

# 義大利中等學校融合教育 實施現況

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## 摘要

四十年來，義大利對於透過學校教育實現包容差異之社會建設和專業社群已很重視。對所有一般學生而言，特殊學習需求（SEN）學生、特殊學習障礙（SLD）學生及身障學生融入普通班級，皆是政府或學校需要為他們提出革新或提升的學校品質，因為融合教育下的所有學生透過鼓勵實驗、教育規劃、合作、網絡與承諾之分享，擴展特殊議題的知識等方面，不但對教師和校長有正面影響，也有助於提升落實融合教育的信心。本文除分析融合教育相關文獻外，主要探討義大利中學實施融合教育過程中不同階段的特色。本文在探討義大利近期中等教育改革過程中，亦同時引用義大利國內或國際上熱烈討論或引發爭論的不同觀點，如反隔離式（整合教育）、反對與贊同照顧每位學生的融合教育模式等文獻。然本文有鑑於融合教育在義大利中等教育改革中最具意義，也最具代表性，故以中等學校所實施融合的教育為分析的主要焦點；特別是在不久的未來，中等學校融合教育將針對學校教學能否達成符應學生個別需求的實施成效進行評估，本文對未來政策成效的評估具有啓示性價值。

**關鍵詞：**義大利教育制度、融合教育、中等教育

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# The Implementation of Inclusive Education in Secondary Schools in Italy

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## Abstract

Over the past forty years, schools in Italy have worked on the development of non-discriminatory social and professional networks. The inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classes has contributed to this renewal and promoted a better school for SEN students, SLD students and, in fact Inclusive education is realized through experimentation, educational planning, collaboration, networking and commitment sharing. This article expands and updates what has already been discussed in a previous article, and also introduces the features of inclusive education in its different stages of implementation. The recent debates on anti-segregation (integrated) education and inclusive education will also be discussed. Particular attention is paid to the reform on the level of secondary schools, which represents one of the most significant changes in Italian educational system, the effect of which we will be able to evaluate in the near future.

**Keywords:** Italian education system, inclusive education, secondary education

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# I. Introduction: Inclusive Education

Notion of inclusion (and inclusive education) has been emerging since the Salamanca Statement (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1994) and through UNESCO actions aimed to shift the focus from the challenging education of students with special deficiencies to the idea of education for all the children, in order to promote inclusive education and to eliminate barriers and of all kinds, that may cause social and cultural discrimination.

The *Salamanca Statement* shows that inclusive education requires that educational systems develops a pedagogy centered on the individual child (child-centered Pedagogy), responding flexibly to the needs of each student. This pedagogy is based on the idea that innovative differences should be regarded as a resource and not as an obstacle. In fact, the full realization of inclusive education implies the transformation of the school into a place where the openness and acceptance of the different educational needs of pupils become precisely what characterizes and qualifies the educational system, the educational organization and teacher training.

In recent years there has been a paradigm shift with respect to the philosophy of education of people with disabilities. First, the student with disabilities is now seen as a student with special educational needs, which leads to the decline of the use of the old categories of disability; secondly, it has expanded the area of the issues covered by the so-called special educational needs so as to cover all issues related to the educational needs of pupils, such as learning and behavioral difficulties:

The notions of normality and specialty can explain very little of the complexity inherent to educational processes. Normality and specialty, in fact, are not to be understood as ways of being (there are no *normal* people and *special* people), and it no longer makes sense to think that

there are special people alongside normal people. The reality is that every person, as a result of special needs with regard to different types of problems, contexts and / or situations, may be in a position to have special needs (Lascioli, 2011, p.26-29).

A milestone in the history of the Italian educational system is the start of full inclusive education:

Inclusion of students with disabilities and learning difficulties into common educational contexts was called with the Italian term *integrazione scolastica* (school integration) and is ascribable not only to Montessori's idea of education understood as "help" to children, so that they conquer independence getting free of the oppression of ancient prejudices on education (Montessori, 1909), but also to that of Don Milani, both a priest and a school teacher on the side of those being in a condition of poverty and exclusion, due to socio-economic difficulties and to linguistic and cultural disadvantages (Canevaro & Goussot, 2005, p. 82).

Don Milani claimed the school of all students and urged reflection on a targeted teaching for each of them, thus creating the conditions for a school of differences that can give space to individual needs and expectations and to the educational needs of each and every student (Milani, 1967).

According to Kerstin Göransson (2009), what today is called inclusion or inclusive education was universally called "school integration" before 1994 as also admits Plaisance, albeit underlining innovation of *inclusive* practice with respect to what is now internationally defined *integrative* practice—that is an education pattern still closely linked to disability and special education, influencing teaching methods in common schools but not resulting in a change of educational context and

of teaching for all the students (Plaisance, 2009a).

According to Charles Gardou and Denis Poizat, “integration” refers to ideas of repair and incorporation of an external element in a pre-existing context (Gardou & Poizat, 2007); the notion would therefore be connected to a mainstreaming approach, and then to admission to common context only for those eligible for adaptation: and therefore it wouldn’t be connected to participation and sharing for each and any student, through a substantial change in educational context. Gardou (2006) stresses the innovative meaning of inclusion, due not to its etymology, but to the anthropological and cultural meaning of the notion as being the opposite of exclusion.

This debate has been particularly intense in Europe, and is also due to differences between member states:

the common trend is to develop policies towards inclusion in mainstream schools; yet two-path and multipath systems exist and differences still remain in educational policies and practices and in the very definition of special educational needs and disability (Meijer, Soriano & Watkins, 2003, p. 142).

I dwell on this issue because in research the two concepts of integration and inclusion are generally contrasted.

Integration may be referred even to education in special educational context, provided it helps mainstreaming and/or social inclusion (e.g., by promoting vocational training and work insertion). Inclusion is regarded as broader and more democratic than integration; it is not limited to disability and is seen as a challenge that promotes innovation through the theory of heterogeneous groups in educational context and through the practice of curriculum individualization: inclusive education will help to remove the causes and consequences of any discrimination and inequality (de Anna, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c). And yet, in those countries where there

are still special contexts, following two-path or multipath systems, we are often faced with references to *partially* inclusive, or to *fully* inclusive educational practices (meaning those contexts and occasions where all students eventually meet), while this is a contradiction because the idea of inclusion is not merely descriptive of what happens sometimes in a school, of what can be done in times and occasions particularly defined, but is equivalent to a change of perspective that starts from the idea that there are no exclusive contexts where special/different students may be marginalized, and that all students learn and grow together in common school.

Italian schools have been achieving inclusive education paths since the 1970s and those could come into being because of Italian education policy that finally allowed admission of any disabled student, notwithstanding the kind of disability, in common school and in common classes (de Anna, 2007a, 2007b). In the papers by Falcucci Commission it is stated that (Ministero della pubblica istruzione, 1975, Chapter 1):

... the possibility of implementing a school structure suitable to tackle the problem of handicapped children presupposes the belief that people with developmental, learning and adaptation difficulties should be considered protagonist of their own growth ... In a school that, by getting organically ready through operational forms richer and more varied than those offered by traditional teaching, gives the students a chance of growing thanks to a plurality of languages and experiences, it is difficult and factitious to distinguish between “educational” activities, to be understood as teaching “core subjects”, and “supplementary” activities, and to distinguish between “normal” teaching and recovery/support activities.

At the end of the 1970s, this policy expressed the will to achieve a school for all, able to meet the educational needs of each student, as already apparent in the works of the so-called *Falcucci Commission* and

in the subsequent promulgation of Law No. 517/1977, also known as *Falucci Law* (Norme sulla valutazione degli alunni e sull'abolizione degli esami di riparazione nonché altre norme di modifica dell'ordinamento scolastico, 1977). Italian scholars have been supported those issues, providing the necessary theoretical framework and the hints to provide methodology and tools that could be effective in operational teaching (Canevaro, & Goussot, 2005; Canevaro & de Anna, 2010; de Anna, 1991, 1992, 1997, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c<sup>1</sup>).

In institutional papers and regulations “inclusion” is usually found together with “integration”, which comes both from Italian pedagogical tradition and from the meaning of the two corresponding terms in spoken Italian, where *integrazione* has a broader meaning than *inclusion* (Giangreco & Doyle, 2012).

The Ministry of Education, University and Research (Ministero dell'istruzione, dell'università e della ricerca, MIUR), in the recent guidelines for inclusive education of students with disabilities, still uses the notion of “school integration” (*integrazione scolastica*) to describe a process that is called “irreversible” in Italian educational system and that shares many features with what is now called “inclusive education” in international debate (MIUR, Direzione Generale per lo Studente, l'Integrazione, la Partecipazione e la Comunicazione, 2009). The same term *integrazione* is also used in other Ministry guidelines (MIUR, Direzione Generale per lo Studente, l'Integrazione, la Partecipazione e la Comunicazione, 2009), for example, in those devoted to the immigrants' children, who are not in a position of disability and are not conceived as “external elements” in our schools and in fact are fully included thanks to

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<sup>1</sup> Not to mention the recurring international conferences organized in Rimini by Erickson academic and educational publishing house, and attended by thousands of scholars, experts, teachers and professionals, coming by all the corners of Italy and by all the world. Most of Italian scholars and researchers have been supporting full inclusive issues through the works of *Società Italiana di Pedagogia Speciale* (Italian society of special pedagogy).

Ministry educational policies.

As a matter of fact, the Italian educational system has been promoting full inclusion since the late 1970s: inclusion of students with disabilities has helped to change the very perception of people with disabilities in Italian society, and it has helped innovation, fostering the entry of new professionals in schools and universities and promoting a synergistic taking care of the child, that also involves parents and local authorities, in collaboration with educational institutions and training organizations.

According to nomenclature used by international organizations and to the use of English as vehicular language, the notions of inclusion and inclusive education have been spreading also in Italy: a debate has sparked about the meaning of the innovative concept of inclusion with respect to our past (Ianes, 2008b, 2009):

Different experiences provide opportunities to explore and to look at other contexts, to understand different strategies and interventions that sometimes have other roots. It is not a question, necessarily, of making judgements about which approach is better than another but such an approach provides the opportunity to engage in dialogue and be open to different ideas and experiences in order to achieve anew understanding, while keeping our own identity; one possible outcome could be a greater awareness and a strengthening of our policy choices. (Canevaro & de Anna, 2010, p. 205).

According to Hinz (2007) reported in Plaisance (2009a) and in Plaisance (2009b), there are substantial differences between integrative and inclusive educational practices; however, those described by Hinz as main features of the integrative educational context do not match the Italian educational practice of *integrazione* that has developed in the same direction of what is now called inclusion and inclusive education.

To give just one example: the specialized teacher<sup>2</sup> is assigned to the

school only if it is attended by one or more disabled students,<sup>3</sup> but even in Law No. 517, school is depicted as an inclusive context, where all the teachers shall be able to meet the different expectations and needs of their students; besides, the workforce of specialized teachers is determined annually (at national, regional and school level) according to the number of disabled students and to the kind of disability (which means that students may benefit of a different amount of supporting interventions), but the specialized teacher is not assigned to the disabled student (or to a class/group of disabled students) but to the school and then to the common class, with the task of supporting the teaching team's educational planning and practice; the specialized teacher participates in the evaluation of all the students in the class, voting for their admission or non-admission to the next grade.

Disabled students can also benefit of assistants, assigned annually by municipalities or by provincial administration (in the upper secondary) to help autonomy and communication according to a project for special assistance that schools have to prepare and submit yearly to local authorities (Giangreco & Doyle, 2012). Assistants help those in need to reach autonomy and communication, supporting daily needs and helping in overcoming barriers; assistants of students with sensory disabilities help them manage specific tools and expression means. They can be involved in

<sup>2</sup> Italian support teachers have never been called 'special' teacher, but specialized teacher, because they acquire an additional training.

<sup>3</sup> Law No. 104/1992 ("Legge - quadro per l'assistenza, l'integrazione sociale e I diritti delle persone handicappate", 1992) fixed a standard ratio of one specialized teacher every four disabled students, though the actual ratio has long been (and still is) of one specialized teacher every two disabled students. It's possible to assign even more specialized teachers to schools ("Misure per la stabilizzazione della finanza pubblica", 1997b), but Government has been trying to reduce spending. If a class is attended by one or more students with disabilities, the number of pupils in will be reduced: standard classes should not exceed 26 pupils in primary schools and 27 pupils in junior and senior high schools, but general criterion are often contradicted by local reality. Currently the Ministry of Education only *recommends* extreme caution in the constitution of first classes 'as far as possible'. Directions about the classes subsequent to the first are not clear (Nocera, 2012).

educational planning.

In Italy, until the mid 1990s, educational inclusive processes were mainly focused on inclusion of students with disabilities (then called school integration) because for these students the school system had been developing and could provide specific measures and, above all, an model of intervention based on group working, for both school planning of general organization, and for school and class educational planning. School inclusion of students with disabilities has not been limited, then, to the assignment of specialized teachers to support other teachers, but it has been and is still geared on school working groups and class working groups. After the drafting of a functional diagnosis (Diagnosi Funzionale, DF) for each student, where medical territorial teams give advice on the student's situation and potentials (being then crucial for educational planning), individual working group for each student (called Gruppo di Lavoro Handicap [GLH] or Gruppo di Lavoro Operativo [GLO]) have to meet periodically: the same social and medical referring people meet the teachers and the family at school; those workgroups are entitled to draft functional and dynamic outlines (Profilo Dinamico funzionale, PDF) on the student's level and potentials in different areas (cognition and meta cognition, social and affective area, expression and communication...), and finally have to draft an individualized educational project (Individual educational planning, IEP), that is included in pedagogical class planning and periodically monitored.

These interventions, although reserved for students with disabilities until 2010, can be defined fully inclusive, because they are founded on the assumption that all students must learn together in ordinary schools. School inclusion has never been, therefore, the simple admission of disabled children, or their simple insertion, in common schools (mainstream), nor can one describe it as a set of special methods, of different teaching models depending on the type of disability.

In his juxtaposition of inclusive educational practices and integrative

educational practice, Hinz (2007) mentions special resources allocation for *labelled* children as a feature of integrative practice, but in Italian school system it has been steadily emphasized that the allocation of special resources and tools can improve the learning context for all students, and that it constitutes a resource for the entire school. We have already focused that the specialized teacher is not a specialist, that s/he is assigned to the class and not to the student with disabilities who attend it, that the educational planning must stem from a common reflection and it is not subject to the recurring control of experts but by a workgroup which includes the social and health experts, but also includes the class teachers and the student's family and meets in schools.

According to scholars, Italy is the only country where, from kindergarten to university, there are no longer two separate educational systems, common and special, because the right to education is exercised by everyone in common schools and in common classes (de Anna, 1997; European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2003; de Anna, 2004; Giangreco, Doyle & Suter, 2012), which means that the Italian educational system is not two path nor multipath, but one path (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2003; Mejier, 2003; Mejier, Soriano & Watkins, 2003).

In Italy special school no longer exist (They were finally abolished at the beginning of 1990s), nor special classes in common schools (abolished in 1977). In 1980s and 1990s, also due to international exchange and European Comenius projects, schools were encouraged to document inclusive good practice and develop inclusive intervention patterns, not a blueprint but a series of effective pathways fit to individual situations and context (a model of inclusive process, regarding a down syndrome student in upper high school is described) (Villanella, 2003; Ianes, 2005b).

To demonstrate the substantial success of inclusive education in Italy, we can mention the high number of students with disabilities, including mental and physical disabilities, enrolled today in Italian universities,

where special reception and mentoring services have been functioning over the years (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, n.d.; MIUR, Direzione Generale per lo Studente, l'Integrazione, la Partecipazione e la Comunicazione, 2011a).

In Italy, special education has influenced common schools but has also transformed them, resulting in the change of educational practices (common and special) and of the whole school system, which today is called to meet the needs of all students, after the Ministry's interventions in favor of foreign students and in favor of those with specific learning disorders (which will be examined below). Following the most recent guideline of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry Circular (MIUR, 2013), any school and teaching team will have to introduce, starting from the next school year, the drafting of an individualized education plan for each student presenting special educational needs, thus achieving the full inclusive aim of Italian school system.

The issues facing us today affect primarily the ability to achieve these objectives in common schools: in fact, the reference to the special educational needs of each student implies that teachers have to ask themselves what a special educational need is and what it means that a student has a special educational need; teachers have also to understand who can and should determine that condition of the student, considering that a diagnosis may be available (e.g., for special learning disorder children) but that is not always the case (e.g., for students with behavioral difficulties and social and cultural disadvantage), and then the class board of teachers will have the task to identify them, to involve families and draft individual educational planning.

The recognition of the category of Special Educational Needs ( SEN) dates back to the late 1970s of the last century (Warnock,1978), it has been studied in a number of international relations, in pedagogical works and is normally adopted in European countries and in North America. even in Italy this notion has been spreading and, in view of the instances

represented, it is natural to expect that the group of students in need of enhanced teaching and additional resources line up at least 4-5 students in each class, if not more.

The Ministry guidelines fit the individualized interventions within a school model being clearly inclusive, with the aim to redefine and complete the Italian traditional approach, settled in over thirty years.

The task of ensuring inclusion policies in each school is left to the Board of Teachers, that has been given for years the task of drafting the plan of educational offer, and then to some school organisms and boards, whose names and tasks have been redefined: e.g., the research school working group and (Gruppo di lavoro e di studio di Istituto) turns to the working group for inclusion; also the area network actions have been enhanced, e.g., through connections with the *Territorial Centers for Inclusion* (Centri Territoriali per l'Inclusione, CTI) formerly known as Territorial Support Centers (Centri Territoriali di supporto[CTS], functioning in pole schools).

To the board of individual class teaching team is then assigned a heavy responsibility: to identify pupils with SEN (based on diagnosis when available, or following a resolution of the board itself) and to decide on whether to resort to additional educational interventions and / or to individualized personalized teaching, and finally to meet both the special needs of some students and the mission of managing the class as an inclusive community. It is a very difficult task, because it is to reconcile an individualistic vision of the student with a systemic vision, threatening to revive the contradiction between the medical—diagnostic model and the pedagogical model, between the specialization of interventions and the inclusive model, and finally between this and the risk of marginalization of the student into the frame of an individual project, other than organic and joint educational class planning (Pavone, 2013).

These are the main issues that are being debated today in the Italian school, and that relate to the ability to turn it into an increasingly inclusive

context, reconciling the needs of students, those of teachers and the adjustment of resources with the cuts in public spending and the heavy funding cuts to the school system. In fact, the Italian school is part of a social system that is undergoing a profound and dramatic economic and institutional crisis.

Considering the complexity of the Italian school system, the many recent reforms of the school that have occurred especially in recent decades (particularly in lower and secondary schools), and considering the long history of inclusive processes in the Italian educational system, this article attempts to provide a broad and comprehensive view for those who are interested in exploring these issues. Therefore, all main Italian legal sources have also been reported, and can be viewed in bibliography.

## II School Integration and Inclusive Education in Italy

The progressive democratization of Italian society is entwined with the implementation of the educational system and is linked to the increasing attention paid to students' individual needs and to special education needs in common schools (Canevaro & de Anna, 2010).

The end of nineteenth century can be considered the initial phase of Italian educational policy: national unity, formally achieved in 1861, will be gradually extended to Veneto and Friuli, and then to Papal State, and will be completed only with the first world war. Quality education was not at all lacking (Italian universities are among the oldest in Europe), but Italian population, different in traditions, culture and language, was composed mostly of farmers and did not have access to primary education, so it was mostly illiterate, especially in the southern regions. The extension of compulsory education is linked to the fight against illiteracy, but also to the gradual extension of the right to vote, which had long been limited on

the basis of gender, wealth and education. The Italian educational system retained a centralized and hierarchical structure, together with a marked separation between education and training courses.<sup>4</sup> In 1859, *Casati* Law started the nationalization of education, establishing a four-year primary school, of which only the first two years were expected to be attended by all the children (*Riordinamento dell' Istruzione pubblica*, 1859; Felici, 2010); only those who had accomplished the four year course could access the lower and upper secondary school that allowed the continuation of studies and admission to university. There were also *complementary* schools (to train new primary school teachers and for work insertion) and various types of three-year technical schools that allowed to be admitted to technical institutes, but most of these technical institutes did not allow to enter university.

The same *Casati* Law provided for implementation of special elementary schools, municipal or provincial and that is considered a first step towards social and educational inclusion, because the school system was now expected to meet special educational needs, at least of those students who were considered eligible for education, i.e. those with censorious or motor disease (Macro, 2010).

In 1923, at the beginning of the fascist period, the Ministry of Education enacted the so-called *Gentile* reform which raised compulsory education up to 14 years of age.<sup>5</sup> At the end of primary schools, students could choose several options: among them *ginnasio*, which required an

<sup>4</sup> Finally, laws of 1912 and 1919 introduced universal suffrage for all male citizens over the age of 30, but only in 1946, after the Fascist period and the struggle for liberation, universal suffrage was extended to women. In republican Italy, all citizens with at least 21 years of age could vote until 1975, when all citizens with at least 18 years of age were also allowed to vote.

<sup>5</sup> The reform consisted of Royal Decree Laws (R.D. or r.d.l.) redefining the entire education system. It established a not mandatory preparatory degree (kindergarten) and a five-year primary school (6 to 10 years). The most significant innovations were: *Liceo Scientifico* (senior high school on mathematics and science) and *Istituto Magistrale* (teacher training school), even the school of arts and *complementari* schools were reorganized; a state exam at the end of each school cycle was introduced.

entrance examination and was the only kind of education that allowed admission to senior high schools (classical grammar, scientific and “female”) and then enrolment at university.<sup>6</sup> The reform was nevertheless in a line with the past: it still assigned the primacy to classical grammar education and to the philosophical-humanistic ambit (*Liceo Classico*), relegating technical and vocational education in a subservient position; schools for industry remained entrusted to the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce (later to that of National Economy).

The same reform brought in special classes in common schools, called *classi differenziali*, that provided education for students who had been excluded from the common context but might be subsequently reintegrated in common classes (it did not concern disabled students), and this step clearly shows the authoritarian vision of society and school. According to *Section 415 of Regio Decreto 26 Aprile 1928 No. 1297* (“Regolamento generale sui servizi dell’istruzione elementare”, 1928), students who committed “acts of permanent indiscipline ... such as to raise doubt that they may arise from mental abnormality” would be assigned to special classes, or hospitalized “in institutions for juvenile offenders” with the agreement of the family (Tenuta, n.d.).

It has been generally emphasized that *Gentile* reform was guided by a classist and elitist vision of culture, but an aspect that is often forgotten is that it encouraged the education of people with disabilities. Section 175 of consolidation laws relating to primary education (“Approvazione del testo unico delle leggi e delle norme giuridiche, emanate in virtù dell’art.1,n.3,della legge 31 gennaio 1926, n.100, sulla istruzione elementare, post-elementare, e sulle opere di integrazione”, 1928), still the only kind of education that most people could attain, widened compulsory

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<sup>6</sup> Only the graduates from classical humanistic high school (*Liceo Classico*) could enrol at all university faculties. Graduates of maths and science high school could be admitted only to technical-scientific university faculties, all the other graduates (from technical and teacher training institutes) could not apply for university.

education to students with visual and hearing impairments who had no other “abnormality” preventing them from complying. For students with hearing impairment, compulsory education was granted until 16 years of age. More special institutions were founded and educational institutes were adapted, providing also that special kindergartens could be attached. The reform encouraged the *schools of method* (that is schools for special teaching training) and developed training for teachers of kindergartens, to employ them in special institution and special classes of common schools, thus laying the groundwork of modern teacher training. In the early '30s, the establishment of special elementary school was promoted, with attached vocational courses meant to work insertion.

The concept of special educational need was still to come, but Italian special pedagogy could number experimental pedagogues convinced that people with disabilities were eligible for education.<sup>7</sup> The first *Scuola Magistrale Ortofrenica*,<sup>8</sup> founded in Rome by Giuseppe Ferruccio Montesano in 1900 (Montessori, 1909), was directed by Maria Montessori who developed her *method of scientific pedagogy* applied to child education thanks to the experience with psychic or psychophysical impaired children.

The post-world war I period saw the tragic increase of the disabled, military and civilian, together with the birth and development of associations of people with disabilities.<sup>9</sup> The collaboration between

<sup>7</sup> Since the Fourteenth century, some Italian educators had pledged in favour of those who were then called “deaf and dumb”, such as Bartolo della Marca d’Ancona and Girolamo Cardano, or such as Ottavio Assarotti, Tommaso Pendola and Tommaso Silvestri between the end of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century, Antonio Gonelli-Cioni devoted himself to the education of frenastenici, that is of the ‘feeble-minded’.

<sup>8</sup> Meaning: School for teaching the mentally impaired.

<sup>9</sup> A First World War hero was Enrico Toti, with one leg amputated, who managed to join the Italian army (though he couldn’t be officially enrolled); he died in battle, they say, throwing his crutch against the enemy; this occurrence has been long emphasized by holography and then mainly connected to nationalism, but a closer knowledge of his adventurous life, could reveal that Toti was also one of the first inclusion heroes, a feature that is generally undervalued.

the Minister of Education Gentile and Augusto Romagnoli, the great pedagogue of people with visual impairment, contributed to the emergence of “schools of method” for teachers and educators of special schools. They promoted a process of “normalization” for blind students to be developed in special elementary school, in order to allow mainstreaming in common schools up to university. Students with sensory and motor disabilities could attend common school, provided they were eligible to follow the common courses and syllabuses without significant changes in school environment and teaching: even before the educational policies to develop inclusion, mainstreaming was encouraged and there were already many students with physical and sensory disabilities attending common high schools, with the support of common teachers and classmates. Therefore, from the 1920s until the 1960s and 1970s, the number of students with disabilities (especially visual) in common secondary schools and university courses would gradually increase.

At this stage of pedagogy and special pedagogy, it still existed, however, a clear separation between common and special school context. Between 1960 and 1970, Italy experienced very strong internal migration due to economy and industrial development: migration from the country to cities and from south to north affected the Italian school system and had to face new responsibilities, also due to the emergence of new learning difficulties caused by social distress. The response was to implement and reinforce separate pathways and settings, in other words special classes and special schools, which determined a reaction, involving both teachers and parents (Canevaro & de Anna, 2010). This separation was reasserted in 1962 (“Utilizzazione di fondi per il finanziamento del piano per lo sviluppo della scuola, 1962; Istituzione e ordinamento della scuola media statale”, 1962): special schools for students with “psychophysical” disabilities<sup>10</sup> and for “social re-education” were set up; special classes in common schools

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<sup>10</sup> “Psychophysical” is the term used in Italy to define both mental and physical disability, this term can be still found in official instruments and records.

were increased and extended to junior high school in order to allow compulsory school completion; the same laws ensured functioning by promoting several steps: among them the courses of specialization to train special school teachers. The reform of the lower secondary grade dates back to the early 1960s with the establishment of the *Scuola Media Unica*: a three-year junior high school, compulsory and free, for students from 11 to 13: section 11 provides “update classes” for pupils with learning difficulties and section 12 provides for the establishment of special classes (*classi differenziali*) for misfit students (Giangreco & Doyle, 2012).<sup>11</sup>

The idea that students with severe and mental disabilities could be educated in common school context was affirmed, however, just in those years: the reform stressed the importance of ordinary school, and parents and teachers were increasingly orienting towards full integration in common classes, according to the regulations on the right to education in sections No. 34 and No. 38 of the Constitution of the Republic, setting up that “school is open to all students” and that “basic education (which was then imparted for at least eight years) is compulsory and free” (Assemblea Costituente, 1947). Asserting equality includes recognizing the other person with the awareness that diversity belongs to each of us and cannot justify discrimination; problem students’ admission to common schools, though in separate classes, arose both uneasiness for their marginalization and teaching experimentation that developed a change of conceptual framework in education (Canevaro & de Anna, 2010).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the process of democratization in schools

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<sup>11</sup> Law No.1859 (Riordinamento dell’ Istruzione pubblica, 1859 ; Istituzione e ordinamento della scuola media statale, 1962): students could apply at *Scuola Media Unica* after a five-year primary school ended by a state exam. Other laws focusing school democratization in the 1960s: Law No. 444 (Ordinamento della scuola materna statale, 1968)) implementing not mandatory state nursery school for pre-school children from three to six. Law No. 820/1971 implementing full time school in basic education (*scuola a tempo pieno*) and reducing the number of pupils in classes. The same law implemented additional activities alongside curriculum subjects.

kept pace with that of society and often anticipated regulatory policies; the principle that education should take place as a rule in ordinary schools was introduced by law (“Conversione in legge del D.L. 30 gennaio 1971, n.5 e nuove norme in favore dei mutilati ed invalidi civili”, 1971), which also regulated the complexity of measures required by social inclusion: it addressed all areas of intervention, including the health and social sector and the allocation of pensions and allowances. Besides, it established, after compulsory education completion, the right to attend guidance and vocational training courses organized by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (“Conversione in legge del D.L. 30 gennaio 1971, n.5 e nuove norme in favore dei mutilati ed invalidi civili”, 1971). That law introduced steps to develop protected job opportunities that foreshadowed placement quotas reserved to disabled workers and targeted job placement that would be introduced at the end of 1990s (Norme per il diritto al lavoro dei disabili, 1999).

At the end of 1960s the extended time was introduced in elementary and junior high school, which helped to implement the students’ right to study. A law (“Norme sulla valutazione degli alunni e sull’abolizione degli esami di riparazione nonché altre norme di modifica dell’ordinamento scolastico”, 1977) allowed school inclusion of people with disabilities, giving a great space to the creation and management of a new system (with particular regard to specialized teachers and their training) but this process is part of a broader transformation of education, through the introduction of educational planning and new rules for evaluation and examination. It was started a process of school amendment that came from the awareness that mainstreaming and mere admission are insufficient when context and teaching transformation are not provided, that students shouldn’t be requested to adjust to school context: it is the educational environment, instead, that should be adapted to the needs of all students (including those with disabilities).

This has profoundly influenced the educational system towards full

participation of all students in a school where the anthropocentric model that enhances the pedagogical logic is opposed to the functionalist model of useful learning, though drawing strongly the focus on the development of those capabilities, skills and competencies that will promote meta-cognition, enabling the operational workgroup (and the student) to devise a life project. According to Italian scholars, educational needs are *special* not only when referring to disability, but also when we refer to any student, because each and all students are entitled to enjoy *special* care and to receive all due attention to their individual needs (Ianes, 2009; Ianes & Demo, 2009; Canevaro & de Anna, 2010). Diversity is seen as a positive value and as an occasion of enrichment for the whole educational community. The emphasis is laid on attention to context, of sociological matrix, but with a holistic approach that encourages individual participation and fosters full social integration:

Behind the “daring” choice of the Italian school system to open common classes so that they could become “common” indeed and for all, there is a concept of education as high as the human person, who finds in education the overriding time for his/her own development and growth...School is an educational community that welcomes every student in the daily effort to build relational conditions and pedagogical situations such as to allow the maximum development. A school not only to know, therefore, but also to grow... (MIUR, Direzione Generale per lo Studente, l’Integrazione, la Partecipazione e la Comunicazione, 2009, p. 3).

Canevaro and de Anna (Canevaro & de Anna, 2010) have pointed out two important consequences of school inclusion of students with disabilities: it has helped the identification of problems that may cause learning difficulties, it has focused attention on adaptive and cognitive strategies, and on methodologies based on cognitive strategies, with potentially beneficial outcomes for students with dysgraphia, dyslexia,

and other impairments, and in general for all students. It has allowed to experience together both disability and normality in a context where peers can learn a great deal from each other, and then enrich each other: research has widely shown that benefits are reciprocal.

In the early 1970s, inclusive education was widely experienced in basic mandatory education, with interesting outcomes and increasing involvement of teachers, who pushed for a policy change and for full inclusion (Gelati, 2007).

Finally, Law No. 517/1977 abolished special classes in mandatory education (elementary school and junior high school), which fostered a change of conceptual framework even in the upper secondary, where teachers now felt the inadequacy of mainstreaming approach and where inclusive education was finally extended with a judgment by the Constitutional Court, in 1987: the same educational interventions provided in mandatory education had to be granted in upper secondary schools. The final abolition of special classes and special schools is owed to a law “Legge - quadro per l’assistenza, l’integrazione sociale e i diritti delle persone handicappate”, 1992, which also promoted university attendance through the creation of support bodies, specific measures and resources in all Italian universities; inclusive education in universities was finally ordered by another law (“Integrazione e modifica della legge-piadro 5 febbraio 1992, n. 104, per l’assistenza, l’integrazione sociale e i diritti delle persone handicappate”, 19).

Even students with very severe disabilities could now be included in the upper secondary; in this level of education the purpose of attending school may vary, because only those students who can reach the aims of the common curriculum (even modified in strategies, tools and resources) can have a final diploma valid for profession and/or admission to university. Therefore disabled students in the upper secondary can have both a IEP (individual educational plan)<sup>12</sup> meant to common curriculum achievement, or a IEP geared on autonomy and participation, though

linked to general planning and class planning: those IEPs' final aim is developing competences that will be useful for social and work inclusion, but also to foster friendship, collaboration and peer tutoring in the class, together with a knowledge of disabilities, which is considered crucial for enrichment of both school context and society.

In the 1980s “judgments” were introduced for assessment in elementary school, instead of traditional rating votes and evaluation report cards,<sup>13</sup> democratization in basic education was carried on and finally elementary school was profoundly altered at the turn of the new century;<sup>14</sup> instead of the *solo* teacher, the child could face a plurality of educators, included specialized teachers, with different experience and pedagogical styles merging in a common educational plan, which supported inclusive education in elementary school. This organisation of basic education has been modified by the so-called *Gelmini* reform<sup>15</sup> by the centre—right government, that reintroduced the grading system and the single teacher from school year 2009/2010, but regulations on school autonomy give joint decision—making bodies the task to decide about teaching

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<sup>12</sup> Individual educational planning (IEP) is called PEI in Italian.

<sup>13</sup> The new programs can be found in DPR No. 104 (Approvazione dei nuovi programmi didattici per la scuola primaria, 1985)

<sup>14</sup> The principle of teaching collegiality was reaffirmed and a didactic modular organization (of three teachers in two classes or four teachers in three classes) was implemented by Law No. 148/1990 (“Riforma dell’ordinamento della scuola elementare”, 1990).

<sup>15</sup> By ‘Riforma Gelmini’ one commonly indicates the collection of legislative acts come into force during the tenure of Minister Gelmini contained in Laws No. 133/2008 (“Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del? decreto—legge 25 giugno 2008, n112—Schema di piano programmatico del Ministero dell’Istruzione, dell’Università e della Ricerca, di concerto conil Ministero dell’Economia e delle Frnanze, dicui allart.64 del decto—leggellz”, 2008) and No. 169/2008 (“Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto—legge 1° settembre 2008, n. 137, recante disposizioni urgenti in materia di istruzione e università”, 2008b). Law No. 240/10, that is the reform of university (“Norme in materia di organizzazione delle università, di personale accademico e reclutamento, nonché delega al Governo per incentivare la qualità e l’efficienza del sistema universitario”, 2010b) came into force in 2011. Regulations about reordering of secondary schools, technical institutes and vocational institutes were issued in 2010 and will be explained further.

organization, which theoretically should allow collegiality and some teaching modularity in elementary schools, notwithstanding the cuts in staff numbers (due to extended time classes' reduction) modular teaching organisation has therefore been preserved.

Legge No. 104/1992 faced the widespread need to overcome the medical approach to school inclusion of disabled students; before that law, students with a disability had to be *certified* in order to be entitled to receive an IEP and the support of specialized teachers in common context (Giangreco & Doyle, 2012). This certification of disability has been maintained, but Legge No. 104/1992 stressed the importance of a dynamic and educational approach by formalizing and regulating, from basic school up to the end of senior high school, the periodical drafting of a functional diagnosis (Diagnosi Funzionale, DF) in addition to the mere certification, and of a functional and dynamic outline (Profilo dinamico Funzionale, PDF) for each student with a disability (Ianes, 2004, 2005a, 2008a, 2008b).<sup>16</sup> The same law permanently established both the general workgroup of the school and the operational individual workgroups for each disabled student, in order to define a “project for life” (Ianes & Cramerotti, 2005).<sup>17</sup> Those organisms had already being developed in schools, to foster shared educational planning, shared assessment and adequate evaluation, they focused on the disabled student's relation with his/her own context (individual, family, educational, local...) giving birth to a model system (Lin & Villanella, 2008).

During all school attendance, DF and PDF shall be the premise for drafting the IEPs<sup>18</sup> whose aims are fostering learning and full participation (e.g., assistance, transportation).

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<sup>16</sup> The Italian acronyms are given in brackets;

<sup>17</sup> It is traditionally called GLH (workgroup on disability) or GLO (operational workgroup) and shall be attended by the principal and all class teachers (including the specialized teacher), by the family, by a representative of local social and sanitary service (ASL) and by other significant people, if any (for example, special assistants).

<sup>18</sup> IEPs are issued by individual operational workgroups.

In 2008, some changes were proposed, due to the closer collaboration between schools and local authorities/organisms after Legge No. 30/2000 (Nocera, 2008): a reinforced DF should have superseded DF and PDF, but this change hasn't been actually implemented everywhere; however, many initiatives have been updated, both for principals and teachers, and for social and health workers, with the goal of reaching a truly dynamic and functional vision of students' special needs. The international classification of functioning, disability and health (World Health Organization, 2001) has represented an innovative tool for the definition of personal and environmental factors that may be a barrier to educational and social inclusion: the International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health (ICF) perspective does not stress the deficit, but enhances individual potential and contextual factors' role; it can help overcome the biomedical model's limitations in detecting individual educational needs of students with disabilities (Booth & Aiscow, 2008; Plaisance, 2009). Ianes (2004) states the importance of the International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health (ICF)–children and Youth (CY) for special educational needs' recognition, stressing that it responds to a vision of the person/student that is complete, comprehensive, holistic, systemic, not just reducible to biological aspects (Ianes & Demo, 2009). Other authors point out that the current understanding of disabilities and special needs is based on a dichotomy between individual and social factors, but this duality does not grasp the complexity of the issue, therefore they suggest the capability approach, based on ICF (Borgnolo et al., 2009); some scholars illustrate the importance of ICF in a Professional Training Center in order to ensure continuity in the education and rehabilitation objectives during the training programme and within the life project (Bortolot & Pradal, 2009). Life project perspective is crucial in individual educational planning of common schools and recurring refresher courses are, therefore, organized almost yearly: e.g., the MIUR Circular No. 5 (MIUR, Ufficio Scolastico Regionale per il Lazio, 2012) recommends school network organization to

plan inclusive projects and activities and to organize refreshment courses about ICF and its use in schools to help detecting students' individual needs.

Finally, we must not forget the contribution of special pedagogy which, as we have mentioned, in Italy defines a field of study and research that does not apply to special education of disabled people, but to the special attention paid to the needs of each and all students in common schools : pupils are inserted in an inclusive background (sfondo integratore ) marked by the sense of belonging: a dimension, then, as wide as possible, enhancing meta-cognition and autonomy (Pavone, 2009).

One of the challenges now facing the Italian school is the inclusion of foreign students, generally the children of immigrant parents, regular or irregular. Although the economic crisis has significantly reduced the new entrances in Italy, the presence of foreign students has become a structural feature of the education system: it affects more than 87% of primary school complexes and about 90% of lower secondary schools. About 70% of schools detect a presence of foreigners that does not exceed 15%. However, the proportion of immigrant pupils is more than 30% in about 470 primary schools and in 140 lower secondary schools. Even many illegal immigrants attend school, thanks to regulations on right to education (Servizio Statistico, 2010). The percent is higher in north and center Italy, where parents are included in the social fabric and actively collaborate with schools. The main difficulties are encountered in the southern regions, where the school is an outpost of law and where the lack of stable work encourages illegal child labor, impose frequent shifts of the entire family, and reduces the time to devote to the education of children: all factors hindering the motivation to attend school regularly.

The definition of “intercultural education” is used for the first time in the Ministry Circular No. 205/1990 (“La scuola dell’obbligo e gli alunni stranieri, L’educazione interculturale”, 1990): “cultural diversity” is seen as a further positive resource for the complex process of growth of both

individuals and society; intercultural education shall promote the ability to live together in a multifaceted cultural and social context, and involve not only acceptance and respect, but also the recognition of different cultural identities, from a perspective that enhances the different cultures of origin. Even in the absence of foreign students, the educational context and disciplinary teaching shall prevent the emergence of stereotypes and ethnocentric prejudices, promoting human rights through understanding and cooperation between peoples, in the shared aspiration to development and peace. This delicate task entrusted to School is reaffirmed in the rules concerning immigration, e.g., in Presidential Decree No. 394 (“Regolamento recante norme di attuazione del testo unico delle disposizioni concernenti la disciplina dell’immigrazione e norme sulla condizione dello straniero, a norma dell’articolo 1, comma 6, del decreto legislativo 25 luglio 1998, n. 286”, 1999) which establish the right of immigrant children to education, in the form and manner prescribed for Italian citizens. Regardless of the legality of residence and documentation, immigrant students are required to attend school and can enrol at all levels. The Teachers’ Board has a crucial role in making proposals for their distribution (avoiding the establishment of classes where the presence of foreign students is predominant), it shall adapt the curriculum as far as possible, adopt specific interventions (individually or for groups of students) and even activate courses, projects and workshops with external staff (to facilitate the learning of the Italian).

In Ministry circular No. 24/2006 we can find the *Guidelines for the reception and integration of foreign students* (“Direzione Generale per lo studente, Ufficio per l’integrazione degli alunni stranieri”, 2006). The principles governing the guidelines are: Universalism, common school for all the students, centrality of the person and of his/her relationship with the context. Intercultural education is seen as a process where the role of principals and teachers is crucial, together with school autonomy and exchange of experiences between schools and through networks of

schools.

The guidelines give the Italian school the task of mediation in the three areas in which hospitality develops: administration, communication and relationships, education and teaching. The MIUR Circular No. 2/2010 sets a maximum limit of 30% of non-Italian pupils in the class: the limit has been gradually introduced, starting from the first classes, but it can be (quite easily) raised by the General Director of the Regional School Office, due to territory features and needs (MIUR, Dipartimento per l'Istruzione, Direzione Generale per gli Ordinamenti Scolastici e per l'Autonomia Scolastica, 2010a). Coordination structures planned at national, regional and local level include pole schools that should manage enrolling on the territory: currently, school with the highest percentage of foreign students can insert newcomers without any problems and use network to help resource sharing.

The Italian teachers, called once again to deal with the social and cultural changes in the country, have accepted this role, confirming the inclusive model of the Italian school system. The main obstacle is that of having to use existing resources and the modest resources that become available in this time of economic crisis and recession.

A further step in the implementation of inclusive education has been the recent *Guidelines for the right to education of students with specific learning disorders*, Disturob Specifico d'Apprendimento (DSA) being the Italian acronym (MIUR, Direzione Generale per lo Studente, l'Integrazione, la Partecipazione e la Comunicazione, 2011b). The guidelines were issued in accordance with a law which acknowledged dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia and dysorthography as specific learning disorders (“Nuove norme in materia di disturbi specifici di apprendimento in ambito scolastico”, 2010). It is important to point out that the English SLD (Specific Learning Disability) does not correspond exactly to what we define DSA in Italy, because dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia and dysorthography cannot be considered nor defined a “disability” according

to the Italian law.

Giangreco & Doyle (2012, p. 69) point out that:

Notably, Italy does not generally consider students with “learning disabilities” (as the term is used in the United States) to be “disabled”.

The term specific learning disorders (DSA) defines all specific difficulties in automating the interpretation of graphic signs that may occur in people in whom the neurological and cognitive features are intact; in Italy you can talk about DSA only in the absence of other symptoms or side/secondary conditions (like mental retardation, cognitive disabilities, serious socio-cultural disadvantages etc., although DSA can be found together with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD also called *Disturbo da Deficit di Attenzione Iperattività*, DDAI). Nevertheless, the student’s specific learning disorders must be certified by a reliable source (generally by the local health service and/or a hospital) and documentation must be forwarded to school and kept there at teachers’ disposal.

A SLD can damage learning (difficulty in transcending written signs into sounds, reading impairment, problems in understanding the text, impairment of the ability to study, frequent association of reading difficulties to dysorthography, dysgraphia and, sometimes, to dyscalculia), but a SLD may also have psychological and emotional consequences and may result in lacking motivation, negative self-concept, anxiety and low self-esteem, tendency to avoid the task, lacking sense of responsibility and behavioral risk: an unrecognized DSA can manifest itself with behaviors that can be interpreted as ADHD (although ADHD typical behaviors may also lead to the development of learning disorders, which makes it hard to focus).

The enactment of Legge No. 170/2010 (“Nuove norme in materia di disturbi specifici di apprendimento in ambito scolastico”, 2010)<sup>19</sup> brings

to the foreground the cultural and professional reflection on what today means to act as a teacher, asking once again the Italian school, through flexibility and autonomy, to put at the center of its activities and care the singularity and complexity of any person, of his/her own identity, aspirations, ability and fragility. It is underlined the importance of teaching professionalism together with that of class context and family's contribution, in order to determine the SLD student's centrality in his/her own learning process. The importance of class context is linked to the development/ strengthening of pro-social skills, to the education towards awareness of diversity, in order to arise a correct affective-relational attitude in all students; and to arise a positive affective - relational attitude in SLD students, in order to develop awareness of their having to live with their own difficulties, and then of their having to deal with a training on specific skills through the available means and resources. Families' contribution is focused on correct methods of communication, on co-responsibility with school, on a positive relational attitude and on sharing.

Teaching professionalism involves: methodological flexibility, flexibility in context organization, ability to observe, formative evaluation, correct affective and relational attitude, ability to group managing, co-responsibility and sharing. The difficulties of the pupil with DSA can be managed using learning methods that take advantage of the visual channel and the oral one as channels of information access. A multimedia equipment is recommended and should be part of the educational project of the class, it should be placed in the classroom to be used in the natural teaching practice by the whole class: the teacher must have a basic

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<sup>19</sup> Even before the Law, the enactment of measures to help SLD students' right to study were encompassed in a number of MIUR interventions, through a number of Ministry circular letters concerning: educational compensatory and dispensatory measures; SLD diagnosis, compensatory and dispensatory during state exams; SLD students evaluation in general, and evaluation of SLD students during first cycle exams and state exams. Those circular letters have been followed by many others because they have been issued yearly, mainly for state exams organization and evaluation.

knowledge of the multimedia tools, and is noticeable the importance of interactive whiteboards (known as Lavagna Interattiva Multimediale, LIM), on which teachers and students can write, draw, attach images, display text, video or animations, and whose use in schools has been encouraged by the MIUR since school year 2009/2010. Multimedia whiteboards have been appreciated during the visit of a Taiwanese delegation in school year 2010/2011, but there are also other new technologies that may be of use to reduce the gap between those who are able to read and write properly and those who are not able to do so, and need alternative means or alternative channels for access to the text and to learning. Teachers can use aids for access to the written text, aids to enable reading, compensatory aids together with cooperative learning to aid rehabilitation.

The voice synthesizers can ease the access to written texts; word processing helps to overcome the problems in handwriting and spelling, allowing automatic correction. Voice synthesizer and word processing can reduce physical and psychological space between the SLD student and other students, allowing the SLD students to perform activities independently, and also allowing to reduce the distance between student's performances and teachers' demands, in order to achieve the same general objectives of the class: they allow, in short, to reduce the distance between performance and requests, in order to achieve the same objectives as the companions. They also "treat" the disorder by practicing deficient skills: word processing reinforces lacking/insufficient skills of grapheme/phoneme transposition; it enhances meta-cognitive strategies because it involves an additional operation: the letters must be traced between the symbols on the keyboard, then passing from reading to writing, and this allows the student to reflect on what he/she has to write, as well as to strengthen and exercise the ability to phonological analysis. The corrector graph and/or self-correction require reading, but also retyping: and then they allow the student to correct the text immediately after the mistake,

which corresponds to unemotional correction which does not affect the student's self-esteem. Educational software allows the intervention on deficient skills and on learning customizing; it promotes motivational aspects and encourages a greater attention effort. The strengths of educational software are as follows: although it does not solve all reading problems, its use may increase students' self-esteem, unless it is seen as a tool for negative differentiation; nevertheless it has to be integrated into an educational project and into teaching common practice.

Compensatory aids are used to support the SLD student during the learning process, bridging the gap due to the specific disorder; the most known are the following: Pythagorean table, software for the creation of conceptual (mental/cognitive) maps, tape recorder, calculator, e-book, hypertext. With regard to the practical steps: simple measures are sufficient to make more accessible a written document, they include: the choice of font (Arial, Verdana...), line spacing (e.g., 1.5—double-spaced), the choice of space between words (e.g., double spacing), the use of the printed upper case, etc. Finally, the school cooperative model transforms the class in a learning community promoting diversity in sharing: each student can provide his/her own skills for the global growth of the class through the appropriation of other students' skills, through peer tutoring, mutual aid, relationship for help, cooperative learning, etc.

The right to education of pupils with specific learning disorders is ensured through various initiatives promoted by the Ministry of Education, through the training of principals and teachers and the construction of individualized and/or personalized paths in schools. The difference between individualized and personalized paths lies in the level and type of the changes required (i.e., in teaching strategies, teaching resources and flexible time of performances allowed to SLD students; or in making use of specific tools, like keynote maps and talking books, or even in being excused from foreign languages' written tests...) being understood that these students' attendance is aimed at achieving a regular diploma, and

therefore at acquiring all knowledge, basic skills and competences that are required by the course of studies.

Therefore, in all types and grades of school, pupils with specific learning disorders have the full right to enjoy specific tools and measures that may be necessary to overcome their difficulties (i.e., even in the upper secondary they can use calculators, computers and computer automatic correction in writing, they can keep notes and charts...). The same tools may also be purchased during the tests for periodic and final assessment, including the state examination and university exams.

It is not expected the assignment of specialized teachers: teachers of the discipline have the task to update and implement new teaching methods and specific teaching strategies on the basis of individual education needs and learning styles. This gives teachers' observation and skill a key role, not only in kindergarten and primary schools, but also throughout the school career, in order to identify the cognitive characteristics on which to focus for achieving educational success. According to experience, most students with specific learning disorders will profit only partially of the measures and tools allowed, either because they do not need all of them, or because they do not want to feel "different", and therefore prefer to learn thanks to teachers' professional skill, facing school challenges thanks to small aids. It is, therefore, crucial that all the measures required may be fully shared in the class, thus reducing the gap and perceived "differences", and also enriching the learning context for all the class, following the true inclusive perspective and approach of the Italian model.

The regulations on students with specific learning disorders provide for the establishment of a SEN contact person and introduce the obligation to summon special meetings of the class teachers (at least one at the beginning of the school year, and even more when needed), with the presence of parents and of the people entitled to the student's care outside school (i.e., psychologists, private tutors, if any ...); also the student can be summoned, when necessary, especially when of age. The aim is to draft

an IEP that will include all the strategies and resources required for the student's IEP.

### III. The Upper Secondary School and the Reformation of Cycles

School autonomy is the process of allocating administrative, teaching and organization autonomy in all Italian schools and is crucial to understand the functioning of the educational system, particularly of the secondary level after its reformation in 2010, which requires each high school to make choices about curriculum and its implementation.

In the mid-1970s Delegation Decree Laws (Decreti Delegati No. 416, 417, 418, 419 & 420 according to Presidential Decree May, 31 1974<sup>20</sup>) established joint decision-making bodies (collegial governing bodies called “Organi Collegiali” in Italian) at the national, district and school level, for educational, didactic and administrative management of all educational institutes. This organization was confirmed in 1990s, by a law and a President's decree law: Law No. 59 (“Delega al Governo per il conferimento di funzioni e compiti alle regioni ed enti locali, per la riforma della Pubblica Amministrazione e per la semplificazione amministrativa.”, 1997) and Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica (DPR) No. 275 (“Regolamento recante norme in materia di autonomia delle istituzioni scolastiche, ai sensi dell'art 21 della legge 15 marzo 1997,

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<sup>20</sup> With Law No. 477/1973 the Parliament had entrusted the government to issue rules on school management and school staff. The Law has been enacted through Delegation Decree Laws (DDL): Istituzione e riordinamento di organi collegiali della scuola materna, elementare, secondaria ed artistica. (1974a); Norme sullo stato giuridico del personale docente, direttivo ed ispettivo della scuola materna, elementare, secondaria ed artistica dello Stato. (1974); Sperimentazione e ricerca educativa, aggiornamento culturale e professionale ed istituzione dei relativi istituti. (1974).

n. 59”, 1999a).). In each school those bodies are still providing the direct participation of teachers, non-teaching staff and parents to all decisions concerned. Those joint bodies are still in force because they fully merged into the General law on school (“Testo Unico delle disposizioni legislative in materia di istruzione”, 1994) and underlie school autonomy, that was implemented in the late 90’s.<sup>21</sup>

Each school is considered like an autonomous institution, it draws up an annual Plan of Educational Offer (POF), being organized in policy areas (i.e., “inclusive education and inclusion of differences”, “intercultural education”...) that are coordinated by willing teachers elected by the Board of Teachers and called “instrumental functions” (“Funzioni strumentali” in Italian). Teachers can also submit projects to promote POF educational activity. The Board of Teachers—according to the clues and instructions by the territory (Local Authorities, Enterprises, Board of Associations of Disability...), by families and by the School Board (Consiglio di Circolo o d’Istituto’ in Italian: a management and administrative body chaired by a parent)—processes and approves yearly the plan of educational offer which is finally adopted by the School Board. The latter has the task of issuing the school regulations, but also to direct, control and approve an annual plan, which is the accounting document that has to be prepared by all educational institutions to develop and implement their educational offer.

Instrumental functions, project coordinators and class coordinators are key figures in managing effective education: all those teachers are paid with modest bestowals, from the school fund or from other school allocations. The most recent reforms have institutionalized departments (that already existed in some way as organization bodies of the Board of

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<sup>21</sup> That Decree Law was also meant to rationalize the educational system, that was now divided up as follows: state nursery school (not mandatory), elementary grade, secondary grade (junior and high) and schools of art education. This structure will be changed in 2010.

Teachers).

Effective organization, administrative transparency and democratic management of schools is closely linked to a quality educational offer and, therefore, also to development of quality education pathways leading to quality inclusion, as required by students and families and as recommended by Italian educational policy. This is particularly true in recent years, characterized by cuts in public spending and economic recession.

We must, however, specify that the draft bill No. 953, known as *Apra*, aims at reforming the collegial bodies, by restricting the space of democracy and paving the way for the statutory autonomy of each school (which would have a board of administration instead of the present school board), resulting in the questioning of the national system of public education and with the dangerous speeding up of the role of the private sector which will have the opportunity to be part of the collegiate bodies and, because of their external financing to heavily influence the plan of educational offer. Those issues will be discussed below.

Unlike basic school, the upper secondary system remained essentially unchanged from the *Gentile* reform of 1923 up to 1968. In 1969 a five-year experimentation was started in all vocational schools, and admission to universities was fully liberalized: students could apply for any faculty after a five – year course (or after a four—year course, like in schools for primary teacher training, followed by an extra fifth year).<sup>22</sup> No comprehensive school reform of the upper secondary was carried out

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<sup>22</sup> As a result of student protests of the late 60s, a new state exam at the end of the upper secondary education was finally implemented, which would remain unvaried until the Law No. 425 (Legge n. 495, 1997c) and Presidential Decree No. 323/1998 (Regolamento degli esami di Stato conclusivi dei corsi di studio di istruzione secondaria superiore, 1998b). Currently, the upper secondary state exam includes three written tests (one multidisciplinary) followed by an oral exam on several disciplines. Evaluation is percent bases (100 is the maximum) and deserving students can be awarded, according to achievements of each of the last three years, an additional education credit for a maximum of twenty points.

until the new century, but the Ministry allowed hundreds of experimental pathways based on local context needs and aimed to update the technical and vocational competences that students could acquire, which led to proliferation of experimental courses that widened the educational offer for students, but increased public spending. Finally, reforms in the early years of the new century have been changing the education system and particularly the secondary grade.

At the beginning of the new century, a framework law, the so-called *Berlinguer* reform,<sup>23</sup> divided the education system into: kindergarten, primary grade (or basic school) and secondary grade. Through that first reordering of cycles, compulsory education was raised from the fourteenth to the fifteenth year of age: this reform of the center-left government was aimed at overcoming the “classiest model” of secondary school, still modeled on the pattern of *Gentile* reform. The upper secondary, yet organized in courses rigidly separated from each other, was now subdivided into a first two-year period—mandatory, unitary and with the goal of orientation—followed by a three-year period that was to foster the professional skill development.

*Berlinguer* reform was entirely repealed by Legge No. 53/2003 (the so-called Moratti reform, of the center-right government),<sup>24</sup> which guaranteed the right to education and training for at least twelve years, or at least up to the attainment of a qualification by the age of eighteen, but this *right-duty* was considered fulfilled also through training from 14 years onwards, which did not envisage necessarily school attendance. It was thus made possible a school–work alternation, aimed at acquiring practical skills for employment: students could enter primary school

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<sup>23</sup> This reform is contained in Law No. 30 (Legge Quadro in materia di Riordino dei Cicli dell’Istruzione, 2000).

<sup>24</sup> Moratti reform is contained in Law No. 53 (Delega al Governo per la definizione delle norme generali sull’istruzione e dei livelli essenziali delle prestazioni in materia di istruzione e di formazione professionale, 2003).

even at five (a voluntary opportunity that these days has been revived as structural change), but the choice between school attending and other kinds of training was judged to be done too early, already at 13 years, like in early 60s: the right to education and school attendance could actually stop shortly after the end of the lower secondary, which caused a lot of criticism. The reform proposed a new structure of the education system, including a first cycle (primary school (+) secondary junior school) and a second cycle (senior high schools called *Licei* (+) vocational education and training) with the possibility to change domain during the first two years.

In 2005, a Decree law reshaped again the whole system of the upper secondary into a dual system based on *Licei* (senior high schools with different domains: art, classical studies, economy, language, music and dance, science, technology and human sciences) and vocational education and training (“Norme generali e livelli essenziali delle prestazioni relativi al secondo ciclo del sistema educativo di istruzione e formazione, a norma dell’articolo 2 della legge 28 marzo 2003 [53]”, 2005). The first remained the responsibility of the state, while the latter became the exclusive competence of regions. That caused a lot of criticism: education and training should be the competence of the state (as enshrined in title 5th of the Constitution of the Italian Republic) and this was seen as a backward step, which re-proposed a distinction between high schools and technical and vocational training.

The policy of center-right governments on education was also characterized by a downsizing of state intervention and of funds allocated to state schools, by the allocation of funding to private schools, in the name of freedom of choice and free competition, and by the substantial reduction in resources for extended time and full-time schooling. The Ministry of Public Education (Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, MPI) changed its name into Ministry of Education and was merged with the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, which gave birth to the MIUR also responsible for private educational institutions and universities. An aside

of center-left government entailed the extension of compulsory education up to 16 years, a threshold that has no longer been changed, also technical and vocational education were restored and re-launched in paragraph No. 13 of Law No. 40 (“Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 31 gennaio 2007, n. 7, recante misure urgenti per la tutela dei consumatori, la promozione della concorrenza, lo sviluppo di attività economiche e la nascita di nuove imprese”, 2007).

Currently, students are entitled to compulsory education from the sixth to the sixteenth year of age; students with disabilities can complete compulsory schooling even until the age of eighteen: to fulfill compulsory education, students have to attend the *Primary cycle* (primary and lower secondary school), and the first two-year period of the upper secondary (“Disposizioni per la formazione del bilancio annuale e pluriennale dello Stato [legge finanziaria 2007]”, 2006).<sup>25</sup>

The *Decreto ministeriale (D.M.) No. 9 of 27 January 2010*, introduced in high schools the model certificate of basic skills acquired by the student at the end of compulsory education. This must be prepared by the class council, shall be issued at the request of the student and refers to the following areas: languages axis, math axis, and scientific-technological axis, historical and social axis.

Schooling in common context is guaranteed to all students, even to those with severe disabilities. In evaluation, it's possible to administer different tests, though equivalent to the standard ones, and to take into account student's difficulties to a certain extent, otherwise one can also customize tests and evaluation, using non-conventional forms of assessment: but the operational workgroup will have to decide, in that case, whether it's possible to award a diploma valid for all purposes.

A MIUR circular letter (MIUR, 2010e) confirms that students with disabilities who have not acquired a diploma at the end of the lower

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<sup>25</sup> The extension of compulsory schooling started in school year 2007/2008.

secondary (but just a certificate on training credits) may nevertheless enroll at the upper secondary, but a limit is introduced: the disabled student wishing to enroll must not have exceeded the eighteen years of age; after the end of the chosen course, in case of subsequent enrollments in other upper secondary courses, he/she won't be entitled to supporting teaching. One alternative solution is provided by afternoon/evening courses for adults, where supporting interventions may still be provided, though this solution is rarely chosen by students with severe disabilities and their families: at the end of schooling, in default of a diploma, they prefer to join vocational projects implemented by local authorities, territorial centers, cooperatives and private adult institutions. Further information on student assessment in cycles, different courses and in training are available in the papers by the European Commission (Anonymous, 2013).

*Moratti* reform first and then *Gelmini* reform have been launched not without controversy in schools and in society: this complex explanation of the various changes in the last twenty years is aimed at clarifying the persistence of traditional denominations, such as “elementary school” and *scuola media* (meaning junior high school), not only in spoken language but even in official documents and international papers.

*Gelmini* reform underlies the current educational system: after kindergarten (still not compulsory and admitting children from 2 and half), we have a primary cycle that can be started at 5 and ends with a state exam: with the introduction of comprehensive schools (Istituti comprensivi in Italian). Primary cycle is connected on one side to kindergarten and on the other side to upper secondary education, because it encompasses both the existing primary (or elementary) school and the lower secondary level (former *scuola media*). Therefore, what is officially defined “secondary education” now corresponds to the upper secondary, that follows the primary cycle and lasts four or five years (according to the chosen domain and to possibility of admission to higher education): upper secondary schools shall now be referred to as “secondary institutes”. Connection

between the first cycle of education and secondary education is pursued by schools through autonomy, useful to organize, even through network, suitable guidance projects focused on educational continuity.

The Reform of Higher Secondary Education is available in Ministry documents called *Riforma della Scuola Secondaria Superiore*, which is Presidential Decree Laws No. 87, No. 88 & No. 89 containing the regulations of high schools (called in Italian *Licei* from the Latin *lyceum*), of vocational institutes (the Italian *Istituti Professionali*), and of technical institutes, that is *Istituti Tecnici* in Italian (MIUR, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d). Special guidelines from the MIUR were issued, to help transition to the new system. Given its complexity, it is the case to illustrate the reform just in its essential.

The *Licei* system consists in six kinds of senior high schools, some of them with different options: art (six different domains), classic (Grammar), foreign languages, music and dance (the two sections have different paths), human sciences (with an economy and social option) and science (with an applied sciences option gathering the experience of existing *Liceo Tecnologico*, a significant trend of innovation in the aftermath of Moratti Reform). *Licei* last for five years: a first two-year period, aimed at completion of compulsory education and at acquiring basic learning and skills required by course type, is followed by a second two-year period and by a fifth year. The educational institution may modify the curriculum within a certain share of autonomy (20% of total hours in the first two-year period, 30% in the second period and 20% in the fifth year) according to the educational, cultural and professional outlines that complete the reform, and to the indications by regions. The curriculum of each subject cannot be reduced by more than one third over the five years and school cannot delete any of the subjects of the fifth year.

The main innovations concern: the enhancement of Latin, law and economy; time increasing for mathematics, physics and science; foreign languages' reinforcement; in the fifth year, a non-linguistic discipline shall

be taught in a foreign language. The standard timetable will be annual, rather than weekly, to promote flexibility: from the last two-year period, the school can activate pathways to foster schoolwork alternation.

The widening and strengthening of educational offer can be pursued through the introduction of quotas for flexibility. From the second two-year period, pathways for partnerships can be introduced: with university, with higher education institutions of art, music and dance,<sup>26</sup> with higher technical education, (Istituto Tecnico Superiore, ITS), and with higher technical and vocational education or (Istituto di Formazione Tecnica Superiore, IFTS) (Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa [INDIRE], n.d. a; Castellini, 2011).

Higher technical education is a newly established sector based on foundations for participation—including schools, training institutes, businesses, universities and research centers, local authorities. The goal is to create post-secondary “special schools of technology”, with a path parallel to those of university, which will train high technicians in strategic technology areas for economic development. Students can be admitted to ITSs after a four-year or five-year secondary course; at the end of ITS it’s possible to continue at university with a shortened pathway.

Higher technical and vocational education (IFTS) is a part of integrated higher technical education (Formazione Integrata Superiore, FIS) having more and less the same characteristics of ITS and providing higher technical education and training. It can be attended by youth and adults (even employees) who graduated from high schools, or were admitted to the fifth year of high school, or obtained a diploma at the end of education and vocational training. The paths shall be characterized by flexibility and modularity; they are planned by the regions on the basis

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<sup>26</sup> AFAM in Italian; they are: the Academy of Fine Arts and legally recognized Academies of Fine Arts, the National Academy of Dramatic Art, the National Academy of Dance, the Conservatory of Music, the equalized Music Institutes, the Higher Institutes for Artistic Industries (ISIA) and other institutions authorized to issue AFAM certificates.

of their economic and financial planning, with the participation of social partners.

In new technical institutes the existing fragmentation of courses (39 normal and 200 experimental), is overcome by identifying two broad areas and 11 options. Economy domain provides courses in: administration, finance and marketing; tourism. Technology sector provides courses in: mechanics, mechatronics and energy; transport and logistics; electronics and electrical engineering; computer science and telecommunications; graphics and communication; chemistry, materials and biotechnology; fashion industry; agriculture, agro-food and agro-industry; construction, environment and territory. Most of them provide additional courses to target education and training.

New technical institutes are characterized by an area of general education common to both paths and by separate address areas that can be organized on the basis of a national list continually updated. They are structured in a first two-year period, to complete compulsory education and to acquire the basic knowledge and skills required by course type, followed by a second two-year period and by a fifth year, whose curriculum can be modified to meet the demands of the territory, of the working world and professions. The fifth year will end with the State Examination and allow admission to university. Technical institutes may use flexibility to organize training options, but for now flexibility is possible only in the second two-year period and in the fifth year, where curriculum can be changed by 30% (last two years) and by 35% (last year). Flexibility is added to the 20% share of autonomy. Students will have a weekly time corresponding to 32 hours of lessons: the widespread use of laboratories for teaching purposes is considered an essential tool for effective teaching (INDIRE, n.d.b).

Even the relaunch of vocational education is based on autonomy and flexibility allowing adjusting and modifying curriculum to meet the interests and aspirations of young people, local needs and demands of the world of business and professions. The previous five areas of vocational

education, with 27 address areas are replaced by two macro-sectors: service sector and industry and handicraft sector, the first providing six courses (services for agriculture and rural development, health services, services for food, wine and hotel business; commerce services) and the second providing two courses (craft and industrial production, maintenance and technical assistance). Students will have a weekly time corresponding to 32 hours of lessons.

In new professional institutes flexibility applies to all courses and consists of a portion of the annual timetable that can be used to integrate educational training with vocational training provided in the regional system. Flexibility must be traced back, however, to a framework of general criteria established at national level to prevent the risk of training fragmentation. In the first two-year period, flexibility share must not exceed 25% of timetable and 35% in the third year; flexibility is added to the 20% autonomy share. Schools may stipulate work contracts with experts from the working and profession world who have a specific and documented experience, the diploma issued after the state exam must certify the skills acquired and the chosen options.

Within some limits and thanks to autonomy, all secondary institutes can change the standard timetable and devise different ones, based both on compulsory activities and courses for all the students and on other subject—matters included in the plan of educational offer. Within the limits of the available budget, they can either increase the compulsory courses or organize the elective ones (that shall be consistent with the profile of educational, cultural and professional studies). Elective subjects become mandatory for students who choose them and contribute to evaluation: in short, it now opens the possibility of curriculum diversification and personalization (even with the assistance of external experts and/or networks). Secondary institutes can adopt new organizational models, such as Departments, for better training planning, and Scientific and Technical Committees aimed at strengthening collaboration with local stakeholders,

especially for guidance to profession and to carry out internships, apprenticeships and school-work alternation.

## IV The Training and Recruitment of Teachers

The training and recruitment of Italian teachers has experienced many phases and a wide variety of models, even different depending on the order and type of studies: to mention only the secondary grade, in the 1980s, after a long period of qualifying courses for teaching alongside recruitment based on disciplinary rankings, the Ministry decided to announce public competitions both useful to gain a teaching qualification and for the recruitment, depending on available employment positions. In the 1990's competitions were no longer announced, except for some disciplines: recruitment took place on the basis of rankings where both educational qualifications and service credits merged. Meanwhile, in-service updating for permanent teachers could take various forms: for some time updating and refreshment courses (still being one of teachers' most important duty) were considered a mandatory requirement to be eligible to the expected salary increases linked to service length.

Currently, in-service updating can be organized at central, regional or provincial level, but it can be provided also by schools — or by networks of schools — because it falls under “autonomy of research, experimentation and development” (“Regolamento recante norme in materia di autonomia delle istituzioni scolastiche ai sensi dell’art. 21 della legge 15 marzo 1997, n. 59”, 1999): schools can design staff training, and enable research (i.e. on assessment, on methodological/didactic and curricular innovation, on inclusive education…), and can design new solutions to document their experiences. Not to mention that Italian schools have been joining

national and international projects (i.e., European union projects) that have profoundly changed staff professional and didactic skills.

Over the last decade the network model has been asserting: the MIUR has been funding project-based refreshment courses for networks of school: the national project—ICARE (Imparare, Comunicare, Agire in una Rete Educativa) aroused a number of methodological and didactic projects, based both on pedagogical experimentation and on refreshment courses, mainly on ICF (Villanella, 2010); the above mentioned MIUR Circular letter No. 5, October 2012 (MIUR, Ufficio Scolastico Regionale per il Lazio, 2012) called for school network projects on inclusion of students with disability, based both on methodological innovation, new technologies and teachers' updating; only 18 network projects in Latium have been selected and allocated of € 13,000 (about NT\$ 542,880) each: that sum has to be divided between the schools involved in each network, after having saved a part of it, to pay a compulsory updating course on ICF: e.g., in a network of five schools, each of them will have no more than €2,000 (about NT\$ 83,520) pre-tax, that will be greatly reduced by taxation. The commitment to update teaching competences is nevertheless relevant.

Special teacher training for support interventions was launched in the 1970s; those specialization courses also included practical training and were firstly biennial for each “category” (sensory visual/hearing or “psychophysical”) of disability, and therefore valid both in common and in special classes still existing. Subsequently, they became biennial but multi-purpose (for teaching in common school). They were organized by the Ministry of Education at provincial level, or by various qualified and licensed entities, including universities, category associations of disability and special institutions where special schools and “schools of method” had been functioning.

From the late 1990s until 2008, training of all new teachers was carried out by the schools of specialization for primary and secondary

teaching (Scuola di Specializzazione per l’Insegnamento Secondario, SSIS), organized by universities at regional level; specialization courses lasted two academic years (four semesters), with examination for admission and limited enrollment established according to the availability of employment positions (as set by the Ministry of Education in each region), and with a final academic defence.

To be admitted, a student had to be in possession of a four/five-year degree (according to the old university system, prior to “Bologna System”), or of a postgraduate two-year degree (Master’s degree). Training, of equal dignity for all teachers both of the primary and the secondary grade, took place in universities; a part of the basic course was intended to cover the issues of inclusive education. SSIS training could continue with a further year of specialization for would-be supporting teachers; (Lin & Villanella, 2008). SSIS frequency was mandatory and students had also to attend direct traineeship in schools and indirect traineeship (group works) under the guidance of supervisors (in Italian: *tirocinio diretto/indiretto*). Supervisors were expert teachers having the task to start reflection and discussion and to link the theoretical part of the course to teaching practice: to be employed they had to win a SSIS competition, and worked part time in their schools and part time for the SSIS.

The experience of the Schools of Specialization officially ended in 2008, but some of them worked until 2010, to ensure the specialization course completion to all enrolled trainees: section No. 5 of Law No. 53 (Delega al Governo per la definizione delle norme generali sull’istruzione e dei livelli essenziali delle prestazioni in materia di istruzione e di formazione professionale, 2003) and section No. 3 of Ministerial Decree No. 270 (MIUR, 2004) had established Master of Science courses at university (second-level) that would end by a qualifying examination and could be followed by a master course to train specialist teachers for support activities (de Anna, 2007). The MSc degree was finally implemented in

2011 and includes a traineeship called TFA (Tirocinio Formativo Attivo meaning: “active training traineeship”) which consists of 475 hours at state schools; TFA is also necessary to complete the path of graduates under the old system wishing to gain teaching qualification.

Most recently, contradicting both the training system of the old SSIS and the new teacher training system pivoted on MSc and TFA, the MIUR launched a new competition to recruit more than 11,500 teachers, with a cost of about €1,000,000 (about NT\$ 41,760,000). This has triggered a reaction of some 160,000 temporary teachers, already qualified by universities and enrolled in rankings for teaching but still without a permanent position.

## V. The Italian School of 2000s

In the late 90s and the first decade of the new century, the entire educational system has been hit by a wave of regulatory interventions and “reforms” that have to be at least mentioned, because they definitely characterize today’s Italian school and particularly secondary school.

In addition to the *Reform of educational cycles*, the MIUR has issued new regulations on achievement evaluation and students’ behavior, on lifelong learning and adult education, on certification of competences and even on textbooks, whose digital (or at least mixed) version has become mandatory since the present school year (“Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 25 giugno 2008, n. 112—Schema di piano programmatico del Ministero dell’Istruzione, dell’Università e della Ricerca, di concerto con il Ministero dell’Economia e delle Finanze, di cui all’art.64 del decreto-legge 112”, 2008a). Other rules set the integrated education and training system managed by the regions and the digital administration code which provides for the computerization of administrative acts (“Codice dell’amministrazione digitale”, 2005a.).

All these provisions are intertwined with many others, on administration and accounting management, on labor regulations and standards for civil servants. Reforms are in part due to renewal, in part to the adjustment of the legal and institutional national framework to European framework, and in part to the need for simplification, rationalization and cost containment, as for the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity (which underlies decentralization) and for what is called in Italian “Dimensionamento” (meaning: “resizing”): the school management system is now under the jurisdiction of the Regions. Every year regions have to make a program of their own school network, in accordance with section No. 138 of Decree Law No. 112 (Conferimento di funzioni e compiti amministrativi dello Stato alle regioni ed agli enti locali, in attuazione del capo I della legge 15 marzo 1997, n. 59, 1998a) and with the reformation of TITLE V the Constitution (Modifiche al titolo V della parte seconda della Costituzione, 2001).

This resizing is aimed to cut expenses, and section No. 19 of Law No. 111/2011 sets comprehensive schools of at least 1,000 pupils through unification (“Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 6 luglio 2011, n. 98 recante disposizioni urgenti per la stabilizzazione finanziaria. Art.19: Razionalizzazione della spesa relativa all’organizzazione scolastica”,2011)—That has led to the cancellation of many preschools and primary cycle schools, with substantial impoverishment of schools’ socio-cultural identities and of educational provision in many areas of Italy, and that will have its effects even on inclusive education. Law No. 111 has been judged unconstitutional by the Corte Costituzionale della Repubblica Italiana (Decision No. 147, 2012), but it still remains in force, despite the damage it can cause in a context where organizational autonomy granted to individual schools has been weakened.

The regulations on upper secondary education have a number of innovations designed to improve the educational offer in relation to

specific demands of the territory and working world: schools can equip themselves with a scientific committee which advises and make proposals for the organization and use of autonomy and flexibility share, but at no cost to public finances; the results of this innovation are to be assessed in future, but for now, the choices about the areas of autonomy and flexibility are left mostly to schools, i.e., especially to the board of teachers.

It remains to be seen, whether resources allocated will help fully achievement of reform goals: there are many possible actions allowed to schools, but it is repeatedly stressed their not having to result in staff redundancies, and that they will not result in additional fund allocation. The rules provide the possibility to assign an enhanced contingent of human resources at a single institution and/or make it available to schools through network arrangements, but this perspective does not appear achievable for the time being, considering general staff reduction.

The full implementation of the reform, then, clashes with the limited financing: managers and teachers are faced with a series of conflicts and doubts, even of administrative sort, which hinder the realization of innovation. Autonomy shares, rather than flexibility shares, relate to teaching organization and can be realized with the teachers already assigned to the school: here innovation is the product of pedagogical and organizational capacity of individual schools, or of network/s of schools. A separate issue is flexibility, because this may lead to a change in the path of study that requires accurate controls and, to a certain extent, even appropriate authorizations.

The law theoretically provides for the implementation of a new type of organic, defined as “functional” to autonomy and school networks, which would be made permanent for at least three years and would complement the human resources already allocated to individual schools. This measure, however, is connected to the corrective measures of public finances (“Disposizioni urgenti per lo sviluppo economico, la semplificazione, la competitività, la stabilizzazione della finanza pubblica

e la perequazione Tributaria, in attuazione del capo I della legge 15 marzo 1997, No. 59”, 2008), while an organic actually functional to needs should be free from constraints clearly oriented to rationalize human and financial resources in the direction of maximum savings and low investment.

The reform redesigns the curriculum in terms of disciplines and time reduction, with a smaller number of teachers employed and an additional burden of responsibility for those in service (i.e., “experimental” scientific and technological licei had much more laboratory hours). It opens a time, then, when teachers’ professionalism will have to be redefined and upgraded, also based on new disciplinary combinations, and this raises doubts and questions. These observations are not intended to criticize the reforms, which would not be possible if the Italian schools had not given evidence of their ability to organize, adapt and improve the educational offer in the interest of students, but to have a broad vision of education policies and of secondary education it is necessary to highlight both the strengths and the possible weaknesses in the school system.

According to recent data by Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali (CENSIS), in 2010 the proportion of young people aged 18 to 24 years with only a junior high school diploma and no longer included in training courses has dropped from 19.2% to 18.8%, a datum which is confirmed in all regions of Italy, except in those of the center in which it stood at 14.8%. The proportion of young people aged 15 to 29 who do not study and do not work has, instead, increased with the onset of the economic crisis, rising from 20.5% in 2009 to 22.1% in 2010 (CENSIS, 2011). Lifelong learning covers only 6.2% of the population and adult education has seen a decrease in resources allocated from €16 million (about NT\$ 6,681,600,000) in 2009 to €4.4 million (about NT\$ 1,837,440,000) in 2011.

Economic crisis and government interventions in education continue to operate heavy cuts, which seem geared to mere cash criteria. Recently, the bill “Stability decree Law” by Monti government has proposed an increase of teachers’ “front” working time (“front” hours meaning the time

for classroom lessons) that was to increase from 18 to 24 hours per week, both in lower and upper secondary schools, with no increase in salary.

Such a choice, besides being illegal—because it corresponds to an unilateral cancellation of the National labor contract—showed very little knowledge of the teachers' workload, which goes far beyond the “front” hours spent in classrooms.<sup>27</sup> Besides, those 18 front hour per week are in line with the schedule of European colleagues (who are nevertheless better paid) as indicated by the information network about education in Europe called Eurydice (about school year 2009/2010) (Anonymous, 2013).

The one third workload increase would result in a series of extremely negative consequences in upper secondary schools: the increase in the number of classes (and then in the number of students) for each teacher would determine teachers' burnout and the impoverishment of educational offer. The mobilization throughout Italy, which saw teachers and students march together in daily demonstrations against government educational policy has, for now, blocked this attempt and resulted in the

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<sup>27</sup> In addition to classroom teaching, service obligations for secondary school teachers include 80 hours per year of ‘functional activities’ to teaching and routine joint activities (class councils, teachers’ board assemblies, department/disciplinary meetings ...); to those we must add: records’ compilation and interviews with parents; coordination and verbalizations of class meetings; board, class and individual planning; lesson planning and class assignment control; written test and exam preparation; checking and mark assignment, results’ transcription, national INVALSI (Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema dell’Istruzione) tests’ checking; a very important routine activity is IEPs’ planning for pupils with learning difficulties and students with disabilities. To those we add: textbook evaluation for possible adoptions (and written reports for new adoptions); recurring updating courses and self-updating activities. Day trips (such as exhibitions, conferences, visits tours, theater performances...), school trips and camps, language stages and cultural exchanges require preparation and assistance. Most teachers are involved in disciplinary and interdisciplinary projects for the widening of the educational offer: they are required to plan, supervise and monitor those projects, and often to attend committee meetings. Many teachers are involved in remedial/reinforcement courses additional to teaching (e.g. for foreign students) that are underpaid with the meager funds of the school. To all this we must add the tasks of instrumental functions (POF coordinators) whose workload, additional to teaching, is underpaid and not based on a scheduled service timetable, but project and result based.

cancellation of that measure from the bill on “stability”; nevertheless, both teachers and students went on with protestation against cuts to state education: most teachers have been reducing their involvement in projects and non-routine activities, and students have been taking up many senior high schools for squatting (“Aumento delle ore, la scuola protesta mille iniziative di studenti e professori”, 2012). In fact, there is still the possibility that the number of frontal hours remains unchanged, but that each formal “hour” is reduced to 50 minutes, with the consequent increase in the number of classes and students for each secondary school teacher.

The reduction of resources devoted to state education does not encourage efficiency, does not eliminate the deadwood, but it takes away the lifeblood of a growing tree, because it hampers the process of education and training of new generations: The Ministry of Economy has not yet indicated the amount of funds that will be allocated to the schools’ fund, making it impossible to start most activities in the POF. Another worrying signal is the so-called Aprea bill (“Proposta di Legge d’iniziativa del deputato APREA: Norme per l’autogoverno delle istituzioni scolastiche e la libertà di scelta educativa delle famiglie, nonché per la riforma dello stato giuridico dei docenti”, 2008). It planned to modify school governance, and namely those joint bodies described above, introducing private intervention and private funding to equate state schools and private schools: even the legal status of teachers could be changed and their role would become functional to a privatized school run by external parties and stakeholders.

A final consideration concerns the secessionist pressures and glocal issues that have emerged in the last two decades, along with cultural changes due to globalization and, finally, to the dominance of mass media: all those, combined with the economic crisis and the substantial impoverishment of the welfare state, can undermine the unitary, national and democratic features of Italian educational system.

This scenario requires a strong commitment from the world of

education and beyond, in order to prevent the denial or loss of quality experiences, good practices and of the values standing behind them: it is necessary to defend the value of the results achieved in the interest of the students and their families. The school system is now called upon to face the economic, social, scientific and cultural changes and has to compete with a functionalist model that imposes the economy logic on pedagogical logic, and which is increasingly at the service of economic progress and of a learning that is considered “useful” merely because it is suitable for market demands (Fiorin, 2007).

The first fifty years of the history of the Italian Republic have seen an evolution in education in a country with prospects for economic and social development that are now failing; nevertheless, the Italian school (especially public school) is still the repository of heavy and delicate tasks that put it at the center of policies for inclusion and progress of the whole society. Cuts in state schools and public education are likely to create social exclusion and only in the future we will be able to evaluate the effects of this phase of our history: for these reasons, an understanding of the education system cannot be separated from that of its history, which has helped the implementation of full inclusion in schools, as this article has tried to show, as it does not obviate the stubborn commitment of those teachers who, although they are the worst paid in Europe, are still struggling to break down the causes of early school leaving and social exclusion. The liberalist pressures, though definitely influencing the society and culture of the new century, are not always in harmony with the respect for citizens’ constitutional rights and with the right to education as a tool for achieving citizens’ autonomy and self-determination. School inclusion and inclusive thought are key tools to promote a better school and a better society.

The quick evolution of terminological and conceptual scenarios, of policy choices and of the economic and market logic—that influence, by now, any social and cultural development in a globalized world - require

a strong reference thought that may result from reflection, but also from research on the field, and that cannot be separated from the awareness and knowledge of other historical, cultural, linguistic and social realities.

International comparison is a look at realities that are geographically distant, but it brings us closer and can strengthen us in achieving our inclusive objectives: international comparison may arise new lifeblood, so that the respective experiences will serve to renew the commitment and motivation of those who dedicate themselves to young people in achieving the objectives of education for all and of developing civilization and society. International exchange is to be understood, therefore, as a means of understanding and as a means to develop relevant and profitable international links: it falls, therefore, fully in the inclusive approach, in inclusive practice and in the framework of cooperation and inclusion.

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