

義大利中學身心障礙學生 融合教育之研究

Valentina Della Volpe*

摘要

一般學校接納身心障礙學生是義大利教育系統的重點。義大利有 63,000 名專任教師參與約有 139,000 名身心障礙學生就讀普通學校的融合教育。在義大利已高度覺知對身心障礙者的完全接納是社會自我成長的重要關鍵。事實上，義大利的學校以有教無類為目標，學生教育講求的多樣化，可實踐群我成長的經驗。當前學校透過內、外部資源評估形成強而有力且結構良好的方案，正努力實現讓身心障礙學生全面性融入普通學校和班級的教育目標。融合的概念指包括所有可在融合教育實務中真正參與貢獻的人，換言之，學生、家長、全校師生和責任區域網絡的人都包含其中。本文第一部分從義大利立法觀點探討融合教育概念的歷史演變；其次，闡述義大利中等學校融合教育的個案研究，其主要內容義大利與學校教育環境與資源有關，尤其身心障礙學生被法律認可的現象對每個人的成長和社會的教育發展均有助益。

關鍵詞：融合、義大利學校、身心障礙、立法

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The Inclusive Education for Disabled Students in Italian Schools

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Abstract

The school inclusion of students with disabilities is a special characteristic in the Italian education system. In Italy there are about 63,000 specialized teachers that are involved in inclusion processes, and about 139,000 disabled students attending ordinary schools. Italy has developed the awareness that unbiased acceptance of the disabled is essential for the growth of society itself. In fact, the Italian school is a community that welcomes all students, regardless of their functional diversities, to carry out experiences of personal and social growth. There are many strong and well-structured projects with internal and external resources to facilitate the realizaiton of the ideal goal. The inclusion encompasses the involvement of all the participants, namely, the students, their parents, the teachers and students of the whole school and the territory network. In the first part, we focus on Italian legislation from the point of view of historical evolution of the concept of inclusion in the education. In the second part, we present and discuss a case study of an inclusive Italian junior high school. This paper examines the major elements, regarding resources and tools that portray the Italian school environment, in which disabled students are legally recognized as a resource for the growth and social-educational development of every citizen.

Keywords: inclusion, Italian school, disability, legislation.

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Historical Evolution and State of the Art

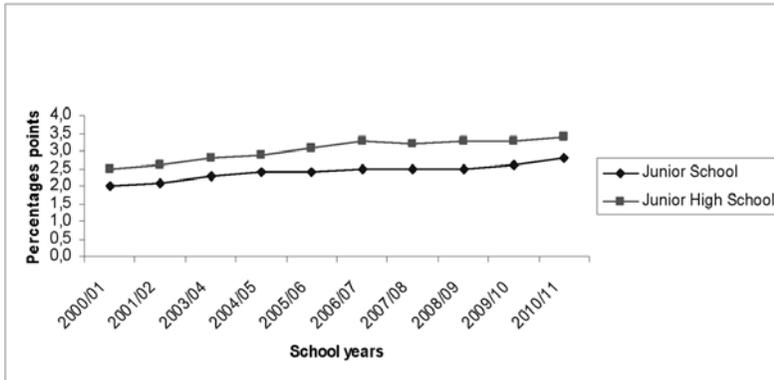
In Italy, the National Institute of Statistics, together with the Ministry of Education, University and Research, and the Ministry of Work and Social Politics realized, between the 26th of April and the 10th of June 2011, a study about the inclusion of students with disabilities in both private and public junior and junior high schools.

The result is that in the academic year 2010-2011 in Italy there were 139,000 students with disabilities (3% of the total of the students), of which about 78,000 in junior schools, (2.8% of the total of the students in junior schools) and a bit more than 61,000 in junior high schools (3.4% of the total of the students in junior high schools) (National Institute of Statistics[ISTAT], 2012). In addition, about 35,729 were in upper schools and about 16,000 in universities.

The effective inclusion of people with disabilities is a necessary and fundamental condition for the development of society. In Italy, the awareness of that was developed starting from the '70s through a new approach to the disability concept, the diffusion of medical and scientific knowledge regarding handicaps and psychic disorders and with the normative national and international support (de Anna, 1983; 1996a; 1996b; 1998).

The World Health Organization, in the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (2001), provides a definition of disability and health condition in a non-favorable environment, considering the individual not only as a health subject, but also suggesting the adoption of a global approach to the person, giving attention to the overall potentialities, the various resources of the subject, also considering the personal, natural, social and cultural environment that has an influence on the person's health.

Figure 1 Percentages of students with disabilities in junior and junior high schools in Italy



Source: National Institute of Statistics. (2012). *The inclusion of students with disabilities in state and private schools*. Retrieved from: <http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/50280>

In the pedagogical environment, the concept of “un-expressed and contextual potentialities” was already studied in Italy and internationally in comparative and consideration studies about the rules from Lucia de Anna. In one of these studies we can read:

The fundamental point about the handicap problem is the expression of potentialities that the handicapped subject has! Any disabled person, in my opinion, can show un-expressed capacities and potentialities, the challenge is to create the necessary conditions for such development from teachers and operators (for operators I mean every individual from teachers, directors and pedagogies, including all those who operate and interfere with the educative process)” (de Anna, 1991, p.19).

The Italian laws about the inclusion and the education in schools of students with disabilities have had a wide development that allowed our country to be one of the most relevant examples, in juridical laws, about issues relating to disabilities (de Anna, 2000; 2001).

Table 1

Academic year 2010/2011: Students with disabilities by nature of problem

Problem kind	Junior School	Junior High School
Blindness	0.9	0.9
Hypovision	4.2	3.6
Deafness	1.1	1.4
Hypoacusis	3.4	3.5
Motor limitations	13.9	10.4
Learning difficulties	22.6	26.9
Language	24.6	15.4
Development	17.6	11.6
Mental	40.0	47.1
Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorders	26.5	22.1
Affective and relational disorders	18.8	18.6
Behavior disorders	17.2	16.0
Psychiatric	0.7	1.0
Other disabilities	17.0	15.5

Source: National Institute of Statistics. (2012). *The inclusion of students with disabilities in state and private schools*. Retrieved from: <http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/50280>.

The evolution of the disability concept has gone through three different phases in our country, that have eventually lead to three key words that appear in the pedagogical reflection scene and show the story of special pedagogy, namely, schooling, academic insertion and inclusion.

Let's see these more in detail

1. First phase: Schooling, from 1923 to 1970

It's been defined the right and duty of schooling for everybody, including children with disablements, disabilities and deficiencies. Such schooling was initially available only in special institutions.

The Italian school initially started to deal with the issue at the beginning of the 20th century, through 《the Royal Decree n.3126》 from 1923 where were given the first instructions to establish rules for the schooling of blind and deaf-mute students, along with other rules about

the assistance to abnormal children and about the organization of special classes in junior schools.

Not much has been done for people with physical and psychical disablements, and only with the 《Royal Decree n.653》 from 1925, at paragraph 102, it was established that *the mutilated people or handicapped people due to the war and those who were born with disabilities or disabled for other causes that don't have full functional capabilities of the organs to complete all the examinations, can get total or partial exemption for single tests, with the duty to undergo to tests that are deemed equivalent by the commission.*

《The Royal Decree n.577》 from 1928 establishes that people in school age with behaviour or intelligence abnormalities, and easily recoverable with a specific educational assistance from teachers with special educational qualifications, can be included in differential classes, while people with higher deficiencies, not recoverable, can attend special schools with teachers who own educational titles of physiopathology.

Such 《Royal Decrees》 have a big importance, not only because they show the interest in Italy, in regards to disabilities, but also because they help to overcome the status of the link with social assistance and charity with which disabled people were treated until then.

An important step that marked a change is surely given from the 《Constitution of 1948》 in which it is underlined, at paragraph 34 that “school is open to everybody” and in paragraph 38 “disabled and impaired people are have the right to education”. However we can see that the word/concept of “inclusion” is not yet contemplated.

2. Second phase: Academic insertion, from 1971 to 1993

In the second phase, the benefic effects of schooling were noted, and the duty of including disabled students in common schools started.

The concept *academic insertion* refers to the presence of students with disabilities in common schools and it's linked to the recognition of a right: the right that each person has to feel equal to others, with the same

rights and aspirations, regardless of the physical, bio-psychical, social and cultural conditions. The recognition of such right brings to the choice (at the beginning of the x'70s) to close with the experience of special schools and classes, and to welcome students with disabilities in normal schools.

3. Last phase: Inclusion, from 1994 onwards

It was outlined the current situation in Italy, where we reached the school inclusion of each child, including those with complex disabilities.

The word *inclusion* Please note that in Italy we use the word *integrazione*. Only more recently we started to use it along with *inclusion*. The first focuses on the individual with disabilities with his/her potentialities, while the latter focuses on the environment that is modified to welcome such student underlines the transition from the academic insertion of the disabled child, but essentially isolated and shunned, to the phase where there is a proactive commitment to get the child actively participating within a context of authentic relationships with his/her peers, school and environment.

The word *inclusion* represents in our national experience an important step forward. Within a few years, it was noted that including students with disabilities in normal classes was not enough to grant them an authentic welcome and a promotion of individual potentialities. It was necessary to operate on the organizational and operative plan. School has to change to be capable of granting welcome.

Inclusion represents the preliminary availability to welcoming, we could say *unconditioned*, with which it's possible to think at academic insertion as a right to every individual and at the inclusion as a school responsibility.

It's not the consequence of some deficiencies or a response to problematic provocations, but it represents the background of values a priori that makes welcome policies and inclusion procedures possible.

As seen, inclusion becomes a pedagogic paradigm born from the recognition of the common right to diversity. A diversity that is not

only identified by disability, but it encompasses the variety of personal situations, so that *heterogeneity* becomes *normality* (Ianes, 2005a).

Such transition is supported by a state-of-the-art legislation, founded on the passing of the difficulties that prevent people from attending a common school, not reserved, in the awareness that each individual builds his/her own knowledge in a social environment. The school inclusion has its basis in the 《law n.118》 from 1971 that establishes the obligation of schooling for people with disabilities in normal classes, with the exception of individuals affected with severe intellectual deficiencies or physical disablements, for which the law considers the inclusion in particular structures, because they were considered detached sections from public common schools.

Only in 1977, with 《the law n.517 par.2,》 were introduced for the first time forms of inclusion and support favoring “handicapped students” within the common classes of junior and junior high schools (Junior students are 11-13 years old and Junior high students are 14-18 years old).

In the second half of the '80s the educative action favoring students with difficulties and their inclusion became stronger. This was because disability was perceived as a good occasion of civil education, but also as an opportunity, a resource for schools, to start researches and introduce innovative methodologies. It was also understood that students with disabilities could be an additional occasion for the qualification of formative objectives for the entire class.

It seems important then that the legislative and judicial perspective opens to the idea of an educational intervention as a unitary process, a life project that 《the Constitutional Court》 in paragraphs 34 and 38, ask that it should be built according to specific parameters of each individual with difficulties.

《The sentence n.215》 from 《the Constitutional Court》 from 3 June 1987 establishes that students with disabilities cannot be considered unrecoverable and that inclusion helps them not only in socializing, but

also in education, and that its interruption might lead to a risk of stopping of favorable factors of the development of personality.

The inclusion culture has acquired energy, and it finds an additional point of strength in the principles stated in 《the framework law on handicap n.104》 from February 1992, and in its administrative orders.

To recap, today the full development of people, their equality regardless of the presence of psycho-physical difficulties, and their right to education, recalled in paragraphs 2, 3, 4 and 34 of our Constitution, are guaranteed by either 《law n.517/77》 and by 《law n.104/92》 .

《Law 104/92》 is the framework law for assistance, social inclusion and the rights for people with disabilities. It gives detailed directions about the fulfillment of school inclusion in clauses 5, 6, 7 and 8 of paragraph 12, and in paragraphs 13 and 14. This law, other than guaranteeing the full respect of dignity of people with disabilities, insists on the necessity of removing invalidating situations and prearranges interventions that help avoid marginalization processes (right to education—specific placement—removal and passing of architectural barriers—mobility and transport—removal of obstacles for the exercise of sport, touristry and recreational activities etc).

More recently, with 《law n.18》 from March 2009, the Italian Government has rectified and accomplished the “United Nation Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities” and its optional protocol (United Nation, 2006) and founded the National Observatory on the conditions of people with disabilities.

Paragraph 1 states the following:

- The purpose of this Convention is to promote, protect and guarantee the full and equal usability of all human rights and all fundamental freedoms by people with disabilities and to promote the respect of their own dignity.

- For people with disabilities we mean all those people who present long-lasting physical, mental, intellectual or sensorial disablements

that, together with barriers of different nature, can impede their full and effective participation to society on the basis of equality to others.

Such rule represents an additional moment that underlines the constant attention that Italy has shown for the process of inclusion of people with disabilities, and a never ending scientific debate fuelled by the opening to the international context.

The Observatory is presided by the Ministry of Work, Health and Social Politics, and is in charge three years with the following tasks:

a) Promote the fulfillment of the Convention and elaborate a detailed report on the measures taken as per the paragraph 35 of the Convention, according to the inter-ministerial Committee of human rights;

b) Prepare a bi-yearly program for the promotion of rights and inclusion of people with disabilities, according to national and international laws;

c) Promote the collection of statistical data that show the condition of people with disabilities, also according to different environmental situations;

d) Prepare a report on the state of application of the politics about disabilities.

Promote the realization of studies and researches that can contribute to detect priority areas towards which address actions and interventions for the promotion of rights of people with disabilities.

Table 2

The Italian Framework of Inclusion

Rule	Date	Subject
Law n.1859 Par. 11, 12	31.12.1962	Foundation and setting of rules for junior high schools—Creation of differentiated classes
Law n.118	30.03.1971	Rules favoring mutilated and civil disabled people
Presidential Decree n.970	31.10.1975	Rules about schools with particular purposes

(續下頁)

Rule	Date	Subject
Law n.517 Par. 2,7	04.08.1977	New evaluation and didactic planning grids. Introduction of integration activities. Removal of differentiated and special classes
Law n.270 Par.12	20.05.1982	Revision of the recruitment process for specialized teachers
Presidential Decree n.347	25.06.1983	Rules for employees employed in local institutions as per the agreement from 29 April 1983
Constitutional Court Sentence n.215	03.06.1987	Right to attend upper schools for students with disabilities
Ministerial Newsletter n.262	22.09.1988	Enrolment and attendance in upper schools of handicapped students. Fulfillment of the sentence from the Constitutional Court n. 215 from 3 June 1987
Law n.341 Par. 3,4	19.11.1990	Reform of university didactic set of rules
Law n.148 Par. 1,3,4,5,6	05.06.1990	Reform of junior school set of rules
Law n.176	27.05.1991	Ratification of the ONU Convention on the children's rights from 20 November 1989
Law n.104 Par.3,4,12,13,14,16,42	05.02.1992	Framework law for assistance, social integration and rights for handicapped people
Presidential Decree Par.4	24.02.1994	Rules about coordination between health system and schools
Law n.449 Par.40	27.12.1997	Measurements for stabilization of public finances—1/138 specialized teachers/students
Law n.17	28.01.1999	Access to universities of students with disabilities Integration of Law 104/92
Law n.68	12.03.1999	Specific placement, with school and work paths including access to work for students with disabilities
Law n.62 Par.1	10.05.2000	Recognition of comprehensive schools, run by local entities or privately owned, that are part, as well as public schools, of the national education system

(續下頁)

Rule	Date	Subject
Law n.53	08.03.2000	Instructions in support of maternity and paternity, for the right of health and educational assistance – Integration law 104/92
Law n.328	08.11.2000	Framework law for the realization of the integrated system of interventions and social service
Law n.16	09.01.2004	Instructions favoring the access to information technologies to students with disabilities
Law n.244 Par.2, clauses 413-419,422,427,443,444, 462, 474	24.12.2007	Financial law 2008—Redefinition of criteria of the number of support teachers
State-Regions Agreement	20.03.2008	Criteria for the welcoming and taking into account of students with disabilities—As per article 8, clause 6, law n.131 from 5 June 2003
Law n.18	03.03.2009	Ratification and fulfillment of the NU Convention of the rights of people with disabilities—13/12/2006
MIUR note n. 4274	04.08.2009	Guidelines on school inclusion of students with disabilities

In table 2 “The Italian framework of inclusion” we report the most relevant steps of the Italian legislation regarding the development of the concepts and principles of integration/inclusion.

Instrumental and Humane Resources for Inclusion in Italy

The World Health Organization (2001) in The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) gives the guidelines for the development of projects aiming at improve the quality of life of individuals with disabilities. The purpose is to help increase

potentialities, competences and activities of people with disabilities, favoring social participation in consideration of the environmental factors that can help.

This essay aims at make people understand that the real inclusion is not limited to the school environment, but it is built through all institutions around the individual and it is based on the network of all human and instrumental resources offered by the environment and their rules (Canevaro, 2007).

The individual educational program is at the beginning of this process. It explicates the educational dimension of the Italian school that is looked after by all institutional components as per the guidelines released by the Ministry of Education, University and Research on 4 August 2009.

The individual educational program starts from the real understanding of the needs of students with disabilities and comes from the comparison of all institutions, school, local healthcare (ASL) and local authorities that coordinate the necessary interventions through the network of the human and instrumental resources available, as per the rules *Atto d'Indirizzo* from 《Presidential Decree》 (PD) from 24. February. 1994.

The analyses provided by such organization, once the clinical diagnosis is clarified, are: Functional Diagnosis (FD), Dynamic Functional Profile (DFP), Handicap Work Group (HWG), Individualized Education Plan (IEP), the test and the assessment of such educational interventions (Ianes, 2005b).

Given the above, families have a more active role that is recognized in either the formulation of the DFP and the IEP and in their ongoing tests.

We also need to remember the high incidence of the Italian associations of parents and relatives of people with disabilities. Thanks to them, the first laws about social assistance, social welfare and health care were approved, as well as paths about school education (Mura, 2004; Pavone, 2009).

The *functional diagnosis* is being looked after by the health care

and from other local entities (par.3 PD 24/02/1994), and it analytically describes the functional development of the psychophysical state of the student with disabilities. The functional diagnosis is handed to the parents of the student who will in turn hand it to the school, according to the rules indicated by the first minister, 《Law 185/2006》 and in time before making a request for a specialized teacher and his/her appointment by the education superintendent.

If the Functional Diagnosis is not available, 《the Ministerial Newsletter n.363/1994》 clause 1 and 2, states that the certificate of the specialized medical doctor or the one from the psychologist working in the local healthcare or agreed upon the same, 《paragraph 38 of law 448/98》 can be accepted on a provisional basis.

If the student has been certified on the basis of paragraph 3 of 《the law 104/92》 the financial law from 1999 allows parents to replace the medical certificate with a self-certification included in the admission form. The specialized doctor who formulates the functional diagnosis has to gather all necessary data to clarify the weak and strong points of students, on which they need to work on.

The Functional Diagnosis has to include:

- Clinical, family and social anamnesis data of the student;
- Clinical diagnosis from the medical doctor specialized in that particular pathology;
- The levels reached in the characteristic areas of the development (language, cognitive, metacognitive skills, social and inter-personal skills, personal and social autonomy, sensorial and motor-praxis skills, playing and expressive skills.)
- The levels reached in regards to the prearranged goals for the class attended, the response to the affective, psychological, relational and behavioral dynamics (Ianes, 2004).

The *Dynamic Functional Profile* is created on the basis of the Functional Diagnosis elaborated by the specialized medical doctor. This

highlights the skills and difficulties of the student through his/her physical, psychic, social and emotional characteristics. This helps understanding the actual recovery chances of the student with disabilities.

Through the definition of short, medium and long term goals, the necessary tools to help support, stimulate and gradually strengthen the stronger points of the student with disability are identified. This is done with regards to the resources of the medical and social needs and the cultural choices of the student. The DFP helps in a positive way by highlighting the skills of the student and it helps promote development and progress, beyond a pathological perspective about handicap.

After that, the below operations are defined based on a pedagogical and psychological perspective, and not a medical and prognostic one, and on the accepted methods of school programming that are really helping teachers involved in the inclusion process (Ianes, 2005b, pp.164-165).

The *Individualized Education Plan* is then based on the Dynamic Functional Profile. To elaborate the IEP it is necessary to program the interventions based on an interdisciplinary collaboration that involves specialized teachers, operators from the healthcare and families. The IEP has to be defined by the second month of the academic year and has to be verified frequently, on a quarterly basis or even more frequently in particularly difficult cases.

The IEP aims at integrating school and extra-school activities, starting from didactic and educational projects. It is connected to the projects from the school and to the didactical projects of the class. It is a project for a specific student according to his/her qualities.

The aspects that have to be defined in the IEP are: purposes and didactic goals; working paths; methods, tests and assessment; intervention fulfillment timing; ways of family involvement; possible support tools; testing and assessment methods

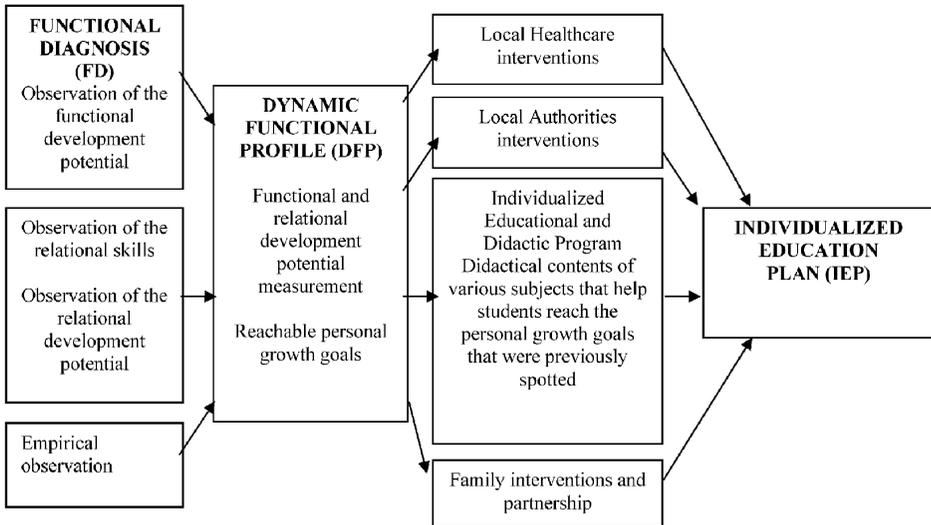
Therefore, the IEP has to be seen as a pedagogic and flexible operating tool that operates a modification of the language of the Dynamic

Functional Profile in pedagogic actions and does the following:

- Suggests hypothesis on the development of *helping relationship*;
- Highlights strategies and methods (environment, school setting, people, situations);
- Has specific operational cores (according to specific goals);
- Encompasses areas of development and support coordinated by the teachers of the class;
- Gives directions on the modifications of projects of the class according to the presence of the student with disabilities;
- Indicates tools and resources that integrate the textbooks and justify their choices;
- Contains the timing of the intentional learning situations developed for the student in a flexible and planned manner;
- Includes a plan for homework;
- Provides cooperation areas with the families;
- Gives directions on possible tasks for teachers and co-operational aspects with other operators.

The IEP is part of the educational plan offer of the school attended by the student with disabilities. Its purpose is to fulfill the right of all children to be educated according to their skills, regardless of their psychical and physical conditions, paragraph.12, clauses 1 - 4 of 《the law.104/92》 .

Figure 2 Development process of the individualized education plan (IEP)



The last resource over which the educational programming is based is the *Handicap Work Group* (HWG), paragraph 15 from law 104/92, which consists in the periodical meetings between teachers, students parents and other operators from the health care, whose purpose is to verify the efficacy of the educational interventions put in place through the Individualized Education Plan. These meeting have to be set up on a quarterly basis.

HWGs have organizational and planning tasks. They are a study and work group made by normal and specialized teachers, operators from the healthcare (local entities and ASL), family members of all the students with disabilities and students (only in upper schools) with the task of cooperating with educational and integration projects set up in the Individualized Education Plan.

In the below table (Tab 3) we can see the tasks and purposes of Operational HWGs.

Table 3

Tasks and roles of the operational handicap work group

Entity	Institutions	Tasks	Purposes	Timing	Members
Operational Handicap Work Group	ASL, School, Family, Associations	Editing Dynamic Functional Profiles (DFP)	Description of difficulties and potential development in short and medium terms	After initial school inclusion period and after the transition to a new school grade	Medical units, normal and specialized teachers, parents of students with disabilities
		Development of Individualized Education Plan (IEP)	Description of specific didactic-educational interventions	Beginning of each academic year + quarterly or four monthly tests	ASL employees, normal and specialized teachers, parents and other operators

Other than the school and operational HWGs there are also HWGs from the education agency, whose tasks consist in expert advice and proposals to the education superintendent, schools and collaboration with local authorities and local healthcare for the fulfillment and check of the program agreements, in accordance to paragraphs 13, 39 and 40 from 《Law 104/92》 (Nocera, 2006). They also check the settings and fulfillment of Individualized Education Plans, and any other activities regarding the integration of students with learning difficulties.

An education agency HGW is made of:

- a technical inspector appointed by the education superintendent;
- a school expert utilized according to paragraph 14, clause 10 from 《Law 270 of 20 May 1982》 ;
- Two experts appointed by the local authorities;
- Two experts from the local healthcare;
- Three experts from the major associations of people with

disabilities appointed by the education superintendent on the basis of the criteria from the Ministry of Education.

The *headmaster* coordinates all initiatives inside the school along with all operators involved. The headmaster also defines the level of services and the financial availability, according to the current rules, 104/92, DPR from 24 February 1995, the regional law for the right to education and the program agreement defined by the local authority, the healthcare and the education agency.

The headmaster guarantees the formative offer that is planned and fulfilled by the school. This is for all the students, hence including those with disabilities. The Formative offer Plan is inclusive as it gives precise answers to individual educational needs, based on daily actions and projects; hence, the presence of students with disabilities is not an issue or an emergency, but an event that requires a re-organization of the system that was already highlighted previously and it represent a development opportunity for everyone. The school integration/inclusion is hence a fundamental value, a cultural assumption that requires a strong management leadership by the headmaster, which is a key figure in the construction of such system.

The Key Role of the Specialized Teacher: Formation, Competences and Professional Profile

At the core of the italian school inclusion system is the specialized teacher for inclusive processes (or “support teacher” as per the ministry newsletter 199 from 28 July 1979), which is a specialized teacher, introduced by 《law 517/77 par. 2 & 7》 and in the further 《law 270/1982 par. 12》. The specialized teacher is a teacher who holds a master degree

and a qualification certificate in one of the following subjects: literatures, sciences, mathematics, philosophy, technologies, and law, etc. and with a further certificate in special education. 《Law 517/1977》 states that in the junior and junior high school, if there are students with disabilities, then specialized teachers are needed to develop students' inclusion.

The specialized teacher operates in primary schools, junior high schools and, since 1992 in Junior high schools. He/she participates in the didactic and educative programs along with other teachers integrating activities with specific interventions to help develop skills of students with disabilities. The amount of working hours is the same as the other teachers from all kind of schools (25 in nursery schools, 22 in junior schools, 18 in junior high and upper schools, spread out over at least 5 days).

The specialized teacher is appointed by the province education superintendent, in a ratio of 1/138 out of the number of students, on the basis of the requests from schools that have students with certified handicaps. Each year, based on the number of pre-registrations of students with disabilities, each school determines the situation and needs of each single student and requests the relevant amount of specialized teachers to the Education Agency.

The specialized teacher cooperates fully with his/her colleagues in planning and realization of the educational and didactic projects for students with disabilities. It makes his/her competence available, as well as his/her didactic specialization and helps prepare the relevant tools and paths. The specialized teacher is co-responsible for the whole educational activities of the section, module or class that is assigned to, collaborates with families and local healthcare agencies (ministry newsletter 184 from 3/7/1991).

The amount of working hours is based on the teacher/student ratio and it is established by the Educational Project that is based on the needs of each single student in regards to the nature of the handicap. The specialized teacher has the same responsibilities as other teachers and fully

participates in the assessment process of the class that he/she is assigned to. Paragraph 315, clause 5 from the 《*Testo Unico 297/94*》 states:

Specialized teachers have co-ownership of the sections and classes in which they operate. They participate in the educational and didactic programming and in the development and assessment of the activities of the inter-sections, inter-classes, and classes boards and in the teachers' board.

Moreover, thanks to them, the school develops all interventions aiming at an effective inclusion, including the below: organization of educational and didactic activities based on a criterion of flexibility in the setup of sections and classes, in relation to the individualized school programming.

Guarantee of the educational continuity between different school levels, including communication between teachers from schools of different levels to promote the maximum development of the school experience of students with disabilities.

Activation of orientation courses specific for students with disabilities.

A specialized teacher has to be able to identify and assess skills and knowledge of the students with learning difficulties, with disabilities or belonging to un-comfortable areas. In particular he/she has to be able to use procedures and tools that help outline a precise profile of the student, through tests, data sheets and diversified assessments. It is indeed essential that the specialized teacher understands predispositions and potentialities of the students and is able to see their interests to establish the goals that have to be achieved through the education program.

The specialized teacher has to constantly assess the students that he/she looks after through a systematical observation of the results achieved (de Anna, 2007).

In the past, normal teachers used to play the specialized teacher role, one in each class, where there were students with disabilities. Further qualifications were requested by 《law 341》 from 19 November 1990, and in 1997 the specialized teacher role was introduced 《par. 40, clause 3, law 449》.

Until 2010 to become a specialized teacher in nursery schools and in junior schools, teachers had to attend a 400 hour specialization course at the faculty of Science of Primary Formation. For junior and junior high schools it was also necessary to attend one of the specialization schools for Junior and Junior High Schools teaching (called SSIS) after the master degree. Those schools, other than qualifying teachers, gave the specific title of “specialized teacher”.

《The Ministry Decree 249/2010》 introduced substantial changes in the formation of teachers for all school levels. Starting from academic year 2012/2013, to be a specialized teacher, in addition to the above qualifications and requirements, it is necessary to attend a training course (minimum 60 credits) to achieve the specialization in didactic inclusion activities of students with disabilities. The course is limited to a predefined amount of candidates. Candidates need to be qualified teachers and have to pass an admission test. The course is structured in specific didactic paths for each different school levels and it encompasses 300 hour training. The training is a fundamental part of the formative path of the university student and its goal is help get the necessary professional competences. At the end of the course, candidates need to pass a test to achieve the specialization diploma.

Currently the specialization for supporting activities can only be achieved through Universities. The formation of teachers is currently being reviewed by the government. The Ministry of Education, universities and research will create specific qualification classes for support activities and will release guidelines that specifically define the formative path of this professional figure.

Going back to the pedagogic level, we need to remember that inclusion processes are not predefined, but are evolving continuously, because they deal with people and require training and competences (de Anna, 2007).

To better define the competences of the specialized teacher, the technical committee of the permanent observatory for the school inclusion of people with disabilities elaborated a formative path split into seven modules (de Anna, 2007) that has to be fulfilled for the creation of a highly qualified professional figure.

In the below table 4 we report the split of the seven modules. Lucia de Anna (2007) states that they have to be considered in a circular and interconnected way, although they are presented as a sequence.

Table 4

Teachers training and the seven modules

Title	Competences to develop
1) Acknowledge diversity of needs in the class and know the possibilities offered by the rules and by the current inclusion procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manage information, arranging them within a historical institutional cultural framework - Identify issues - Manage the relationship between teaching and learning with competence and flexibility
2) Know the student with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read a clinical diagnosis and a functional diagnosis - Effective use of an observation checklist - Identify appropriate formative goals - Identify if learning difficulties derive from physical, intellectual, emotional or social issues - plan and build learning units with adequate methods, tools and technologies
3) Create learning environments and a network of relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build communication and interaction relationships - Organize the class as a learning and didactic communication environment - Act in a didactic way - Create connections with the physical environment

(續下頁)

Title	Competences to develop
4) Utilize inclusive didactic strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build along with other colleagues an educational path attentive to the needs of the student with disabilities - Monitor, verify and assess progresses, knowledge and goals achieved
5) Utilize methodologies, methods and specific materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Know (historically, in either positive and negative aspects) the various methods used didactically in regards to students with disabilities, their implications and effects - Test and search solutions and adaptations more suitable to the needs of students with disabilities - Establish with families of moments of continuity and discontinuity in the educational and re-enabling activity
6) Support in the school and life project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Know problems about work and specific job placement - Identify formative paths to help build the job placement - Translate in a professional profile a task, a duty to complete as a job in a didactic project and program - Create connection paths between school and professional training to help the student with disability acquire professional competences
7) Build and strengthen working relationships with colleagues, personnel, stakeholders and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acquire ability in collaborating - Engage in open communication with colleagues in regards to the teaching activity - Address conflict - family empowerment - continuity and discontinuity with families - Identify relationships between the school environment and other educational entities - Work on common projects

Source: de Anna (2007). The training of teachers and the seven modules. *Educational and Social Inclusion*, 6(5), pp.437-453.

The task of the specialized teacher is to collaborate with other teachers in order to develop a specific program keeping in mind the needs of all students and the possible issues that could arise, and developing

teaching methods that can help overcome such issues. In doing so, the specialized teacher deals with difficulties of the students with disabilities on the whole, not just those of a specific student. Hence, the specialized teacher always constantly cooperates with other teachers: participates in the traditional educational programming, contributes to the choice of teaching strategies that can be used for the whole class. Has an important role in the arrangement of didactic and support materials that help the learning of all students, actively participates in the supply of precepts for the entire class.

Normal teachers, who are expert in specific didactic disciplines, should instead operate in a personalized way, especially in presence of more difficult cases.

The joint work of the specialized teachers and normal teachers favors the inclusion and the stimulation of positive attitude towards the inclusion itself, without prejudices and stereotypes. Given the above, specialized teachers have a great importance and are part of decision process within schools.

Others Aid Roles in the Inclusive Process

The specialized teacher is not the only figure in the school system that deals with students with disabilities. School operators such as *janitors* have a great importance in supporting everyday activities and needs of individuals with difficulties. They help, as part of their specific functions, “in assisting students with disabilities, giving them the necessary support to access external schools’ structures areas, within such structures and to exit them, in the use of hygienic services and help in the personal hygiene”.

Their tasks are divided into ordinary and additional. Janitors are

appointed by the headmaster after choosing them within the technical administrative staff, they have to be qualified and they receive an additional compensation.

In case of a student with severe disabilities, the local authorities (municipality or province) can appoint one more professional figure: the *operator for personal autonomy*, following a request that has to be forwarded to the relevant municipality for students attending junior or junior high schools, while the same request has to be forwarded to the province (Office of Social Services Department) for those students attending upper schools.

The task of the *operator for personal autonomy* is to favor school inclusion by:

- Supporting in the projects aiming at reach personal autonomy in the daily school activities (eating, walking, use of services, dressing up, etc.) along with the help of a janitor;
- Supporting the student in reaching his/her own autonomy regarding the surrounding environment and the social inclusion that are reached through the didactic-educational internal activities (laboratories, recreational and motor activities) and external activities (school trips, guided tours, etc.);
- Collaborating with both normal and specialized teachers for the school activities program in accordance with the IEP and the HWG.

The main rules dealing with the above are:

- Par. 13, clause 3 《from Law 104/1992》 ;
- Ministry of Instructions, university and research, newsletter 3990 from 30 November 2001.

Table 5

Mean hours per week of operators for personal autonomy

Junior School		Junior High School	
Independent in at least one of the three activities (moving, going to the toilette, eating)	Not independent in any of the three activities	Independent in at least one of the three activities	Not independent in any of the three activities
4,0	10.0	5.0	10.6
4.1	14.3	2.4	7.2
1.9	7.6	1.9	4.0
3.3	9.8	3.4	7.0

Source: National Institute of Statistics. (2012). *The inclusion of students with disabilities in state and private schools*. Retrieved from: <http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/50280>

If a student has a sensorial deficiency (blindness, hypo vision, deafness, or hypo acusis), the school, following the family’s request, can forward to the local authority a request to appoint a further professional figure: the *communication assistant* for deaf students and the *typhology expert* for blind students.

They are social-educative assistants that support students with sensorial disabilities and interact with them in order to compensate their communicational difficulties, due to deafness or blindness. They are a sort of mediators and help facilitate communication, learning, inclusion and the relationship between the student, the family, the class, the teachers and specialized services.

To help the inclusion and the learning process, such operators use strategies, communication models, and specific tools for each student, to help him/her access all didactical contents. If necessary, they use the Italian sign language and the Braille. At school, they interact and co-operate with other people, including normal and specialized teachers, helping reach the goals set by the IEP.

The *classroom* is the environment where the development of the student factually takes place; hence, it is necessary that the inclusion of the student with disabilities is carried out by agreeing to all the necessary conditions that will guarantee the accomplishment of the goals set up by the IEP (Canevaro, 2007). Initially, classrooms including students with disabilities were made of at most 20 people (par. 7, clause 3, law 517/77; par.13, clause 1, law 104/92). However, in 1997 (Law 449, par.40), with the abrogation of the previous rules, the number of students per class had increased to an unacceptable level.

Following 《law 448/1998》 par.26 and the subsequent 《Ministry Decree n.141》 from 3 June 1999, the limit of students per classes has been set to 20 (including disabled students). As a result, an inclusion project has to be carried out by the whole class board and not only by the specialized teachers.

The headmaster has to send the school inclusion project to the HWG of the education agency, explaining the reasons of the number of students' reduction, highlighting the formative needs of the disabled student as well as the strategies and methods used by the class board.

The HWG of the education agency has to be a motivated letter to the education superintendent, who can then approve the project. If such project hasn't been forwarded or approved, the classes of junior and junior high schools, attended by students with disabilities, can't have more than 25 students. The number of students in the range 21-25 will be determined by the seriousness of the student's disability, the overall conditions of the students with disability, the organizational issues of the school, and the professional resources available. More than one student with disabilities in the same class is allowed only in exceptional cases of minor disabilities.

In Italian state others entity commits to fulfill specific tasks according to their competences (par.13 《law 104/1992》):

- The *education agency* appoints the specialized teachers for inclusion activities; activates school and professional orientation courses;

provides on-site training and learning opportunities for normal and specialized teachers; guarantees the use of supporting personnel for the school integration process; promotes and favors the experimentation of new forms of inclusion between school, territory and professional training, in respect of the applicable rules.

- The *province administration* commits to progressively eliminate the architectural barriers of the school buildings they manage, according to the plan in place; facilitates the use of school operators in the school inclusion process; co-ordinates with other entities the necessary interventions regarding the right to education; guarantees the co-operation with the school administration regarding school and professional orientation for disabled students; promotes continuous training opportunities in support of occupation and professional reconversion of disabled workers; favors the experimentation of new ways of integration between school, territory and professional training, in respect of the applicable rules;

- The *local healthcare* drafts the certificate of the recognition of the handicap, the functional diagnosis and every other documentation aiming at detect the characteristics and needs of the students, with the purpose of identifying the resources, tools and supports needed for school inclusion; guarantees the presence in the school of the operators for the revision of the dynamic functional profile and for the periodical assessments of the Individualized Education Plan; send one of their representatives in the workgroup for the integration, as stated in 《par.14, clause 2, law 104/92》: co-operates with the school administration in expert advice activities for the realization of the training projects, as outlined in M.N. 137/90; co-operates with the province administration and the centers for professional training, orientation and support to inclusion; when needed, arranges for rehabilitation personnel to be sent to the schools; drafts the functional Diagnosis and the DFP;

- The *municipality* further proceeds in the elimination of the architectural barriers from the school buildings they look after; ensure

the presence of the supporting staff, the personal independence and the communication of the students with physical and sensorial disabilities and the non-independent students: guarantees the transportation for disabled students; provides schools with a map of the resources available for the schools in the territory (sport, educational, cultural, spare-time infrastructures, etc.), favoring their use.

The Inclusion: an Everyday Reality

The access to the junior high school represents a particularly complex moment in the life of the persons with disabilities and their families. The type of school, the assessment of the educational programme proposed, the consistency with the disabled student's life project, the teachers' expertise in relation to the educational programme, represent only some of the many aspects which must be assessed when choosing the most appropriate educational path (Folci, Maggiolini & Zampieri, 2011).

It is in such considerations that the professional figure of the author of this article is included, serving as a specialized teacher in a junior high school in Rome.

In the following part, we will deal with the actual on-site work, describing an Italian meaningful situation.

The junior high school "G.G.Belli" is in the North part of Rome, in the quarter Prati-Della Vittoria and it is included in historical buildings, particularly valuable from an architectural point of view, that bear witness of a school idea that is typical of people belonging to the medium-upper class, who will attend university after finishing the junior high school. This school welcomes both students coming from the local areas and the neighboring quarters, and in some cases, even from further areas, often associated with the commuting of the parents working in the many offices of the areas, and foreign students whose parents are employed by the local families.

Figure 3 The public junior high school “G.G.Belli” of Rome



Photo taken by Valentina Della Volpe, 2012

The social and cultural environment is rather homogeneous, made up mainly by people belonging to the medium-upper classes, employed in tertiary activities with a generally high educational level (most of the students' parents hold a degree) and there is also a big amount of social infrastructures (theatres, cinemas, libraries).

The educational requests, qualitatively considerable, represent the multiple interests and knowledge hunger of the students and their families. Bearing in mind the needs of the users and the needs of the community, the school has developed to a constant enrichment and improvement of the formative offer, in accordance to the goals set up on a European level. (The school's website is available from http://www.scuolabelli.it/home_belli.php, 2012).

Given the context, the school has developed a differentiated formative offer, made up by the traditional music sections, the strengthening of German courses, the introduction of Spanish courses, two full time sections, and elective afternoon and summer activities, realized thanks to the commitment of the parents association “Noi del Belli”.

The school has 34 classes, of 30 weekly hours (normal time) and 5 courses, made up by 3 classes each, 32 hours for the 2 music sections

and 36 hours (full time) for the other 4 courses, with a total of about 850 students (aging 11-14). The 2.4% of the total is made up by students with disabilities. Together with me in the school there are 8 other specialized teachers, 4 operators for autonomy and 4 typhology experts.

My task is to guarantee and experiment a good level of personalization in the didactic activities, favoring the social inclusion of all students involved and ensure collegiality and sharing of ideas between stakeholders (Janes, 2005a). Moreover I contribute in favoring the chance to take back a pedagogical vision highlighting the needs of the students, and plan actions and interventions in adherence to the principles of inclusion and to the organizational models from the school set of rules.

This means that the specialized teacher works with his/her colleagues on four different factors:

(a) The mood of the class

Teachers have to be fair and not discriminatory, they have to be attentive to the needs of everybody, accept the diversities of the students with disabilities and value them as enrichment for the whole class, they have to favor the set-up of a sense of social identity, and build up positive social and emotional relationships.

(b) The didactic strategies and the tools

The didactic planning aiming at inclusion entails the use of favoring strategies and methods, such as the co-operative learning, the work or pair group, the tutoring, the learning by discovering, the division of the time into multiple times, the use of didactic mediators, tools and informatics aids, software and other specific aids.

It is important that teachers prepare the study documents or homework in electronic format, so that students using aids or computers can easily access them in order to carry out their learning activities. It is important therefore that the new technologies are well known in order to favor school inclusion, also considering the potentialities of electronic books. Therefore all teachers need to be familiar with the new

tools and can avail of training opportunities carried out by the Ministry of Instructions and Local Entities, in order to support the activities of disabled students even when the specialized teacher is not there.

(c) Learning and teaching

An inclusive system considers the student as the protagonist of the learning process regardless of his/her capacities, potentialities or limitations. Therefore, it is necessary to build up the knowledge by activating personal strategies of approach, in respect of the pace and style of learning and supporting the mechanism of self-regulation.

The method of the co-operative learning seems to be a good approach in this regard, along with an educational individualized plan, which is constantly monitored.

(d) The awareness of the incremental value of the teachers' competences

The educational activity has to be able to demand and not only to protect. But, in order to do so, it has to have a certain credibility, which has to be achieved day by day (Canevaro, 2006) hence, the collegiality of teachers have to be able to:

- Organize and give life to learning situations; this implies knowing the contents to teach for a given subject and their translation into learning goals; start working based on the students skills, with a view to the issues and obstacles related to the learning process; build up and plan didactic systems, engage students in research activities and knowledge projects;

- Manage the progress of the learning process, i.e. create and manage problematic situations that are suitable to the level and potentialities of the students; acquire a thorough view of the teaching goals; get a full understanding of the theories regarding the teaching activities; observe and evaluate the students in the learning situations according to a formative approach; carry out periodical assessments of the competences and decide on how to progress;

- Create and put in place differentiation methods; manage the heterogeneity of the class and develop the co-operation between students

and particular form of learning;

- Engage students in their learning process and in their work; raise the desire to learn, the sense of school work and develop the capacity of self-appraisal of the students, negotiate with students the different types of rules and contracts, offer formative activities that are attentive to the educational needs of everyone especially those of disabled students and favor a personal development project;

- Group work; elaborate a group project and common goals where diversity is not isolated or excluded, but perceived as an added value; build up and renew a pedagogical group; face and analyze complex and practical situations, as well as professional issues; manage complexity;

- Participate in the school management; organize and develop the participation of all students within the school, no one excluded;

- Inform and involve the students' parents in the build-up, fulfillment, monitoring and assessment of the IEP;

- Use the new technologies; effectively use the didactic potentialities of software regarding teaching goals; communicate through telemetric; use multimedia tools in the teaching process;

- Deal with duties and ethical dilemmas regarding the profession; fight prejudice and discrimination; participate in building up common rules of life; analyze the pedagogical relationship, authority and communication within the class; develop the sense of responsibility, the solidarity and the sense of justice;

- Manage own continued training; draft a balance of own competences and negotiate a development project along with colleagues.

The monitoring of the individualized education plan is particularly important for the work that is carried out by the specialized teacher, in accordance with all the other teachers.

It represents a form of research and is split into six parts:

(a) the organizational quality: assessment of the quality and general efficacy (timing, environment and tools)

(b) the didactic quality (or quality didactic): didactic analysis, in relation to both the formative contents offered and the class management and teaching strategies used (Ianes, 2005b);

(c) the quality of relationships within the class: observation of the relationships between teachers and students (Canevaro & Ianes 2008);

(d) the students' satisfaction: this is assessed by gathering feedback and defining indicators regarding the level of appreciation of the past school experiences;

(e) the families' satisfaction: this is assessed by analyzing the ideas and points of view of the parents of the students with disabilities;

(f) the satisfaction of the teachers of the class board: this is done by gathering data in relation to the professional and personal satisfaction of the teachers involved.

- The tools that are normally used to gather the above information are: Log-books;

- Semi-structured interviews to teachers, non-teaching school staff and families;

- Exchange of ideas, information, considerations with teachers and other school staff involved in the integration process;

- Direct observation of the relational and didactic dynamics, during laboratory courses and other de-structured moments.

Through a constant and attentive monitoring of the inclusion process, we want to try to shed light on the aspects that characterize what Canevaro (1996; 2004) call *best practices*. These are procedures that make the school a real inclusive environment.

The best practices are not just good single actions, but they are:

A complex organization for everyone, that can be used over time, they are a quality indicator. Within school, best practices represent also the factual possibility that there is a regular presence of specialized teachers for support and integration [...] with a higher

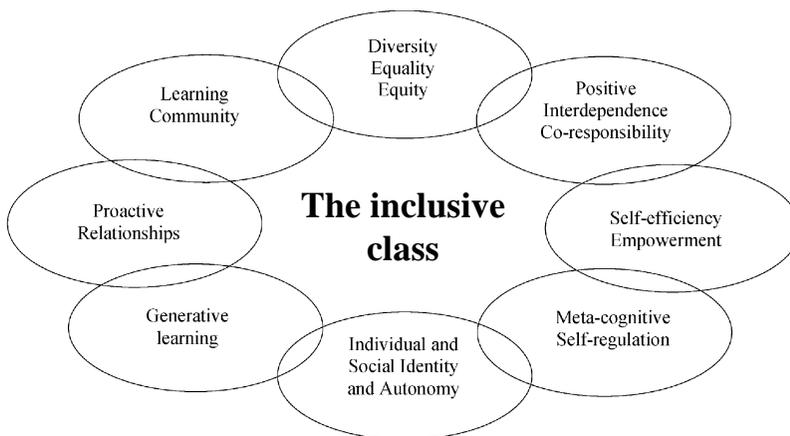
stability, with the chance that one teacher is not associated with one disabled student, but they are a resource for the whole school structure (Canevaro, 2006, p.139).

By monitoring we then try to investigate also the aspects regarding the organization structure of an inclusive class, which can be useful for future projects.

Everything starts from a good organization of the physical spaces of the school. In particular, we want to highlight how the classrooms have to completely fulfill the needs of the students: brightness, ease to reach the place where the students sit and lack of architectural barriers; with a position of the desks that favor group works, but also a good view over students from the teachers, also facilitating the interaction with the students.

The disposition of the seats has to guarantee a perspective view on the whole environment and favor a good mobility of all students, disabled or not, so to enhance relationships and communication.

Figure 3 Major elements of an inclusive class



Source: Della Volpe (2012) *Inclusive online learning environments: Pedagogical reflections and possible applicable models* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Department of Motor, Human and Health Science, Foro Italico University.

The organization continuity, cannot however be guaranteed by the specialized teacher only, but it has to be achieved through the collaboration with the class coordinator, which represents the binding agent between each teacher and an important go-to person for both teachers and the disabled students and their families.

In particular, the specialized teacher has to be able to deal with the needs of the families that, in past experiences haven't been looked after: they have instead to be looked after and constantly kept up to date about the progresses and issues of their children (Pavone & Tortello, 2002).

Therefore we can say that a good, organized school is a school that carries out good procedures, it is an organization that takes into account the differences of the students and their diversity.

Conclusions

The inclusion of students with disabilities is an essential goal of the Italian school system, as it represents the effective objectification of a pure, shared social value and the fulfillment of a specific constitutional rule based on the principle of equality (par.3).

The school plays an essential role in helping the growth and the social integration process of the student with disabilities (Moliterni, 2010; Mura, 2011).

It is important to remember that along to the right to education (par.34), that has to be granted to everyone, the right to health (par.32), to support, to placement into work (par.38) and to education (par. 30 and 38) have to be granted as well, as part of the inclusion project.

Hence, the inclusion of students with disabilities takes place through the co-operation and inter-relation of all the available services specifically set up 《law 104/92》. Their complexity needs therefore a careful evaluation from all the people involved.

The knowledge of all issues related to the integration of services and the development of helping procedures, represent an important way of work, especially during the current period of reduction of the resources available. This is particularly important as the scientific and social focus increases the sensitivity regarding disorders and disabilities. And this increases the number of students that are recognized as in need of specific interventions.

The effort and commitment that are required to the headmaster and to the teachers within schools to allow the actual inclusion of the students with disabilities are increasing. While the headmaster is directly involved in the specific organization within the school, teachers, on the other hand need to improve their competence in the inclusive education process, as this represents the most important factor for the inclusion and the development of the students with disabilities.

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