The Index for Inclusion

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Abstract

The change that has marked the educational planning and the organizational-didactic practices has been defined by its integration into the school of students with disabilities, from Law 118/1971 to Law 517/1977, from the Judgement of the Constitutional Court n. 215/1987 to the framework law n. 104/1992.
These laws have marked the steps that go from exclusion to inclusion and integration.
This path has accompanied the debate on the meaning of integration, inclusion and SEN.
Integration is only a matter of disabled students. Inclusion, otherwise, responds in an individualized way to the different Special Educational Needs manifested by the students (even by those not certified with any disabilities). The Index calls for a reflection on the difference between the expressions "integration" and "inclusion", which refer to different educational contexts.

Keywords

Special Educational Needs (SEN); Index; Inclusive Cultures; Special Didactics; Inclusion

Introduction

The acronym SEN, standing for students with special educational needs, appeared for the first time in the Warnock Report issued in Great Britain, in 1978, with the aim of highlighting the need to change the educational system of the United Kingdom.

In Italy,on December 27, 2012 the Ministry of Education issued the directive "Intervention tools for students with special educational needs and territorial organization for school inclusion".

The Ministerial Directive of December 27, 2012, offers a definition of the SEN: << *The area of school disadvantage is much wider than that explicitly referred to the presence of deficits. In every class there are students who submit requests for special attention for a variety of reasons: social and cultural disadvantage, specific learning disorders and/or specific developmental disabilities, difficulties arising from the lack of knowledge of the Italian culture and language, because of different cultural groups of belonging". In the varied panorama of our schools, the complexity of the classes becomes increasingly evident. This area of the school disadvantage, covering different issues, is indicated as Special Educational Needs area. Here three broad sub-categories are included: those of of disability, specific developmental disabilities and socioeconomic, linguistic, cultural disadvantage.>>*

1. Special Educational Needs

Ianes defines the Special Educational Need as follows:

"The Special Educational Need is any evolutionary difficulty, in the educational and / or learning field, caused by an operation, in the various areas defined by the ICF [International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health] anthropology; it's problematic for the subject in terms of damage, an obstacle to his well-being, a limitation of his freedom and a social stigma; it's independent of aetiology (bio-structural, familial, environmental, cultural, etc.), and requires special individualized education " (Ianes, 2005).

SENs are considered as a macro-category that includes every possible difficulty in education and learning.

The types of difficulties included in the SENs are the following: social and cultural disadvantage, specific learning disorders and /or specific developmental disorders, difficulties arising from the lack of knowledge of Italian culture and language because of different cultures of belonging. (Ministerial Directive, 2012). For all these categories, there is the right to obtain the Personalized Didactic Plan (PDP), in which the individualized and personalized paths used and the dispensatory measures and compensatory tools for the student are explained.

Students with specific disorders

Students with normal intellectual or even high skills, who – for specific problems – may have difficulties at school, must be supported to fulfil their potentialities. Among them, students with SLDs (Specific learning Disorders) have been the subject of important regulatory measures, which have now established a well structured framework of rules aimed at ensuring their right to education. However, it is worth noting that certain types of disorders, not dealt with by law n. 170/2010, provide the right to use the same measures provided for as they present specific problems in the presence of normal intellectual skills. In particular, it's about disorders with specific problems in the area of language (specific language disorder or – more generally- low verbal intelligence associated with high non-verbal intelligence) or, conversely, in non-verbal areas (as in the case of motor coordination disorder, dyspraxia, non-verbal disorder or– more generally- of low non-verbal intelligence associated with high verbal intelligence, if these conditions affect the realization of the student's potentialities), or other severe problems

that may compromise the school path (such as a minor autism spectrum disorder, if not included in the cases provided for by law n. 104). An educational approach, not merely clinical - as mentioned in the introduction - should allow identifying strategies and methods of intervention related to the special educational needs, with a view to a more inclusive and welcoming school, without any need for further regulatory clarification. In this regard, Law n. 53/2003 and Law n. 170/2010 are the primary reference standards to refer to for the initiatives to be taken in these cases" (Ministerial Directive of December 27, 2012).

Students with attention disorder and Hyperactivity

A particular discourse should be made about students with attention and/or activity control disorders, often defined with the acronym A.D.H.D. (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). A.D.H.D. may also often be associated with an SLD or other problems; it has a neurobiological basis and causes difficulties in planning, learning and socializing with peers. It has been estimated that the disorder, in a serious way such as to compromise the school path, is present in about 1% of the school population, i.e. in almost 80.000 students (source: Italian National Institute of Health). With considerable frequency, the A.D.H.D. is in co-morbidity with one or more disorders of the developmental age: provocative oppositional disorder; behavioral disorder during adolescence; specific learning disorders; anxiety disorders; mood disorders, etc. The best path for taking charge of the child/young subject with A.D.H.D. definitely starts when there is a synergy between family, school and clinics. The information provided by teachers play an important part for completing the diagnosis, and the collaboration of the school is a vital link in the rehabilitation process. In some cases, the particularly serious clinical situation – also for the co-morbidity with other diseases – requires the attribution of the supporting teacher, as provided for by law n. 104/92. However, there are many young people with A.D.H.D. who, due to the lower gravity of the disorder, are not certified with disability, but they have an equal right to have their educational success protected. Therefore, there is the need to extend the statutory measures provided for by law n.170 for students with specific learning disorders to all students with special educational needs. (Ministerial Directive of December 27, 2012).

Borderline cognitive functioning

Students with non-optimal intellectual potentialities, described generally with the expressions of borderline cognitive (intellective) functioning, but also with other expressions (for example, mixed evolutionary specific disorder, code F83) and specific differentiation-if not included in the provisions of laws n.170-104 - require special consideration. It can be estimated that there is around a 2.5% of cases in the whole school population, i.e. approximately 200,000 students. These are children whose global IQ (intelligence quotient) responds to a measure ranging from 70 to 85 points, and there are no peculiarities. For some of them the delay is related to neurobiological factors, and is frequently in co-morbidity with other disorders. For others, it is only a mild form of difficulty for which, if properly supported and oriented towards school paths that are better suited to their characteristics, the subjects involved can carry out a normal life. Educational and didactic interventions have, as always and in such cases, a crucial importance. (Ministerial Directive of December 27, 2012).

2. The ICF model

In the functioning and special disability classification tools, consideration is paid to the ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health) diagnostic model, promoted in 2001 by the World Health Organization.

According to the World Health Organization, health does not mean the absence of a disease, but it means a bio-psycho-social well-being, and that is the implementation of individual potential.

The ICF offers a shared language and a conceptual reference model for describing health and related states. It proposes a model of a defined bio-psycho-social approach.

The ICF highlights how disability is strongly characterized from a social point of view, the way it is bound both by the person's health conditions and by the environmental and social conditions in which he carries out his activities. If these conditions do not take into account the functional limitations of the individual and do not accommodate the environments of life and relationships, barriers and obstacles that limit social participation are raised.

The concepts and principles that characterize the ICF become, in the educational field, the guidelines for describing, reflecting and discussing the topic of disability.

In 2007, the ICF-CY was published, that is, the adapted version of the ICF for children and youth. From the preface,we can see that: *"The classification builds on the ICF conceptual framework and uses a common language and terminology for recording problems involving functions and structures of the body, activity limitations and participation restrictions manifested in infancy, childhood and adolescence and relevant environmental factors".* In the introduction, we can read that "*The unit of classification in the ICF-CY is not a diagnosis for a child, but a profile of its functioning*".

Also in the ICF-CY, the reading of the condition of a child must evaluate the areas of functioning and disability in relation to the environment and the educational context in which he is included.

An inclusive action must consider all the students and act initially on the contexts, and then on the individual.

The Index for Inclusion is a self-assessment and self-improvement tool that proposes, through indicators, a process of assessment of strengths and weaknesses towards an inclusive school.

3. Index for Inclusion

The *Index for inclusion* was edited by Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow, and published in 2000 by the *Center for Studies on Inclusive Education* in Great Britain; over the years, it has become an international reference point for what concerns the self-improvement and development of inclusive planning at school. In Italy, it was edited by F. Dovigo and D. Ianes and published by Erickson in 2008.

The Index calls for a reflection on the difference between the expressions "integration" and "inclusion", which refer to different educational contexts.

The concept of school integration refers to the idea of disability in terms of the difficulties of a few, to which we must respond with possibilities similar to those offered to other students. This concept is based on the accommodation of the student in difficulty in a pre-established school organization. The assessment of the quality of the integration is determined by the level of standardisation to the "norm" acquired by the student. All this presupposes an idea of predetermined adequacy.

The concept of inclusion, on the other hand, is based on everyone's participation in school life; the idea is to create a school that can accommodate everyone.

The proposed path involves an analysis of how to overcome the impediments to every student's learning and participation, including those without disabilities or special educational needs.

The Index is a tool that can favorthe inclusive path in schools, since it is a concrete method that identifies what inclusion represents in all areas of school; this implies an involvement of the whole school community: families, students, teachers, collaborators and so on.

The Index proposal, as Dovigo points out in the preface to the Italian edition, "*understands inclusion as a continuous process to which all the people in contact with the school world contribute. A process that does not arise from diagnostic labels but from the reference to human*

rights and the values underlying them, and that only through a confrontation that involves everyone, children and adults, can be turned into educational practices allowing school to fully assume its role of place of social justice promotion". In addition, it states that: *" if we are convinced that the primary dimensions for the realization of an inclusive school are the acceptance of diversity, the respect for oneself and others, the knowledge that comes from working together in a welcoming environment full of relationships and proposals, the pages of the Index show us how it is possible to cultivate such dimensions through the development of inclusive policies, practices and cultures".*

The authors of the Index, in its first part, offer an overview of the tool, underlining how schools are constantly changing and only some of these are a consequence of a school development project.

We can read that*: "The change in the schools turns into inclusive development when it is based on inclusive values. Doing the right thing means relating actions to values".*

The authors point out that there are other proposals regarding the promotion of the educational development of schools, based on similar principles, and they believe that the Index allows these proposals being included in a single development method, *"Like a single tree with many roots".*

The starting point must be a detailed analysis of the school and its relationships with the communities and the surrounding context, involving staff, local administrators, families and students.

The analysis is structured through three dimensions: Cultures, Policies, and Practices.

Cultures are rooted in values and convictions. Policies are about how school is organized and how the change can be designed. Practices refer to the content and the ways to teach and learn.

Each dimension is divided into two sections.

A set of indicators, which represent the objectives of the specific school with respect to inclusion, allows for a more detailed analysis. To each indicator there are corresponding questions.

Dimension A. Creating inclusive cultures
- A1. Building up communities
- A2. Asserting inclusive values

Dimension B. Creating inclusive policies
- B1. Developing the school for everyone
- B2. Organizing support for diversity

Dimension C. Developing inclusive practices
- C1. Building curricula for everyone
- C2. Coordinating learning

Dimension A. Creating inclusive cultures
- A1 Building up communities
1. Everyone is welcome.
2. The staff cooperates.
3. Students help each other.
4. The staff and students respect each other.
5. The staff and families cooperate.
6. The staff and school council members work together in a more than satisfactory way.
7. School is a model of democratic citizenship.
8. School stimulates to understand what the relationships between people everywhere in the world are.

9. Children and adults are sensitive to the various ways in which gender differences occur.
10. School and local communities support mutual development.
11. The staff establishes a continuous connection between what happens at school and the students' family life.

- A2: Asserting inclusive values
1. School develops shared inclusive values.
2. School promotes respect for human rights.
3. School encourages respect for the integrity of our planet.
4. Inclusion is seen as a way to increase participation for all.
5. There are high expectations for each student.
6. Students are valued equally.
7. School contrasts all forms of discrimination.
8. School promotes non-violent interactions and resolution to disputes.
9. School encourages children and adults to feel good with themselves.
10. School helps promote health for children and adults.

Dimension B. Creating inclusive policies
- B1: Developing the school for everyone
1. School undertakes a process of participatory development.
2. School has an inclusive approach to leadership.
3. Staff selection and career are transparent.
4. Staff skills are known and adequately exploited.
5. New staff members are supported to settle down in the school.
6. School promotes the acceptance of all the students from the local community.
7. All new students are supported to best settle down.
8. Classes and groups are organized in an impartial manner to support each student's learning.
9. Students are well prepared to be included in other contexts when they leave school.
10. School makes its facilities physically accessible to all people.
11. Buildings and areas surrounding the school are organized so as to allow everyone's participation.
12. School reduces its CO_2 emissions and the use of water.
13. School contributes to waste reduction.

- B2: Organizing support for diversity
1. All forms of support are coordinated.
2. Vocational training activities help staff respond to diversity.
3. Support for learning Italian as a second language is a resource for the whole school.
4. School supports educational continuity for students assisted by social services.
5. School ensures that policies aimed at special educational needs are inclusive.
6. Behavioral rules are related to learning and curriculum development
7. Pressures to the use of disciplinary measures are limited as much as possible.
8. Obstacles to school access and attendance are reduced.
9. Bullying is acted upon.

Dimension C. Developing inclusive practices
- C1: Building curricula for everyone
1. Students experiment with food production and consumption cycles.
2. Students carry out research on the importance of water.
3. Students study clothing and body care.
4. Students analyze the housing structures and the relationship between construction and

natural environment.
5. Students reflect on how and why people move both in the local context and in the global one.
6. Students learn about the importance of health and relationships.
7. Students learn about the Earth, the solar system and the universe.
8. Students learn about life in the terrestrial environment.
9. Students carry out research on the energy sources.
10. Students learn about the importance of communication and communication technology.
11. Students are passionate about literature, arts and music, and produce personal creations.
12. Students learn about the importance of work and the way is connected to the development of their interests.
13. Students learn about what ethics, power and democracy are.

- C2: Coordinating learning
1. Learning activities are designed by keeping in mind every student's skills.
2. Learning activities stimulate the participation of all students.
3. Students are encouraged to trust their critical reflection abilities.
4. Students are actively involved in the learning process.
5. Students learn in a cooperative way.
6. Lessons develop the understanding of similarities and differences between people.
7. The assessment contributes to the achievement of educational goals for all students.
8. The discipline is based on mutual respect.
9. The staff actively collaborates in designing, teaching and assessing.
10. The staff develops shared resources to support learning.
11. The supporting staff fosters the learning and participation of all students.
12. Home study activities are organized to contribute to every student's learning.
13. Activities carried out outside of the classroom involve all the students.
14. The resources in the local context of the school are known and used.

It is important to see inclusion as an action aimed at the realization of inclusive values. It is "*a commitment to particular values that bear witness to the desire to overcome exclusion and promote participation... Values are fundamental guides and a stimulus for the action ... they define a destination."*

"*Clarifying the relationship between values and actions is the most practical step we can take in education, a choice that guides us to know what we should do in the next steps and understand the actions of others. In schools, this means linking values to specific aspects of the curricula, of the teaching and learning activities, of the interactions in meeting rooms and outdoor spaces, and in the relationships between children, between adults and between children and adults.*".

The Index is based on the values and actions of a particular school and not on pre-established programs or initiatives.

The authors produce a list of pivotal words like equality, rights, participation, community, respect of the diversity, sustainability, non-violence, trust, empathy, honesty, courage, joy, love, hope/optimism, and beauty.

The analysis of the context through the Index covers the opportunities for development by proceeding, as previously mentioned, along three dimensions: Creating inclusive cultures, Creating inclusive policies and Developing inclusive practices.

- Dimension A. Creating inclusive cultures

This dimension tends to create a safe, tolerant, cooperative and welcoming community in which everyone is valued. The values of inclusive cultures lead decisions regarding policies and practices

- Dimension B. Creating inclusive policies

This dimension ensures that inclusion runs through all school projects and involves everyone.
- Dimension C. Developing inclusive practices

This dimension concerns the development of what is taught and learned, and the way it is taught and learned, so that it reflects inclusive values and policies.

4. Index Development Stages

The path undertaken with the Index can be represented as a cycle of school development. Sometimes, the phases overlap and each one is divided into further objectives.

Phase n.1. Starting using the Index
- Starting from where and how it is possible to use it
- Developing one's own project group
- Finding support
- Working in an inclusive way
- Placing oneself within the framework
- Documenting the path
- Using indicators and questions
- Taking part in the dialogue on values
- Developing a common language: inclusion, obstacles, resources and support for diversity
- Analyzing the change and the development in the school
- Taking into account the integration of the interventions
- Exploring the design framework
- Dealing with the obstacles related to the use of the Index

Phase n.2. Exploring together
- Promoting awareness
- Exploring the ideas of staff and administrators
- Exploring the ideas of the students
- Exploring the ideas of the families and the members of local communities
- Negotiating priorities for the development
- Facilitating the exchanges of everyday ideas

Phase n.3. Producing a project
- Analyzing priorities
- Including priorities in the development project

Phase n.4. Taking actions
- Turning priorities into actions
- Supporting the realization of the development

Phase n.5. Reviewing the development
- Reviewing and celebrating the progresses made
- Reflecting on the work accomplished with the Index
- Thinking about the next steps

Conclusions

Among the three dimensions of the Index, the one related to the creation of inclusive cultures is of considerable importance. It is through cultures that a change can become consoli-

dated. Cultures are ways of life that create communities of people and, at the same time, they are created by them. As we can see from the Index,the cultures *"are established and expressed through language and values, through narrations, stories, knowledge, skills, beliefs, texts, arts, artefacts, formal and informal rules, rituals, systems and institutions ... cultures give a collective sense of how things are done and how they should be done, and contribute to the shaping of identities, so that individuals can reflect and affirm themselves through group activities*."

All this refers to the Didactics of the Implicit, proposed by Loredana Perla.

Changing one's own way of being in a classroom, observing students' ways of acting, examining the teaching-learning process, stimulates the development of a reorganization of one's own representation patterns of the teaching profession, of one's own role and that of students, of the tasks and objectives of the teaching profession and of all the actions necessary to try to reach them.

In additionas Loredana Perla claims*, "in the teacher's action there is much more than the latter knows or can manage, a universe of affections, tensions, dilemmas, assumptions of common sense, beliefs, naive epistemologies, abductive reasoning strongly connected with the self-image and with the social existence, which make the teaching practice something very different from an engineering project.*" What isimplicit in the practice is not immediately understood. "*It is hidden in the folds of the 'ordinary', in the silences in the classroom, in the non-verbal, in between the lines of conversation. It is the riddle of the unsaid[1]*".

Any modification of the educational-didactic actions implies a variation of the values system, and of the socio-affective and emotional aspects related to them.

It would be interesting to observe how and if the activation of processes aimed at inclusion, through the use of the Index, can grasp that "implicit" of which Loredana Perla speaks, since only by modifying the individuals' culture (of which the implicit is part) it is possible to build inclusive communities.

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