



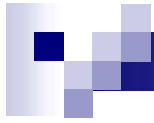
The Italian Model of Inclusion

Sirocco! Building Their Tomorrows, Today!
Meeting in Italy,
May 2013



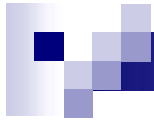
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- In **Italy** so far we have experienced **three decades of school and health policies** aiming at the full inclusion of students with disabilities and special educational needs.



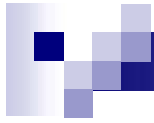
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- As **Dario Ianes** - a major scholar and researcher on school Inclusion – points out, there are two major issues that emerge:



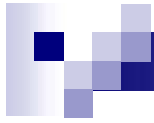
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- The need of an accurate **assessment** of the disabled student's strengths and weaknesses and the building of an appropriate Individualized Educational Plan or, better still, a Life project.
- the need of supporting not only disabled students but also **children with special educational needs**.



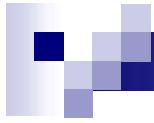
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- Concerning the first point, school professionals refer to the student's **functional diagnosis**, prepared by the public health system, which examines the child's abilities/ disabilities in different areas of functioning.



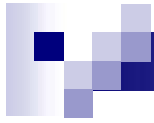
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- Even if the law was meant to involve all the school's operators, however a lot of problems emerge, related to the **different cultural perspectives** of health professionals on one hand and school professionals on the other.



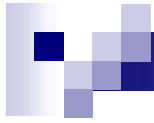
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- A change for the better occurred with the introduction of **ICF, the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health**, occurred in 2002.



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- This was specifically designed to describe the person in a more comprehensive way. ICF describes a person's level of functioning as a **dynamic interaction between their health conditions, environmental factors and personal factors.**



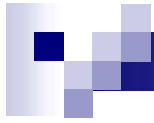
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- As a consequence, health professionals have become more motivated to **involve teachers, educators and families** in the process of building a functional diagnosis.



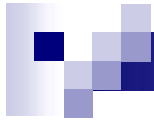
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- This was an important prerequisite to the construction, for the disabled student, of a **Life project, in a life-long learning perspective:** reaching goals related to **adult life** is getting more and more common in Italy, so much that now all Education programmes tend to focus on three main aspects:



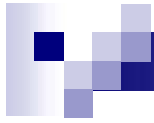
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- 1) Developing competence in the area of **personal activities** (e.g. learning, communication, self-help)



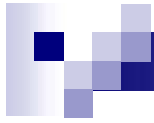
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- 2) Considering the child's **social participation**. The SEN student shares activities together with their peers but individual objectives are designed for him/her. Curricular goals are spotted and adapted with respect to the child's abilities and deficits.



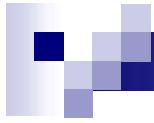
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- 3) Defining significant objectives in the area of **adult competence** (e.g self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, pre-working skills etc).



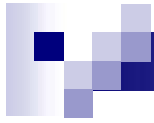
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- As regards the second important issue, we must consider that, along with a percentage of 2-3% of children with disabilities, another 15-20% have learning disorders, but, whereas children with disabilities are granted to have a special education teacher, **pupils with special educational needs do not have the same rights of individualized support.**



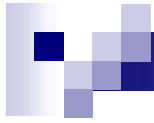
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- A possible solution is given by the use of **effective resources for inclusion** at school **both** by special education teachers and mainstream teachers.



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- Indeed, when too much is asked to SE teachers alone their action becomes ineffective. It is fundamental that their action is not isolated.



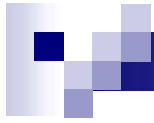
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It is generally agreed that **effective inclusion strategies** always consider the following issues:



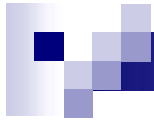
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- **The need to find a link between the class curriculum and the individualized plan**



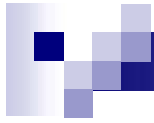
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- **The involvement of classmates and schoolmates**



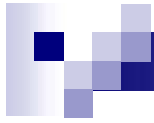
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- The teaching of **social skills and emotional awareness**



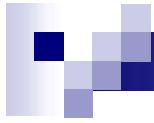
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- **Metacognitive** teaching and learning in order to make pupils **self-sufficient**



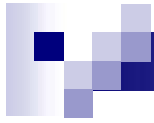
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- **Information communication technology** (e.g. speech synthesizer, magnifying software etc.)



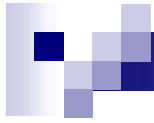
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- Since the last decade, we have tried to introduce the concept of “**special normality**” into the practices for inclusion.



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- “Special normality” means that there must be a **close link** between the individualized plan and the curriculum of the class. Only this can make significant the disabled student’s participating to classroom activities with peers. Thanks to this “special” work, the classroom learning context becomes richer for all students.



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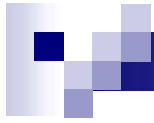
- **Dario Ianes and his researchers** have designed a flow-chart that may help teachers and students in adapting curriculum objectives to the need of a specific child. This **model** includes five levels of adaptation, from the surface to more depth, depending on the abilities/deficits of the disabled student included in the class.



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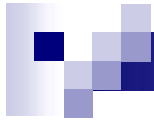
- **First level of adaptation:** changing the input/output codes.

Access to tasks and contents is made easier by changing the **codes** used to convey the message (e.g. listening to a tape recorded text instead of reading).



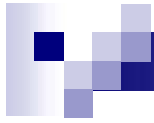
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- **Second level of adaptation:** changing the teaching/learning contexts. Access to tasks and contents is made easier by adapting the learning activities and contexts (e.g. learning spelling by means of a motivating instructional software instead of traditional pencil-and-paper).



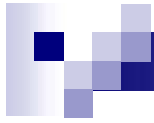
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- **Third level of adaptation:** changing the content — simplification.
Access to tasks and contents is made easier by their simplification (e.g. providing short and explicit texts to read).



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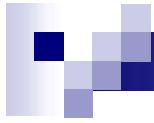
- **Fourth level of adaptation:** changing the content - identifying basics.
Access to tasks and contents is made easier by identifying and presenting their basics.



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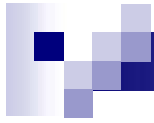
- **Fifth level of adaptation:** participating to the task culture.

Opportunities are sought in order to involve the child in the classroom activities, was it even only - so to speak - as an observer.



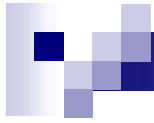
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- The reason why a full inclusion of disabled students is sought-after in Italy is that we believe that **peer involvement** is a precious resource. We want to teach students to accept and give value to all individual differences, in order to develop a supporting community where all children will live.



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- If we want to create a **supporting community** we need to start with children at school.



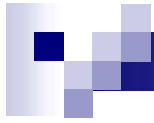
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- **Cooperative learning** methods and **tutoring** have proved to be a successful strategy to reach inclusion. But first of all, a climate of sharing, mutual work, prosociality and closeness must be built. By applying these strategies, we can build a **basis of shared prosocial acceptance and solidarity.**



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For the future, the **challenge** is: to make special our schools' normality so that it can be suitable to all Italian children.



Thanks for your attention!

Source: *The Italian model for the inclusion and integration of students with special needs: Some issues*

Dario Ianes - Transylvania Journal of Psychology, Special Issue No 2, 2006.