

AN ITALIAN GOOD PRACTICE OF INCLUSIVE TEACHING FOR MIGRANT STUDENTS

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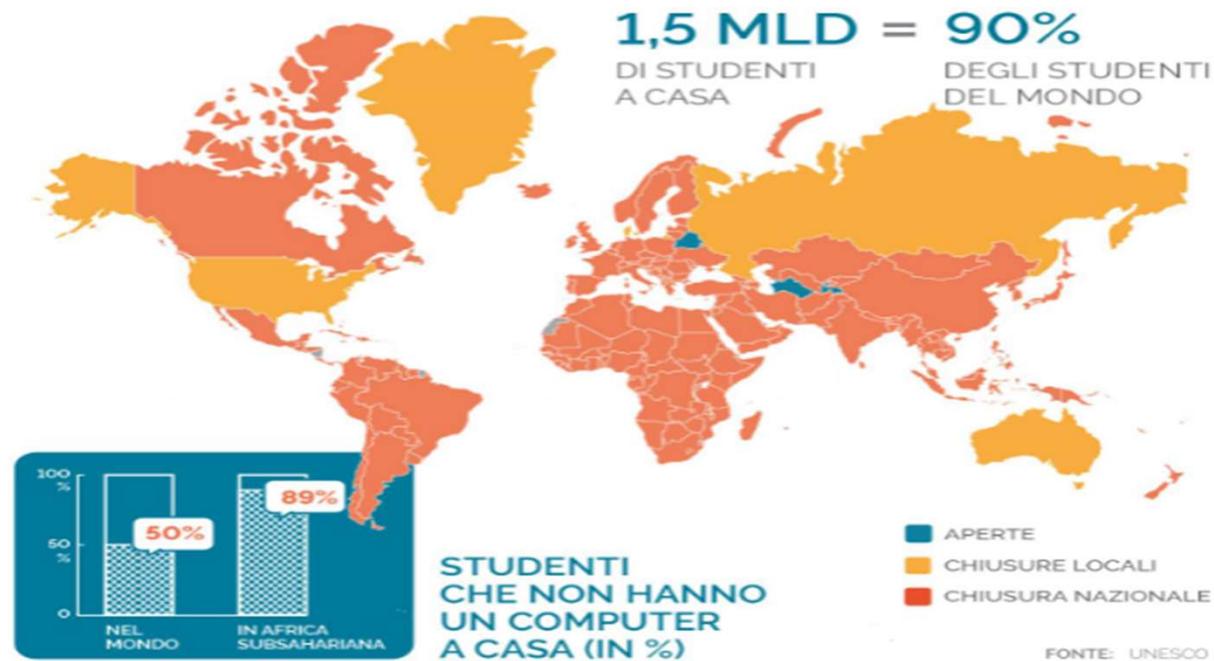


THE COVID

Closure of primary, secondary schools and universities:

1,5 MLD of students at home = 90% of students

Students with no computer at home: 50% in the world, 89% in Sub-Saharan Africa



(Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale – Ispi. Source: Unesco, 2020)



Strong heterogeneity in Italy:

Only about one third of the students were in optimal conditions for the use of Distance Learning: connection + workstation + at least two teachers who regularly use any digital device for teaching (Argentin et al. 2021).

Almost a third of teachers tend to reject digital tools, with negative repercussions on satisfaction with their Distance Teaching activity (Agasisti et al., 2021), while 73.6% would like to continue to use technology combined with face-to-face teaching (Inapp 2020).

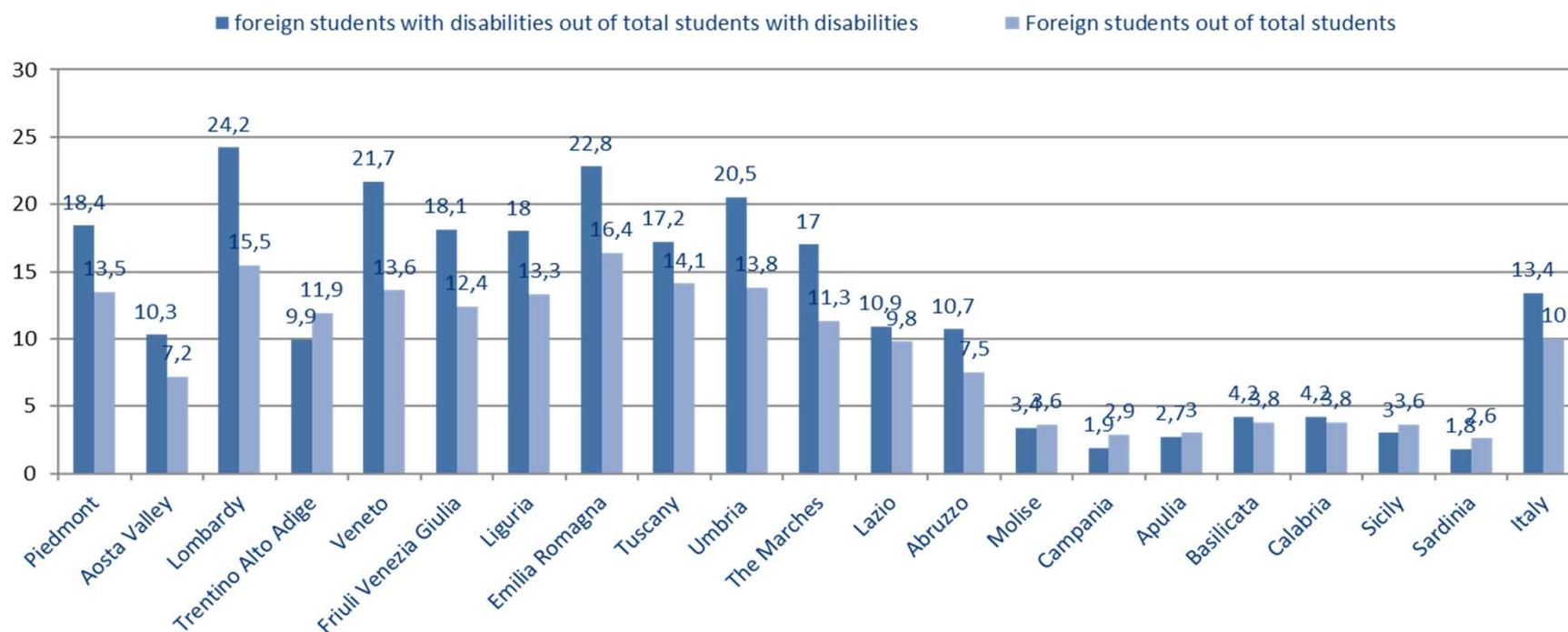
91.2% teachers require specific training on Distance Teaching (Inapp 2020).
Difficulty of parents, especially mothers, to reconcile Distance Learning and work (Bicocca 2020, Unicef 2021).

Concerns regarding the effectiveness of Distance Learning in the inclusion of disadvantaged children/young people: disabilities, migratory background etc. (Fondazione Agnelli 2020, Fish 2020).



FOREIGN

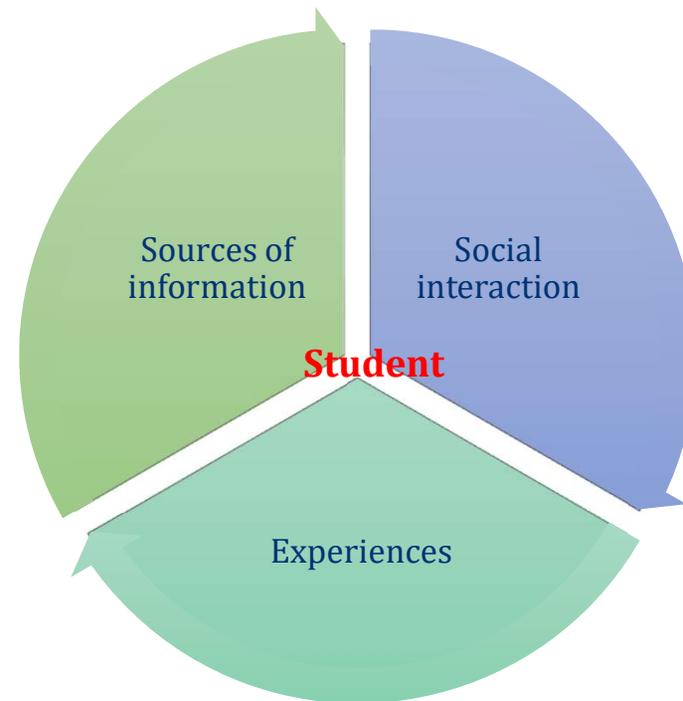
Foreign students out of total students and foreign students with disabilities out of total students with disabilities by region - a.s. 2018/2019



Source: MI - DGSIS - Ufficio Gestione Patrimonio informativo e Statistica - Rilevazioni sulle scuole



The Covid emergency as an opportunity for a general rethinking of teaching: from the Nuremberg funnel to constructivist teaching



CASE STUDY

Methodology

Desk analysis of good inclusive distance teaching practices carried out also by other schools (Agnelli Foundation, Bicocca with schools, etc.).

Analysis of the three-year educational offer plan (PTOF) and self-assessment report (RAV) of the school, including the results of the Invalsi tests.

The qualitative data come from a case study, through in-depth interviews with privileged witnesses (teachers, parents, Headmaster), with the aim of describing good practice in terms of inclusive Distance Learning.

The focus of the interviews (summer 2020) is on teaching methodologies and coping strategies during the Covid emergency.

The research combines, from an anthropological point of view (Headland et al., 1990), an emic perspective (the "native" perspective) with an etic one (the external observer's perspective).



State Institute of Specialized Education for the Deaf (Isiss) "A. Magarotto"

It includes the cycles of kindergarten, primary school, lower secondary school and upper secondary school.

It was born from a school inclusion project, developed by the CNR, which transformed a boarding school for the deaf into a specialized school for teaching deaf pupils, which hosts hearing and/or multi-handicapped students, mainly of Italian nationality but also of other origins.

It has 7 locations, 5 of which in Rome, one in Turin and one in Padua (plus boarding schools).

Full-time teachers with a monovalent specialization qualification, basic Italian sign language courses are organized for substitute teachers who do not have this qualification, in order to promote inclusion and communication and meet the needs of deaf students who use sign language / bilingual.

Most of the teaching staff have the ECDL certification.



THE TRAINING OFFER

Other professional figures :

- Psychologist (LIS);
- communication assistant (AsCo) deaf and/or hearing, (provided for by Law 104/92, art. 13);
- Educational operator for school autonomy (O.E.P.A.);
- speech therapist;
- logogenist;
- Interpreter.

Other peculiar characteristics of the didactic model

- Teaching of Italian Sign Language (LIS) as a curricular subject also for hearing students
- Small classes (max 11-12)





Innovative methodologies and strategies for participatory and inclusive teaching (PTOF 2019/20 - 2021/22)

- Active and participatory lesson, guided discussion;
- accessible, laboratory, skills, metacognitive, experiential teaching;
- problem solving;
- flipped classroom;
- Montessori methodologies;
- brainstorming;
- cooperative learning;
- problem setting and finding;
- tutoring and modeling;
- peer education;
- debriefing;
- Circle Time;
- Research and action;
- Role Playing;
- Team Teaching;
- Mastery learning;
- Participatory heuristic method;
- Learning by Doing;
- Audiovisual and multimedia tools: tablet, digital camera, DVD player, multimedia room, computer room, video library;
- Interactive multimedia whiteboard



What happened during the lock down? The interviews

- From the very beginning, it has been a priority to keep in touch with all students, using all the platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp.
- In the first 15-20 days: recognition of the need for IT equipment (computers, tablets, etc.) to deliver the devices to families who need them.
- Well defined lesson starting and ending to structure a routine: 2/3 hours a day for childhood and above, 4 hours for primary and secondary school; maximum duration of each lesson: 40 minutes, respecting the natural attention curve.
- Revision of teaching strategies: the frontal teaching has been replaced by a more integrated and participatory teaching.
- Model of the flipped classroom.
- Play as a resource and educational tool to be used also and above all in difficult situations to keep the attention of children high.
- Video material, possibly subtitled, uploaded to Classroom and to be viewed before the lesson, found on the internet (Youtube etc.).



Special strategies for deaf students and/or with linguistic difficulties (foreigners etc.)

A visual, digital, interactive, playful didactic:

- Accessible subtitles;
- choice of highly iconic teaching materials (videos, images, cartoons, drawings);
- brief explanations and highlighting of key concepts;
- support from the assistant to signing, deaf or hearing communication (sometimes using a second screen);
- individual meetings, lasting up to 30 minutes, tailored to the skills of the individual student, especially for foreign and/or deaf children, to explain the most difficult topics.



Online transposition of inclusive methods and strategies used in-person schooling, but also reconsidered.





Distance Learning at Magarotto

It was an important challenge, to which the teaching staff responded by reconsidering their teaching strategies, with a change of perspective compared to the past.

There was also a lot of training done by the teachers who acquired digital skills that will also be useful in the future.

The digital learning has grown: some tools (Google Classroom for homework, Google Meet for meetings with parents, etc.) will continue to be used even in the future.

There has been a general rethinking of teaching, with inevitable repercussions on face-to-face teaching as well.



PROS / CONS

The pros and cons of Distance learning that emerged from the interviews confirm what literature and data of the last few months are highlighting:

Critical issues	Positive elements
Hw and sw technical problems and connections not always working	Stimulus for an acceleration towards digital school (also from an infrastructural point of view)
Risk of addiction	Sensibilization of parents to a responsible and moderate use of IT tools
Fatigue from excessive use of the computer	More attention to the learning process
Loss of students with low digital skills	Acquisition of digital autonomy
Children's longing for classmates and school in presence	Distance learning more functional for children with character flaws (shyness, anxiety)
Reduction of opportunities to socialize	Rediscovery of the social and emotional dimension of learning



Strengths and Weaknesses of Digital learning with respect to children at risk of exclusion (disabled and foreigners)

Critical issues	Positive elements
Greater difficulty in following online lessons (especially in large classes)	Possibility of individualized meetings
Greater difficulty for teachers to repeat the classic frontal lesson	An opportunity to radically rethink traditional teaching
Digital divide of teachers	Digital training for teachers
Digital divide of disadvantaged students and their families	Migrant students as a digital literacy tool for their families (reverse mentoring)
Alternative to face-to-face teaching	Alternative to the absence of teaching in special cases (for example diseases that force a prolonged hospitalization)



CONCLUSIONS

Rethinking the role of the School after Covid-19

The challenges of the pandemic have exposed the historical frailties of the Italian school system: the large number of classes, the chronic precariousness of a large number of teachers, the state of decay of many buildings, the digital delay.

If great crises are also opportunities for growth, the period we are experiencing can represent an opportunity to critically rethink school.

Distance learning is giving incentives to deepen digital and IT skills, primarily among the teaching staff. Teacher education should be sensitive to this new reality, and requires investment in educators' digital skills.

Digital learning should be adapted to the needs of students at greatest risk of exclusion: in the school year 2020/2021 268,671 students with disabilities and 808,953 pupils with non-Italian citizenship are expected in public schools (out of a total of 7,507,484 students, from kindergarten to secondary school).



Distance learning from an inclusive perspective

Strong inequalities remain among households using the internet. Providing additional public resources for low-income families and families with many school-age children and young people is therefore imperative.

The increase in time spent online has led young people to be more exposed to the risks of networks. But the use of the internet (eg Whatsapp, Zoom, Meet) to help classmates in difficulty has also proved to be an excellent tool of solidarity between equals (Generazioni Connesse 2021).

Foreign children are generally familiar with the internet and social media. They represent the "advanced point" of the generation of "digital natives" (Istat 2015), but they often don't have an adequate digital environment to develop their potential.





COVID-19 emergency has sharpened the already existing digital divide (Guidetti 2021).

However, those schools that already had an inclusive teaching methodology and that already used multimedia, reacted better than others to the emergency.

In optimal conditions, many children and young people (but not all!) felt motivated to join online classes and felt confident in their ability to learn also in this new context.

It would be useful to transform the ideological debate for or against Distance learning into a constructive debate on how to make it more effective and inclusive, in synergy with face-to-face teaching.



Digital assets

- Ministero dell'Istruzione: <https://www.istruzione.it/coronavirus/didattica-a-distanza.html>
- Rai Scuola: <http://www.raiscuola.rai.it/articoli/la-scuola-in-tv-gli-orari-ellelezioni/45140/default.aspx>
- Save the children – Fuoriclasse in movimento on line: <https://fuoriclasse-in-movimento-hub-savechildren.hub.arcgis.com/>
- Bicocca con le scuole: <https://bicoccaconlescuole.unimib.it/>
- Generazioni connesse – Ministero dell'Istruzione, Commissione europea, programma CEF (Connecting Europe Facility):
<https://www.generazioniconnesse.it/site/it/0000/00/00/didattica-a-distanza/>
- Fondazione Agnelli – Oltre le distanze: <https://lab.gedidigital.it/gedi-visual/2020/oltre-le-distanze/>
- De Agostini: <https://deascuola.it/didattica-a-distanza/>
- Progetto Idee per la Scuola: <https://ideeperlascuola.it/>



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