

THE TRAINING OF THE NEW SUPPORT TEACHER BETWEEN DIDACTIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL SKILLS: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

LA FORMAZIONE DEL NUOVO DOCENTE DI SUPPORTO TRA COMPETENZE DIDATTICHE E TECNOLOGICHE: UN'INDAGINE EMPIRICA

Patrizia Belfiore

University of Naples Parthenope

Patrizia.belfiore@uniparthenope.it

0000-0001-8057-9697

Emma Saraiello

University of Naples Parthenope

esariello@gmail.com

0000-0002-8783-6112

Double Blind Peer Review

Citazione

Belfiore P., Saraiello E., (2023) The training of the new support teacher between didactic and technological skills: an empirical investigation. *Giornale Italiano di Educazione alla Salute, Sport e Didattica Inclusiva - Italian Journal of Health Education, Sports and Inclusive Didactics*. Anno 7, V 1. Edizioni Universitarie Romane

Doi:

<https://doi.org/10.32043/gsd.v7i1.791>

Copyright notice:

© 2023 this is an open access, peer-reviewed article published by Open Journal System and distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

gsdjournal.it

ISSN: 2532-3296

ISBN: 978-88-6022-469-9

ABSTRACT

For several years, the quality of teaching has been considered an indicator of cultural productivity in terms of students' learning, an element that tends to increase competitiveness. The competences that will have to outline the 'outgoing profile' of the support teacher converge on the knowledge of several dimensions. The aim of this work is to compare the incoming and outgoing skills of the learners of the Specialization Course for the support activity of the University Parthenope.

Oramai da diversi decenni, la qualità dell'insegnamento è considerata indicatore di produttività culturale in termini di apprendimento degli allievi, elemento che tende ad incrementare la competitività. Obiettivo del presente lavoro risulta quello di comparare le competenze in entrata e quelle in uscita dei discenti del Corso di specializzazione per l'attività di sostegno dell'Università degli Studi Parthenope.

KEYWORDS

Training, Competence, Inclusion
Formazione, Competenza, Inclusione

Received 5/04/2023

Accepted 2/05/2023

Published 20/05/2023

Introduction

In recent decades, the right of all to education has been considered a strongly shared value, as well as at the national level, also in international policies. Teacher training is considered to be one of the main components of raising the quality of teaching/learning processes, essential to provide fairer opportunities for school success for all students (De Angelis, 2021; Bellacicco, 2019). With particular reference to teaching for people with disabilities, the training of specialized teachers should ensure the acquisition of basic skills capable of fostering and promoting the process of inclusion of pupils with disabilities, as provided for by the Ministerial Decree of 30.09.2011 that defines *Criteria and procedures for the performance of training courses for the achievement of specialization for support activities pursuant to art. 5 and 13 of D.M. n. 249/2010*. The quality of the training of future teachers, and in particular of support teachers, is considered one of the factors that most affect the development of inclusive learning environments, attentive to the enhancement of differences (Damiani, 2015). In the current historical moment, characterized by normative evolutions in the field of school inclusion, it becomes important to identify, clarify and share some key concepts of this field and then trace the peculiar elements that constitute the educational professionalism of the specialized teacher for support activities (Pugnaghi, 2020). The right to education, education and professional training of people with disabilities (Art. 38 of the Italian Constitution), in fact, has gradually been substantiated through a legislative process, social and cultural that has gradually shifted the focus from an approach based on a logic of exclusion to an approach based on a logic of inclusion (Bellacicco, 2019). The inclusive logic, inspired by the bio-psycho-social approach of the *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)* - international classification drawn up by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2001 - is based on the idea that it is necessary to recognize and value the differences of all pupils, allowing their full participation in school activities. In Italy, within the framework of the training courses for obtaining specialization for the activity of teaching support to pupils with disabilities, there are different methods used to evaluate the effectiveness of these courses and, in particular, the skills acquired at the end of the training (Arduini & Bocci, 2019; Caldin, 2009). The issue of the competences of the inclusive teacher is a very important one and must be addressed in the theme of teacher training. It is, in fact, a question that in our country returns cyclically to the center of the debate on the training system and its ability to respond adequately to the educational needs of all

(Bocci, Guerini, Gravaglini, 2021). The *Disability Report* of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2011) and the *Conclusions of the Council of the European Union on the Social Dimension of Education and Training* (2010) stress that education and training systems must ensure fairness and merit. Among the main challenges of the coming decades, on the national and international scene, there is the development of a constructive synergy between political strategies of inclusion and the training of inclusive teachers, especially specialized in support.

1. The Teacher of Support between Training and Skills

In the context outlined above, the process of training specialised teachers appears to be a key element in achieving a fairer education system, in which teachers can acquire the necessary skills to respond appropriately to the different needs of all pupils, ensuring quality training and enhancing its potential through a personalized educational path (Limone, 2021). Starting from D.M. n. 249/2010 and later D.M. 2011, the individual Universities were given the right to propose training courses for the achievement of specialization for the activity of teaching support to students with disabilities. The specialization course for teaching support activities for students with disabilities, established pursuant to art. 13 of the D.M. of 10 September 2010, n. 249, is a training course for the acquisition of teaching skills designed to encourage the integration of pupils with disabilities in schools according to the law of 5 February 1992, n. 104 and subsequent amendments and additions. It is a course of minimum duration of at least 8 months that provides for the acquisition of 60 credits divided into disciplinary courses, laboratories, direct, indirect internship with ICT and final test. The Minister of Education, University and Research pursuant to art. 13, paragraph 3, of the D.M. of 10 September 2010, n. 249. annually defines with its decree the programming of access to the specialization course. In particular, for the specialization courses on support for the secondary school of first and second grade, the possession of the requirements provided for in paragraph 1 or paragraph 2 of Article 5 of Legislative Decree 59/2017 with reference to the separate procedures for the secondary school of first or second grade as follows:

1. Access to the competition in relation to the teaching posts referred to in Article 3, paragraph 4, letter a) of DL 59/2017, the possession of the specific qualification on the class of competition or the joint possession of:

a) Master's degree or single cycle degree, or Level II diploma of advanced artistic, musical and dance training, or equivalent or equivalent qualification, consistent with the competition classes in force at the date of the call for competition;

b) 24 university or academic credits, hereinafter referred to as ECTS/ECTS, acquired in curricular, additional or extra-curricular form in the anthro-psycho-pedagogical disciplines and in the teaching methodologies and technologies, ensuring the possession of at least six credits in each of at least three of the following four disciplinary areas: pedagogy, special pedagogy and teaching of inclusion; psychology; anthropology; teaching methodologies and technologies, achieved pursuant to DM 616/2017.

2. Access to the competition shall be granted in respect of technical-practical teaching posts, the possession of a specific qualification in the competition class or the joint possession of:

a) degree, or diploma of advanced artistic, musical and dance education of first level, or equivalent or equivalent qualification, consistent with the competition classes in force on the date of the call for competition;

b) 24 ECTS/ECTS acquired in curricular, additional or extra-curricular form in anthro-psycho-pedagogical disciplines and in teaching methodologies and technologies, ensuring the possession of at least six credits in each of at least three of the following four disciplinary areas: pedagogy, special pedagogy and teaching of inclusion; psychology; anthropology; teaching methodologies and technologies, achieved pursuant to DM 616/2017.

The educational activity offered during the course aims to make each participant reflect on the choice of the most functional individualized strategies to allow each student to show and increase its potential, making exercise the autonomy of choice, according to its personal educational and learning process (Albanese & Mercadante, 2010). In addition, it is important to remember that "the specialized teacher for support" is assigned to the class in which a pupil with disabilities is enrolled; he assumes the joint title of the section and the class in which he operates, participates in the educational and educational planning and in the preparation and verification of the activities of the interclass councils, class councils and colleges of teachers pursuant to Article 13, paragraph 6 of Law no. 104 of 5 February 1992. The

specialized teacher deals, therefore, with the activities of support «to the class» in order to favor and promote the process of inclusion of students with disabilities. It offers its professionalism and competence to make a significant contribution within the class in support of the collegial educational action, according to principles of co-responsibility and collegiality (Calvani et al, 2014). The specialist support teacher must therefore have the following skills:

theoretical and practical skills in the field of special pedagogy	theoretical and practical skills in the field of special education	psycho-pedagogical knowledge on the types of disability
competences in the field of the pedagogy of the aid report	knowledge and skills on the modalities of interaction and educational relationship with the pupils of the class promoting pro-social relations between them and between them and the school community	educational skills of family dynamics and how to involve and cooperate with families
in-depth theoretical and operational knowledge for the interdisciplinary approach to the study of body-mind interaction, psychomotricity, human behavior and learning	in-depth theoretical and operational knowledge in relation to communication processes	familiarity and competence with simulation, observational and experimental practices and methodologies in the field of special education and teaching
ability to analyze and understand cognitive processes at the individual and collective level, in conditions of disability or not	skills to co-design, co-monitor and co-lead innovative projects aimed at promoting the integration process within the classroom context	special teaching skills in science, humanities and anthropology

teaching skills in metacognitive and cooperative approaches	special teaching skills for sensory and intellectual disabilities	psycho-educational skills for intervention in relational and behavioral disorders
pedagogical-didactic skills in the integrated management of the class group	skills to monitor and evaluate educational and training interventions	legal and regulatory knowledge on school integration and human rights
Teaching skills with I.C.T.	communication skills and collaboration with colleagues and social and health care professionals"	

2. The experimental study: objectives, sample, instruments and procedures

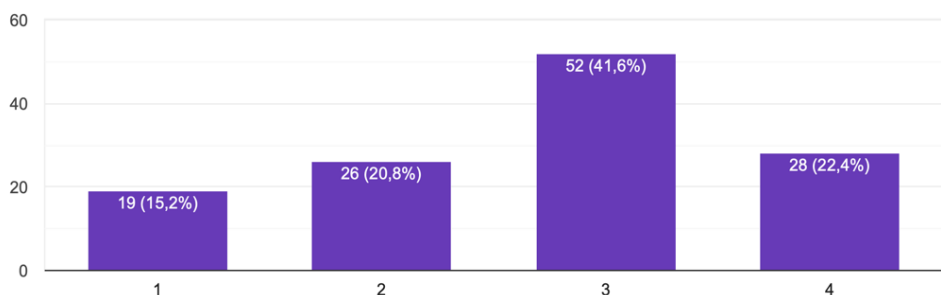
The research activity implemented at the University of Naples Parthenope had the objective of verifying whether, at the end of the specialization course for teaching support to students with disabilities offered, there has been a real increase of specific professional skills in teachers who have followed the specialization course compared to the skills held at the entrance (before starting the course). In particular, we wanted to investigate whether the Specialization Course has increased both confidence in their professionalism and the perception of their skills with respect to teaching strategies. The research methodology followed is of a quantitative nature, based on the analysis of a pre-filled questionnaire on Google modules administered to learners anonymously at the end of the activities. The sample interviewed is represented by the 150 enrolled in the Specialization Course for Teaching Support Activities for Students with Disabilities of Parthenope University, a.y. 2020/2021. The Questionnaire, which consists of 5 sections (Socio-demographic Information, Basic Professional Knowledge, School Inclusion and Special Teaching, Teaching and Technological Skills acquired at the end of the Course for the Inclusion and Organization of the Specialization Course) and 45 items, was built following analysis of the existing literature (Mitchell, 2018; Mura, 2016). In particular, it was prepared on the basis of existing questionnaires such as

the one used by Montesano-Straniero (2019) and the BEST questionnaire (become a Special education Teacher) by De Angelis. A first part is reserved for socio-demographic data (gender, age, educational qualification, years of teaching) and a second part is dedicated to topics such as the importance of technologies for inclusion processes or inclusive teaching (a Likert scale was used to express agreement/disagreement with the statements mentioned). The last two questions are open-ended: students are asked to give suggestions regarding the organization of the Course.

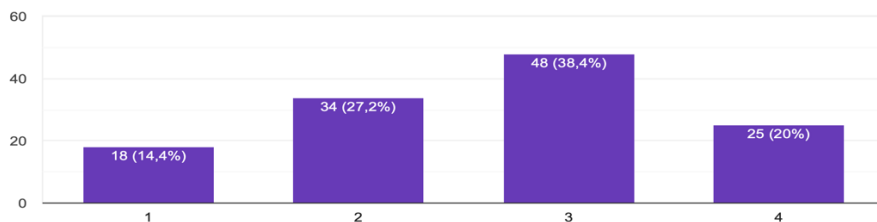
3. Results

Of the sample considered (150 learners of the Specialization Course Support of the University of Naples "Parthenope") responded to the questionnaire 126 subjects (84%). With regard to training, 90% of the subjects have a Master's Degree and only a small percentage (5%) claim to have a High School Diploma. Compared to work experience, for 23.9% of respondents it is the first experience, while most do not exceed 5 years. In the second section, more than 90% of respondents say they already have information about the world of education and disability as well as that of inclusive teaching. The most significant results of the third section can be summarized as follows:

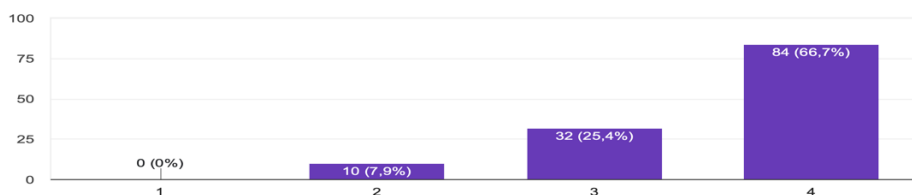
- Curricular design should be directed to a first medium level and then to customized courses



- There should be times when children with disabilities are taken out of class to carry out personalized activities:

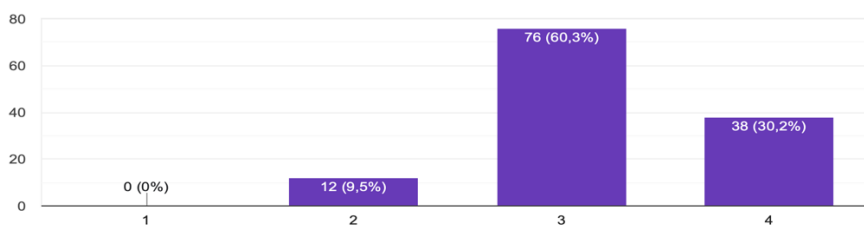


- It is important that the assessment criteria are known to pupils

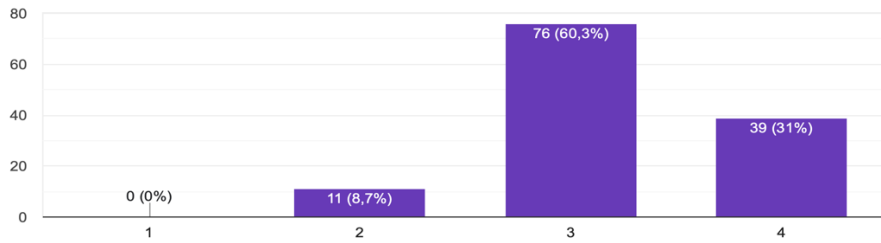


In the fourth section, the results that made it possible to make important considerations are:

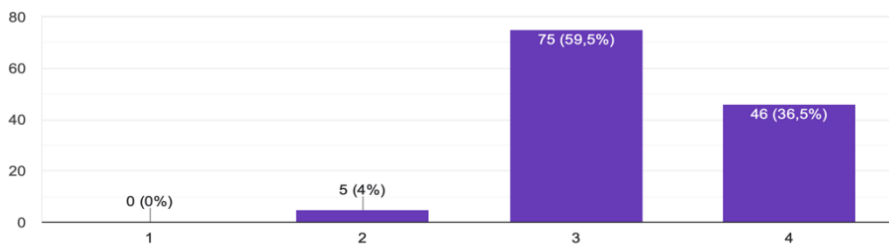
- I am able to design lessons that promote the active participation of all students



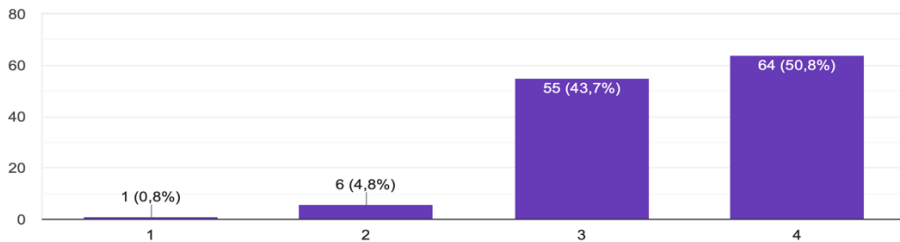
- Are able to customize/ individualize the content provided for individual disciplines



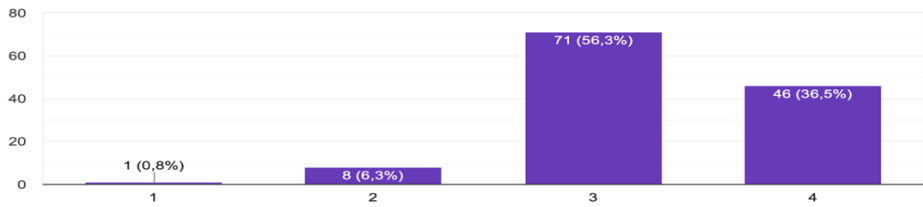
- I am able to adapt my teaching action to the different needs of students



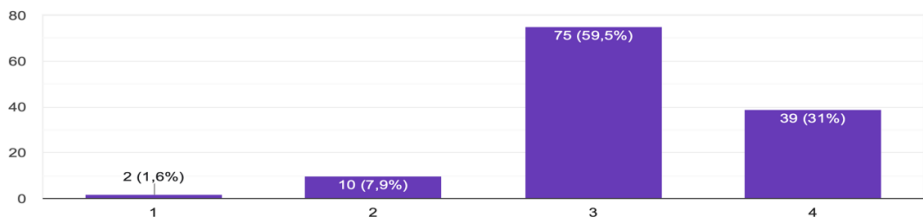
- I am able to draw up an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)



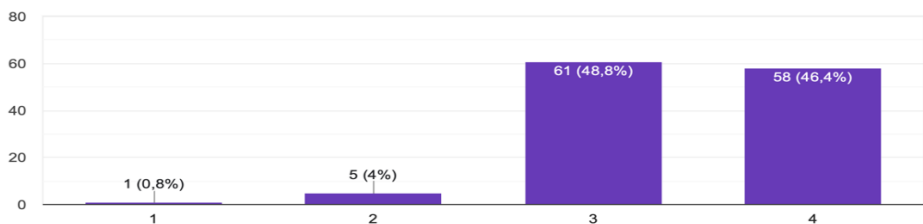
- Are able to promote and value diversity within the school curriculum



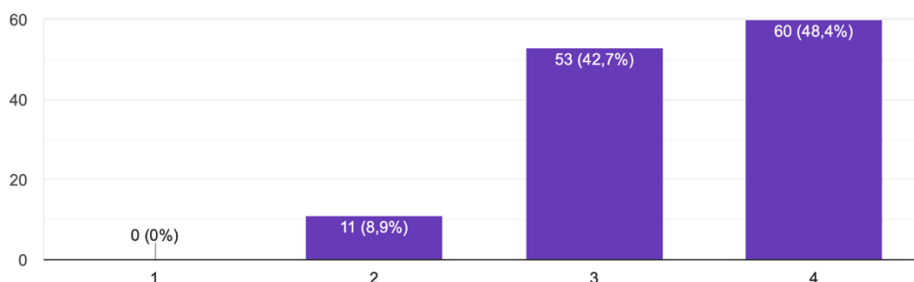
- Are able to design and implement targeted interventions for the main types of disability



- I am able to use Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) effectively



- I am able to independently process multimedia products to be used both in presence and in e-learning mode



As for the last section, the ex post evaluation of the course, the main observations were the possibility of increasing laboratory activities and those dedicated to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

Discussions and conclusions

The discourse concerning the competences of the support teacher is a very important issue and must be placed in reference to the theme of teacher training, initial and in service within all school contexts (Ferrara, 2019; Ianes, 2013; D'Alonzo, 2017). The school of each and every one tends to provide each pupil with formative responses adapted to specific needs, welcoming the diverse educational emergencies and proposing profound changes in the way of "making school" which are fundamental for the creation of an inclusive learning environment for all. In fact, the integration process must necessarily tend to adapt the pre-structured school organization for normal pupils, in an inclusive perspective, recognizing diversity and placing it at the heart of educational action (Isidori MV, 2014; 2017). Despite the undisputed need to invest in inclusive teacher education, there is not as much agreement on how to do it (Camedda, 2016; Ciraci, 2017). The quality of teaching has always been considered an expression of cultural productivity, the motivational and dispositional structure of the training processes. A positive attitude of greater confidence in their professionalism and an increase in the perception of having increased their skills in the workplace has a strategic implication in the paradigms of learning (Weiner, 1972; Bandura, 2000). As part of the widespread focus on the development of the teacher's skills, in innovative and qualifying terms, it is now well established the opportunity to consider three complex nodes linked together: the methodological issue, the integration of ICT, the joint development of hard skills (disciplinary) and soft skills (transversal). For

this reason, some critical issues have been highlighted in our contribution to better understand the phenomenon (Montanari & Ruzzante, 2020). The first problem concerns the fact that, despite the fact that, on many sides, inclusive training for all teachers is declared indispensable, today there is a differentiation in the acquisition of knowledge and skills between so-called curricular teachers and specialized teachers for support (Limone, 2021). Secondly, for each lecturer interviewed, the importance assumed by the so-called new technologies in the learning and communication processes of his teaching action becomes crucial, action that is all the more effective when accompanied by the use of technologies (Utgé, Mazzer, Pagliara, & De Anna, 2017). It is no coincidence that the learners interviewed emphasized the role of technologies in teaching strategies, in fact this subject has been the subject of scientific reflection in relation to the competences of teachers which include a clear technological knowledge base combined with a broad pedagogical competence and a deep knowledge of the contents (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Reflections on the use of ICT in education and training have developed theoretical studies and methodological analysis aimed at rethinking innovation paths and didactic qualification aimed at their integration in teaching practices (Admiraal et al., 2017). The focus is on their use as useful tools both on the cognitive level (to research, produce, rework and interact the knowledge system), and sociocultural (to encourage processes of communication, development, sharing and exchange). It is crucial that the introduction of ICT in teaching, while accompanied by good technical knowledge, does not go beyond being able to incorporate it flexibly into the content of the discipline, in turn transposed with appropriate methodological approaches to effectively enhance student learning (Pinelli & Fiorucci, 2020). Moreover, from the experience gained in the year of the specialization Course on the support of the University of Naples Parthenope emerge a set of useful indications for the organization of the future training courses for teachers with respect to the logistic aspects. In conclusion, we can say that the hope is, in the coming years, to be able to fill the small gaps highlighted today and improve more and more a service in the pursuit of a result of inclusion in school processes.

References

- Admiraal, W., Van Vugt, F., Kranenburg, F., Koster, B., Smit, B., Weijers, S., & Lockhorst, D. (2017). Preparing pre-service teachers to integrate technology into K–12 instruction: evaluation of a technology-infused approach. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, 26(1), 105–120.

- Albanese, O., & Mercadante, L. (2010). L'inclusione dell'insegnante di sostegno nel gruppo classe. Riflettere e innovare. Bergamo: Junior.
- Arduini, G., & Bocci, F. (2019). La valutazione dei Corsi di specializzazione per il sostegno didattico come input per la decisionalità politica in materia di formazione degli insegnanti. In P. Lucisano & A. M. Notti (Eds.), *Training actions and evaluation processes. Atti del Convegno Internazionale SIRD* (pp. 39-48). Lecce: Pensa MultiMedia.
- Bandura, A. (2000). Autoefficacia. Teoria e applicazioni. Trento: Erickson.
- Bellacicco, R. (2019). Un profilo inclusivo per il docente di sostegno in formazione: l'efficacia del corso di specializzazione dell'Ateneo di Torino. *Education Sciences & Society-Open Access*, 10(1), 135–156.
- Bocci, F., Guerini, I., & Travaglini, A. (2021). Le competenze dell'insegnante inclusivo. Riflessioni sulla formazione iniziale tra aspettative e conferme. *Form@re*, 21(1).
- Caldin R. (2009), *I pensieri degli studenti — e del docente — sul corso di Pedagogia dell'Integrazione*. In A.M. Favorini (a cura di), *Pedagogia speciale e formazione degli insegnanti*, Milano, FrancoAngeli.
- Calvani A., Menichetti L., Pellegrini M. e Zappaterra T. (2017), *La formazione per il sostegno. Valutare l'innovazione didattica in un'ottica di qualità*, «Form@re, Open Journal per la formazione in rete», vol. 17, n. 1, pp. 18-48.
- Calvani, A., & Vivanet, G. (2014). Tecnologie per apprendere: quale il ruolo dell'Evidence Based Education? *Journal of Educational, Cultural and Psychological Studies*, 10, 83–112.
- Camedda D. e Santi M. (2016), *Essere insegnanti di tutti: atteggiamenti inclusivi e formazione per il sostegno*, «L'Integrazione Scolastica e Sociale», vol. 15, n. 2, pp. 141-149.
- Ciraci, A. M., & Isidori, M. V. (2017). Insegnanti inclusivi: un'indagine empirica sulla formazione specialistica degli insegnanti di sostegno. *Journal of Educational, Cultural and Psychological Studies (ECPS Journal)*, (16), 207-234.

- D'Alonzo L. (2017). *La differenziazione didattica per l'inclusione. Metodi, strategie, attività*. Trento: Erickson.
- Damiani, P. (2015). Tra innovazione e inclusione: il bisogno di formazione alle “nuove competenze inclusive” dei docenti. Basi teoriche per un modello formativo coerente. *Formazione & Insegnamento*, 13(2), 297–302.
- De Angelis, M. (2021). Valutare le competenze del docente inclusivo: revisione sistematica nei corsi di specializzazione sul sostegno in Italia. *Form@re*, 21(1).
- De Angelis, M. (2022). Uno strumento per valutare le competenze del docente specializzato: il questionario BEST (BEcome a Special education Teacher). *Annali online della Didattica e della Formazione Docente*, 14(23), 35-50.
- Decreto Ministeriale 10 settembre 2010, n. 249. *Regolamento concernente: «Definizione della disciplina dei requisiti e delle modalità della formazione iniziale degli insegnanti della scuola dell'infanzia, della scuola primaria e della scuola secondaria di primo e secondo grado, ai sensi dell'articolo 2, comma 416, della legge 24 dicembre 2007, n. 244»*.
- Decreto Ministeriale 30 settembre 2011. *Criteri e modalità per lo svolgimento dei corsi di formazione per il conseguimento della specializzazione per le attività di sostegno, ai sensi degli articoli 5 e 13 del decreto 10 settembre 2010, n. 249*.
- Domenici, G. (2017). (a cura di). *Successo formativo, inclusione e coesione sociale: strategie innovative. Strategie didattiche integrate per il successo scolastico e l'inclusione*, Vol. 1. Roma: Armando.
- Ferrara, G., & Pedone, F. (2019). Docenti e inclusione: un'indagine empirica sulla formazione specialistica degli insegnanti di sostegno. *Form@re - Open Journal per la Formazione in Rete*, 19(3), 221–233.
- Gariboldi, A., & Pugnaghi, A. (2020). Formare insegnanti inclusivi: il tirocinio come contesto di crescita professionale. *Italian Journal of Special Education for Inclusion*, 8(2), 243-258.
- Ianes, D., & Cramerotti, S. (2013). *Alunni con BES – Bisogni Educativi Speciali*. Trento: Erickson.

- Isidori, M. V. (2017). *Bisogni Educativi Speciali BES. Ridefinizioni concettuali e operative per una didattica inclusiva. Un'indagine esplorativa*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Isidori, M. V. (a cura di). (2014). *I Disturbi Specifici dell'Apprendimento (DSA) a scuola. La formazione degli insegnanti*. Roma: Anicia.
- Koh, J. H., & Divaharan, H. (2011). Developing pre-service teachers' technology integration expertise through the TPACK-developing instructional model. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 44(1), 35–58.
- Limone P. (2021). *Ambienti di apprendimento e progettazione didattica*. Roma: Carocci.
- Mitchell D., (2018). *Cosa funziona realmente nella didattica speciale e inclusiva. Le strategie basate sull'evidenza*, Trento, Erickson
- Montanari, M., & Ruzzante, G. (2020). Formare l'insegnante specializzato: l'esperienza inclusiva dei laboratori nel corso di specializzazione per il sostegno. *Italian Journal of Special Education for Inclusion*, 8(1), 335–349.
- Montesano, L., & Straniero, A. (2019). Un questionario per indagare convinzioni e atteggiamenti degli insegnanti in formazione rispetto all'inclusione e alla disabilità. *Italian Journal of Special Education for Inclusion*, 7(2), 309-321.
- Mura, A., & Zurru, A. L. (2016). Riqualificare i processi inclusivi: un'indagine sulla percezione degli insegnanti di sostegno in formazione. *L'integrazione scolastica e sociale*, 15(2), 150–160.
- Pinnelli, S., & Fiorucci, A. (2020). Valutazione della componente tecnologica per la promozione dell'inclusione. Un'esperienza di ricerca-azione su base index rivolta a docenti di sostegno in formazione. *MeTis-Mondi educativi. Temi indagini suggestioni*, 10(1), 257–278.
- Utgé, M. S., Mazzer, M., Pagliara, S. M., & de Anna, L. (2017). La formazione degli insegnanti di sostegno sulle TIC. Analisi dei prodotti multimediali del corso di specializzazione per le attività di sostegno. *Italian Journal of Special Education for Inclusion*, 5(1), 133-146.

Utgé, S. M. (2016). Accessibilità Pedagogica e inclusione: significati, norme e formazione con particolare riguardo alla Spagna. Tesi di dottorato XXVII ciclo, discussa presso l'Università di Roma "Foro Italico" in data 10-11 febbraio 2016.

Weiner, B. (1972). Theory of motivation: From mechanism to cognition. Chicago: Rand-McNally.

Authors' contribution¹

¹ Authors' contribution: Introduction (Emma Saraiello); 1.The Teacher of Support between Training and Skills (Patrizia Belfiore and Emma Saraiello); 2. The experimental study: objectives, sample, instruments and procedures (Patrizia Belfiore); 3. Results (Patrizia Belfiore); Discussion and conclusion (Patrizia Belfiore and Emma Saraiello)