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THE BIRTH OF GENERAL SCHOOL INTEGRATION of **DISABLED STUDENTS** **LAW 118/71 AND LAW 517/77**



- The integration of students with disabilities in Italian general education classrooms started **42 years** ago with the **law 118/1971**

At the time, **disabled children only had the right to attend regular schools (primary and secondary), without any kind of help.**

LAW 517/77: DIVERSITY AS THE STUDENT'S GENERAL STATUTE



- Fifteen years after the introduction of comprehensive school , the problem of integration reached full awareness and ripening with the law **517, of August 4, 1977**.
- We can say that , with law 517, the Italian school (elementary and secondary) becomes **the school of integration**. Schools must be flexible to meet the needs of each student, and they must provide **individualized assistance**.
- With law 517, **diversity** becomes **the child/teenager's general statute**.

Law 517/77: One law and One article for all diversities



- Being conceived as the **integration school** and following the ideals of a society and civilization aimed to **integration**, the Italian school **didn't** introduce the integration of disabled students with a special law written for them and **neither** with a law's article reserved to them. On the contrary, in just one law, Italy declared **the rights of all children and teenagers** (including the ones with disabilities) **to satisfy all their diverse needs of learning.**

SPECIAL ED. TEACHER AND REDUCED CLASS



- In coherence with the inspiring law 517, which declares that it is the school that must individualize its actions to reach the differences, some **elements of effective help were introduced : the special education teacher and the reduced class with a maximum number of pupils.**
- That way, **law 118/71**, which followed only an approach of mere inclusion, **was finally outdated.**

Constitutional Court

Sentence n. 215/87



- *The integration of disabled students, was defined as “a brave step for the Italian school”, but it initially involved only preschool, primary and secondary school. It reached full maturity 10 years later when **the Constitutional Court’s sentence n. 215/7** declared that all disabled students have full and unconditional right to attend all schools of all types and levels.*

THE MINISTRY'S REGULATIONS PROCESSING



MINISTERO DELL'ISTRUZIONE,
DELL'UNIVERSITÀ E DELLA RICERCA

- After law 517 and for the following years, the Ministry of Education conceived a support **regulatory framework** that, in coherence with the spirit of integration, establishes and regulates:
- The **role** of the **special education teachers** and their **training**
- The **criteria** for **certification, education planning and documentary research**
- The **connection between different authorities** (local, medical, etc).

THE INTEGRATIVE DIDACTIC ACTION



- didactic actions will be more effective and successful If teachers consider all students that have special needs (derivated from disability or other causes) as one single group,.
- **A school aimed at integrating SEN students, can develop good strategies, which make the school suitable and appropriate for all students (the capables ones, the ones with disability and the ones with serious difficulties).**
- **Each student must satisfy his/her needs of learning and social interaction with schoolmates and teachers.**

TYOLOGIES OF KIDS WITH B.E.S. (SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS)



We can define 3 types of students **with special educational needs** :

- 1) Situations of disability, Law 104/92.** (The law that defines the caring, social integration and rights of handicapped people);
- 2) Specific learning troubles(dyslexic), law 170/10;**
- 3) Other learning trouble's situations,** introduced by the ministerial directive (17/12/2012) about SEN : *Policy tools for students with special educational needs and territorial planning for school integration.* It is of a much lower rank, compared to a law, but still of a great significance.

SOME STATISTICS ABOUT TYPOLOGIES 1 AND 2.

Cesare Cornoldi shows the following statistics about typology 1 (**disability**), law **104/92**, and typology 2 (**dyslexic , specific learning troubles**), law **170/10**, on subjects between 4 and 21 years



KIND OF DIFFICULTY %	MALES %	FEMALES %
DSA	4,5	3,5
Speech impediment	1,5	1
Focusing impediment	5	1,25
Mental retardation	1	1
Partial or total deafness	0,1	0,1
Multiple disability	0,15	0,15
Total 20% (13% males, 7% females)		

SOME STATISTICS ABOUT TYPOLOGY 3



A research about tipology 3, run by Giacomo Stella in 1991 for the education office of Modena, is still valid today;

- The researchers asked teachers of around 8000 students , how many pupils showed enough learning difficulties to request an external help.
- After that, they ran basic tests of text comprehension and writing, on a sample of 2000 students of 4° grade primary school and 2° grade secondary school..
- **Finally, it was possible to calculate the percentage of kids with learning troubles (dyslexic) and the one of kids with learning difficulties not related to specific disturbs.**

Conclusion :

- 1) **The students originally marked as in need of external help were 14% at the end of last year of primary school (9,9% at first year of primary school) and 24% at the last year secondary school (22% already at first year of secondary)**
- 2) **The students that had dyslexia related difficulties were about 4% (6% in math), an average that was constant in the years since 1° grade elementary school (this element shows the neuro-biological roots of the difficulties).**
- 3) **The students with difficulties not dyslexia related ended up being just over 10% at the end of elementary school and just over 20% at 2° year of secondary school.**

MORE STATISTICS ON TYPOLOGY 3

15%

- More statistics: the students with **Special Educational Needs** are **10-15%**, at least, according to **Celi, Janes and Cramerotti**. We are talking of an average of **3,4** and up to **5 kids in a class of 25-28 students**. As we know, percentages are not equally spread in schools , **they are higher in vocational institutes**
- Beyond comparing the research's statistics, **it's obvious that the problem is very important and it includes both quantity and quality aspects.**
- A good criteria, for the teachers, to identify students with *special educational needs*, is to ask themselves, in a practical way, wich ones , among all students that are generally or partially unsuccessful, **will not reach the basic levels with ordinary education**. This is the start to recognize and to extend the analysis of special educational needs within the class.

INCLUSION BRING BENEFITS TO ALL CHILDREN



All children
Can Learn!

- Although SEN students types 2 and 3 do not require the presence of a special education teacher or the introduction of smaller classes, **what we report in the next slides (the importance of proceeding by trial and error in the respect of each diversity, the need to introduce personalised learning paths, the need to respect each student learning velocity ...) is important for all children with special educational needs and bring benefits to all learners, in fact we can say that**

The creation of the conditions necessary for the effective inclusion of SEN students helps all children (Council of the European Union, 2010, p. 5).

THE EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGE FOR ALL THE STUDENTS IN THE CLASS



- While planning the approach and the methods to welcome the kids with difficulties in the first days at school, it's important to keep in mind **two considerations**:
 - 1) On one side, the disabled students need **to feel part of the group, like the others**. But they **mustn't** feel privileged or identified by their diversity with an excess of attention;
 - 2) On the other side, the disabled student inclusion **must be seen as an educational advantage for all the boys and girls in the classroom** : interacting with the disabled schoolmate is something that increases skills and competences .

THE EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGE FOR ALL THE STUDENTS IN THE CLASS (2)



- **All the boys and girls in the class must have the opportunity to communicate with the disabled schoolmate and get involved in helping actions**, like emptying or carrying his backpack, checking that he's not left behind etc, they need to feel and act like they were his or her **older brothers and sisters**, understanding his/her needs and helping the schoolmate with reduced autonomy.
- A great example was set by the girls of a teacher training school who were asking gently her agitated schoolmate: "You need to pee? Please say it if you need to.", while leaving the library.
- Same thing for some big boys in their last year at technical college that, while going to the gymnasium were asking each other: "Where's Fabio? Hey, where is he?"

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER : FULL CO-LEADERSHIP.



- Sometimes, the problem of school integration involves the **support teacher** too. Not all teachers fully accept that the support teacher has **co-leadership about didactic actions** and that he or she is in charge of *the whole classroom's integration*, and not only of the disabled student's integration
- This is the base of the inseparable **collaboration between class teacher and support teacher** (**both in charge of the whole classroom**)

SPIRIT OF INITIATIVE, COMPETENCE, COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL SKILLS



A good support teacher :

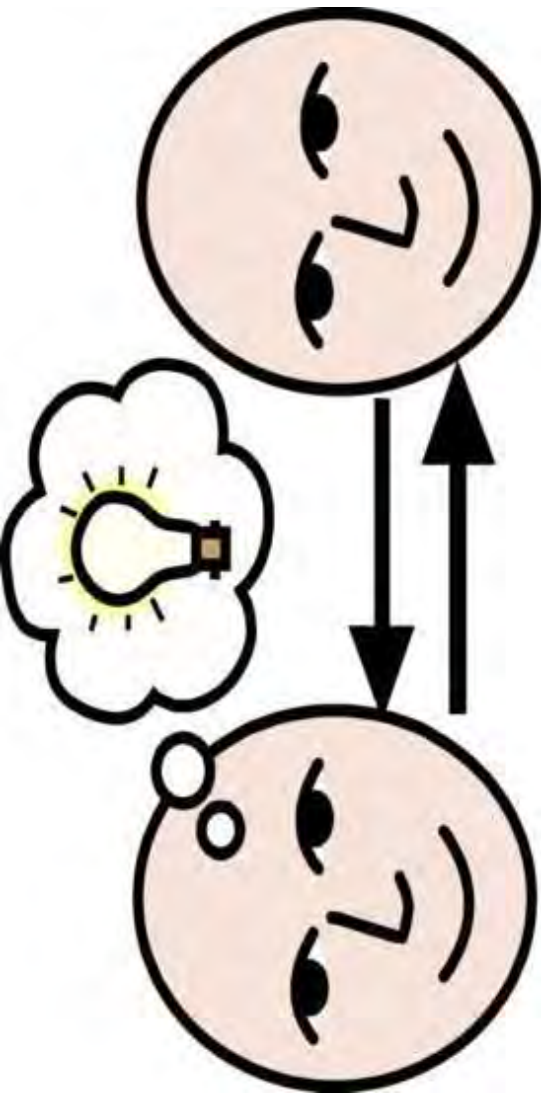
- **has spirit of initiative**: has an active attitude, is able to organize strategies, is in charge of the coordination of all actions towards the disabled student; **He/she is never a follower.**
- **is competent**: can exercise his/her role in a competent way, studies the record and updates it, focuses the observation in the right way, takes refresher training and consults experts.
- **has good communication and social skills**: can maintain a positive relationship with colleagues, can handle the difficulties created by the ones that can't deal with integration in the right way .

THE SUPPORT TEACHER'S GROUP AND THE SUPPORT ACTIVITIES PROTOCOL



- **The establishment of the support teacher group** is another important aspect. The school group of support teachers (e.g. special education teachers) should meet regularly and discuss all problems and tasks related to their job. They should involve in the discussions the class teachers and possibly the schoolmaster.
- It is the support teacher group that should elaborate the framework of criteria and actions towards integration that should be shared between class teacher and support teacher. Essential Criteria and actions should be written in a **protocol of understanding** that every teacher should know and pass on to the new ones as soon as they arrive.
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- Here is an **example of a protocol**, divided into : **1) Sharing elements 2) Criteria and procedures 3)behaviour and communication style**

PROTOCOL: SHARING BASIC ELEMENTS



- **Class teacher and support teacher share the same role.**
- **the support teacher 's integration measures the integration of the disabled student.**
- **The presence of a disabled student in the class offers an extraordinary educational advantage for all.**
- **The support teacher is the coordinator of all activities addressed to the disabled student.**
- **The disabled student's integration is focused on two aspects:**
 - **Current integration:** the student must attend to class as much as possible,
 - **Future integration:** It might be necessary that the student get temporarily separated from the class to achieve some specific competences

PROTOCOL, ACTION'S CRITERIA, PROCEDURES

THE ROLES

- **The support teacher excercises a role with the whole class too.** He/she encourages a friendly relationship between the disabled kid and his/her schoolmates. The support teacher creates groups of students in need of help that include the disabled kid.
- **Exchanges of roles** between the teacher and the support teacher are encouraged and expected.
- The support teacher shares his/her attention and **has a relationship with all the students.**
- **The class teacher plays a role for the disabled kid too.** (check the works, with a note or a signature or a co-signature).



PROTOCOL: ACTION'S CRITERIA, PROCEDURES (2)

Rituality

Several routine's actions are important for the disabled student, such as:

- **Roll call** (the kid waits with excitement for the moment when he, too, can say: "here I am !")
- **The calendar** (ripping off the old sheet after establishing what day is today)
- If the student is involved in special laboratory activities, **he should always spend the break with the classmates**, and go back to class before the bell rings
- The student should always **be present in the classroom at the beginning and at the end of the lessons.**
- **All movements from the classroom** should always include the disabled student and they should be carefully planned (on those occasions, the support teacher should **take a step back leaving the student with his/her classmates**).



PROTOCOL: ACTION'S CRITERIA, PROCEDURES (3)

Rituality's educational advantages

Habits are an educational advantage for the whole class and even for the teacher, because they allow:

- **To slow down**
- To accept and **respect the slower times** of the disabled classmate.
- To experiment the **sense of belonging** to a group thanks to a **supportive attention towards a weaker classmate** (it should never be felt as a *sacrifice*)



PROTOCOL: ACTION'S CRITERIA, PROCEDURES



Helpful relationship

All students in the class should be involved in a helpful relationship,

- Helping the disabled classmate to get his things out of the backpack
- Helping him/her to write down the homework on the diary,
- Helping him/her in small movements or carry out small tasks (for example go and make some copies, etc)

To be involved in a helpful relationship is particularly important for undisciplined students, bullies or extremely shy students.

Educational advantage: *The student that carries out a helpful relationship, models his/her personality in ways of a higher wealth and a good setting of his nature.*

PROTOCOL: BEHAVIOURS ,ATTITUDES AND COMMUNICATION STYLE



ATTITUDES

The class teacher should never hurry the support teacher or the disabled student when starting class (some arrangements can be made, separately, to help speed up the operations if needed). Instead the teacher should **pay attention and get involved** or he/she should **know when to wait** acting busy while getting ready.

COMMUNICATION STYLE

The public conversations between teacher and support teacher must always reflect a respectful relationship that includes the disabled student. Conversations should **never show disagreement or lack of respect.** Never say, for example “I have his test results, can you take **HIM** to the support classroom?”

The student's observation

TO OBSERVE IS: TO KNOW, TO WATCH, TO SEE.



- Observation as a technical activity requires the distinction between **to see and to watch**. And ultimately, as a third dimension: **to know**.
- *To see what is really interesting to us, we must know **how to watch**, and to know how to watch we must have had some previous knowledge of the phenomenon, its structure, its basic aspects. So we forcefully have **TO KNOW**.*
- Not only. The way to observe varies according to what is **the purpose** of the observation.
- What we are aiming for, is to promote the **maximum social integration, present and future**, of the disabled student. Moreover, **we must understand the functioning of the multiple aspects involved (comprehension, affection, etc)**, the **specific aspects related to the deficit and the ones related to the student's disability** .
- Knowledge allows us to understand what is interesting to us and in which perspective. **Therefore two operations are very important:**

TO OBSERVE IS: TO KNOW, TO WATCH, TO SEE



- **1) First of all we must acquire an essential knowledge of the student's deficit to understand:**
 - cognitive, personal, communication, social related aspects and
 - what are the aspects to focus and work on and what is the real expectation of improvement we can aim for. To this end it's important to organize an interview with the medical doctor. Also reading the ICI-10 or DSM IV can help. And, ultimately, exploring the net.
- **2)then, we must get information on how the deficit is expressed in this specific case and how the student reacts to it:** the limits, the present capacities and the potential ones in the future, short and long term. (See The Functional Diagnosis).
- **To observe the student we can use an interactive rubric**

INTERACTIVE OBSERVATION RUBRIC

Single tasks For ex.:	He carries out the task by himself 1 with no problems(good) 2 with hesitation (acceptable) 3 with difficulty (to be consolidated)			He carries out the task <i>only</i> with help 1 with minimum help 2 with substantial help 3 only with major help			He can't carry out the task, even with help
	1	2	3	1	2	3	
He acknowledges ...							
He puts in order...							
He connects... etc.							

TO OBSERVE IS: TO KNOW, TO WATCH, TO SEE, *WHEN THE INTERACTIVE RUBRIC IS USEFUL*



- Investigation through the interactive RUBRIC shouldn't be needed in all cases: but it can be useful :

- 1) When we have to understand the current limits of the student's capacities in a certain area** (investigation through only one task can largely define the next tasks and the whole area involved);



- 2) When we have to build up some elementary capacities with targeted actions.**

- For the rest, in most cases, the simple observation of the student is sufficient to organise the activities that we want to set up and a deeper level of investigation is not required.

To feel great at school

The disabled student should **feel well at school** and, at the same time, **work on a path aimed to improve his/her future**. This work requires commitment and it can show some difficulties.

The present wellbeing cannot preclude the achievement of both social integration's skills and practical skills , necessary in the future.

The two directions, today and tomorrow, must interact without too much tension. A debate about those two needs should be set up and considered necessary.



THE DISABLED KID'S LEARNING: To advance by trials and errors? ?



The **student's path towards new skills** must combine with the one that builds a **stable and safe identity**.

Students can lose selfconfidence when proceeding by trials and errors since this approach can lead to temporary failures. **The student can feel diminished and out of place**. At the same time the student can feel **his/her adulthood compromised** .

But normally, the child can keep enough confidence, for a while, to be able to try again. Teachers have to stimulate students , keeping in mind that some of them can react negatively to failures and can be emotionally more fragile due to a high rate of anxiety in the family

Conclusion: to advance by trials and errors is the **correct** educational procedure but we must know its limits

Giving up learning



- Advancing by trials and errors must be carried out without passing what is called the “**discouragement limit**”. Failure can sometimes **threat** the **kid’s identity, his/her confidence and his/her selfimage**.
- When this situation occurs, **the student closes in upon himself** and he/she shuts off even when facing tasks that could be normally accomplished. The student enters into a negative state known as “**avoidance**” which is a real psychological block. **It’s a defensive reaction, prompt and total**.
- Teachers should know how to recognize such **responsive laziness** which is not lack of will but a safety strategy generated from lack of selfconfidence.

Step-by-step approach and gratification



- The refusal must be dismantled with **great calmness** and a gradual approach, **carrying out the tasks step by step**, to secure the achievement which is the only effective cure for failure wounds .

- **The step-by-step approach and gratification** are the two main tools to use with SEN students. It's not an easy task; avoidance behaviours can be persistent within disabled kids. Especially the ones with mental retardation .

- The correct way is to propose and carry out small tasks, even very simple and isolated, that get the student in a positive state of achievement and make him feel back on track..



Step-by-step approach and gratification



- This action requires sometimes limitless patience and time investment but scolding or being tougher only reinforces the psychological block in an endless spiral.
- **The teacher's work, especially the support one, can be successful only with good communication when empathy and a fair firmness combine.**
- Sometimes a “dog and cat” pattern can occur between support teacher and student, as it happens between parents and children. A vicious circle that happens again and again and brings each time to endless emotional escalations.
- It happens especially when a wrong approach has been set up by the support teacher, who lacks firmness although being empathic and communicative.
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Present and future integration, a good growth while learning



- We cannot forget that the disabled student must be “pushed” over his/her limits, even persistently, to reach new targets while working on knowledge, competences, social skills, learning autonomy and daily tasks.

This way we bind together current and future integration; **today’s wellness** and **aiming to the future integration in society** are both essential rights for a disabled person.

Teachers and parents must understand that the two dimensions are connected and mutually supported..

Present and future integration, a good growth while learning (2)



Students improve their self confidence when they experiment success. To develop selfconfidence is essential not only to move on in life, but also to face and overcome failures during learning processes

At the same time both teacher and parents must understand the need to develop all the student's skills, aiming to a higher social integration in his/her adult life and **they must avoid indulging in protecting a present comfort that can be misleading.**

The difficulty consists in keeping the right balance between the two dimensions (present and future integration);

One should not occur at the expense of the other, as it happens, sometimes.