

THE TRAINING OF NON-SPECIALIZED TEACHERS TO PROMOTE THE INCLUSION OF PUPILS WITH DISABILITIES. SOME REFLECTIONS

LA FORMAZIONE DEGLI INSEGNANTI NON SPECIALIZZATI PER LA PROMOZIONE DELL'INCLUSIONE DEGLI ALUNNI IN CONDIZIONE DI DISABILITÀ ALCUNE RIFLESSIONI

Valentina Paola Cesarano

University of Naples Federico II
valentinapaola.cesarano@unina.it

Maura Striano

University of Naples Federico II
maura.striano@unina.it

Abstract

This work presents some reflections on the Minister's Decree n. 188 of 21.06.2021 that outlines for the year 2021 a training system that guarantees a basic knowledge of inclusive issues for non-specialized teaching staff on support and engaged in classes, of all levels, with pupils with disability. A basic preparation of this type is desired from the early years of inclusion paths and constitutes a working tool to respond to all pupils, with a view to full inclusion and to guarantee the principle of joint ownership in the pupil's own assignment. In this scenario, teachers are configured as "levers of change" (Ainscow, 2005), or strategic agents of social and school inclusion processes for which specific training is essential that can provide them with the skills necessary to translate on a praxis level the founding principles of inclusive logic so that teachers acquire an inclusive and reflective posture, working in the perspective of the biopsychosocial model and acting in a co-responsible way.

Il contributo presenta alcune riflessioni in merito al Decreto n.188 del 21.06.2021 che delinea per l'anno 2021 un sistema formativo che garantisca una conoscenza di base relativa alle tematiche inclusive per il personale docente non specializzato su sostegno e impegnato nelle classi, di ogni ordine e grado, con alunni con disabilità. Una preparazione di base di questo tipo è auspicata sin dai primi anni dei percorsi di inclusione e costituisce uno strumento di lavoro per rispondere a tutti gli alunni, in un'ottica di piena inclusione e a garanzia del principio di contitolarità nella presa incarico dell'alunno stesso. In questo scenario, i docenti si configurano come "leve del cambiamento" (Ainscow, 2005), ovvero agenti strategici dei processi di inclusione sociale e scolastica per i quali è fondamentale una formazione specifica che possa fornire loro le competenze necessarie a tradurre sul piano prassico i principi fondanti della logica inclusiva affinché gli insegnanti acquisiscano una postura riflessiva e inclusiva lavorando nell'ottica del modello biopsicosociale e agendo in modo corresponsabile.

Keywords

Training, inclusion, functioning, co-responsibility

Training, inclusion, operation, co-responsibility

Introduction

With the enactment of the Decree of the Minister n. 188 of 21.06.2021 has been given implementation to art. 1, paragraph 961, of the Budget Law 2021 that outlines for the year 2021 a training system that guarantees a basic knowledge of inclusive topics for teaching staff not specialized in support and engaged in classes, of all levels and levels, with pupils with disabilities. Basic preparation of this kind is desirable from the very first years of inclusion pathways and is a working tool to respond to all pupils, with a view to full inclusion and to guarantee the principle of co-ownership in taking charge of the pupil. According to Decree no. 188, each teacher must have access to a training unit for a total of 25 hours on inclusive topics and on the specifics present in their class, through courses organized by individual institutions or networks of schools. The training courses will be proposed by the individual schools or by networks of schools and approved in conjunction with the Scientific Technical Committee established at each UU.SS.RR. and with schools' polo for training. At the end of the training there is a final evaluation test. In addition, in view of the main purpose of the provision, namely to promote the inclusion of the pupil with disabilities in school and to ensure the principle of the co-ownership of the said teachers in taking care of the pupil, this training activity is extended to teachers on a fixed-term basis, with an annual contract, where they are engaged in classes with pupils with disabilities, and therefore fully involved in educational-didactic design and in collegial activities. In such cases, the training activity is carried out in a constant working relationship and does not lead to additional charges in relation to the appropriations provided. The training courses must, as usual, be included in the SOFIA platform and monitored with detection activities aimed at understanding the outcome of the training course on the theme of inclusion, and to collect additional needs for any subsequent training activities. Annex A of Note 27622 of 6 September 2021, for example, indicates a breakdown of the training module in question that school institutions may adopt, or bend to specific needs in the exercise of their autonomy, including by making use of specific collaboration agreements with other bodies/entities with specific expertise in the field, but always in compliance with existing procedures with public evidence where necessary:

Topics dealt with

- Reading and interpretation of diagnostic documentation
- Normative references
- Criteria for an inclusive quality educational design
- Special teaching

The note also outlines the specific and transversal objectives of the training courses:

Specific objectives

- know the current legislation
- know the main types of disability
- knowing how to read and understand diagnostic documents
- Acquire basic knowledge of the ICF perspective
- apply ICF elements for pupil/a observation in context

- design and experiment at least one inclusive educational and educational intervention responding to

educational needs of pupils/persons with disabilities and class

- co-design and experiment at least one inclusive educational and educational intervention responding to educational needs of pupils/persons with disabilities and class
- identify criteria and tools to verify the inclusion process, including from the perspective of horizontal and vertical continuity

Transversal objectives

- acquire operational tools to meet the needs of class and school
- welcome new inclusive educational and educational paradigms
- developing team working skills
- enhancing the quality of educational provision for class and school
- identify criteria for assessing the quality of school inclusion.

The following paragraphs will reflect on some of the formative dimensions contemplated by the Decree and their implications in the field of inclusive education.

1. Teacher training to promote an inclusive professional posture

The Decree of the Minister n. 188 of 21.06.2021 appears to be in line with the scenario of theorizations on the value of inclusive education which is at the same time the emergency and goal of an effective teaching fruit of a shared action (Booth, 2011), aimed at enhancing all subjective differences and affirming the fairness of rights, both at a macro institutional level and at a micro level, involving professional action aimed at achieving the educational success of each and every one (Sibilio & Aiello, 2015). The logic of inclusion, in fact, emphasizes the need to respond to the different needs expressed by students during school, with the aim of removing the barriers that hinder learning and encourage, in this way, the participation of all pupils in school life irrespective of any conditions of disability, linguistic-cultural diversity or economic-social disadvantage to prevent marginalization and discrimination (UNESCO, 1994; 2000). This framework calls the teachers to a reshaping of teaching based on the identification of methods and tools able to consider the peculiarities and natural inclinations of students. In this regard, the community is called to adopt an inclusive approach in planning, implementation, in the monitoring and evaluation of educational policies to further accelerate the achievement of the objectives of Education for All and to help create more inclusive societies (UNESCO, 2008). In this scenario, teachers are configured as "levers of change" (Ainscow, 2005) strategic agents of the social and educational inclusion processes for which specific training is essential and which can provide them with the skills necessary to translate the principles of inclusive logic into practice. To do this, we have invested and are investing in the professional development of teachers with the aim of achieving a complete mastery of "inclusive" skills and the internalization of a professional habitus consisting of "provisions to

act" (Rossi, 2011, p. 127) which, by integrating the experiential dimension, constitutes a matrix of perceptions, inclinations and actions, making it possible to carry out differentiated tasks on the basis of schemes that allow to solve similar problem situations (Bourdieu, 1972).

The training system outlined by the decree in question, ensuring a basic knowledge of inclusive topics for non-specialized teaching staff on support and engaged in classes, of all levels and levels, with pupils with disabilities, puts once again at the center the need " [...] to deal with the 'educability and needs peculiar and complex, of people that often society has marginalized, excluded, segregated" (d'Alonzo, 2018; p.9). This implies the need to invest in the training of all teachers, with the aim of promoting those pedagogical skills that contribute to an inclusive position of the teacher, a posture that nourishes itself of a culture of attention to the person in condition of disability, able to bring pedagogically oriented benefits, so that the pupils that due to environmental factors, personal, cognitive and/or relational factors, They can't keep up with the rhythms and demands of an increasingly complex world.

2. Exploring the relationship between educational-educational strategies and practices and teachers' attitudes for inclusive training

Among the objectives listed in the note that we are considering, reference is made to the acquisition by all teachers of teaching and educational planning skills in an inclusive perspective. However, even before training teachers in this direction, the possible relationship between educational-didactic strategies and practices related to teaching and teachers' perception of inclusion and disability should be explored in depth. In this regard, interesting food for thought comes from the research of Murdaca, Oliva and Panarello, in which were chosen the tools to be used to assess whether there is a relationship between certain factors related to teaching (satisfaction, educational practices, teaching strategies, self-effectiveness) and the opinions, attitudes and concerns of teachers about the inclusion of pupils with disabilities "[...] because teachers represent the elective figures of inclusion and all the possibilities that inclusion offers are linked to their ability to represent the world of the pupil and the various possible ways through which he demonstrates its diversity" (p. 278). In this perspective, the teacher has the possibility to configure himself as an accelerator of the development potential of the students by raising their level of self-determination (Pavone, 2014; Cottini, 2016; and Murdaca, 2008) and therefore self-esteem and self-effectiveness. So, training inclusive teachers cannot ignore the question of what personal characteristics of the inclusive teacher are effective in creating and rethinking the teaching strategies in use? Many authors point to the level of self-effectiveness of the teacher as one of the factors that lead pupils with and without disabilities to self-determination (Carbonneau, et al., 2008). The self-effectiveness of the teacher can in fact affect the educational choices and the ability to create a good climate within the class and establish functional relationships with colleagues, managers and families. The teachers' convictions of effectiveness mainly influence the students' own ideas, their participation in the proposed activities and their educational attainment. The motivated teacher encourages improvement, gives confidence to their pupils by motivating them, stimulates experimentation and curiosity, gives choices, critically examines behaviors without providing a priori judgment, supporting and encouraging in their pupils an intrinsic regulation of the approach to study (Elliot and McGregor, 2001). The choice of effective teaching practices, especially in inclusive contexts, depends, to a large extent, on the opinions that the teacher has of the nature of disability and the role he gives to students with special

educational needs within the class group (Jordan et al., 2009). Experience and knowledge from previous contacts with students with disabilities has been shown to be directly linked to more positive attitudes on the part of teachers towards inclusion (Burke and Sutherland, 2004). Indeed, opposing concerns and attitudes on the part of teachers appear to stem, on the one hand, from a lack of information about the cognitive processes and behavioural deficits that certain conditions of disability manifest, and, on the other hand, the sense of inadequacy that pervades most teachers who are unable to effectively meet the demands of students with difficulties, to which is often added the lack of resources and external support (Murdaca, Oliva and Panarello, 2016). Therefore, the more pressing the teacher's sense of inadequacy and incompetence towards inclusion, the more reluctant she will be to engage in and use inclusive teaching methods and teaching methods (Agbenyega, 2007; Forlin e Chambers, 2011). Florian and Rouse (2010) reiterate the importance of using 'head, hand and heart' doing, knowing and believing, because teachers need not only to develop technical skills of cognitive and practical type but also and above all heart skills, which refer to ethical and moral dimensions, values and beliefs ((Murdaca, Oliva and Panarello, 2016).

3. Promoting inclusive ICF training: biopsychosocial observations and languages

Note 27622 of 6 September 2021 lists the specific objectives of in-service training of teaching staff for the inclusion of pupils with disabilities, refers to the acquisition of basic knowledge on the ICF perspective and the application of ICF elements for the observation of the pupil/a in the context. These objectives have several repercussions in the promotion of inclusive language and inclusive teaching, recognising the centrality of the biopsychosocial model promoted by the WHO (2002). Not all teachers are familiar with this model and its operationalisation embodied in the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (WHO, 2002). The one proposed by the ICF is a useful model for a global reading of special educational needs from the point of view of health and operation, the result of relations between various internal and external areas of the pupil. In this sense, the educational and/or learner function is the overall result of bodily functions and structures, personal activities in terms of skills and performance, environmental and personal factors that may facilitate or hinder social participation and personal activities in terms of capacity and performance. In the great dialectic between these two dimensions, biological and contextual, is placed the body dimension of the pupil, as it is developing from the structural point of view and as it is evolving its set of cognitive functions, mental, motor etc. The student with his corporeity is in the world that lives with his real activities starting from his abilities and participates socially in the multiple roles that he plays in the various contexts of life, family, community. When the various factors interact in a positive way, the student will grow and will work well from the educational-learning point of view, otherwise its operation will be hampered and difficult, bringing out special educational needs (Janes, Cramerotti; 2019). The ICF therefore allows us to observe the many factors that interact and contribute to the functioning of each pupil and allow us to detect the special educational needs that can arise from many combinations of factors unfavorable for the pupil. This tool allows the teacher to consider the overall

functioning of a person, beyond the diagnostic and linguistic labels, or the specific causes of his disorders. About language, the label of handicap disappears with the ICF because we talk about functions, disabilities, environmental contextual factors, social participation. Therefore, the existence of people in a condition of disability is affirmed whose mental, physical, and sensorial functioning requires to be supported and facilitated by our society, urgently, to express their resources and potential. The goal is therefore to educate teachers also and above all to an inclusive language, a language that is more adequate and respectful of the dignity of the person with disabilities, a language that does not close the gaze that produces glimpses of the type "I have a BES, a DSA, a child H", but who is open to the peculiarities of the functioning of each one. In turn, teachers will educate pupils to an inclusive language that directs the gaze of the peer group to see disability as an existential condition and as an umbrella term to be used to refer to impairments, limitations in activities, different degrees of participation. social according to the perspective of the ICF. This type of evaluation of the special educational need allows to build a truly inclusive didactic through an individualized educational plan that looks in the direction of the Life Project.

4. Rethink the relationship between teachers for educational co-responsibility in inclusion processes

The training of all teachers aimed at the inclusion of pupils with disabilities calls into question the relationship between specialized teacher and curricular teacher, highlighting how much collaboration and educational co-responsibility are key principles in the design and implementation of truly inclusive teaching as inclusive school does not distinguish between roles, skills and functions between specialized teachers and curricula, but enhances profiles of inclusive teachers capable of facilitating the evolution of knowledge and learning understood as continuous and dynamic processes that lead each pupil to "learn to learn" With unique, original and unrepeatable methods, guaranteeing educational equity and respect-enhancement of the potential of each pupil, regardless of his" status "(Gaspari, 2015a, p. 173). The specialized teacher and the curricular teacher, in a unified manner, activate processes of mediation, negotiation and facilitation of the dynamics of socialization and learning in a cooperative perspective, avoiding phenomena of exclusion. A training aimed at all teachers in the field of inclusion is a training that promotes an inclusive look first and foremost among teachers, where the role of the support teacher must not be perceived as "the teacher of the emergency", who carries out traditional tasks of the assistance, but shares with the other teachers the deployment of inclusive skills and competences, transversal to all the professional backgrounds of each teacher. At the same time, inclusive planning is a shared planning of a functional network of supports and aids within the classroom and the wider social context that allows to overcome the limits of the dual relationship (disabled pupil and specialized teacher), to develop effective strategies and inclusive practices, in which all teachers are the teachers of the whole class. This implies overcoming not only certain "segregating" practices of the roles of the specialized teacher and the curricular teacher, but also certain languages in which expressions such as "My disabled child" or "your child H" delineate the boundaries of possession of pupils in condition of disabilities that hinder inclusion itself, as a dynamic, open process in which, as Cohen and Siegel warn, actors, goals, memories are the contextual elements that, in their complex and constant transaction, allow a reconfiguration of roles, relationships, objectives but also of knowledge and stories that represent the shared cultural fabric on which both the community of professional practices of teachers and school operators,

and the educational community as a whole draws (Striano, Cesarano, Capobianco, 2017). The key to change is the acquisition of a high profile of professionalism resulting from training on the topics of pedagogy and special inclusive teaching, for all teachers. Furthermore, regardless of the different roles, all teachers need to have reflective tools at their disposal through which to embody inclusive processes in professional practice because the latter require a reflexive competence that allows them to reflect on their spontaneous actions and retroact on them in a conscious way, adopting a metacognitive attitude. At the same time, the reflective tools make it possible to make explicit the implicit implications of opinions, attitudes, representations not only regarding the condition of disability but also and primarily with reference to the processes of inclusion and how they are influenced by these implicit and operationalized at the level didactic and educational. In this regard, neurophenomenology offers significant suggestions on the nature of intentionally oriented behavior and can therefore constitute a useful tool for the construction of metacognitive strategies aimed at teacher training (Stollo, 2008) in the context of inclusive teaching and educational practices. At the same time, the training of teachers in a shared inclusive posture should include the promotion of communities of practices capable of implementing inclusive transformations in their professional practices, capable of observing, exploring, and respecting the functioning of all pupils. An inclusive community of practices shares and conveys models and protocols, languages and means from a biopsychosocial point of view. In this perspective, a community of practices could be said to be inclusive if it is able to become a learning community by creating moments and opportunities for co-responsible work, recognizing how much support teachers and curricular teachers can become facilitators of the project. life of pupils with disabilities, identifying those factors that hinder school and social participation and investing in those elements that have a facilitating and enabling impact on functioning.

Conclusions

The training of non-specialized teachers on inclusion issues makes it possible to overcome the very concept of "support" introduced for the first time in the context of the law of 4 August 1977, no. 7 regarding the "integration" of "handicapped"¹ students in school settings. This concept, in fact, provides for the presence of a specialized teacher indicated by the ministerial circular of 3 September 1985 as a fundamental "point of reference to which the task of supporting the learning and integration of this type of pupils with specific" support actions "aimed at the realization of an" individualized educational project"² moving within the framework of what Michael Olivier defined as the "integration paradigm", contrasting it with the "inclusion paradigm"³.

The integration paradigm provides for the implementation of dedicated actions and resources (such as the support teacher) to integrate people labeled as "handicapped" in a context that has

¹ Legge 4 agosto 1977, n. 517.

² Circolare Ministeriale 3 settembre 1985

³ OLIVIER, M. (1996) *Understanding Disability: From Theory to Practice*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

not foreseen them and which is not it was designed for them and their "handicap", defining alternative and parallel paths and making dedicated resources available without which full participation in teaching-learning processes would not be possible. In this perspective there is no reconfiguration of the classroom structure, of the setting of the learning / teaching processes of the didactic methodologies because the "integration" takes place in a different space-time and can only take place by virtue of the presence of spaces, resources, teachers dedicated to "supporting" a process that otherwise would not happen.

On the other hand, the paradigm of inclusion provides that educational context are designed for each one and can change their organization and structure, to allow each and every one to learn and grow independently, fully expressing their abilities and potential. This implies the involvement and commitment of all the actors involved, including pupils, who are enabled to learn and participate in all educational experiences by removing the cultural and structural obstacles that stand in the way of achieving their growth goals. Within this paradigm it is necessary that, as Booth and Ainscow (2011) argue we operate by making three vectors interact: cultures, policies and practices within educational contexts trying to build inclusive "communities" inspired by shared principles, implementing guidelines and regulatory indications so that they are fully implemented, creating the conditions to be able to implement and share good practices to be consolidated and disseminated. In this scenario, curricular teachers are system figures who come to play an active and proactive role and interact with specialized colleagues, managers, all school staff, and families in the creation of inclusive educational contexts in which everyone can feel. Welcomed and valued and can learn and grow according to personal aspirations, abilities, and possibilities (Striano, 2021).

Riferimenti bibliografici

Agbenyega, J. (2007). Examining teachers' concerns and attitudes to inclusive education in Ghana. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 3(1), 41-56.

Ainscow, M. (2005). Developing inclusive education systems: what are the levers for change? *Journal of educational change*, 6 (2), pp. 109-124.

Booth, T. Ainscow M. (2011). *Index for Inclusion – Developing Learning and Participation in Schools*. UK: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education [CSIE].

Bourdieu, P. (1972). *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique*. Genève: Droz.

Burke, K., & Sutherland, C. (2004). Attitudes towards inclusion: Knowledge vs experience. *Education*, 125(2), 163-172.

Carbonneau, N, Vallerand, R. J., Fernet, C., Guay, F. (2008). The Role of Passion for Teaching in Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Outcomes. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100(4), 977-987.

Cottini, L. (2016). *L'autodeterminazione nelle persone con disabilità. Percorsi educativi per svilupparla*. Trento: Erickson.

D'Alonzo L. (2018). *Pedagogia speciale per l'inclusione*. Brescia: Scholè.

Elliot, A. J., & McGregor, H. A. (2001). A 2 × 2 achievement goal framework. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80(3), 501-519.

Forlin, C., & Chambers, D. (2011). Teacher preparation for inclusive education: Increasing knowledge but raising concerns. *Asia Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(1) 17-32.

Florian, L. & Rouse, M. (2010). Teachers' professional learning and inclusive practice. In R. Rose (Ed.). *Confronting Obstacles to Inclusion – International Responses to Developing Inclusive Schools* (pp. 185-199). London: Routledge.

Jordan, A, Schwartz, E, & McGhie-Richmond D. (2009). Preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(4), 535-542.

Ianes C., Cramerotti S. & Scapin C. (2019). *Profilo di funzionamento su base ICF-CY e Piano educativo individualizzato*. Trento: Erickson.

Murdaca A. (2008). *Complessità della persona e disabilità*. Pisa: Edizioni del Cerro.

Murdaca A., Oliva P., Panariello P. (2016). L'insegnante inclusivo: fattori individuali, percezione della disabilità e strategie didattiche. *Formazione & Insegnamento*, XIV, 3, 277-286.

Nota 27622 del 6 settembre 2021 - Formazione in servizio personale docente ai fini inclusione alunni con disabilità ai sensi del comma 961 - Art. 1 della legge 30 dicembre 2020- N. 178 – DM 188.

OMS – Organizzazione Mondiale della Sanità (2002). *ICF. Classificazione Internazionale del Funzionamento, della Disabilità e della Salute*. Trento: Erickson.

Pavone, M. (2014). *L'inclusione educativa. Indicazioni pedagogiche per la disabilità*. Milano: Mondadori Università.

Rossi P.G. (2011). *Didattica enattiva. Complessità, teorie dell'azione, professionalità docente*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.

Sibilio, M., Aiello P. (a cura di) (2015). *Formazione e ricerca per una didattica inclusiva*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.

Striano M., Capobianco R., Cesarano V. P. (2017). La didattica inclusiva per una scuola di tutti e per tutti. Dal riconoscimento dei Bisogni Educativi Speciali alla personalizzazione degli apprendimenti. *Formazione, Lavoro, Persona*, VII, 20, 25-36.

Striano M. (2021). La dimensione del sostegno in educazione in Mariani A. (a cura di) La relazione educative. *Prospettive contemporanee* (pp.51-61), Roma: Carocci.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) & The Ministry of Education and Science, Spain (1994). *Statement and framework for action on special*

needs education. adopted by the world conference on special needs education: access and

quality. Retrieved on January 16th, 2022, from:
www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF.