
Italy – Ways of inclusion in law and at school



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According to the Constitution of the Italian Republic: “all citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions. It is the duty of the Republic to remove those obstacles of an economic or social nature which constrain the freedom and equality of citizens, thereby impeding the full development of the human person” (art. 3)



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The Republic guarantees the freedom of the arts and sciences, which may be freely taught.

The Republic lays down general rules for education and establishes state schools of all branches and grades (art. 33)

Schools are open to everyone (art. 34)



On those pillars is based our educational system



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The educational system in Italy is organized according to the principles of subsidiarity and of autonomy of schools.

Schools are autonomous as for didactic, organizational and research activities.

But what about SEN pupils?



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Integration started in 1971, when, by Law 118, compulsory education had to “take place in regular classes, except in case of mental deficiencies or physical impairments so severe to prevent learning or integration in common classes.”

Then, Law 517/1977 prescribed to activate, both in primary and middle schools, “procedures to integrate handicapped pupils by providing special teachers”.



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Law 104/1992, is the main frame for all disability issues: it guarantees people with disabilities and their families the ownership of specific rights; provides assistance; states the full integration and the adoption of prevention measures and functional recovery; ensures social, economic and legal protection.



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Law 104/1992, moreover, prescribes to remove any barrier (architectural and sensorial) and to introduce appropriate aids and tools to support pupils with disabilities in education and training.



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In 2009, the Ministry of education has published the ‘Guidelines for the integration of pupils with disability at school’, with the purpose of increasing the quality of educational interventions for pupils with physical, psychic and sensory impairment.



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As inclusion is not just a matter of people with disabilities, we should take a step back and examine the condition of these pupils at school.

In the 50s children with "learning difficulties" and behavioral problems attended separated classes.

Moreover there were "special classes" and "special schools."



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Law 517/77 closed separated classes in lower secondary schools, but it didn't provide specific measures for pupils attending these classes. Separated classes in primary education were closed, instead, 15 years later by law 104/1992.

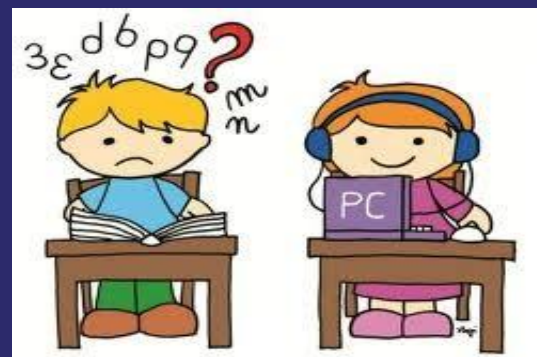
In these cases, no special measures were provided for maladjusted pupils, who were simply “transferred ” to common classes.



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Law 170/2010 - stated that pupils with learning disorders don't need special teachers, but a new way of teaching, according to their way of learning.

The aim was to shift the focus from a clinic, to a pedagogic view, by empowering all subjects involved in the educational process.



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Indeed, after so many years of hard work in the field of integration, we were facing a new challenge. Pupils with disabilities or learning disorders were at risk of being in charge only of special/support teachers.

There were still some obstacles in introducing personalization and individualization in learning.



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That's why the Ministerial Directive 27 December 2012, on BES (SEN), created an “umbrella”, to cover all kinds of difficulties at school: disabilities, SLDs, SDDs, socio-economic, cultural or linguistic disadvantage or pupils that can be anyhow in need of special care. This, in order to **ensure more inclusive practices** in classrooms through individualized and personalized educational plans.



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Inclusion at school

Pupils with disabilities generally attend mainstream schools, in the ordinary sections and classes at all educational levels.

At enrolment, parents should submit the specific certification regarding the type of disability and the right to receive specific support.



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Owing to this certification the following documents are drawn up:

- the functional diagnosis;
- the dynamic-functional profile;
- the PEI (individualized educational plan).

Moreover schools must remove all barriers and offer all facilities (also through the use of ICT) in the most functional manner suited to the needs of each pupil.



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Usually, classes hosting 1-2 pupils with disabilities group a maximum of 20 pupils.

Each class having pupils with disabilities has one or more support teachers. Support teachers are teachers specialised in SEN. They are fully part of the teachers' team of the classes and participate in all the activities concerning planning and assessment.



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Assessment for pupils with disabilities is carried out according to the goals set by the individualized educational plan. Although assessment procedures are the same applied to all pupils, they take into account pupils' progresses rather than their achievements.



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Law foresees the creation of ordinary classes as detached sections in rehabilitation centres and hospitals.

‘School in hospital’ is characterized by flexibility, taking into account the type of disease of each pupil, the time for medical examinations and therapies, as well as the life pace in hospitals.



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Home tuition is intended for sick children who cannot attend school for at least 30 days, who are taught at home by one or more teachers according to a specific project aimed at their subsequent reintroduction in their class.



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SLDs are diagnosed by the competent offices of the National health system. Schools, pre-primary schools included, should promptly intervene in presence of suspect cases of SLD, upon notice to the pupil's family.

At the enrolment of pupils with Specific Learning Disorders (DSA), parents should submit to schools the official certification released by the relevant offices of the National health system.



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As pupils with SLD are in charge of the curricular teachers, MIUR ha issued guidelines to help schools support pupils with SLD. In particular, schools should activate specific pedagogic and didactic measures to guarantee their achievements, also through personalized educational plans (PDP) and the possibility of using compensative tools and dispensatory measures.



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Assessment of pupils with SLD should be consistent with the PDP, for example, by using oral – rather than written - tests to assess foreign languages knowledge, or by using compensative tools.



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In case of **other** special educational needs, schools should activate personalised pedagogical measures.

Also migrant pupils could be SEN pupils.



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Foreign minors, also if in situation of irregular migration, have the same rights to education and health as the Italian ones.

Specific Guidelines (2014) provide, beside a regulation framework, also some suggestions concerning school organisation and teaching.

For example each class can host a 30% maximum migrant pupils, lest a higher density may affect effective inclusion.



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Starting from this school year 2013-14, each school has to draft an Annual Plan for Inclusion (PAI) as a base for the POF (Plan of the educational offer). The POF is the basic document describing the curricular, extra-curricular, educational and organizational resources that each school adopts according to its autonomy. At the end of each school year, schools should monitor and evaluate the efficacy of their inclusiveness.



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Critical aspects and possible solutions

There are also other critical aspects, and, particularly, the risk of labeling those pupils.

In some situations we are still at risk of seeing pupils with disabilities dealing only with the support teacher instead of all the class.



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3 ways to foster inclusion

- ICF approach;
- In-service teachers' training;
- CTSs.



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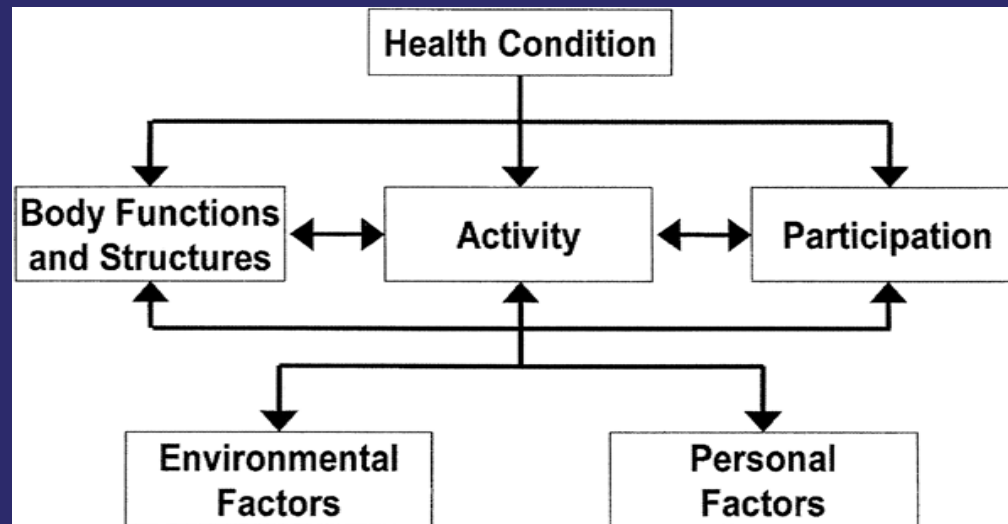
ICF-CY approach

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health was created in 2001. In order to capture the developmental processes and life circumstances of children and youth in a functional way it was further developed into a version for children and youth, the International Classification for Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY, WHO, 2007).



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ICF-CY, is designed to record characteristics of the developing child and the influence of the environment surrounding the child.



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In educational settings “children in need of special support” could be children with disabilities, but also other children who may have a temporary need of special support and children at risk for disability/disorders.

The focus is on prevention and intervention, by recognising both facilitating and hindering factors.

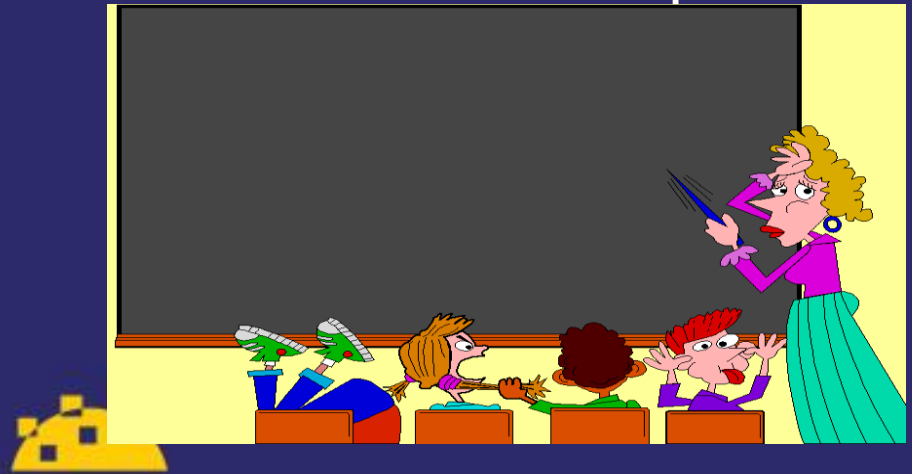


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In-service training for teachers and school masters

School is responsible for offering appropriate educational opportunities for every child.

Regarding this, it is obvious that teaching is a multidimensional profession that requires knowledge and skills in different areas and that teamwork is required.



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Law 128/2013 has introduced the principle of compulsory in-service training.

Since SEN pupils are in charge of all the school staff, teachers and school managers of all school levels receive a specific in-service training for pupils with Special Educational Needs.

Training activities focus on topics such as early risk identification, didactic measures to be adopted both with the pupil and with the class-group, assessment procedures and guidance.



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Territorial Support Centres (CTSs)

CTSs are 106 public mainstream schools. They are organized in a network across Italy.

The core aim of CTSs is to develop a permanent net of schools at the local level, which is able to retrieve and disseminate the best practices of ICT for inclusion.



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In the first two years of their activity, the CTSs have developed 260 training courses, involving more than 13.650 teachers and professionals.

Moreover they produced 26 educational softwares that can be easily downloaded from the MIUR website.



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Now CTSs collect and disseminate best practices, supply schools with technological devices (hardware and software) and support them in purchasing and efficiently using them. They also activate initiatives to promote the correct use of ICT among teachers, school managers, parents and pupils themselves. Moreover, like tutors or supervisors, and through a peer to peer approach, teachers working in CTSs support concretely colleagues working in other schools in managing special needs in their classrooms.





If you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will leave its whole life believing that it is stupid

Thank you for your attention !

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