

TEACHER CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH CRITICAL REFLECTIVE PRACTICE FOR THE PROMOTION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Diana Carmela Di Gennaro, Erika Marie Pace, Iolanda Zollo, Paola Aiello

University of Salerno, Salerno, Italy

Email: ddigennaro@unisa.it, epace@unisa.it, izollo@unisa.it, paiello@unisa.it

Abstract

In a time where inclusive education has become the underpinning framework of reference for educational policies globally, effective strategies for a smooth and sustainable transformation of educational systems need to be identified. Recent literature on teachers' attitudes has suggested that the adoption of inclusive policies, although necessary, is not sufficient for its implementation. Particularly, it has highlighted that the successful creation of inclusive environments requires critical reflection on the beliefs and values underpinning the attitudes towards the practical implementation and long-term sustainability of inclusive education.

The research presented in this article outlines the historic evolution of the principles characterising inclusive education in Italy and Europe. It then delineates the competencies required for teacher capacity building in inclusive contexts and provides an overview of the founding principles supporting critical reflective practice. In conclusion, it proposes a guided strengths-oriented process aimed at enhancing critical reflection during initial and in-service teacher education courses in order to give teachers the opportunity to reflect on the beliefs and values shaping their practice, as well as explore new routes to bring about improvement and build strategic alliances to be able to handle the complex nature characterising current school contexts.

Key words: *critical reflective practice; continuous professional development; inclusive education; inclusion; teacher training.*

Introduction

The emergence of the knowledge society, brought about by the pervasive influence of modern information and communication technologies (ICT), as well as the evolution of the role of the family and other socio-economic factors, such as immigration and the resurfacing of poverty are only some of the factors which have led to a more complex and dynamic school environment. As a consequence, the roles and expectations from schools and teachers have changed; they are being asked to manage classes with diverse educational needs such as disabilities, specific developmental disorders, emotional disturbance and socio-cultural and linguistic disadvantage. As a result, traditional teacher-centred models need to be transformed into differentiated teaching-learning paths that identify and develop the talents of each student and equip all students with higher-order skills and competencies required to lead an economically productive life. As outlined by Ischinger (OECD, 2009 p.3) what is needed to handle the complexity brought about by technological, social, cultural and economic change is:

“... the creation of ‘knowledge-rich’, evidence-based education systems, in which school leaders and teachers act as a professional community with the authority to act, the necessary information to do so wisely, and the access to effective support systems to assist them in implementing change.”

Although international education policies have promoted and provided the infrastructure and the adequate support systems, at practice levels one of the challenges for the success and long-term sustainability is the implementation of inclusive education, as evidenced in the World Conference on Special Educational Needs held in Salamanca. In fact, since the endorsement of the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action* (UNESCO, 1994), the concept of inclusion has oriented educational policies and practices in many countries. Nevertheless, disparities are still present among EU member states in terms of conceptualising inclusion, reframing and implementing policies, as well as in guaranteeing the capacities and competencies necessary to be able to reach the goal of education for all (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education [EADSNE], 2011). Hence, within this inclusive perspective and as evidenced in the *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* (EADSNE, 2012), teacher training holds an even more remarkable role.

Thus, the research presented first delineates the historical evolution of the principles of inclusion in Italy compared to those within the European context. It then explores the competencies required for teacher capacity building in inclusive contexts and provides an overview of the founding principles supporting critical reflective practice. In conclusion, it proposes a guided strengths-oriented process aimed at enhancing critical reflection during initial and in-service teacher education courses in order to give teachers the opportunity to reflect on the beliefs and values shaping their practice, as well as to explore new routes to bring about improvement and build strategic alliances to be able to handle the complex nature characterising current school contexts.

The Italian Perspective on Inclusive Education

The theoretical paradigm underpinning inclusive principles seems to represent a great challenge which educational agencies are called to embrace and handle effectively. Since the World Conference on Special Educational Needs held in Salamanca in 1994, the concept of inclusion has influenced the orientation of educational policies and practices of many countries. During this conference, in fact, it was postulated that inclusive education is “the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all” (UNESCO, 1994). Therefore, a central element of inclusive education is the removal of barriers that hinder learning and the participation of all children throughout their school life, on the basis of an anthropological model that aims at maximising the potential of each and every individual to develop holistically. In this sense, the inclusive education approach is oriented towards a bio-psycho-social and educational model that finds its roots in the conceptualisations proposed in the *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (ICF) (WHO, 2001, 2007).

Nevertheless, the theoretical construct of inclusive education was, and still is, the subject to different interpretations and declinations. In many countries, in fact, the inclusive approach is still often conceived as a process of integrating children with disabilities into mainstream classes. Instead, in other countries inclusive education is perceived as the theoretical framework of reference for the restructuring of educational principles and practice aimed at promoting children’s educational attainment.

In fact, on an international level, there is a lack of agreement on the meanings of the concepts of inclusive education and special educational needs which are the result of differences in educational policies, different procedures in the certification and identification of children with special educational needs, as well as different social-cultural influences on the interpretation of such concepts (D'Alessio, 2013). To overcome this conceptual incoherence, the need to give a more rigorous and precise definition to the conceptual dimension of inclusion in relation to the concept of integration and the theoretical construct of special educational needs (Chiappetta Cajola & Ciraci, 2013) was highlighted during the UNESCO International Conference on Education, dedicated to "Inclusive Education: the way of the future" (UNESCO, 2008).

Yet, if on an international level inclusion is a highly-debated concept, over the past few decades the educational policies in Italy have gone through a gradual shift from the perspective of integration to an inclusive approach. As a matter of fact, since the 1970s and up to current laws, the Italian educational policies have promoted the integration of children with special needs into mainstream schools, recognising diversity as a human right which cannot be renounced. The Italian model of integration is, in fact, founded on a dynamic concept of integration intended as the recognition and acceptance of diversity and disability, with the objective of creating individualised didactic programmes which support the teaching-learning processes of students with diverse learning difficulties or disabilities. In recent years, such perspective has welcomed the emerging suggestions of the United Nations regarding disability, focusing its attention on the concepts of inclusive education and special educational needs (United Nations, 2006).

In 2009, the year in which Italy approved the UN convention of 2006, the Italian educational authorities, on embracing the proposal of full inclusion, put into force a series of legislative measures aimed at promoting the process of inclusion of children having specific educational needs, even if within a highly-debated climate. In particular, the Legislative Decree 170/2010 and the related guidelines of 2011 define the Specific Learning Difficulties (SLDs), providing the necessary indications regarding the didactic and educational strategies apt at guaranteeing the educational attainment of children with SLDs. Moreover, the same document highlights the importance of the shared responsibility of all teachers in drawing up and implementing the planned educational course of action of these children, thus highlighting the need of in-service teacher training and the reorganisation of teacher education.

The Ministerial Directive of 27th December, 2012 "Strumenti d'intervento per alunni con bisogni educativi speciali e organizzazione territoriale per l'inclusione scolastica" (Intervention tools for pupils with special educational needs and the territorial organisation for school inclusion) and the related Circular dated 6th March, 2013 goes even a step further, delineating the Italian strategy for inclusion. This document, in fact, presents a very precise interpretation of the concept of special educational needs in relation to the Italian educational context. This is based on a holistic view of the individual with reference to the bio-psycho-social model proposed in the ICF and is founded on the diagnosis of the functioning and environmental profile (WHO, 2007). According to this law, there are three main sub-categories which can be identified: 1. disability, 2. specific developmental disturbances, and 3. socio-economic, linguistic and cultural disadvantage. For these groups of students, differentiated and personalised teaching-learning programmes are envisaged on the basis of their individual differences and the potential of each and every learner. However, on a negative note, if on the one hand, this promotes an inclusive educational approach which ensures that "no child is left behind" (The No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB], 2002), on the other hand, it leads to a new form of labelling and categorisation of specific groups which remain entrapped in a debated definition of special educational needs.

From a pedagogical perspective, the concept of special educational needs is first theorised in scientific literature in the 1960s, when it formed the basis for a new conceptualisation of need in educational terms, highlighting the priority to restructure the contexts and learning

objectives in light of the complexity of factors which determine the psychological and physical development of every learner (Gulliford & Upton, 1992). In the wake of such reflections, a fundamental contribution to the construct of special educational need has been offered in the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) which provides the guidelines for the analysis and evaluation of the level of inclusion in schools. The perspective proposed in the Index provides a new interpretation and collocation of educational needs of each child within the broader framework of the plurality of differences present in school contexts (Dovigo, 2008). Taken from this perspective, therefore, the attention is shifted from children with difficulty, and hence having special educational needs, to the contexts which generate such difficulties. Whereas, the perspective of integration, as an integral part of the theoretical framework of special education, aims at identifying the strategies and the resources necessary to guarantee students in difficult circumstances efficient solutions which support their educational learning paths (Ianes, 2008), the model of inclusive education adopts a wider perspective with the aim of offering the same educational opportunities to all students.

Based on the assumption that individual differences are a resource for educational processes, inclusive education assumes a pedagogical perspective that is centred on the individual learner. In addition, it recognises the necessity to restructure the educational system with the scope of adding value to differences, effectively maximising individual potential and responding to the learners' needs in a flexible manner (Lascioli, 2012). Thus, an inclusive educational system requires a reform that not only guarantees the infrastructure and the learning processes but the one which also restructures teacher education. This is because, as Reynolds (2001) postulated and as evidenced in the international literature review *Teacher Education for Inclusion*, teacher education needs to focus on challenging teachers' knowledge, beliefs and values and developing teacher capacity "to work effectively with a wide range of students and colleagues, to contribute to the school and the profession, and to continue developing" (EADSNE, 2010, p.37).

The Theory Underpinning Critical Reflective Practice for Teacher Capacity Building in Inclusive Contexts

In order to understand the relevance of critical reflective practice in inclusive education, an overview of the evolution of critical reflective practice is mandatory. Over the years many prominent scholars have urged the need for teachers to be self-reflective and to engage in critical inquiry. John Dewey (1910, 1933), the pioneer of reflection in education, saw reflection as a further dimension of thought and argued that while thought couldn't be taught and learnt, thinking well could be. In Dewey's view thought constitutes the "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends" (Dewey, 1910, p.6), as opposed to action that is routine which constitutes "habits of thought that are unsystematic, lack evidence, rely on mistaken beliefs or assumptions, or mindlessly conform to tradition and authority" (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006); thus distinguishing action that is reflective from action that is routine. In addition, he asserted that it is the recognition of a problem or dilemma and the acceptance that a problem exists that triggers reflective practice.

Challenging the belief of the time that the teacher is a mere technician (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006), in the 80s, Schön (1983) contributed to bring reflection into the centre of an understanding of what professionals do, by introducing an alternative epistemology of practice "in which the knowledge inherent in practice is to be understood as artful doing" (Usher, 1997, p.143). Unlike Kolb and Lewin, with the theory of double-loop learning, Argyris and Schön (1974) claimed that it was not necessary to go through the whole learning circle in order to reflect upon it, but one can reflect-in-action (Finger & Asún, 2000). Hence, whereas

reflection-on-action can be defined as a retrospective, systematic and deliberate process and involves recalling feelings and actions to gain knowledge from experience, reflection-in-action “acknowledges the tacit processes of thinking which accompany doing and which constantly interact with and modify ongoing practice in such a way that learning takes place” (Leitch & Day, 2000, p.180). With this distinction between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, the focus of Kolb and Fry’s experiential learning theory (1975) was shifted from reflecting on the efficiency of the techniques used to questioning the underlying assumptions, values and beliefs which underpin the goals and strategies set (Smith, 2001, 2011). According to Schön, these two professional processes, which are initiated by the acknowledgement of and reflection on uncertainty and complexity in one’s practice, lead to “a legitimate form of professional knowing” (Schön, 1983, p.69), thus portraying the teacher as a committed and autonomous decision maker. Moreover, he insisted on the importance of re-framing practice to be able to make sense of it. This means “trying to see the same event from different viewpoints or perspectives – for example the viewpoint of a child, student, parent, carer, coach, mentor...” (Ghaye T., 2011, p.6). This is because, as Loughran asserts:

“it is through the development of knowledge and understanding of the practice setting and the ability to recognize and respond to such knowledge that the reflective practitioner becomes truly responsive to the needs, issues, and concerns that are so important in shaping practice” (Loughran, 2002, p.42).

Meanwhile, from the field of transformative learning, Freire’s attention to reflective practice constituted a two-fold contribution to the current theory underpinning critical reflective practice. Firstly, Freire (1970, 1993) postulated the need to critically interrogate the social and political contexts of learning by engaging in critical reflective inquiry. Thus, as outlined by Ghaye T. and Ghaye K. (1998) and Ghaye T. (2011), reflective practice should not simply be seen as introspective, self-indulgent navel-gazing but involves “taking a critical stance towards what teachers and schools do” (Ghaye T. & Ghaye K., 1998, p.3). Secondly, Freire contended that true knowledge only emerges through continuous critical inquiry with other people about their relations to the world, hence suggesting that reflective practice can even be more fruitful when it takes place in groups. On the same line of thought, Mezirow (2006), identified two major elements of transformative learning: critical self-reflection and critical discourse; reaffirming that this competence provides opportunities to question oneself on aspects one would rather not see or know so as to reach higher levels of thinking and action. Furthermore, encouraging critical discourse offers opportunities for sharing reflections, which, in turn, provide the basis for individual and group empowerment.

Ghaye T. and Ghaye K. (1998), continued to build on all of the above principles, proposing an enabling model of reflection-on-practice with the aim of providing a cyclical flexible process to make sense of professional action. This model allows reflection to begin from different starting positions without having to proceed in a fixed or sequential manner. Through the four reflection-action-foci, which are (a) the teachers’ values, (b) their practice, (c) the willingness to search for strategies that bring about improvement, and (d) the school context in the wider community, the model highlights the importance of reflecting on values and making sense of one’s teaching through a meaning-making process.

However, the most significant contribution which, can be said, to have converged the principles of critical reflective practice with those of inclusive education was the introduction of Tony Ghaye’s strengths-based reflective framework (2011). By advocating for a participatory and appreciative action and reflection process (PAAR), Ghaye T. took critical reflective practice a step further. Within this perspective, critical reflection becomes a deliberate, conscious, public and evidence-based research process principally designed to improve the quality of teaching

and learning through a cyclical process that involves action, reflection and knowledge construction; but the one which is initiated by the reflection on strengths rather than deficits. Such an approach embraces and promotes the principles on which inclusive education is based, enticing teachers to reflect on their own strengths and those of their pupils, their schools and the communities in order to transform the educational settings in which they work into inclusive environments.

Which Teacher Competencies for Inclusive Education?

In recent years, the close relationship between the quality of teacher training and student attainment has been highlighted in Italian (Falcinelli, 2007; Baldacci & Frabboni, 2009; Crispiani, 2010; Laneve, 2009; Strollo, 2011; Aiello, 2012; Carlomagno, 2012; Corona, 2012; Chiappetta Cajola & Ciraci, 2013; Ianes, 2014) and international literature (Schwerdt & Wuppermann, 2011; Metzler & Woessmann, 2012). Moreover, the role of the teacher in inclusive education where no child is left behind (NCLB, 2001) is agreed upon unanimously and is considered a priority in European and international political agendas (EADSNE, 2011). Even the World Report on Disability (2011) considers teacher training as fundamental of mainstream teachers “if they are to be confident and competent in teaching children with diverse educational needs” (WHO, 2011, p.222). In addition, this report highlights the importance that training focuses not only on the knowledge and competencies required but also on teachers’ beliefs and values.

Research on teachers’ attitudes towards the principle of inclusion (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Booth & Ainscow, 2002, 2011; MacFarlane & Marks Woolfson, 2013) suggests that the success of sustainable inclusive education requires both the acquisition of competencies as well as instilling values of diversity and human rights. Therefore, within a knowledge society, the teaching profession has to deal with both the institutional changes at macro and micro levels as well as the push towards models that promote a community approach able to take into consideration individual differences (Paquay, Altet, Vigo, Charlier & Perranoud, 2001). Recent studies have shown a particular interest towards teachers’ personal epistemologies which, in a global context, confer epistemic legitimacy to subjectivity (Pulvirenti, 2003). These are *situated* and *embodied* knowledge and beliefs which inevitably influence on the learners’ performance (Fabbri, 2012; Sibilio, 2013). In light of such reflections and after widespread consultation, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2012) delineated the *Profile of Inclusive Teachers*. Based on the assumption that there are practical and conceptual difficulties in singling out the teacher competencies needed in inclusive schools, the objective was to identify the essential competencies, the educational and cultural background, the values and behaviours necessary for inclusive teachers irrespective of the subject taught, the learners’ age or the type of school while taking into consideration all forms of diversity.

The values of inclusive teachers are first explored. These are then associated to the different interconnected competency domain and, for each of the competency domain the attitudes and beliefs, the knowledge and understanding and the skills and abilities are then presented. This work is based on Shulman’s methodological approach “who describes professional learning in terms of the apprenticeships of the head (knowledge), hand (skill, or doing), and heart (attitudes and beliefs)” (Shulman, 2007 in EADSNE, 2012, p.28).

The first essential value identified is “valuing learner diversity - learner difference is considered as a resource and an asset to education” (EADSNE, 2012, p.11); the related competency domains are “conceptions of inclusive education” e le “the teacher’s view of learner difference” (EADSNE, 2012, p.11). Therefore, considering that inclusion is based on access to education, participation and educational attainment of all learners, teachers should learn how to give value to differences and identify the best ways to respond to diversity. The second value is “supporting

all learners - teachers have high expectations for all learners' achievements" (EADSNE, 2012, p.11) and the relevant competency domains are "promoting the academic, social and emotional learning of all learners" and "effective teaching approaches for heterogeneous classes" (EADSNE, 2012, p.13). Teachers are expected to adopt positive behaviour management approaches which encourage development and social interaction among learners, and should collaborate with them and their families to personalise their learning objectives and pathways. In relation to this, the third value identified in the document is "working with others - collaboration and team work are essential approaches for all teachers" (EADSNE, 2012, p.8). Drawing attention to the impact interpersonal competencies have in attainment, the teachers' ability to entice parent involvement in their children's learning becomes central; no less is the technical ability of collaborative problem solving among stakeholders. The fourth value outlined in the same document is "Continuing personal professional development – teaching is a learning activity and teachers take responsibility for their own lifelong learning" (EADSNE, 2012, p.11) and the relevant competency domains are "teachers as reflective practitioners" and "initial teacher education as a foundation for ongoing professional learning and development" (p.16).

Thus, among the competencies which should characterise inclusive teachers there is also the Aristotelian phronesis of practical wisdom, or *wisdom-in-action* to link back to Schön's reflection-in-action. In fact, becoming a reflective professional "involves infusing personal beliefs and values into a professional identity, resulting in developing a deliberate philosophical and ethical code of conduct" (Larrivee, 2000, pp. 293-294). In her reflections on becoming critical reflective teachers, Larrivee outlined that "the process of becoming a reflective practitioner cannot be prescribed: it is a personal awareness discovery process" (Larrivee, 2000, p. 296). Hence she identified three essential practices for the development of critical reflection: making time for solitary reflection, becoming a perpetual problem-solver and questioning the status quo (Larrivee, 2000). As postulated in scientific literature on professionals as reflective practitioners (Schön, 1983, Larrivee, 2000, Leitch & Day, 2006, Ghaye, 2011, EADSNE, 2012), critical reflection should become everyday practice as this is the only way through which teachers would be able to systematically analyse their own actions and meditate on their work, their performance and on the consequences their actions have on the teaching-learning process and consequently be able to identify more efficient methods and strategies. Moreover, the modus operandi of a critical-reflective teacher, should be characterised by the development of problem solving (EADSNE, 2012); a fundamental requirement to handle the complexity and the variety of present educational contexts since a perpetual problem-solver is able to synthesise experiences, integrate information and feedback, uncover underlying reasons, and discover new meaning (Larrivee, 2000). With regards to questioning the status quo, this practice is founded on the involvement of families and colleagues in the reflective process on the teaching-learning processes and is closely linked to the third value identified in the *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* (EADSNE, 2012).

The emerging relevance of reflective practice hasn't passed unnoticed in Italy either. Among the principal competencies identified in literature on the role of the teacher as a crucial resource for an inclusive didactic culture was, in fact, reflective practice (Chiappetta Cajola & Ciraci, 2013; Ianes, 2014). In the past decade the Italian educational context, characterised by the same complex reality, new learning styles and rhythms as well as the need for teacher training, has been marked by an awareness of the value of teaching as professional knowledge and by a greater attention to the teachers' philosophy of education (teacher's thinking) (Rivoltella & Rossi, 2012). Hence, the development of a new perception of the teaching profession, much more in line with Schön's (1983) reflective practitioner, can be observed. The teacher is now seen as a professional able to analyse the didactic choices made, be accountable for the decisions taken and personalise and shape strategies according to the specific emerging situations in the teaching-learning processes (Fabbri, Striano & Melacarne, 2008; Bochicchio, 2012).

Therefore, through the use of reflective tools, ecologically-situated reflective circuits can be produced with the intent of generating new understanding which would form the basis for an in-depth restructuring and transformation of practice (Striano, 2008). Thus, there is a distinct shift from naive and common sense understanding to formal and validated knowledge, a cyclical process of practice-theory-practice (Frauenfelder, 1986). As Magnoler (2012) stated, through reflective practice, action and knowledge in turn generate each other, each of which becomes the principle of the other. Action produces resources to generate and manage new informed action and hence bring about the necessary professional trait of being competent rather than simply knowing.

Facilitating Critical Reflective Practice in the Professional Development of Teachers

Having made the case for the relevance and effectiveness of reflective practice in teacher education and continuous professional development to deal with the dynamic and complex classrooms of today (Larrivee, 2000; OECD, 2009), the next step is to identify the processes and tools with which the meta-cognitive and practical skills needed for reflective action can be promoted. In spite of the acclaimed worth of reflective practice outlined earlier, there are a number of extrinsic and intrinsic stumbling blocks which first-time reflective practitioners need to overcome before they can feel that they have mastered the competence. Some of the main issues identified include time (Killion & Todnam, 1991 as cited in Gil-Garcia & Citron, 2002), personal motivation (Scales, 2008), ongoing commitment (Graham & Phelps, 2003) and building trust (Ghaye T., 2011). On a pedagogical level, Maloney & Campbell-Evans (2002) note the issues of introducing and deepening reflective skills, assessing reflective writing, the potential overuse of reflective practice and the debate around a structured versus an open tool.

Considering that reflection is not an end in itself but the starting point of becoming a reflective practitioner (Scales, 2008), its use in teacher education needs to be carefully and strategically planned. Apart from the planning of activities for the acquisition of the meta-cognitive skills required, any training course envisaged to use reflective practice needs to be organised accordingly to support and encourage reflective practice throughout (Moon, 2001, Raelin, 2002).

The most common methods used to assist in the development of critical reflective practice in the teacher education context include reflective journaling, portfolios, mind mapping, storyboarding, scenario-based role-plays, critical group audience and micro-teaching or video reflection (Ghaye T., 2011; Gil-Garcia & Cintron, 2002). However, with the introduction of Web 2.0, the use of a journal-blog is being widely considered as a useful tool for on-line learners. Whichever the medium chosen, according to Gil-Garcia and Cintron, this involves teachers in “self-assessment, collaborative critique, self-reflection and goal setting” (Gil-Garcia & Cintron, 2002, p.1). Moreover, it provides a means to transform “their educational practices into best practices” (Gil-Garcia & Cintron, 2002, p.4) as it provides opportunities for shared dialogue with a trainer and among stakeholders. Ideally, trainers should vary the media used in order to meet the different learning styles and preferences of teachers and future teachers. Moreover, presenting teachers with an array of tools would provide teachers with authentic experiences which they could eventually introduce to their students in class to instil reflective processes from a young age and promote inclusive and participatory teaching-learning strategies.

Conclusions

In light of the reflections which, on an international level, commend the importance of critical reflective practice for the creation of authentic inclusive educational environments, it

is desirable that the Italian authorities concerned would welcome and translate such reflections into targeted courses of action to favour the processes of inclusion further. If on the one hand, in the past years the Italian educational policies have been oriented towards the promotion of inclusive education that guarantees the educational attainment of all, on the other hand, teacher training is still at the centre of heated debate. This is because the latter requires the revision and restructuring of course programmes that aim at reorienting teaching methods to be in line with inclusive values and support teachers in handling the complexity characterising the educational contexts of the twenty-first century.

Notes

Di Gennaro D. C. is the author of the section: *The Italian perspective on inclusive education*.

Pace E. M. is the author of the sections: *The theory underpinning critical reflective practice for teacher capacity building in inclusive contexts* and *Facilitating critical reflective practice in the professional development of teachers*.

Zollo I. is the author of the section: *Which teacher competencies for inclusive education?*

Aiello P. was the scientific coordinator of the research work.

References

- Aiello, P. (2012). *Italian Ministry Guidelines on SLD students' Special Educational Needs. Didactic suggestions and Teachers' training*. Szombathely: Savaria University Press.
- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. A. (1974). *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Avramidis, E., & Norwich, B. (2002). Teachers' attitudes towards integration/inclusion: a review of the literature. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 17 (2), 129-147. doi: 10.1080/08856250210129056.
- Baldacci, M., & Frabboni, F. (2009). *La controriforma della scuola. Il trionfo del mercato e della scuola [The school counter-reform. The triumph of the market and the school]*. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Bochicchio, F. (2012). Didattica e apprendimento nelle organizzazioni [Didactics and learning in organisations]. In P. C. Rivoltella & P. G. Rossi (Eds.), *L'agire didattico. Manuale per l'insegnante [Didactic practices. A manual for teachers]* (pp. 115-131). Brescia: La Scuola Editrice.
- Booth, T., & Ainscow, M. (2011). *Index for Inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools (3rd Ed.)*. UK: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education.
- Booth, T., Ainscow, M., Black-Hawkins, K., Vaughan, M., & Shaw, L. (2002). *Index for Inclusion*. UK: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education.
- Carlomagno, N. (2012). *Corpo, movimento e didattica: emergenze formative e sviluppi professionali. I nuovi profili professionali motorio-sportivi nei contesti educativi per l'età evolutiva [The body, movement and didactics: the emergence of training and professional development. The new motor-sport professional profiles in educational contexts for developmental years]*. Lecce: Pensa Editore.
- Chiappetta Cajola, L. C., & Ciraci, A. M. (2013). *Didattica inclusiva: Quali competenze per gli insegnanti? [Inclusive Didactics: Which competencies for teachers?]*. Roma: Armando Editore.
- Corona, F. (2012). Metodo naturale ed overlapping: strumenti di tatônement sperimentale applicabili alla didattica speciale. In M. Sibilio (Ed.), *La dimensione pedagogica ed il valore inclusivo del corpo e del movimento [The pedagogic dimension and the inclusive value of the body and movement]*. Lecce: Pensa Editore.
- Crispiani, P. (2010). *Il management nella scuola di qualità [Management in quality schools]*. Roma: Armando Editore.
- D'Alessio, S. (2013). Italia e Europa di fronte ai BES [Italy and Europe with respect to Special Educational Needs]. *SIPES Seminar*, 16th December 2013, Bologna.

- Dewey, J. (1910, 1933). *How we think*. Lexington: D C Heath.
- Dovigo, F. (2008). L'Index per l'inclusione: una proposta per lo sviluppo inclusivo della scuola [Index for Inclusion: a proposal for the inclusive development of schools]. In T. Booth & M. Ainscow (2008). *L'Index per l'inclusione [Index for Inclusion]*. Trento: Edizioni Erickson.
- European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2010). *Teacher Education for Inclusion – International Literature Review*. Retrieved on April 30th, 2014 from: <http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/Teacher-Education-for-Inclusion/teacher-education-web-files/TE4I-Literature-Review.pdf>.
- European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2011). *Mapping the Implementation of Policy for Inclusive Education: An exploration of challenges and opportunities for developing indicators*. Retrieved on April 30th, 2014 from: http://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/mipie_MIPIE-summary-of-proposalsEN.pdf.
- European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2012). *Profile of Inclusive Teachers*. Odense, Denmark: European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. Retrieved on April 30th, 2014 from: <http://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/Profile-of-Inclusive-Teachers.pdf>.
- Fabbri, L. (2012). Ricerca didattica e contesti di apprendimento [Didactic Research and Contexts for Learning]. In P. C. Rivoltella & P. G. Rossi (Eds.), *L'agire didattico. Manuale per l'insegnante [Didactic practice. A Manual for Teachers]* (pp. 97-114). Brescia: La Scuola Editrice.
- Fabbri, L., Striano, M., & Melacarne C. (2008). *L'insegnante riflessivo. Coltivazione e trasformazione delle pratiche professionali [The reflective teacher. Enhancement and transformation of professional practices]*. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Falcinelli, F. (2007). *La formazione docente: competenze nelle scienze dell'educazione e nei saperi disciplinari [Teacher training: competencies in education and subject knowledge]*. Perugia: Morlacchi Editore.
- Finger, M., Asún, M. (2000) *Adult Education at the Crossroads. Learning our way out*. London: Zed Books.
- Frauenfelder, E. (1986). L'improponibile frontiera tra «eredità» ed «ambiente» in educazione [the impractical frontier between 'heredity' and the 'environment' in education]. In A. Granese (Ed.), *Destinazione Pedagogica. Itinerari di razionalità educative*. Pisa: Giardini editori e stampatori.
- Freire, P. (1970, 1993). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.
- Ghaye, T., & Ghaye K. (1998). *Teaching and learning through critical reflective practice*. London: David Fulton.
- Ghaye, T. (2011). *Teaching and learning through critical reflective practice: a practical guide for positive action (2nd Ed.)*. New York: Routledge.
- Gil Garcia, A., & Citron, Z. (2002). *The reflective journal as a learning and professional development tool for teachers and administrators*. Presented at a Conference on World Association for Case Method Research and Application. Germany 2-5 July. Retrieved on March 15th, 2014 from: <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED480130>.
- Graham, A., & Phelps, R. (2003). Being a teacher: Developing teacher identity and enhancing practice through meta-cognitive and reflective learning processes. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 27 (2), 11-24.
- Gulliford, R., & Upton, G. (1992). (Eds) *Special Educational Needs*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Hofer, B. K. (2001). Personal epistemology research: Implications for learning and teaching. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13 (4), 353-383.
- Ianes, D. (2008). L'Index per l'inclusione: una proposta per lo sviluppo inclusivo della scuola. [Index for Inclusion: a proposal for the inclusive development of schools]. In T. Booth & M. Ainscow (2008). *L'Index per l'inclusione [Index for Inclusion]*. Trento: Edizioni Erickson.
- Ianes, D. (2014). *L'evoluzione dell'insegnante di sostegno. Verso una didattica inclusiva [The evolution of support teachers. Towards inclusive didactics]*. Trento: Erickson.
- Killion, J. P., & Todnem, G. R. (1991). A process for personal theory building. In A. Gil Garcia & Z. Citron (2002). *The reflective journal as a learning and professional development tool for teachers and administrators*. Presented at a Conference on World Association for Case Method Research and Application. Germany 2-5 July. Retrieved on 28th April, 2014 from: <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED480130>.

- Kolb, D. A., & Fry, R. (1975). Toward an applied theory of experiential learning. In C. Cooper (Ed.) *Theories of Group Process*. London: John Wiley.
- Laneve, C. (2009). *Scrittura e pratica educativa: un contributo al sapere dell'insegnamento [Writing and educational practice: a contribution to knowledge of teaching]*. Trento: Erickson.
- Larrivee, B. (2000). Transforming teaching practice: becoming a critical reflective teacher. *Reflective Practice*, 1 (3), 293-306. Doi:10.1080/713693162.
- Larrivee, B., & Cooper, J. M. (2006). *An educator's guide to teacher reflection*. Cengage Learning. Retrieved on April 6th, 2014 from: <http://cengagesites.com/academic/assets/sites/4004/Education%20Modules/gd%20to%20teach%20refl.pdf>.
- Lascioli, A. (2012). Dall'integrazione all'inclusione: la scuola che cambia [From integration to inclusion: the changing school]. *Orientamenti pedagogici: rivista internazionale di scienze dell'educazione*, 59(347), 9-28.
- Leitch, R. & Day, C. (2000). Action Research and reflective practice: towards a holistic view. *Educational Action Research*, 8 (1), 179-193. doi: 10.1080/09650790000200108.
- Loughran, J. J. (2002). Effective reflective practice: in search of meaning in learning about teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53 (1), 33-43. doi: 10.1177/0022487102053001004.
- MacFarlane, K. & Marks Woolfson, L. (2013). Teacher attitudes and behaviour toward the inclusion of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in mainstream schools: An application of the theory of planned behaviour. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 29, 46-52. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2012.08.006>.
- Magnoler, P. (2012). Prospettive e dispositivi per la professionalizzazione degli insegnanti [Perspectives and strategies for the professionalisation of teachers] . In P. C. Rivoltella & P. G. Rossi (Eds.), *L'agire didattico. Manuale per l'insegnante [Didactic practices. A manual for teachers]* (pp. 363-378). Brescia: La Scuola Editrice.
- Maloney, C., & Campbell-Evans, G. (2002). Using interactive journal writing as a strategy for professional growth. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 30 (1), 39-50. doi: 10.1080/13598660120114968.
- Mezirow, J. (2006). An overview of transformative learning. In P. Sutherland & J. Crowther (Eds.), *Lifelong learning: Concepts and contexts* (pp. 24-38). New York: Routledge.
- Metzler, J., & Woessmann, L. (2012). The impact of teacher subject knowledge on student achievement: Evidence from within-teacher within-student variation. *Journal of Development Economics*, 99 (2), 486-496. Retrieved on March 21st, 2014 from <http://ftp.iza.org/dp4999.pdf>.
- Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca [Ministry of Education]. Legge 8 ottobre 2010, n. 170 - Nuove norme in materia di disturbi specifici di apprendimento in ambito scolastico [Law 8 October, 2010, n.170 – New school regulations for Specific Learning Difficulties].
- Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca [Ministry of Education]. Decreto Ministeriale 12 luglio 2011, n. 5669 - Disposizioni attuative della Legge 8 ottobre 2010, Nuove norme in materia di disturbi specifici di apprendimento in ambito scolastico [Ministerial Decree 12 July, 2011, n. 5669 – Implementation of Law 8 October, 2010, New school regulations for Specific Learning Difficulties].
- Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca [Ministry of Education]. Direttiva Ministeriale 27 dicembre 2012 – Strumenti d'intervento per alunni con Bisogni Educativi Speciali e organizzazione territoriale per l'inclusione scolastica [Ministerial Directive 27 December, 2012 – Intervention tools for pupils with Special Educational Needs and territorial organisation for inclusive education].
- Moon, J. (2001). *Short Courses and Workshops: Improving the Impact of Learning and Professional Development*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, § 115, Stat. 1425 (2002).
- OECD (2009). *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments. First Results from TALIS*. Paris: OECD Publications. Retrieved on March 16th, 2014 from: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/17/51/43023606.pdf>.
- Paquay, L., Altet, M., Vigo, R., Charlier, E. & Perrenoud, F. (2001). *Former des enseignants professionnels. Quelles stratégies? Quelles compétences?* Bruxelles: De Boeck.

- Pulvirenti, F. (2003). Epistemologia, epistemologie, epistemologie personali. Verso una nuova rotta del processo formativo [Epistemology, epistemologies, personal epistemologies. Towards a new route in formative processes]. In *Annali della facoltà di scienze della formazione dell'Università degli studi di Catania*, vol. 2, pp. 185-204. Retrieved on March 16th, 2014 from: <http://ojs.unict.it/ojs/index.php/annali-sdf/article/view/132/120>.
- Raelin, J. A. (2002). I don't have time to think! Versus the art of reflective practice. *Reflections*, 4 (1), 66-79. Retrieved on March 16th, 2014 from: <http://www.global-leader.org/Reflective%20Practice%20Article.pdf>.
- Reynolds, M. (2001) Education for Inclusion, Teacher Education and the Teacher Training Agency Standards. *Journal of In-Service Training*, 27 (3), 465-476. doi:10.1080/13674580100200164.
- Rivoltella P. C., & Rossi, P. G. (2012). Introduzione. In P. C. Rivoltella & P. G. Rossi (Eds.), *L'agire didattico. Manuale per l'insegnante* [Didactic Practices. A Manual for Teachers] (pp. 7-22). Brescia: La Scuola Editrice.
- Scales, P. (2008). *Teaching in the lifelong learning sector*. England: Open University Press.
- Schön, D. (1983) *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schwerdt, G., & Wuppermann, A. C. (2011). Is traditional teaching really all that bad? A within-student between-subject approach. *Economics of Education Review*, 30 (2), 365-379. doi: 10.1016/j.econedurev.2010.11.005.
- Shulman, L., (2007). *Keynote lecture to American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Annual Conference*. New Orleans: LA. European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2012). *Profile of Inclusive Teachers*, Odense, Denmark: European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. Retrieved on April 30th, 2014 from: <http://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/Profile-of-Inclusive-Teachers.pdf>.
- Sibilio, M. (2013). *La didattica semplice*. Napoli: Liguori.
- Smith, M. K. (2001, 2011). Donald Schön: learning, reflection and change. *The encyclopedia of informal education*. Available at: www.infed.org/thinkers/et-schon.htm.
- Stollo, R. (2011). *Il laboratorio di epistemologia e di pratiche dell'educazione. Un approccio neuro-fenomenologico alla formazione pedagogica degli educatori* [The laboratory of epistemology and educational practices. A neurophenomenological approach to teacher training in pedagogy]. Napoli: Liguori.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), *Inclusive Education: the way of the future*. International Conference Centre, Geneva 25-28 November 2008.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) & The Ministry of Education and Science, Spain (1994). *Statement and framework for action on special needs education. adopted by the world conference on special needs education: access and quality*. Retrieved on March, 16th 2014 from: www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF.
- Usher, R. & Bryant, I. (1997). *Adult Education and the Postmodern Challenge. Learning beyond the Limits*. London: Routledge.
- World Health Organisation (Ed.). (2007). *International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health: Children & Youth Version: ICF-CY*. Geneva: World Health Organisation. Retrieved on May 21st, 2014 from: http://scholar.google.it/scholar?q=world+health+organization+international+classification+of+functioning+disability+and+health&hl=it&as_sdt=0%2C5.
- World Health Organisation (2011). *World Report on Disability*. Geneva: World Health Organisation. Retrieved on March 30th, 2014 from: http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2011/9789240685215_eng.pdf?ua=1.

Advised by Laima Railienė, SMC "Scientia Educologica", Lithuania

Received: May 11, 2014

Accepted: July 10, 2014

<i>Diana Carmela Di Gennaro</i>	PhD Student, Department of Human, Philosophical and Education Studies, University of Salerno, Via Giovanni Paolo II, 132, Fisciano (SA), Salerno, Italy. E-mail: ddigennaro@unisa.it
<i>Erika Marie Pace</i>	PhD Student, Department of Human, Philosophical and Education Studies, University of Salerno, Salerno, Italy. Email: epace@unisa.it
<i>Iolanda Zollo</i>	PhD Student, Department of Human, Philosophical and Education Studies, University of Salerno, Salerno, Italy. E-mail: izollo@unisa.it
<i>Paola Aiello</i>	Assistant Professor, Department of Human, Philosophical and Education Studies, University of Salerno, Salerno, Italy. E-mail: paiello@unisa.it