos*.⁹ In the words of teacher, Michelini¹⁰:

*Gianfranco was mainly of the idea that, for learning to develop in children, they need downtime, while feeling that their pace of learning is being respected.*¹¹

As regards time in quantitative terms, Micheline said of Zavalloni:

*Asking oneself how much time children need to learn and how much time to give them is also essential in Pedagogy of the Snail. It is a mathematical function, based on the model of school learning,¹² but, in my opinion, Zavalloni surpasses Carroll. Gianfranco said: "We will be the protagonists of our lives when we are the masters of our own time."*¹¹

Based on Zavalloni's ideas, Micheline suggests the need for the entire school community to think about educational time from a pedagogical, didactical and organisational perspective, in order to decide on the kind of school they want to be; in other words, under what idea of time they want to educate young generations (Micheline, 2017b).

1. *Using our hands*

From Zavalloni's perspective, hands are the most powerful tool that humans have to achieve their autonomy. Zavalloni sees in them two key elements: instrumental and writing use.

According to Zavalloni (2008b), there is a gradual decline among children of them using their hands and engaging in motor-skill-enhancing activities, such as using spinning tops, playing with balls or using slingshots, which have fallen into disuse, particularly with the emergence of

new technologies. Each activity mentioned requires hours of dedication, without rush and enjoying the process, to master it. Manual work, such as craftwork, requires a lot of time.

Zavalloni believes handwriting to be one of the most appropriate ways of stimulating and structuring thought, while being an action involving a good motor-skill exercise, essential for expression and communication. Handwriting, for example, favours harmonious personal development. The mental process required to use our hands is different from that of other skills and, as such, so is the learning achieved. It's a learning process that requires an abundance of time, doing and redoing, and knowledge geared towards creativity.

This principle is one of the most controversial in the current educational scene, as it totally opposes the trend of fostering 'the most' and 'the quickest' as a synonym of 'the best', as done to date, according to the leading advocate of slow education in England, Maurice Holt, in 'fast education' (Holt, 2002). With this term, Holt referred to the business nature that the English education system adopted with the 1988 Education Reform Act.

2. *Ecology and territoriality*

Based on these specific actions and minor behaviours in school, such as eliminating photocopies, growing vegetable gardens, recycling materials, and consuming natural and 0-km products,

PS aims to create a culture, on both an individual and group level, committed to ecology and territoriality. Zavalloni, in terms of one's relationship with nature, believes that schools should have a land-worker mentality and, in turn, be up to speed on today's ecological issues.¹³

Zavalloni (2008b) was critical of the organising of trips and excursions hundreds of kilometres away when students had not even been to the river closest to their home. He also thought it impossible to feel European without knowing the territory that surrounds you or without having a close connection to the land. Zavalloni's proposal establishes a kind of 'close proximity education', which seeks to use the closest resources and gain knowledge of the surrounding environment through didactic activities, such as excursions on foot and bike, which make the journey itself an educational experience. In PS, it is essential to know our nearest surroundings to subsequently grasp the totality of it all.

3. Documenting

Documenting vs evaluating. Evaluating academic outcomes with terms such as 'results', 'evaluation', and 'academic standards', correspond to an economic and business system, not a school one. However, through documenting, a corpus can be created of an individual or group trajectory by means of observing and recording information (Zavalloni, 2008b). The Italian teacher believes that documenting is the real way

to evaluate or assess. In Magnolini's words:

Another thing I learned from Gianfranco is to document everything (...), he called it 'inductive pedagogy'. Gianfranco always had a camera in his pocket (...), and a notebook in which to write and draw. I think that was down to a love of reminiscing, not to make others see how good he was; it was to have the chance to reflect and to be able to share and disseminate his understanding (Magnolini, 2013, p. 18).

Documenting in school was a pedagogical need for Zavalloni. He considered that resources such as a field diaries, everyday works and projects undertaken in the centre could form part of the documentation, which he called '*la traccia*' [the trail].

4. Appropriate technologies

Zavalloni deems a technology to be appropriate if: 1) on a social level, it improves the state of a person; 2) on an economic level, it uses the world's resources intelligently; 3) on an ecological level, it respects the natural balance; and 4) on a political level, it decentralises the power of government and shares it out among the people. Ultimately, Zavalloni considers a technology to be appropriate when it resolves more problems than it causes (Rabitti, 2013).

Zavalloni discussed his concerns in a letter sent to a friend, Mario Lodi, who was also a teacher and an important figure in the overhaul of the Italian pedagogy of the 20th century. In the letter,

Zavalloni stressed the importance of the appropriateness of teaching-learning times, as well as the precedence of some over others.

I'm not against technology, but I believe there is a particular time for each activity: if we didn't teach children how to ride a bike, it would be difficult for them in adulthood to learn following the whole process that would have been done in childhood. If children aren't shown how to use a carving knife, they will no doubt learn how to use a computer well; but they will not know how to use their hands for other things, and they will not develop the psychomotricity that comes from using certain tools (Zavalloni, 2009a).

Zavalloni considers new technologies to be just as valid as the traditional technologies, even the earliest ones. As such, he believes they should be present in everyday life, but never at the detriment of others. The PS proposal does not entail, therefore, turning one's back on ICT. What Zavalloni suggests is choosing the technology appropriate for each situation and using it always to the benefit of people and/or the environment. This perspective is very reminiscent of that of Heidegger (Heidegger, 2002).

5. Suitability of material and space

Choosing material and furniture based on quality criteria compared with financial criteria, together with them being ergonomic and locally produced, is another trait of PS. Zavalloni suggests using natural materials, mainly wood, and avoiding plastic and metal. A learning environment

in which children can use their hands in order to experiment, handle, create and build, use a handsaw for woodwork, acrylic colours for painting... all of good quality (Zavalloni, 2008b). Rabitti (2013) also points to the conviction of Zavalloni on the educational value of artefacts created from materials provided by nature (sand, logs, stones, seeds, soil, etc.).

According to Zavalloni (1996), a slow school must be designed down to the smallest detail, including its aesthetical appearance, something on which the Italian teacher placed great importance, regarding both indoor and outdoor spaces. On a number of occasions, he turned to architects and other design and space refurbishment specialists and, above all, to those who Zavalloni considered to be the greatest specialists (following the approach of Mario Lodi): the children that use the educational space.

6. Teacher identity and training

Teachers on a mission Zavalloni suggests this teaching figure based on the idea of Don Milani or Morin, and on his own with regard to school and its social mission. The author distances himself from the omnipotent, permanent evaluator and assessor teacher figure, championing one that forms connections to enhance both his/her and the group's abilities, while also fulfilling the corresponding duties without relegating others (Zavalloni, 2008b).

Cultural thickness and contamination. These two concepts stand out in

the discourses analysed on Zavalloni's vision of teacher training. The first involves the training itself and the level of it that the teacher has (cultural thickness). The second, entails how training should reach teaching staff (contamination), opposed to its imposition. When training is given by peers and based on observable experiences and results, it is better received. According to Ferrari¹⁴, Zavalloni deemed it essential that educators had sufficient cultural thickness, as well as the corresponding changes in school, which should be undertaken through contamination in order to be effective.¹⁵

To end what we have sought to be an explanation of PS based mainly on a study of the character of its creator and the proposal itself, the consistency found between Zavalloni's thinking and praxis, which lies between a practical philosophy of education and the author's political vision, must be mentioned.

6. Methodology, focus, model, trend

Having studied the pedagogical thinking of the ideology behind Pedagogy of the Snail and having identified the fundamental principles on which it is based, we will now seek in this synopsis, and by way of conclusion, to clarify where PS belongs within the different terms used to refer to the pedagogical practices that are implemented, as well as some of the criticism received from the educational field.

PS is not defined as a method by Zavalloni or by those who worked on setting it

up and who continue to foster it today. For Papetti¹⁶, the matter is clear:

His work is not a method, but rather it takes from here and there, (...) it is how he intended his book to be used: each person taking what interests him/her, not following it like an instruction manual (...). It's not like a Montessori or Steiner school, that have a specific method.¹⁷

Michelini (2017b) also refers to the guidelines that Zavalloni sets out in his book as lessons that must not be interpreted in a reductive manner, but rather as coherent and necessary options for the idea of school that Zavalloni puts forward.

Sandra Villa¹⁸ also doesn't consider PS to be a methodology in itself, but rather a way of creating a method based on a child-centred educational perspective.

I consider it to be a proposal from which methodologies can materialise (...); it's a vision, a focus on children, developing it in their natural environment and centred on their needs (...).¹⁹

The vision of the teacher, Silvia Marconi²⁰, also shares the idea of not considering PS as a methodology. Marconi says that PS provides some key elements on which each teacher can develop their own educative action.²¹

Therefore, based on the accounts compiled, review of Zavalloni's work and that of others regarding him, and on the visits and periods of stay at different education centres, it can be said

that PS is configured more like a pedagogical trend from which an educational method can be set up, rather than an approach, pedagogical method or methodology.

This educational focus is not baseless, as it can materialise through seven fundamental principles that are —more than being prescriptive—, of reference and are based on diverse, prior educational postulates and paradigms. As such, pedagogues, who value time in education and who seek to provide their children with the values required to be masters of their own time, can embrace the foundations of PS.

Neither PS nor slow education is without critics from the education field. Perhaps one of the strongest oppositions is from the East. In Japan, a country with an educational system characterised by constrained timetables and rigorous assessment, different institutions have stated that, with the implementation in 2002 of the slow education pilot programme, the ‘slow generation’ (Euronews, 2015) emerged, a title no doubt incompatible with the requirements of the Japanese education model.

The example from Japan helps us to see that, in the same way that slow education is not valid for all children, the same is also true of cultures in which, like Japan, speed and haste are part of success. In this regard, Western culture has some similar values, although the fact that they have been introduced more recently allows for the possibility

of rethinking the idea of time in education.

Notes

¹ The following content is based on interviews carried out over two research periods in Italy between April and July 2017 and 2018 at the Faculty of Education Sciences of the Salesian Pontifical University of Rome in Venice (IUSVE) and at the Faculty of Education Science of Catholic University ‘Sacred Heart’ of Milan, respectively.

² The Movimento per la Decrescita Felice (MDF) (*Movement for Happy Degrowth*), following the degrowth postulate, emerged in 2000 in Italy. The initiative, launched by Maurizio Pallante (one of the inspirations in Gianfranco Zavalloni’s thinking), aims to demystify development for the sole purpose of self-development.

³ A teaching staff colleague of Zavalloni. Teacher of pre-school education and founder of Fulmino publishers.

⁴ Lombardini, interview, 20 June 2017.

⁵ The Prairie School. An architectural style that emerged in England in the 19th century that is based on crafted construction rather than mass production.

⁶ <http://www.gruppoeduchiamocialapace.it/>

⁷ *Ozio lentezza e nostalgia. Decalogo mediterraneo per una vita più conviviale*. Book published in 2002 by Christoph Baker, consultant for humanitarian and environmental organisations and author of critical essays on mass development and consumption.

⁸ Fenizi, interview, 20 June 2017.

⁹ Kairos is the son of Zeus, who, on putting an end to the tyranny of Kronos, became the master and guardian of cosmic order. The term *Kairos* seems to be related to time, but also to luck, fortune and opportunity.

¹⁰ Associate Professor at the University of Urbino. Her lines of research focus on teacher training, critical pedagogy and ICT. Specialist on time in Pedagogy of the Snail and friend of Gianfranco Zavalloni.

¹¹ Michelini, interview, 22 June 2017.

¹² Carroll (1963) combined in his school learning model the following five elements, considering time

as a key factor in the learning process: 1) Ability of the students; 2) capacity to understand; 3) perseverance — understood as the amount of time that students are willing to dedicate to a task —; 4) opportunity — time available to learn —, and 5) quality of instructions. These five elements contribute to the time needed to learn or to the time used in learning. Carroll said that the degree of learning can be described as a proportion between the (a) time needed to learn, and (b) time really used to learn.

¹³ Papetti, interview, 20 June 2017.

¹⁴ Work colleague of Gianfranco. Pedagogue and head of the Sogliano Rubicone centre —where Gianfranco was a teacher of pre-school education—, during academic year 94/95.

¹⁵ Ferrari, interview, 20 June 2017.

¹⁶ Currently considered to be one of the most important *giocattolai* [artisan toy maker]. Through play and with toys, Roberto Papetti works on environmental education, education for peace and artistic education. He gives talks, conferences, teacher training courses and workshops, where he makes toys with his own hands in order to demonstrate and disseminate the importance of playful activity in childhood. Papetti defends retaking the streets as a play area and the return of playtime and traditional instruments.

¹⁷ Papetti, interview, 20 June 2017.

¹⁸ Head of Liceo “G. Cesare – M. Valgimigli” (Rimini). Former head of Istituto Comprensivo “Gianfranco Zavalloni” (2007-2016). Teacher of pre-school and primary school education. Pedagogical adviser for the construction of a new school in Rimini inspired by Pedagogy of the Snail.

¹⁹ Villa, interview, 4 May 2018.

²⁰ Teacher of primary education at Istituto Comprensivo “Gianfranco Zavalloni” and member of Grupo Zav, an organisation created in 2006 with the aim of reinforcing the thinking of Gianfranco Zavalloni.

²¹ Marconi, interview, 4 May 2018.

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Author biography

Silvia Sánchez-Serrano. PhD in education from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. She has worked as a FPU researcher for the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport at the Department of Educational Studies in the Education Faculty (UCM) and has been a visiting researcher in universities in Eu-

rope and Latin America. She is currently working as a professor of the Department of Education at the Universidad Antonio de Nebrija. She is a member of the consolidated UCM research group, 'Cultura Cívica y Políticas Educativas'. Her most recent publications and lines of research focus on civic education, educative time and alternative pedagogy and their effects on comprehensive childhood development.



<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5406-9132>