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## Research paper

# Integration and inclusion in Italy. Towards a special pedagogy for inclusion



## *Intégration et inclusion en Italie. Vers une pédagogie spéciale pour l'inclusion*

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### ABSTRACT

Recent Italian ministerial policies have re-affirmed the commitment to educating students according to a policy of inclusion. This commitment follows the initial decision to begin integrating pupils with disabilities into mainstream classes nearly 40 years ago (Act 517/1977) and is in line with current international studies and directives. However, many problems with implementation still remain. (Norwich, 2010). Here, we intend to contribute to the discussion, illustrating some of the theoretical and operational aspects developed under the special pedagogy, the meaning of which will be clarified in the text. We intend to support the view that what had been done in the past to ensure disabled pupils' right to learning and participation can act as a reference for an inclusive pedagogy that caters for the educational needs of everyone involved, as documented by recent research (Canevaro, 2010; Canevaro et al., 2009, 2011). We view the issue from the perspective of special normality (Ianes, 2006), according to which the teachers should work within normal contexts, pursuing common goals using methods and techniques that apply to all, but putting special elements in this normal

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path that ensure that teaching strategies adequately address the cognitive and affective characteristics of each subject with disabilities.

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## RÉSUMÉ

**Mots clés :**  
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La décision de scolariser les élèves dans la perspective de l'inclusion a récemment été affirmée dans les documents ministériels italiens. Après presque 40 ans d'élaboration (loi 517/1977), elle est dans la continuité des choix d'intégrer les élèves ayant des besoins éducatifs particuliers dans des classes ordinaires. Elle s'accorde également avec les idées exprimées dans les documents internationaux. Néanmoins, il subsiste quelques difficultés dans sa mise en œuvre opérationnelle (Norwich, 2010). Nous souhaitons contribuer à la discussion en illustrant certains aspects théoriques et pratiques développés dans la Pédagogie spéciale (dont nous préciserons le sens plus en avant dans le texte). Nous soutenons l'idée que tout le travail réalisé afin de garantir les droits des élèves ayant des besoins éducatifs particuliers à l'apprentissage et à la participation, peut servir de référence au développement d'une pédagogie inclusive à l'écoute des besoins de chacun (Canevaro, 2010; Canevaro et al., 2009, 2011). La perspective adoptée est la normalité spéciale (Ianes, 2006), selon laquelle il faut travailler dans des contextes normaux, en poursuivant des objectifs communs avec des méthodes et des techniques appliquées à chacun, mais en introduisant, dans ces voies éducatives normales, les éléments spéciaux qui sont essentiels pour assurer que les stratégies d'enseignement répondent adéquatement aux caractéristiques cognitives et affectives de chaque élève à besoins éducatifs particuliers.

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## 1. Introduction

The decision to educate students inclusively has been re-affirmed by recent Italian ministerial documents,<sup>1</sup> after the decision to integrate pupils with disabilities into mainstream classes was introduced nearly 40 years ago (Act 517/1977). It is also in line with what has been expressed in international documents and directives.<sup>2</sup> However, in terms of operational implementation, there are still certain issues that need to be addressed. (Norwich, 2010).

The perspective proposed by recent Italian legislation is the "bio-psycho-social" model in the *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (ICF, 2001), according to which "every student, continuously or at certain times, can develop special educational needs for physical, biological, physiological, or even psychological and social reasons, for which it is necessary for the school

<sup>1</sup> Guidelines on scholastic integration of students with disabilities, 4/8/2009; New rules on specific learning disabilities in the school environment (Law 170 of 10/08/2010); Guidelines for the right to education of pupils and students with specific learning disabilities (Ministerial Decree of 12/07/2011); National Guidelines for the curriculum in kindergarten and the first cycle of education, September 2012; Ministerial Directive "Intervention Tools for pupils with special educational needs and territorial organization for school inclusion", 27/12/2012; Practical Guidelines Ministerial Circular no. 8, 6/3/2013.

<sup>2</sup> The documents developed over the decades are numerous and include: the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Disability (1994) UNESCO; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006; the Conclusions and Recommendations of the 48th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE), The Inclusive School: The Way of the Future, 2008; and Guidelines (UNESCO, 2009).

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