

# The quality of inclusion of the Italian school system in the light of the Salamanca Statement and in the ICF perspective\*

## La qualità dell'inclusione nel sistema scolastico italiano alla luce della Dichiarazione di Salamanca e nella prospettiva dell'ICF

**Lucia Chiappetta Cajola**

Department of Education, Roma Tre University, Rome, Italy, [lucia.chiappettacajola@uniroma3.it](mailto:lucia.chiappettacajola@uniroma3.it)

**Amalia Lavinia Rizzo**

Department of Education, Roma Tre University, Rome, Italy, [amalia.rizzo@uniroma3.it](mailto:amalia.rizzo@uniroma3.it)

**Marianna Traversetti**

Department of Education, Roma Tre University, Rome, Italy, [marianna.traversetti@uniroma3.it](mailto:marianna.traversetti@uniroma3.it)

The Declaration of Salamanca (UNESCO, 1994) has represented an opportunity for the development of the principles that the international organizations have utilized, in the last years, to develop the basis of inclusive education (UNESCO, 2005, 2009; UN, 2006, CoE, 2018).

Therefore, on the one hand, the importance of the full participation of students with SEN in the ordinary classes, has been emphasized; in the other hand, the urgency to facilitate this participation by the adaptation of the environmental factors present at school has been more and more clear. These principles are consistent with the bio-psycho-social model of "human functioning" that the WHO has elaborated in the ICF (WHO, 2001, 2007, 2017). At this moment, in the Italian school law, the ICF represents the conceptual reference of all actions aimed to develop school inclusion. The present paper analyses how the ICF culture enhances the concepts of curriculum and school management identified by the Salamanca Declaration as "scholastic-factors" decisive for inclusion. The authors present a reflection about how, in the last decade, these concepts have been developed in Italian schools, and about how these are encouraging the methods of didactic planning, the evaluation, the teacher-training and the governance of special educational needs in an inclusive direction.

**Keywords:** Salamanca Statement, inclusive education, human functioning, ICF, environmental factors, Italian school.

abstract

Riflessione teorica 141

a. incontro con la storia  
b. questioni epistemologiche

This article summarizes and reworks some arguments of a previous paper written by authors (Chiappetta Cajola, Rizzo, Traversetti, 2019). Lucia Chiappetta Cajola is the author of section 1- 4; Amalia Lavinia Rizzo is the author of section 5 -7, Marianna Traversetti is the author of section 8-10.

## 1. Inclusive education from Salamanca until today

The *Salamanca Statement* (UNESCO, 1994) was a fundamental moment for the development of the principles upon which international organisations have fine-tuned the basis of inclusive education (UNESCO, 2005, 2009, 2017; UN, 2006, 2015; CoE, 2018). As a matter of fact, an essential part of the modification of the educational systems regarded the theme of access to the education for students with Special Educational Needs/SEN (OECD, 2005-2007).

In relation to this theme, in the school and educational policies of the various countries, in particular Western countries, different positions emerged. As it is known, in the light of the principles of the affirmation of the right to education (UN, 1948), several special schools were founded (Meijer, Pijl & Hegarty, 1997) and a significant debate started on the need to reconsider the exclusion model as a priority issue for protecting human rights and equal opportunities.

Within this framework, many international documents set forth the fundamental and universal rights of all children, giving emphasis on a pedagogy focused on respecting diversities – therefore, on a wider vision of education that promotes full social participation and genuine learning.

Among these, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN, 1989) highlighted the need to fully develop the potential and the personality of the child, by preparing him or her “for a responsible life in a free society, encouraging the development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own” (UN, 1989, articles 29-30).

With such premises, and after the *Jomtien Statement* (UNESCO, 1990) and the adoption in 1993 of the *Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities*, the *Salamanca Statement* determined a great step forward toward the definition of the concept of school inclusion, and towards the identification of strategic factors for the modification of educational systems<sup>1</sup>.

As a matter of fact, the *Salamanca Statement* doesn’t just state that people with SEN have a right to education, but it specifies that it is preferable that this education happens in regular classes, for reasons that are not just to the mere development of the individual, but also the improvement of the social environment and the reinforcement of the educational system’s effectiveness, within the costs-benefits ratio.

“Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide [...] the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system” (UNESCO, 1994, IX).

1 For an analysis of the complexity of the concept of inclusion, see: Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2006; Ainscow, 1999; Ballard, 1999; Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Corbett & Slee, 2000; Slee, 2000, 2011.

2 <https://www.who.int/classifications/icf/en/>.



## 2. Pedagogy focused on the individual and inclusive teaching: a systemic vision

So the inclusion process is interpreted not as a mere inclusion into the *mainstream*, but as a real educational opportunity. Therefore, it is included into a systemic and interactive vision of the processes to be activated and of the actions to be taken at different levels.

In fact, in addition to recognising the “normality” of each student’s differences, the *Salamanca Statement* underlines the school’s responsibility to activate a “pedagogy focused on the child” that allows to put the individual – with his or her characteristics, potential and needs – at the centre of the educational process (UNESCO, 1994, articles 3, 6).

This expresses the belief that changing the policies and the educational systems towards inclusion can only be achieved if it translates into an attention to the learning environment, which is declared as the privileged context of educational action, as it guarantees students with disabilities the possibility to live and study alongside the others, thus protecting them from the risk of exclusion.

In this framework, learning environment “must accordingly be adapted to the needs of the child” (UNESCO, 1994, articles 4, 7).

In this sense, inclusive values are closely linked to practices and policies, anticipating, for example, the orientation that later was the basis for the development of school tools such as the *Index for Inclusion* (Booth & Ainscow, 2002).

As a matter of fact, taking diversities as a starting point demands to get organised in order to create the best conditions to allow everyone to achieve his or her own right to learn and to participate. If it is indeed the school context that allows students with SEN to achieve their best progress and social integration, then the *Salamanca Statement* reminds us that the school cannot be efficient on its own, as it needs to coordinate its interventions with the families and the other human and professional resources present in the community.

“The integration of children and youth with special educational needs is best achieved within inclusive schools that serve all children within a community” (UNESCO, 1994, articles 6, 11).

## 3. Removing barriers is the first prerequisite for inclusive education

In addition to underlining the right to and the importance of the full participation of students with disabilities or other SEN in common classes, the *Salamanca Statement* underlines the urgency of facilitating the development of inclusive schools, by removing the barriers that prevent them from attending common schools.

“Barriers that impede movement from special to regular schools should be removed and a common administrative structure organized” (UNESCO, 1994, articles 23, 19).

Moreover, as it will be further explored in the following parts of this contribution, in order to remove such barriers, and to allow for the students’ successful

education, it is a priority to make a series of changes in the factors present within the school environment.

“Changes in all the following aspects of schooling, as well as many others, are necessary to contribute to the success of inclusive schools: curriculum, buildings, school organization, pedagogy, assessment, staffing, school ethos and extracurricular activities” (UNESCO, 1994, articles 26, 21).

The modernity of this declaration can be further seen also in the fact that it states the types of students that can particularly benefit from such actions to remove these barriers. However, as the main international organisations devoted to education state today, all students benefit from an inclusive school, which is a better school for everyone, not just for those who have special education needs.

“Most of the required changes [...] are part of a wider reform of education needed to improve its quality and relevance and to promote higher levels of learning achievement by all pupils” (UNESCO, 1994, articles 27, 21).

Therefore, at this point, it is interesting to note that the *Salamanca Statement* has identified the *curriculum* and the school management as “school factors” that are crucial for inclusion.

These factors, as it will be seen later on, have been enhanced by the anthropological model of the *International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health/ICF* (WHO, 2001, 2007, 2017) and developed as strategic factors in the processes that are at the basis of the full inclusion model that is typical of the Italian school system.

“Curricula should be adapted to children’s needs, not vice versa. Schools should therefore provide curricular opportunities to suit children with different abilities and interests” (UNESCO, 1994, articles 28, 22).

“Local administrators and school heads can play a major role in making schools more responsive to children with special educational needs. [...] School heads have a special responsibility in promoting positive attitudes throughout the school community and in arranging for effective co-operation between class teachers and support staff” (UNESCO, 1994, articles 35-36, 23-24).

#### 4. The ICF and the Salamanca Statement: some significant convergences

The concept of inclusion proposed in the *Salamanca Statement* is connected to the biological-psychological-social model of human functioning that the World Health Organization elaborated in the ICF.

The Salamanca Statement was also included among the “philosophical reasons” of the ICF in the version for children and adolescents (WHO, 2007, 17-19) and also in the ICF unified version of 2017<sup>2</sup>.

It is possible to find some convergences between the two epistemological models, pertaining in particular to the focus that they both place upon respecting differ-

3 In the ICF’s language, *performance* is intended as what the student does in his or her habitual



ences, upon the importance of promoting participation and learning for all people, and the fundamental role played by the environment. In particular, the ICF is a systematic classification tool of international importance, suitable for describing with a standardised language the health conditions of a person, while considering it within an innovative vision characterised by multidimensionality and by the interaction between more variables and factors (Maxwell et al., 2016; Raggi et al., 2014).

Trying to create a coherent synthesis of the biological, individual and social dimensions of each individual, the ICF has surpassed the medical model of disability, preferring instead a biological-psychological-social model that centres around the “human functioning” of each person. In the ICF, the “human functioning” is not intended in a mechanistic sense, but as a positive interaction between the individual and the environment and it translates into the activities that allow the subject to execute tasks and to act, and into the “participation”, that is to say, the subject’s involvement in his or her different social life situations (Chiappetta Cajola, 2019; De Polo et al., 2009).

In this sense, the ICF’s approach can be connected to the concept of *human functioning* that dates back to Aristotle and that has been renewed by the *capability approach* (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993; Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 2009).

In the inclusive perspective started by the *Salamanca Statement*, the biological-psychological-social approach is therefore particularly relevant, as it offers the educational field (WHO, 2013) a structure for the interpretation of the environment that isn’t limited to verifying the students’ opportunities to access common schools, but it supports the identification and analysis of the environmental factors that can facilitate or hinder educational success at school.

As a matter of fact, the ICF environmental factors refer not only to the services, the systems and the policies that are available at school and in the community, but also to the products – be them technological or not – to be used in various life contexts (communication, school, play, work, etc.), to the aspects of the natural and artificial environment in which the student is included (light, sound, temperature, etc.), to the relations and the social support available for the student and to the behaviours of the people with whom the student interacts.

Each of these environmental factors can be considered a *facilitator* or a *barrier*, whether it facilitates the development of useful knowledge and abilities or it hinders it.

In this sense, the convergence between the ICF model and the perspective started in Salamanca can be found especially in the awareness of the role played by the environment on learning and on participating, and in the desire to identify the environmental factors that intervene in the inclusion process. This identification isn’t just a description of the effectiveness of the interaction between the student with disabilities and the school context, but it is highly proactive. Indeed, painting a clear picture of the environmental factors that intervene in the life of the student with disabilities allows us to take action, in order to eliminate or reduce the barriers and insert the facilitators that improve the *performance*<sup>3</sup>.

environments, for example, school, family, etc. The concept of performance is very useful in the educational field since it allows to take into account the influence of environmental factors (barriers and facilitators).

## 5. The ICF in the Italian context: how to strengthen full inclusion

Starting with the *Guidelines for the Integration of Students With Disabilities into School Life* (MIUR – Italy’s Ministry of Education, Universities and Research, 2009), adopted after the Italian Parliament ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Act No 18/2009), in Italy the ICF model has become the conceptual framework for the development of school inclusion.

As it is known, full inclusion is a strong and irreversible aspect of Italian tradition (Lauchan, Fadda, 2012) that creates an educational community with the task to welcome all students with disabilities, by creating the best conditions to allow for their highest development with regards to *learning, relation, socialisation, communication, interaction, orientation* and *personal and social autonomy* (Act No 104/1992; Legislative Decree No 66/2017).

Within the framework of functional autonomy and of organizational flexibility, protecting the right to study translates into creating the conditions and executing the activities that are useful to achieve the successful education of all students.

## 6. The heterogeneity of Italian classrooms: characteristics, issues and prospects

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After a long path of full inclusion, Italian classrooms are extremely heterogeneous and the diversity of the students’ educational needs is constantly growing.

In the school year 2016-2017, students with disabilities were almost 160 thousand (3.5% of the total of students), 90 thousand in primary school and almost 69 thousand in middle school (ISTAT, 2018) (Diagram 1).

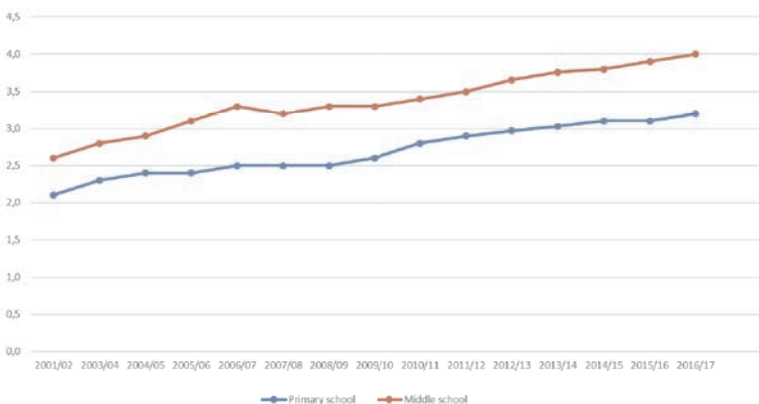


Diagram 1. Students with disabilities by school level and school year (Values for 100 students).  
Source: MIUR- Italy’s Ministry of Education, Universities and Research.

Males make up more than 64% of disabled students (Diagram 2).

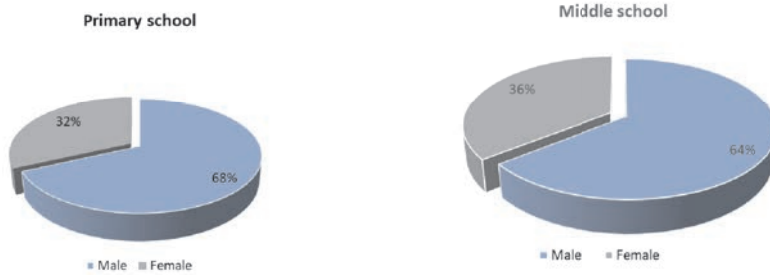


Diagram 2. Students with disabilities by sex and school level. School year 2016/2017 (Percentage values). Source: ISTAT

The most frequent problem is intellectual disability (primary school: 42.6%; middle school: 49.2%).

The years 2016/17 registered an increase in the number of students with Specific Learning Disorders (dyslexia, dysgraphia, dysorthography, dyscalculia) (Act No 170/2010; APA, 2013) that are 254600 (MIUR – Studies and Statistics Office 2018a) (Table 1).

School level	Students with SLD	Total of students	% students with SLD
Pre-school	774*	1.518.843,00	0.05%
Primary school	53.832*	2.764.952	1.95%
Middle school	92.483	1.711.954	5.4%
Highschool	107.525	2.664.967	4.03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>254.614</b>	<b>8.660.574</b>	<b>2.94%</b>

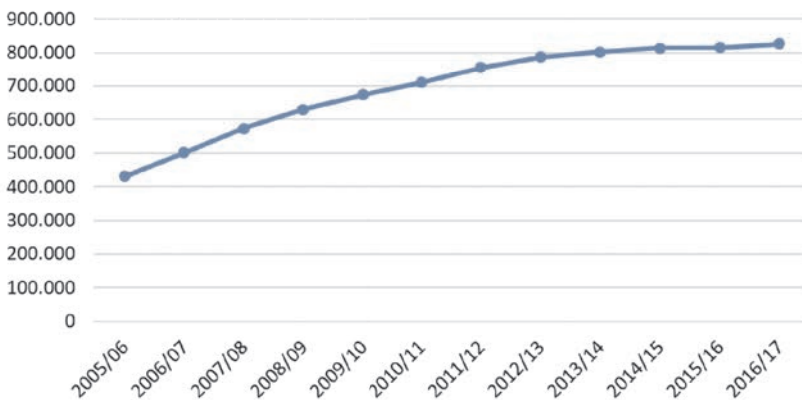
Table 1. Students with SLD and total of students at the different school levels in the school year 2016/17 (\* for pre-school and for the 1st and 2nd year of primary school the students mentioned are at risk of SLD and have been diagnosed after specific tests at the relevant health care facilities). Note: the total of students with SLD could not coincide with the sum of students by type of disorder since some students can present more types of disorder

Overall, 139620 students are dyslexic, 57259 dysgraphic, 68421 dysorthographic and 62877 dyscalculic. The disorder that is on average more common is dyslexia (Table 2).

School level	Dyslexia	Dysgraphia	Dysorthography	Dyscalculia	Total of students with SLD
Pre-school					774*
Primary school	30.157	13.686	17.084	9.446	53.832*
Middle school	49.543	22-623	28.404	24.215	92.483
Highschool	59.920	20.950	22.933	29.216	107.525
<b>Total</b>	<b>139.620</b>	<b>34.636</b>	<b>68.421</b>	<b>62.877</b>	<b>254.614</b>

*Table 2. Students with SLD by type of disorder for the school year 2016/2017. (\* for pre-school and for the 1st and 2nd year of primary school the students mentioned are at risk of SLD and have been diagnosed after specific tests at the relevant health care facilities). Note: the total of students with SLD could not coincide with the sum of students by type of disorder since some students can present more types of disorder*

In the school year 2016/2017, foreign students were almost 826000, with an increase of more than 11000 compared to the school year 2015/2016 (MIUR – Studies and Statistics Office 2018b) (Tables 3 and 4).



*Table 3. Students with foreign citizenship (absolute values).*



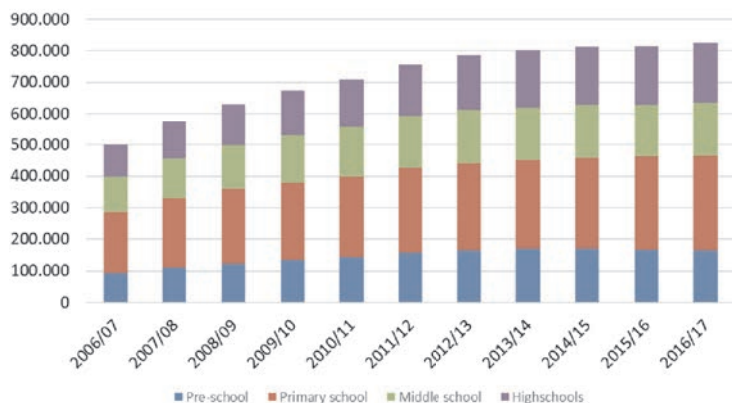


Table 4. – Students with foreign citizenship by school level (absolute values) – from school year 2007/2008 to school year 2016/2017.

## 7. The ICF as the foundation of the Functioning Profile and Individualised Education Plan

After more than forty years since the first legislation on school integration (Act No 118 of 1971; Act No 517 of 1977), the constantly growing complexity of the students' educational needs pushes the Italian school system to continually strengthen the culture of inclusion and the teaching practices and organisational policies.

In this regard, an approach is reaffirmed that is definitely educational and for which the ICF's contribution is considered relevant.

As a matter of fact, after the *Guidelines* of 2009 the ICF has been constantly taken as a model of classification that is useful for strengthening school inclusion as a model that can act as a bridge between the medical field and the educational one, thanks to its attention both on the individual characteristics of all students and the context in which they live<sup>4</sup>. This choice tends to improve the educational quality of the Italian school system and is accompanied by rethinking the ways to certify, document and plan inclusion, by facilitating a constructive dialogue between all the subjects involved in the process of integration.

4 After 2009, in 2010 the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research launched the *ICF Project. From the WHO's ICF Model to Planning for Inclusion* in order to enhance the role of the "environmental factors" in promoting the students' learning and participation. For the project, a National Technical Group was established, of which Lucia Chiappetta Cajola was a member. In most recent years, the application of the ICF as a theoretical-application model capable of offering a valid contribution to the inclusive perspective was reiterated by the MIUR – Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (Miur, 2012, 2013, Legislative Decree No 66/2017) and also by the *Memorandum of Understanding for the Protection of the Right to Health, Education and Inclusion* (Ministry of Health & MIUR, 2015) and by the *2018 Guidelines for Disability and Social Inclusion in Cooperation Interventions* (drafted up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation).

As the *Salamanca Statement* already said, such a dialogue is fundamental for an efficient inclusive action that is based on knowing and understanding a person's real situation in relation to his or her living environment.

In Italy, the active and constructive collaboration between all the people that interact with the person with disabilities has proved to be one of the most critical aspects on which it is most urgent to intervene<sup>5</sup>.

For these reasons, the ICF's principles and their operational consequences seem effective in producing interesting and important changes (Chiappetta Cajola et al., 2014, 2016).

At this historical moment, there are great expectations with regards to modifying the ways to implement social inclusion, in particular in order to facilitate an integrated and synergic action between school, family and territory. The recently issued Legislative Decree No 66 of 2017 *Rules for Promoting the School Inclusion of Students with Disabilities* seems to proceed in this direction – proposing an improvement of the certification and documentation procedures. In the decree, the ICF is put at the basis of the elaboration of a *Functioning Profile*, by part of the multidisciplinary assessment unit<sup>6</sup>, of which the school is a part of, with the collaboration of the family, by communicating the information according to the biological-psychological-social model of “human functioning”.

«The Legislative Decree 66/2017, with the subsequent integration of the Legislative Decree 96/2019 (*Additional and corrective provisions to the legislative decree n. 66/2017*), has recently addressed, along with other aspects, the reconsideration of the Functional Diagnosis (FD) and Functional Dynamic Profile (FDP). Both must be *included* in the Functioning Profile. More precisely, Legislative Decree 96/2019 states that the Profile has ‘to be drafted subsequently to the ascertainment of the disability status, during the developmental age, for the purposes of school inclusion and according to the criteria of the biopsychosocial model of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO)’. [...] The good sense helps us to understand that the Profile cannot be a simple addition, or juxtaposition, of DF and FDP. Differently, in the ICF perspective, the Profile's elaboration needs a substantial understanding. The ICF perspective, in fact, encourages us to understand the word *encompass* beyond the bureaucratic sense of *incorporating*, but in its deeper meaning because it is connected to the new interpretative system of human functioning (Chiappetta Cajola, 2019, pp. 80-81).

So, the information basis produced by the school and integrated within the *Profile* will regard both the student's performances in the different dimensions of development, as well as the barriers and the facilitators present in the context.

As the result of a cooperation assessment (Hollenweger, 2009), that offers a multidimensional description of the student, the *Profile* seems to be a tool that

5 Among the studies that have highlighted this aspect, see in particular: Associazione Treelle et al., 2011.

6 According to Legislative Decree No 66/2017, the multidisciplinary assessment unit is formed by a specialist physician or by an expert on the person's health conditions, by a specialist in child neuropsychiatry, by a rehabilitation therapist and by a social worker or by a representative of the relevant local Institution that is in charge of the subject.



could support the school system in planning an Individualised Education Plan (IEP) capable of achieving an adequate organization of the learning environment – eliminating barriers and facilitating the development of the student’s potential, even the residual potential.

With respect to the full implementation of this process, the Italian school system is getting ready – with a specific training process – to know the ICF and any possible tool to be used for drafting up the Profile and the IEP. In particular, training is directed to reference-contact teachers/inclusion coordinators, a professional figure present in all schools that will likely be able to mediate between the school and the multidisciplinary assessment unit and that should act as a reference point for the schoolteachers’ training on ICF<sup>7</sup>.

## 8. *Curriculum and school management: environmental factors strategic for inclusion*

As it was said, the *Salamanca Statement* offered an important contribution, defining and describing the school factors that are considered strategic to promote school inclusion. In general, these are: curriculum, buildings, school organization, pedagogy, assessment, staffing, school ethos and extracurricular activities (Unesco, 1994, 21).

In the abovementioned ICF framework, these school factors are real environmental factors that can act as facilitators, but they can also present some issues, and so create some barriers.

In the Statement’s *Guidelines for Action at the National Level*, the focus is placed, in particular, on curriculum flexibility, school management and information and research. Specifically, we intend to analyse how *curriculum* and *school management* developed in the Italian school system by intersecting with the modalities of instructional design, of evaluation, of self-evaluation, of training the teachers<sup>8</sup> and with the governance of special learning needs.

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## 9. *The virtuous circle of teaching and evaluation. A new reflection that comes from the ICF*

Form the part in which the *Salamanca Statement* indicates the elements that make up a quality curriculum, at least two strategic factors emerge that in the Italian perspective have become greatly relevant: individualising teaching within

7 Important research-training in this sense was carried out by the Regional School Office of Abruzzo and Roma Tre University (May-October 2018). 150 referent teachers/coordinators took part in the training, for the inclusion of every school level. The scientific project-head is Lucia Chiappetta Cajola. Amalia Lavinia Rizzo and Marianna Traversetti are part of the research group.

8 Training is crucial in order to have teachers move past a series of beliefs and behaviours that make their approach still rooted in special education (Slee, 1995).

the mainstream framework and taking into account the educational function of evaluation.

*“In order to follow the progress of each child, assessment procedures should be reviewed. Formative evaluation should be incorporated into the regular educational process in order to keep pupils and teachers informed of the learning mastery attained as well as to identify difficulties and assist pupils to overcome them”* (Unesco 1994, article 31, 22).

Within the Italian debate on an inclusive school, the two concepts of individualised teaching and evaluation are singularly considered crucial for the inclusivity of the curriculum, but their correlation has been analysed in depth, also in reference specifically to students with disabilities.

As a matter of fact, some scholars in particular have already highlighted how the quality of the organisation of teaching is a key element for removing the barriers that prevent students with disabilities from learning and participating to school life<sup>9</sup>.

In the curriculum, the organisation of teaching is considered fundamental so that each student with disabilities is able to develop “an open and aware identity” (Miur, 2012, p. 7), despite the vast heterogeneity of the individual differences, intended as many ways to express the human reality (Deleuze, 1994).

This framework prevents the risk of adopting uniform teaching methods and demands specific competences that must be learned by the teachers for them to create learning environments that could be adapted according to the principles of individualisation and personalisation. The term *individualisation* refers to the differentiation of the teaching strategies to be followed in order to ensure that all students reach the fundamental competences of the curriculum. Meanwhile, *personalisation* refers to the teaching strategies aimed at guaranteeing to each student his or her own form of cognitive excellence, by suggesting different learning objectives and the possibility to cultivate their own potential and express it fully. Individualisation guarantees that everyone can reach the same goals of the learning course at different times, rhythms and in different operational ways. Personalisation makes it so that everyone develops his or her own talent – intended indeed as personal potential and, in this case, the goal is different for each student.

In this perspective, the school tends to promote the educational success of all students by implementing the concept of equity (Rawls, 1971) and giving priority to the strategic importance of an organisational vision-planned action capable of guaranteeing everyone’s constitutional rights so that all “can carry out, according to their own possibilities and choices, an activity or a function that contributes to society’s material and spiritual progress” (Constitution 1948, article 4).

Coherently with such a framework, the inclusive organisation of teaching proceeds in synergy with evaluation – creating such a virtuous circle that it allows to remove the environmental factors that each time hinder the process of inclusion.

As a matter of fact, evaluation is the source of all information necessary to improve the choices aimed at promoting each student’s learning and educational success.

9 We are referring in particular to the studies carried out by Chiappetta Cajola (2008, 2015).



Therefore, the main task of “inclusive” evaluation is to monitor the adequacy of the educational proposal, without ever becoming discriminatory or punitive. Consequently, evaluation is carried out by firstly investigating the development of the students’ individual potential and then by verifying that the context is devoid of obstacles and rich in facilitators.

So within the evaluating process, one should consider if the best conditions to promote students’ learning and participation have been created. This gives the sense of the connection between teaching and evaluation. As a matter of fact, evaluation will have to also take into account the barriers that have negatively influenced – or even hindered – the achievement of the goals set for each student, and that therefore determined the learning outcomes.

The new reflexion that comes from the ICF looks to the learning environment’s overall ability to correspond to the students’ characteristics: removing the barriers and strengthening the facilitators becomes a determining action to improve everyone’s “human functioning”.

## 10. School management and governance of special education needs. The data that can be measured with the ICF and their use for inclusion policies.

The aspects that, in the *Salamanca Statement*, characterise *school management*, in the Italian school system converge in what is defined as *governance* of special education needs (Chiappetta Cajola & Traversetti, 2016; Chiappetta Cajola & Rizzo, 2018).

This construct is perfectly linked with the concepts of flexibility, responsibility and community on which school management is based, because – in order to promptly and efficiently respond to the student’s differences – it is necessary to plan inclusive intervention on a cultural and organisational basis that allows all players involved (from local administrations to schools and families) to interact in a constructive way, by sharing values, languages, methods and tools.

In this perspective, in the Italian school system there is an active collaboration between the headmaster, the teachers, the social and health workers and educational operators, the third sector and the families – so that taking care of students with SEN is the focus of a joint effort in which the school’s actions combine with those taken in the territory. Therefore, the main foundation is the commitment of the whole educational community, within a common vision oriented toward cooperation.

However, it was also found that the cooperation among schoolteachers and the one between them and the other players involved presents particular issues.

For these reasons, in order to implement an inclusive curriculum, it is best to act consciously so as to allow for “reciprocal recognition” through “the ethics of dialogue” necessary to overcome “daily, planetary and omnipresent incomprehension, and the subsequent misunderstandings” (Morin, 2015, pp. 51-66).

In this perspective, *governance* (Mayntz, 1999; Thompson, 2004) is a form of regulation that is intrinsically characterised by inclusivity, intended as a disposi-

tion to look for the greatest participation of the different players involved in solving the problems. It allows to activate the complexity of co-decisions and inter-institutional cooperation, which characterises an integrated system of interventions.

*Governance* represents the reference paradigm for the relations between the Italian school system and the territory, since it goes beyond a management model based on hierarchical control, and it allows to coordinate multiple actions within decision networks, where the school actively cooperates with the other territorial institutions. Moving from a centralised system of bureaucratic control (*government*) to the relation system of *governance* is considered as the fundamental turning point for the inclusive rearrangement of the educational system (Lindblad et al., 2002). The use of the ICF can also be interpreted within the perspective of governance.

As a matter of fact, the ICF – which is adopted as a shared tool in the teacher teams and in the Working Group for Inclusion present in every school – allows to extend, share and systematise the functions of monitoring and controlling the environmental factors, thus evaluating the level of inclusivity of the school.

This way, at the end of each school year, a proposal can be drafted for a *Plan for Inclusion* (Legislative Decree No 66/2017) that can be effective for all students.

Also within this plan, the ICF is a point of reference to build a basis of information on the barriers and the facilitators and to formulate a global hypothesis on how to effectively use the specific resources, both institutional and non-institutional ones, in connection with the territory, in order to qualitatively and quantitatively elevate the school's process of inclusion.

Its use also allows to plan interventions in order to improve the quality of inclusion, which will be an integral part of the long-term school plan within the Three-Year Plan of the School's Educational Offer (Act No 107/2015).

In conclusion, we want to underline the importance of exploiting the ICF's inclination to collect statistically valid data to orient educational choices at the school level and national school policies.

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