

ED/PP 200 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION? A CRITICAL VIEW ON INTEGRATION POLICIES IN THE ITALIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

IES Abroad Rome

DESCRIPTION:

Historically speaking, the origin of the inclusive education model in Italy could be traced back to the promulgation of the Italian Constitution in 1948. In 1977 the country passed an important piece of legislation known as *integrazione scolastica*: as a consequence of the application of this policy, all students are welcome into public schools regardless of their socio-economic background, physical and intellectual impairments, or of any other selective categorization. At the same time, special schools have been almost completely dismantled. Whenever the Italian policy context is compared to other realities in Europe, where special schools are sometimes the only available options for disabled students, it seems to create an ideal situation for the development of inclusive education and of a human rights approach to education. Does such perception correspond to reality? The course aims at analyzing critically and discussing the Italian model of inclusive education, as a way to address a crucial theme for future educators, school managers and/or policymakers, citizens and parents.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

- Lectures and class discussions
- Guest lectures
- Film viewings
- Course-related trips
- Individual and/or group projects

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Class participation (30%)
- Midterm exam (30%)
- Assignments (10%)
- Final project (30%)

*Details of required work:

Class participation: students will have to participate actively in the class discussions, demonstrating the ability to make connections with the readings assigned for each session.

Assignments: the assignments are described in week 5, 8 and 9. In addition to those, the instructor may plan pop quizzes in order to verify that students have read the material assigned for the day.

Mid-term exam: the students will take a test consisting in 10 open questions on the readings and topics analysed in class.

Final assignment:

As a final project, each student, alone or in a group, after discussing with the instructor, will work on one of the following:

- as a follow up to the meeting with the association *Maestri di Strada* and after learning about their projects (week 8), students, individually or in a group, are asked to imagine and draft a “territorial education project” for the area where they come from or live in America. The project must include an analysis of the educational needs and a description of how they could be addressed in the specific context (10 pages-paper and a class presentation).
- as a follow up to the meeting with an Italian support teacher (week 7) and after learning about individualised educational planning, students, individually or in groups, are asked to develop a PEI (*Piano Educativo Individualizzato*, Individual Education Plan) for a specific “imaginary” student. The characteristics of the imaginary student will be decided among the instructor, the group and the support teacher (10 pages-paper and a class presentation).

- as a follow up to the visit to the Montessori school and after learning about Montessori method (week 4), students, individually or in groups, are asked to develop an educational project starting from a theme/educational need at their choice, referring to the basic principles of Montessori education (10 pages-paper and a class presentation).

Grading Rubric for student participation:

A	Excellent participation The student's contributions reflect an active reading of the assigned bibliography. Skillfully synthesizes the main ideas of the readings and raises questions about the applications and implications of the material. Demonstrates, through questions and comments, that he or she has been capable of relating the main ideas in the readings to the other information discussed in the course, and with his or her own life experience. The student makes informed judgments about the readings and other ideas discussed in class, providing evidence and reasons. He/she respectfully states his/her reactions about other classmates' opinions, and is capable of contributing to the inquiry spiral with other questions. The student gets fully involved in the completion of the class activities.
B	Very good participation The student's contributions show that the assigned materials are usually read. Most of the time the main ideas are identified, even though sometimes it seems that applications and implications of the information read were not properly reflected upon. The student is able to construct over others' contributions, but sometimes seems to interrupt the shared construction to go over tangents. He/she is respectful of others' ideas. Regularly involved in the activities but occasionally loses concentration or energy.
C	Regular participation The participant evidences a regular reading of the bibliography, but in a superficial way. He/she tries to construct over others' ideas, but commonly provides comments that indicate lack of preparation about the material. Frequently, contributions are shallow or unarticulated with the discussion in hand.
F	Insufficient participation Consistently, the participant reads in a shallow way or does not read at all. Does not participate in an informed way, and shows lack of interest in constructing over others' ideas.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- explain the multifaceted concept of "inclusive education" with references to the international debate;
- discuss the complexity and diversity of "disability" and the different cultural approaches to it;
- describe the Italian approach to inclusive education and its historical roots, discussing strengths and main issues;
- appreciate the heritage of important Italian pedagogues such as Maria Montessori and Don Lorenzo Milani, who contributed to the development of inclusive education practices;
- describe and assess the role of support teachers in the Italian education system;
- recognize and discuss features of education systems that are successful in moving in an inclusive direction, based on international research;
- discuss criteria to assess social and educational policies towards equality and inclusion in education;
- create their own idea of inclusive education and how to obtain it in a real context;
- share and motivate their own commitment to full participation and equality in education.

CONTENT:

Week	Content	Assignments
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Week 1 Session 1 Session 2	Inclusive education from an international/intercultural perspective 1. The notion of inclusive education in the international debate; 2. the “special education” approach and the “education for all” approach. 1. Factors that have the potential to either facilitate or inhibit the promotion of inclusive practices in school: main findings from international research; 2. exclusion processes and their many forms.	Required readings: • The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), art. 24 • OECD (2012), <i>Equity and quality in education. Supporting disadvantaged students and schools</i>. Retrieved from: www.oecd.org • Ainscow, M., Miles, S. (2009), <i>Developing inclusive education systems: how can we move policies forward?</i> University of Manchester • Inclusive education in Italy, by Simona D’Alessio, Chapter 2: ‘Inclusive education and special needs education’ (pgg. 23-42)
Week 2 Session 1 Session 2	Disability: a global picture 1. What is disability? 2. different approaches to disability the shift from a “medical model” to a “social model”; 3. the ICF (<i>International Classification of Functioning</i>): a “bio-psycho-social” model. 1. Class discussion Students will discuss the concept of disability based on the readings and on their personal experiences. As cultural differences in the approach to disability emerge during the debate, they will be analyzed and discussed.	Required readings: • World Health Organization (2011), <i>World Report on Disability</i> (pgg. 1-46; 203-227) • Inclusive education in Italy, by Simona D’Alessio, Chapter 3: A sociological approach to the study of <i>integrazione scolastica</i> (pgg. 43-66)
Week 3 Session 1 Session 2	The path towards integrazione scolastica in Italy 1. Creation of a national compulsory education system in Italy (1861); 2. the Gentile law and its “double track system” (1921); 3. the Constitution (1948): origin of the Italian inclusive education model. 4. Law 1859/1962: right to education for disabled students; 5. law 118/1971: disabled students access mainstream compulsory education; 6. law 517/1977: differentiated schools are abolished and support teachers are introduced in the school system; 7. law 104/1992: framework for the integration of disabled people into society. Historical roots of <i>integrazione scolastica</i> :	Required readings: • Inclusive education in Italy, by Simona D’Alessio, Chapter 1 (pgg. 1-21) • Ianes, D. (2007), <i>The Italian model for the inclusion and integration of students with special needs: some issues</i>. Retrieved from: www.darioianes.it Film viewing: • The Wild Child (by Truffaut, 1970)

	1. Political factors: the leaden years and political upheavals; 2. social and economic factors: post-war reconstruction policies and redistribution of wealth; 3. religious factors: the influence of the Catholic church on the policies for inclusive education. 4. Pedagogical factors: the national and international debate and the development of special pedagogy.	
Week 4 Session 1 Session 2	Maria Montessori, an example of social action in education 1. Maria Montessori's life and educational approach; 2. Montessori's theory on child development; 3. the development of Montessori method in Italy and in the world. Course-related trip. The class, accompanied by the instructor, will visit a Montessori school and learn from an expert about the philosophy that inspired a profound change towards inclusion in education practices.	<i>Required readings:</i> • Montessori: The Science behind the Genius, by Angeline Lillard. Chapter 1: An answer to the crisis in education (pgg. 3 – 37)
Week 5 Session 1 Session 2	Inclusive education Italian style Guest lecture. The class will meet an Italian support teacher (insegnante di sostegno) and learn about such role in the Italian education system. Course-related trip. The class, accompanied by the instructor, will visit an Italian public school and learn about its inclusive education practices and projects.	
Week 6 Session 1 Session 2	Mid-term exam Mid-term review Mid-term exam	
Week 7 Session 1 Session 2	Inclusive education Italian style, 2 Group work. After debriefing the content of the guest lecture and course-related trip in week 5, students will prepare a debate on the positive and negative aspects of the Italian inclusive education model and on the role of the support teacher.	

	Guest lecture. The Italian support teacher (insegnante di sostegno) will be in class again to discuss with students about the Italian inclusive education model.	
Week 8	Inclusive education, present and past	<i>Assignment</i> Students will write a 2-page field journal including personal reflections on the guest lecture, connections with the readings and class discussions.
Session 1	1. Father Lorenzo Milani (1923–1967) and his movement against the inequalities of a class-based education system; 2. history of the school of Barbiana (1956–1968): political, social and pedagogical meaning of “I CARE”.	<i>Required readings:</i> • School of Barbiana (1967), <i>Letter to a teacher</i>
Session 2	Guest lecture. The class will meet the association Maestri di Strada and learn about its projects to foster the right to education for disadvantaged students.	
Week 9	School as a place of cultural integration	<i>Assignment:</i> Students will write a 2-page field journal including personal reflections on the course-related trip, connections with the readings and class discussions.
Session 1	1. Introduction to the theme of immigrant integration in schools; 2. issues and experiences of immigrant integration in Italian and Roman schools.	
Session 2	Course-related trip. The class, accompanied by the instructor, will visit a public school in the city center where the percentage of second generation immigrants is very high. This school is well known for promoting interesting projects to foster multiculturalism and the integration of ethnic minorities. The visit will be a chance to reflect on how education policies, in general, and single schools in particular can support integration processes.	
Week 10	Best practices	<i>Assignment:</i> Students will write a 2-page field journal including personal reflections on the field study, connections with the readings and class discussions.
	Course-related trip. The class, accompanied by the instructor, will visit an organization considered as a best practice for the integration of students with disabilities.	
Week 11	Policy analysis	<i>Required readings:</i> • World Bank (2004), Inclusive education an EFA strategy for all. • Inclusive education in Italy, by Simona D'Alessio, Chapters 4-7 (pgg. 67-144) • UNESCO, Understanding and responding to children's needs in inclusive classroom
Session 1	Inclusive education best practices: 1. lessons from the US and Canada; 2. lessons from Europe.	
Session 2	Final class discussion about the policies and practices for inclusive education analyzed during the course. Based on the readings, course-related trips, and guest	

	lectures, students will engage in a comprehensive and conclusive debriefing of the course content.	OECD (2008), Policy Brief: Ten steps to equity in education
Week 12	Final projects Students presentation of their final projects.	

REQUIRED READINGS AND FILM VIEWINGS:

- Ainscow, M., Miles, S. (2009), *Developing inclusive education systems: how can we move policies forward?* University of Manchester
- D'Alessio, S. (2011), *Inclusive Education in Italy. A Critical Analysis of the Policy of Integrazione Scolastica*
- Ianes, D. (2007), *The Italian model for the inclusion and integration of students with special needs: some issues*. Retrieved from: www.darioianes.it
- Lillard, A. (2005), *Montessori: The Science behind the Genius*. Chapter 1: An answer to the crisis in education
- OECD (2008), Policy Brief: Ten steps to equity in education. Retrieved from: www.oecd.org
- OECD (2012), *Equity and quality in education. Supporting disadvantaged students and schools*. Retrieved from: www.oecd.org
- School of Barbiana (1967), *Letter to a teacher*
- UNESCO (2001), *Understanding and responding to children's needs in inclusive classroom. A guide for teachers*. Retrieved from: www.unesco.org
- United Nations (2006), The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, art. 24
- World Bank (2004), Inclusive education an EFA strategy for all. Retrieved from: www.worldbank.org
- World Health Organization (2011), World Report on Disability (pgg. 1-46; 203-227)
- Films:
 - The Wild Child* (by Francois Truffaut, 1970)
 - The Freedom Writers* (by [Richard LaGravenese](#), 2007)
 - The class* (by Laurent Cantet, 2008)
 - Fratelli d'Italia* (by Claudio Giovannesi, 2008)