“Including But Not Limited To”. Fostering Inclusion in Italian and Spanish schools.

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This work examines the current evolution of inclusive schools in Italy and Spain through the analysis of two cases.
The framework

The literature shows that the inclusive process adopted in Spain and Italy has common features, but also significant differences.

(Gobbo, Ricucci, Galloni, 2011; Cornoldi, Terreni, Scruggs, Mastropieri, 1997; Enguita, 2009; Cardona, 2009).
Common features

- Unidirectional approach
  - no special schools, one school for all children

- Support to educational policies
  - addressed to students with SEN

- Quality and equity
  - as key values for promoting educational work
Differences

Levels of autonomy

Moderate decentralization (Spain)

High centralization (Italy)

Economic investments

Ethnic minorities, socioeconomic disadvantaged students (Spain)

Students with disabilities (Italy)
Both countries carry out special policies, measures and practices addressed to specific categories of pupils. However, interventions don’t leave a real mark on the way the schools normally plan and organize activities.
Therefore

the ensuing scenario could be defined as a

“fragmented inclusion”

What are the causes?
The aim was not to produce a comparison, but to highlight the strong and weak points of the inclusive projects promoted by schools in each country.
### Spain

| Primary schools (nursery and primary education, age 3 to 12) | 500 students, 30 teachers | Situated in a town of an Autonomous Community (on the outskirts of Madrid) | Characterized by a population of more than 50% of immigrants |

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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Italy</th>
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<td><strong>Primary and secondary schools</strong> (nursery and primary education, age 3 to 13)</td>
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## Method

The research has been divided into **two phases**, bent to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from the schools:

1. **1st phase**
   - schools’ socio-economic and demographic background,
   - curriculum offered,
   - database’ career,
   - organizational structure,
   - and documentation about inclusive projects fostered by schools;

2. **2nd phase**
   - focus groups,
   - semi-structured interviews,
   - classroom observations,
   - and four questionnaires on-line adapted from the *Index for inclusion* (Booth, Ainscow, 2011).
Why the Index for inclusion?

→ It allows to explore three major *areas* of school organization and improvement:
   1) creation of cultures,
   2) production of policies,
   3) development of inclusive practices;

→ It highlights the role of *practices*;

→ Its articulation makes great about the so-called *implementation phase*, without which any document of school politics becomes rhetoric and an instrument of propaganda.
“[…] Cooperative learning has fostered greater dialogue among teachers. Pupils like it, but all depends on the background of teachers implementing it… Some teachers tend to dismiss it, so we run into difficulties…” (Primary school teacher, 11/8/2012)

“[…] It must be said that in the classroom there are so many different situations, which can not be disregarded. So, we must pay attention to a number of personal dynamics…” (Head Teacher, 10/8/2012)
Children cooperate in playing and learning (teachers)

- **Always**: 35%
- **Often**: 41%
- **Sometimes**: 24%
- **Rarely**: 0%
- **Never**: 0%
- **Other**: 0%

Activities are organized in pairs or small groups (pupils)

- **Always**: 58%
- **Often**: 27%
- **Sometimes**: 7%
- **Rarely**: 5%
- **Never**: 2%
- **Other**: 0%

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Supporting teachers promote learning for all children (*teachers*)

- **Never**: 0%
- **Rarely**: 0%
- **Sometimes**: 12%
- **Often**: 18%
- **Always**: 71%

Having a supporting teacher in class helps all students to accomplish their work (*pupils*)

- **Never**: 0%
- **Rarely**: 7%
- **Sometimes**: 12%
- **Often**: 24%
- **Always**: 57%

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**Teachers and parents/carers collaborate (teachers)**

- **Other**
  - 0%
- **Never**
  - 0%
- **Rarely**
  - 0%
- **Sometimes**
  - 12%
- **Often**
  - 47%
- **Always**
  - 41%

**My parents/carers feel involved in school activities (pupils)**

- **Other**
  - 9%
- **Never**
  - 20%
- **Rarely**
  - 21%
- **Sometimes**
  - 20%
- **Often**
  - 31%
- **Always**
  - 0%
Findings (Italy)

“[...] School are not really able to integrate from one level to the next... Many projects - and the outcomes achieved - are generally not well-known, nor valued as they deserve, even within the same institution...” (School Deputy Director, 10/3/2011)

“[...] I would like better relationships and collaboration between all teachers in the class council, including the support teacher. Our work is rarely praised by colleagues...” (Primary school teacher, 1/20/2012)

“[...] We must think about integration and... if we want to be forward-looking, the inclusion of our students... but first, we have to integrate ourselves...” (Supporting teacher, 3/14/2012)
Teachers collaborate between them (teachers)

- Always: 32%
- Often: 43%
- Sometimes: 20%
- Rarely: 4%
- Never: 0%
- Other: 1%

Teachers collaborate between them (pupils)

- Always: 17%
- Often: 34%
- Sometimes: 30%
- Rarely: 10%
- Never: 4%
- Other: 6%

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School encourages children and adults to feel alright with themselves (teachers)

- Always: 32%
- Often: 43%
- Sometimes: 20%
- Rarely: 4%
- Never: 0%
- Other: 1%

School helps me to feel alright with myself (pupils)

- Always: 7%
- Often: 22%
- Sometimes: 35%
- Rarely: 19%
- Never: 14%
- Other: 4%

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During lessons I often work in pair or small groups (pupils)

- **Always**: 6%
- **Often**: 19%
- **Sometimes**: 38%
- **Rarely**: 23%
- **Never**: 7%
- **Other**: 7%

Children learn in a cooperative way (teachers)

- **Always**: 2%
- **Often**: 38%
- **Sometimes**: 49%
- **Rarely**: 8%
- **Never**: 0%
- **Other**: 3%

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Supporting teachers promote learning for all children *(teachers)*

Having a supporting teacher in class helps all students to accomplish their work *(pupils)*

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Adults and children are sensitive to different expressions of gender (teachers)

Being gay or lesbian is seen as a normal part of life (pupils)
Outcomes

Our inquiry confirms the fragmented condition of inclusive processes in both countries. The measures adopted to promote inclusion produce only partially positive results. Nevertheless, results are worse than it could be expected, especially because the projects address to integrate specific groups of pupils (immigrants, students with disability), rather than adopting inclusion as a global view about school.
The view contrasting normal with special needs students is still commonly accepted. As a result, inclusion is not fully understood as involving all students and the overall school organization, rather than addressing some special groups.
The tie between inclusive efforts and school organization is weak. Inclusion is developed through single projects, which sometimes work quite well, but rarely affect the school organization as a whole in a permanent way. Schools prove to be quite impermeable to inclusive change.
Critical points

3 Teachers’ training

Inclusion is not seen as a core part of teachers’ education and continuous training yet, but rather as an optional skill. Therefore, the qualification levels of school personnel managing inclusive projects are not standardized, and efficacy can widely vary according to the teachers’ turn over.
Could we change the focus from special needs to exclusion, removing the obstacles to the full participation and learning of all students?
Connection between inclusive projects and school organization

Is it possible to “make a pact” between schools inclusion-oriented and the administration (local or central)?
The pact would be: let the schools free to achieve low cost (or no cost) changes which can leave a permanent mark on the whole organization.
Suggestions

3 Teachers’ training

- Continuous training should be made compulsory for teachers.
- Inclusion should be introduced as a core subject in education and refreshing courses.
- Teachers’ traineeships could be hosted by schools which developed inclusive best practices.

Is that enough to leave a mark?
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