Inclusive Education in Italy
A Critical Analysis of the Policy of Integrazione Scolastica

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This book provides an innovative and thought-provoking analysis of the policy of integrazione scolastica from an inclusive perspective. Drawing on historical and empirical research methods the book arises out of an ethnographic study, which investigates the extent to which the policy of integrazione scolastica can be considered an inclusive policy. The author poses two fundamental questions: why are there episodes of micro-exclusion and discrimination against disabled pupils still taking place in regular schools after more than 30 years have passed since the enactment of such a progressive policy? Can the policy of integration lead to the development of inclusion in Italy?

The research findings presented in the book indicate that exclusion and discrimination towards disabled pupils in education do not result from a lack of implementation of the policy at a school level, rather from the perpetuation of dominant discourses, which construct disability as an individual deficit. The book does not deny the progress made in the country following the application of this anti-discriminatory policy; rather it challenges the hegemonic abilist culture and the traditional perspectives of disability and schooling that undermine the development of inclusive education.

After having investigated the theoretical premises of the policy of integration, the author argues that this progressive policy is still rooted in a special needs education paradigm and that what was once a liberating policy has been transformed into a hegemonic tool which still manages, controls and normalizes disability leaving school settings and teaching and learning routines unchanged. She finally argues for a human rights approach for the development of an inclusive school for the 21st century.

The book is an essential reading for academics, policy makers, researchers and students involved in education as it links ideological pressures to practical analyses.

Inclusive Education in Italy
STUDIES IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Scope
This series addresses the many different forms of exclusion that occur in schooling across a range of international contexts and considers strategies for increasing the inclusion and success of all students. In many school jurisdictions the most reliable predictors of educational failure include poverty, Aboriginality and disability. Traditionally schools have not been pressed to deal with exclusion and failure. Failing students were blamed for their lack of attainment and were either placed in segregated educational settings or encouraged to leave and enter the unskilled labour market. The crisis in the labor market and the call by parents for the inclusion of their children in their neighborhood school has made visible the failure of schools to include all children.

Drawing from a range of researchers and educators from around the world, Studies in Inclusive Education will demonstrate the ways in which schools contribute to the failure of different student identities on the basis of gender, race, language, sexuality, disability, socio-economic status and geographic isolation. This series differs from existing work in inclusive education by expanding the focus from a narrow consideration of what has been traditionally referred to as special educational needs to understand school failure and exclusion in all its forms. Moreover, the series will consider exclusion and inclusion across all sectors of education: early years, elementary and secondary schooling, and higher education.
Inclusive Education in Italy

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Simona D’Alessio

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DEDICATION

I would like to thank all the teachers, students and head teachers of the schools I visited, whose participation made this research possible and to whom this book is dedicated.
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Inclusive education is a serious and contentious issue which increasing numbers of societies are attempting to address. The nature of the challenge and the degree of the complexities involved in seeking to gain an informed knowledge and understanding of such developments, is more demanding when set within a cross-cultural dimension. The task includes the exploration of historical, empirical and policy concerns and despite the extent of the work undertaken, we still have very little knowledge and understanding in relation to other societies.

Studies of particular societies are thus an urgent and fundamental necessity particularly if as, D’Alessio maintains we are to:

...attempt to shake the conscience from the lethargy of rhetoric and to open up dialogues and possibilities concerning different types of research that presuppose critical engagement and envision radical thinking. (p. 166)

This book, *Inclusive education in Italy: a critical analysis of the policy of integrazione scolastica*, by Simona D’Alessio, represents a new area of research critically examines the historically ground-breaking Italian education policy of *Integrazione Scolastica* through the lens of the social model of disability, and the principles and practices of inclusive education. This policy was introduced in 1977 and led to the dismantling of special schooling in Italy – a policy which has been rightly celebrated in Italy as a liberating educational measure which allowed previously marginalised groups to attend their local community schools and to be members of ordinary classes. Surprisingly, this very radical education policy has received scant attention by researchers and by policy makers in the UK and elsewhere, although those who do make reference to it acknowledged that its progressive and historical significance. This book is, therefore, unique and important in critically exploring Italian policy which, for over thirty years, has offered a radical alternative to dominant western approaches in relation to education and disabled children and young people. This is of particular significance in the light of the UN Convention on Disability Rights and Article 24, which envisages the development of inclusive education, and the closing down of segregated schools, internationally.

A particularly innovative feature of this study is the importance given to historical context, and the theorising undertaken in relation to the particular political background against which the policy of *integrazione scolastica* emerged.

Furthermore, the book makes a significant theoretical contribution to the field of disability studies in education in exploring its central topic through the critical application of some key theoretical frameworks. The Social Model of Disability is used as an effective framework for critiquing individual deficit approaches and the Medical Model of Disability with reference to the Italian education context. Theoretical ideas drawn from Foucault and Gramsci are explored to critically examine Italian education policies and practices in ways which reveal the underlying impairment-led assumptions, power relations, and practices of categorisation which underpin
FOREWORD

the education system which co-exist with the more visible and still radical policies
and practices of integrazione scolastica.

This book makes an important contribution to our understanding in that it raises
questions about the theoretical premises on which the policy of integrazione
scolastica is founded, rather than examining the policy as an operational or purely
technical project. It shows how, in spite of its very radical origins and aspirations,
Italian policy in this area is based on a ‘special needs’ paradigm. A central argument
which emerges from the study is that what was once a progressive policy has been
transformed into a powerful hegemonic project of normalisation which reproduces
micro-exclusions within mainstream settings.

The study is underpinned by qualitative research in which ethnography is the
principle methodological paradigm used in the development of case studies. As an
insider-researcher, Simona D’Alessio was able to gather rich data of different kinds.
A particular strength of the research lies in the high levels of transparency and
reflexivity which, she argues (convincingly), contribute to the validity, integrity and
reliability of her study. The exposition and discussion of the methodology is one of
the great strengths of the book. The principles and processes involved in the analysis
of the data are lucidly explained and justified, and the outcomes critically discussed
in the light of the research questions and the theoretical frameworks developed in
the earlier part of the book. The quality of the data analysis is sensitive and rigorous,
and theoretical arguments are developed cogently and convincingly from the data
presented.

This study is potentially important in terms of the wealth of ideas and insights it
provides for policy-makers, practitioners and other research users. For example:
it illustrates the importance of engaging with contextual factors, including the
historical and political, in order to understand and probe the rationale, processes
and outcomes of education and social policy. It demonstrates a radical alternative
to dominant perceptions about ‘what is possible’ in terms of policy making in relation
to disability and education. It provides an original, illuminating and carefully crafted
research project which will inspire and challenge other researchers in the field. Finally,
it reveals some of the deeply-rooted barriers to developing inclusive policies, even
when all children attend the same kind of school.

Inclusive education in Italy: a critical analysis of the policy of integrazione
scolastica, is a valuable resource for all those interested in understanding the
complexities involved in analysing the often contradictory ways in which values
and discourses permeate policies in social life. It is a particularly important piece
of work in relation to the study of disability and education, and makes a unique
contribution to our understanding of the nature of cross-cultural research. This
book is essential reading for all those interested in the question of the nature and
purpose of education and its contribution to the realisation and maintenance of an
inclusive, non-discriminatory society. We have found the book both a pleasure to
read and a challenging educative experience.

Professor Felicity Armstrong
Professor Len Barton

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INTRODUCTION

This book gathers the reflections emerging from a research study concerned with the nature and development of inclusive education in Italy. Drawing on the data collected during my doctoral study between the years 2004 and 2008, this book brings to the fore how well-established educational mechanisms may contribute to the perpetuation of forms of micro-exclusion in ordinary school settings despite official purposes of doing otherwise.

The book explores the extent to which the Italian policy of integrazione scolastica can be considered an inclusive policy. Its main purpose is to provide a critical analysis of a policy which has been in place for more than thirty years and which has been decisive in counteracting the exclusion of disabled students from mainstream settings. Anti-discriminatory legislation has been very prolific in Italy. This is particularly evident when considering that countries are currently ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) to end segregation of disabled students from mainstream settings whilst Italy had already made such a choice in 1977. Nevertheless, the book makes a case that the passing of legislation may not be sufficient to fully guarantee the participation of all pupils in the process of learning in ordinary classrooms. To address this issue, the book raises questions concerning the theoretical premises on which a policy is based and it challenges dominant interpretations of the notion of integration, its taken-for-granted principles, discourses and practices.

In the light of these considerations, and in order to investigate contradictions and complexities enmeshed within language and notions, I have chosen to maintain the Italian definition of integrazione scolastica throughout the book because I wanted to respect the definition used by original documents and research participants. Also, because words and their meanings change across time and place and it is difficult to translate a definition from one language into another without falling into the traps of personal interpretations or ambiguity. It is important, moreover, to reflect as much as possible, on the constraints and the national contexts in which words originate so that their fundamental meaning is not lost when it is transferred into another context with its own historical, social and cultural background.

Similarly, the meaning of inclusive education varies conspicuously across countries - even within countries themselves - and these differences in interpretation are derived from the complex interplay of historical, cultural, political and economic factors. For this reason, this book provides its own interpretation of the notion of inclusion. In most Western countries, many practitioners and academics that support inclusive education celebrate it as one of the most important educational imperatives of current education systems. Indeed it is usually considered, by those committed to equality, to be fundamental in the development of a human rights approach to education.

In the context of this book, inclusive education is interpreted as a process of transformation of education systems and cultures in order to allow all students to participate fully and equitably in the process of learning in regular schools. Inclusive education is not concerned with one specific group of people - such as disabled students - but
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it engages with, and addresses obstacles that all learners, including disabled people, may encounter, in pursuing their right to education. However, exclusionary and discriminatory practices are more visible and more deeply rooted in relation to, for example, disability, gender, sexuality, race and the effects of poverty and social deprivation. For this reason, the focus of this book is on disabled people and on their struggle for a more inclusive education system. Nevertheless, it is important to underline that the study of inclusive education, as interpreted within this book, has got nothing to do with the ‘inclusion of disabled pupils’ in ordinary settings, rather it is concerned with the study of how contexts, settings, policy and practice could be made ‘inclusive’ by removing institutionalised and deeply embedded forms of discrimination that shape our society and education systems.

In order to investigate the extent to which the policy of integrazione scolastica can be considered an inclusive policy, the book draws on the application of the social model of disability as the main theoretical framework. Through the application of this model, the book argues that an educational policy should not be evaluated solely from an operational level, such as the articulation of political purposes (for example allocation of resources for disabled students) and their application at a school level, but it should also engage with issues of power relations, especially those operating within the process of policy making. Moreover, a sociological approach, as the one utilised in this book, brings to the fore the theoretical standpoints upon which policies and practices are embedded, thus portraying how different ideologies may impact upon practices and determine the availability of alternative solutions to existing barriers. Although different theoretical frameworks – such as medical/individual model versus social model or inclusion paradigm versus special needs education paradigm - may, arguably, be equally valid, they nevertheless focus on different aspects, providing different explanations and related solutions for similar phenomena, such as disability. The adoption of a sociological lens for the analysis of the policy of integrazione scolastica therefore contributed to the development of different understandings in relation to the education of disabled students in regular settings. It also influenced the modality of gathering data, and the type of data collected, suggesting alternative views to dominant ways of conducting research. Clearly, the social model of disability is also an attempt to draw on the experiences and perspectives of disabled people.

The social model used within this book also provides an effective framework to critique individual deficit approaches to disability. Under an individual/medical model in fact, the research focus usually leans towards an examination of individual deficiencies, and the modifications required to favour the ‘integration’ of a disabled child in ordinary settings. Consequently, observations do not focus on the individual experiences of disabled pupils, their development, the work of specialised teachers or the interaction between specialised teachers and the pupil with a Record of Needs, rather:

Sociological analyses focus on the institutions that treat, house, and manage disabled people – including families, schools, hospitals, and rehabilitation clinics – and above all, they examine disability as a stigmatized social status,
exploring the means by which stigma is created, maintained, and resisted.  
(Stone, 1984:3)

This book draws attention to the structural, cultural and educational constraints that require a disabled child to be certified and classified with a statement of special educational needs in order for him or her to be provided with the same learning opportunity as other non-disabled pupils. Observations are concerned with the organisation and structures of mainstream schools, general teachers and the consequences of adopting traditional forms of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment for all pupils. Finally, a sociological approach looks for explanations that do not only concern the provision of special support for disabled children and the allocation of extra resources to schools. In contrast, they seek to understand why some children are considered less equal than others as they are required to adopt a ‘special’ identity in order to exert their rights to education.

Along with the social model of disability, the works of Gramsci and Foucault are fundamental to understand the intrinsic nature of mainstream schools beyond the enlightened vision of teaching and learning. Their works are relevant as both authors interrogated the conditions under which education systems operate and power is exercised. In particular, Gramsci suggests ways of looking at the sociological implications of education for the wider society. He also provides inputs to conceptualise the hegemonic quality of integrazione scolastica, a policy which misunderstood the means (such as integrating disabled pupils into regular classrooms), for its end (such as changing the education system). Foucault, on the other hand, suggests ways of questioning the reasons why societies need to adopt particular regulatory systems – for example naming, categorisation, classification and labelling – as a means of understanding and of controlling particular social groups. His works identify discourses that perpetuate exclusionary attitudes and practices in the school setting. Drawing on these thinkers, this book invites researchers, teachers, educators and policy makers to critically interrogate their assumptions and practices by detaching their actions and behaviours from their immediate contexts – classrooms, local education authorities and schools – and to consider their consequences.

Unless the structure of mainstream schools is made problematic, pedagogical and organisational innovations linked to integrazione are destined to fail or to remain at a very superficial level. What is crucial is to develop an understanding of the different theoretical premises supporting inclusive education on the one hand and integrazione scolastica on the other hand. This book is an attempt to do so especially by drawing particular attention to the historical and political contexts in which the policy of integrazione scolastica emerged.

THE BOOK RATIONALE

When I first set out to conduct the main study, a traditional way of interpreting integrazione scolastica and of conducting research concerning this policy inevitably influenced my work. I did not want to deny or undermine the achievements made by integrazione scolastica, nor did I want to underestimate the importance of the ‘good practices’ that paved the way to the social integration of disabled people in
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universities and work places. Therefore, my original purpose was to understand how this policy could lead to the development of inclusive education within the Italian education system. Most particularly, I wanted to observe how integrazione scolastica operated in two schools perceived as being good exemplars of ‘good practices’ and potentially situated in an ‘inclusive’ context. Yet, despite the passing of integrazione, some students, in particular disabled students, were still facing some forms of discrimination and marginalisation in the schools in which I worked as a support teacher. Therefore, I was strongly motivated to understand the possible reasons for the perpetuation of these forms of discrimination. Put simply, I wanted to understand why some contradictions and tensions were still in place within a major liberating policy initiative, which had allowed previously marginalised sections of the population to be educated in ordinary settings. Although the policy of integrazione scolastica is considered a fundamental standpoint in the development of inclusive education in Italy (Canevaro, 2002; Ianes, 2005), and is often perceived as a synonym for inclusion (Canevaro, 2001; 2002; 2006), many contradictions arise that need to be analysed and explored. This book also results from the efforts made to address such issues and provide them with an explanation.

At the end of 2004 I began the process of seeking permission to conduct research in two schools located in the north-eastern part of Italy, a region that most Italian commentators identified as one implementing ‘inclusive’ policies. Among the different provinces I decided to conduct my research in a small town, which for ethical reasons I will not identify by its real name but by the pseudonym of Adriazzurra. The choice of site for my study was not due to convenience or proximity but it was determined by my study objectives (Walford, 2001). I soon concentrated on the analysis of this policy initiative and of the school practices that could be considered conducive to inclusion.

After a few weeks of fieldwork, I realised that I was conducting my research with the assumptions that the policy of integrazione scolastica was not only an unproblematic anti-discriminatory policy, but also that it was an ‘inclusive policy’, although under a different name. Gradually, by engaging with the works of social model activists (Oliver, 1990), social theorists (Gramsci, 1971; Foucault, 1977) as well as policy analysts (Fulcher, 1989; Ball, 1990; Ozga, 1990; Armstrong, 2003), I became aware of the complexity of the notions of policy, disability and policy making and I started challenging my own presuppositions, and context-embedded assumptions alike.

Consequently, I decided to disentangle my study from traditional research modalities that have characterised the analysis of the policy of integrazione scolastica so far. A review of the Italian literature regarding integrazione scolastica, shows that despite the passing and the application of this groundbreaking policy, very little research has been conducted in the field of integrazione at a national level (Maviglia, 2008). Indeed, some Italian scholars (Canevaro & Ianes, 2001; D’Alonso & Ianes, 2007) have conducted studies concerning this policy, but they have primarily focused on a description of local practice of integrazione scolastica, without providing any relevant empirical findings concerning the outcomes of this major policy decision for society, schools and most importantly for the life of disabled
pupils. What emerges instead is that most Italian research investigated whether the policy of *integrazione scolastica* – mainstreaming of disabled pupils in regular settings - was being applied or not. Yet, researchers did not seem to question the rationale that drove forward the passing of *integrazione scolastica*, beyond the humanitarian idea of ‘doing good’ to ‘vulnerable’ groups. Furthermore, there did not seem to be any attempt to question this policy, especially in the light of new social, economic and political challenges, such as the application of neo-liberal theories to education and the pressure on raising the standards of schools that modern education systems face today.

Interestingly enough, research in the field of *integrazione scolastica* in Italy seems to have focused primarily on issues concerning the legal application of this policy at a school level by safeguarding the allocation of an adequate quantity of resources and specialist support. A relevant example of this type of research can be found in the questionnaire developed by the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education, Training and Teaching known as *INValSi* to measure the level of implementation of the policy of *integrazione scolastica* in state schools (InValSi, 2005–2006). What emerges therefore is that, firstly, traditional research has essentially aimed to provide evidence of how *integrazione scolastica* has had a positive impact on the learning of disabled people in ordinary settings, especially when compared to the education taking place in segregated settings (Cornoldi and Vianello, 1995; Vianello, 1999; Nocera and Gherardini, 2000). Secondly, it has produced indicators necessary for the evaluation of the quality of technical and administrative arrangements – such as the number of support teachers - that foster the implementation of ‘good practices’ of integration (Canevaro, Cocever and Weis, 1996; Nocera and Gherardini, 2000; Canevaro and Ianes, 2001; CDH Bologna and CDH Modena, 2003; Ianes and Canevaro, 2008). Thirdly, it has examined processes of diagnostic assessment based on new categorisation procedures as a basis for a re-distribution of resources (Ianes, 2004; 2005). Fourthly, it has suggested ways of developing special didactics and pedagogy to facilitate differentiation of teaching and individualisation of learning (de Anna, 1997; 2003; Canevaro, 2006; 2007). Recently, an attempt to break from a research tradition that measures the quality of *integrazione* based on the numbers of disabled people enrolled in regular schools has been made by two national research projects. The first project is a national survey for families with disabled children (D’Alonso and Ianes, 2007). It investigates further the consequences of the policy of *integrazione scolastica* for the families of disabled people thirty years on from its enactment. Yet it fails to investigate the policy of *integrazione scolastica* beyond the framework of the old debate which measures ‘inclusion’ by opposing segregated education to integration and it still focuses on the experiences of disabled students, without questioning educational contexts and systems or examining the theoretical underpinning in which the policy is still rooted. The second project consists of a ministerial programme, known as I CARE (*Imparare, Comunicare, Agire in una Rete Educativa*), which seeks to strengthen the process of integration of disabled pupils in regular schools by focussing on the work of teachers and local stakeholders. The preliminary empirical findings of this national survey provides an extremely valuable picture of the current situation regarding the application of
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the policy in Italy and of the attempts to bring innovation and action research within the school setting.

During my fieldwork, therefore I was faced with the following dilemma:

While inclusive practices were to be found…it was easy sometimes to lose sight of these amid the exclusive practices and cultures. It is the latter that we inevitably see more of, but the former that we really need to address. (Nind et al., 2005:202)

Thus, although inclusive features were to be identified, my focus gradually sharpened to become an analysis of those barriers that could prevent the development of inclusive education in the schools under investigation. This shift of focus was due to the fact that the study of inclusion inevitably encapsulates the study of exclusion and how the latter is materialised in policies and practices (Booth, 2000). My study was not concerned with measuring the effectiveness of its application according to predetermined categories and standards, rather it interrogates why this particular policy initiative was being enacted rather than a segregating one and what were the theoretical underpinnings of such a policy when compared to those of special needs education.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

In order to investigate the level of ‘inclusiveness’ of the policy of integrazione scolastica, the book interrogates the nature and the development of this major policy initiative using three strands of analysis. Firstly, a historical analysis of the conditions that led to the enactment of this policy. This strand of analysis provides an alternative reading of the policy of integrazione scolastica by examining the theoretical premises in which the policy is embedded. Secondly, a policy analysis that investigates milestone documents, legislative measures and the discourses deployed within them. Such an analysis provides relevant information about how the notion of disability has been constructed and how such a construction may determine the perpetuation of mechanisms of micro-exclusion. Thirdly, an empirical data analysis based on the accounts (e.g. interviews, observations) of how this policy is implemented in schools.

The following chapters therefore engage with discourses and practices as they emerge from documents, empirical data, and the use of a specific language that is concerned with the social construction of the notion of disability. Chapter One provides an overview of the uniqueness of the Italian context and it examines the historical development of the policy of integrazione scolastica. The focus is upon the conditions that led to the enactment of this policy and on the analysis of alternative accounts of how the policy came into place. This chapter also seeks to shed light on potential links with the notion of special needs education that have gone unnoticed for many years. Chapter Two provides a general description of the concept, and of the policy of inclusive education and of how a different conceptualisation of inclusion has influenced both the theoretical underpinning and data
collection of the study. Much of the discussion concerning inclusive education is about an international interpretation of the concept of inclusion and its current interpretation within the Italian literature investigated for this study. Chapter Three questions the reasons for adopting a social model of disability as the main theoretical underpinning used to investigate dominant assumptions and perceptions concerning the education of disabled people. The social model of disability is discussed as an alternative to the individual/medical model. A critique of the use of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (WHO, 2001) as the current model of understanding disability in Italy is also provided. Chapter Four is concerned with a critical analysis of the process of policy making and its consequences for the development of inclusive education. This chapter provides an overview of the main interpretations of the policy of integrazione scolastica and how such interpretations may impact upon school practice. An alternative reading of how national and statistical data can be interpreted is discussed. Chapter Five provides a description of the struggles being fought at the level of schooling for the implementation of the policy of integrazione scolastica and how the latter may impede or contribute to the development of inclusive education.

By investigating its dominant discourses, Chapter Six deconstructs the policy of integrazione scolastica and constructs it as a hegemonic discourse of normalisation of disability. Finally Chapter Seven draws together some recommendations concerning possible ways of developing inclusive education further. The last chapter recapitulates the main issues addressed within the book, including the limitations of a single researcher’s study and it offers recommendations of how to develop inclusive education.
CHAPTER 1

STRUGGLES FOR INTEGRAZIONE SCOLASTICA

Historical and Legislative Analyses

This chapter is concerned with a description of the historical context and the struggles that led to the enactment of the policy of integrazione scolastica in Italy. This chapter however does not simply describe the history of integration but it seeks to understand why ‘at a given time, out of all the possible things that could be said, only certain things were said’ (Ball, 1990:3). To put simply, this chapter seeks to understand why whilst the majority of European countries chose to segregate disabled students, Italy began the process of mainstreaming disabled pupils into regular schools and classrooms. The aim is ‘to analyse particular ideas or models of humanity which have developed as the result of very precise historical changes, and the ways in which these ideas have become normative or universal’ (Ball, 1990:1).

Following a brief introduction concerning the Italian policy context and education system, I will provide a critical analysis of the main policy measures with a focus on the possibilities of infiltration and transmutation of special needs education paradigm into the policy of integrazione scolastica. In the third section, I will display the interplay of different forces that brought this policy into existence and the factors that paved the way to the passing of this policy. By bearing in mind the context in which the policy is rooted, my attempt is to trace the origin of current discourses and practices and to understand why out of all possibilities available, Italy chose to develop an integrative policy rather than a segregating one.

QUESTIONING THE POLICY OF INTEGRAZIONE SCOLASTICA

Amongst the many challenges that inclusive education has to face is the struggle against discrimination and exclusion, in particular, the macro-exclusions which are inherent in special education in segregated settings and the various forms of micro-exclusion perpetuated in both ‘special’ and ordinary settings. Many education systems still place some groups of students outside the mainstream system (EADSNE, 2008). Decisions about placement are often made on the basis of students’ physical and intellectual impairments or cultural and social differences, and they deny some students their right to education with their peers. Similarly, many education systems have tended to rank and stream students into levels of attainment and according to their performances and achievements, thus negatively affecting students’ life chances. As the following sections will describe, Italy took a different pathway. In 1977, despite the difficulties arising from systemic constraints and the lack of research and resources, the country passed a piece of anti-discriminatory legislation known as
integrazione scolastica. As a consequence of the application of this policy, all students are welcomed into their neighbourhood schools regardless of socio-economic background, physical and intellectual impairments, or of any other selective categorisation designed to segregate and exclude. At the same time, special schools have dramatically decreased in number and have been almost completely dismantled. Moreover, since the passing of this policy, teaching and learning procedures in ordinary schools have sought to respond to all students’ requirements, in particular by drawing upon specialised forms of pedagogy and teaching methods.

Given these considerations, the Italian policy of integrazione scolastica appears to create an ideal context – legislative, educational, pedagogical and social – for the development of inclusive education. This is particularly evident whenever integrazione scolastica is compared to other policy contexts in Europe, in which segregated education is sometimes the only available option for disabled students. Therefore, why should integrazione scolastica, which led to the full integration of disabled students in regular schools, be questioned as a policy that could hamper the development of inclusive education? During my personal experience first as a support teacher and then as a class teacher in ordinary secondary schools I became aware that, despite the passing of this ‘progressive’ policy, some students were still experiencing certain forms of exclusions. Some families, especially those with disabled children, often reported their children were being discriminated against whilst attempting to avail themselves of their right to education in regular schools. Evidence for this can be found in the increased number of tribunal hearings. Similarly, some disabled people’ organisations have reported the maintenance of segregated institutions despite the passing of the integrazione scolastica legislation which was intended to ensure mainstream education for all (Barbieri, 2007).

On the one hand, Italy’s decision to adopt the policy of integrazione scolastica was part of a wider educational policy of ‘comprehensiveness’ whose purpose was to break the reproduction of inequalities through a selective education system (such as the Fascist education system). At the same time, this policy was part of the post-war reconstruction, which aimed to maintain the political unification of the newly reformed state. One view is that during the 1970s, the education system was not ‘ready’ to embrace the broad diversity of students because of the limited amount of research available and the lack of resources and of opportunities for professional development for teachers. It is not surprising that, when the legislation on integrazione scolastica was passed in 1977, situations arose in which some disabled students were placed in unprepared school settings. On the other hand, all students attended their local schools, while the education system was, arguably, seeking to develop structural and organisational modifications. However, the choice to integrate did not arise from research on education, but as a part of a wider political and social discourse that requires further investigation. This is particularly important, following Oliver’s observations (1996a; 1996b) that, until recently, many sociologists have engaged with issues of segregation and the concomitant development of special education as a means of social control and as a way of increasing or maintaining the power of professional experts (Barton and Tomlinson, 1981; Armstrong, 2003), but they have only peripherally investigated the theory and the practice of integration.
In line with the above consideration, the research sought to question a traditional notion of the policy of *integrazione scolastica* as an essentially un-problematic, and perfectly designed top-down initiative that led to the development of inclusive education. I fully concur with Oliver (1996b) who argues:

It is important to emphasise that I am not claiming that the struggle for integration is over except in an ideological sense. There is almost universal agreement that integration is a good thing given the right level of resources, the appropriate training of teachers and so on. The point that I am making is that the success of integration at an ideological level has made it almost impossible for it to be examined critically. (Oliver, 1996b: 85)

An attempt to critically examine the policy envisages the need to disentangle some key issues from a conservative research tradition which considers *integrazione scolastica* merely as a technical ‘debate about the quality of educational provision’ (Oliver, 1996b: 82) and ‘divorced from the views of disabled people themselves’ (Oliver, 1996b: 83) as such a tradition leaves education systems and mainstream schools unquestioned. For example, there has been very little attempt to investigate the original principles of *integrazione* undoubtedly considered as the crucial standpoint for the development of inclusion. In contrast, such an awareness seems to have limited the possibility of undertaking alternative forms of research which could question the ‘naturalness’ of this policy and could suggest ways of ameliorating practices and, consequently, of developing mainstream education systems. Evidently, this policy partly modified culturally negative attitudes towards disabled people, but, as things currently stand, its impact upon mainstream education has been fairly limited.

*The Italian Education System at the Time in Which the Research was Conducted*

The Italian education system consists of four main stages of state schooling:

– Infant education for pupils between the ages of 3 and 6
– Primary education (five years of schooling) for ages 6 to 11
– Lower secondary education (three years of schooling) for ages 11 to 14
– Upper secondary education (five years of schooling) for students between the ages of 14 and 19

Unlike England, Italy does not have SATs (Standardised Attainment Tests) and OFSTED (The Office for Standards in Education) inspections. Neither are there league tables. Moreover, with the passing of the Autonomy Law in 1999, the compulsory national curriculum (also known as national programs), has been slowly replaced by National Guidelines (i.e. *Indicazioni Nazionali*). However, by looking closely, these differences are less radical than they appear, and similarities become more evident when investigating current political trends (for example decentralisation, standardisation and marketisation) and the language used (for example quality, excellence and efficiency) in national policy documents. Under the international pressure of the PISA studies, Italy developed a National Institute for the Evaluation of Education, Training and Teaching known as INValSi (*Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Educativo di Istruzione e di Formazione*) which is officially
aiming to evaluate the national education system by measuring school performances starting from the year 2009/2010 (Commission of the European Communities, 2008).

Despite the many attempted school reforms of past governments, education is primarily state run. This is also reflected in the sway of policy documents, circulars that are periodically sent to schools by ministerial departments. Although these documents are mostly interpreted as recommendations and guidelines, they provide evidence of the existing asymmetrical power relations between state and schools, notwithstanding recent reforms supporting school autonomy and decentralisation. At the same time, private education, usually provided by religious orders, plays a marginal role. However, regarding the education of disabled students in private schools, also known as ‘paritarie’ (private schools that follow the same curriculum as state schools), it would be interesting to investigate why the state had to legislate (Law n. 62/2000) to ensure that the process of integrazione scolastica was made compulsory in private schools too. Nevertheless, state schools – corresponding to the maintained schools in England - are the dominant venues for the transmission of what is seen as relevant knowledge and the propagation of social attitudes and values. It seems as if parents gave their children to the state so that ‘the State may form them according to certain norms’ (Foucault, 2003:256).

As will emerge in the following sections, a sense of community and solidarity has traditionally played an important role in the Italian school system. Arguably, the original purpose of the Italian education system was to create a public system capable of merging and homogenising the new school population – such as peasants migrating from the southern regions into the northern cities and poor children leaving the countryside to live in rich urban areas – with the children of the new bourgeoisie and old aristocracy. This view of the role of schooling is a legacy of the Fascist school whose purpose was to transmit a particular type of knowledge. The passing of the Law known as the scuola media unica (comprehensive lower secondary education) in 1962, sought to change the school as established during the Mussolini dictatorship, for example by putting an end to the previous division between grammar and vocational schooling for students aged between 11 and 14 (originally passed under the Fascist Government in 1923). The heritage of the selective and traditional system of Gentile (Mussolini’s minister of instruction), however, remains visible today through the role played by the national guidelines on curricula and programmes of study in upper secondary schools.

With this in mind, it is not surprising that the first policies concerned with the ‘mainstreaming’ of disabled people into regular schools, were not primarily concerned with the dismantling of special schooling but with how to modify the rigidity of the newly formed education system in order to enable it to welcome the increasing diversity within the student population. It is interesting, however, to consider whether such ‘comprehensiveness’ was meant to provide all citizens with the same opportunities and rights, or whether is was also a way of maintaining state control and power through non-coercive apparatuses (Althusser, 1971). Not unrelatedly, drawing on Foucault (1970; 1977; 2003), schools have always been hierarchical institutions where students were supposed to be disciplined into becoming good, productive and docile subjects.
Consequently, as the following sections will show, it seems that the formation of a national compulsory education system in Italy was more than an enlightened project to educate all. Arguably, a compulsory education system in Italy was, in its initial conception after the country’s unification in 1861, a cultural and political means to create a sense of nation, and secondly, after World War Two, a social tool to reconstruct a poverty stricken and politically divided country.

Regarding the national curriculum, schools have a certain degree of autonomy to decide what to teach (20% of the curriculum can be locally established) depending on specific requirements and geographical locations. This is particularly true after the passing of the Autonomy Law 1999 (Legge Delega n. 59/1997) and its enactment through the Presidential Decree n. 275 in 1999, an educational reform which affected the education system as a whole. This reform known as Autonomia Scolastica made an effort to innovate the school system, through a ‘decentralisation’ of state power to local government bodies (such as the Reform of the Article 5 of the Constitution) and schools. With the passing of this reform, schools became autonomous bodies as they gained didactical, pedagogical and organisational freedom, as well as the possibility to carry out projects and conduct research, as indicated in the school development plan also known as Piano dell’Offerta Formativa (POF henceforward). At the same time, schools are still required to comply with a list of goals and to teach ‘core’ subjects and knowledge that will allow students to attend upper secondary schools. This is particularly evident in the use of textbooks whose content is more or less the same notwithstanding the publishing company and the region in which they are used. Thus, educational targets and aims, both in terms of curricular contents and competences, remained centrally defined and against pre-determined national standards. The latter are also in line with the objectives stated within the European Council of Lisbon (2000), to be achieved by 2010. Although, apparently, schools are given the possibility to choose what to teach and how to teach, they exercise their freedom according to certain norms (such as the Indicazioni Nazionali or National Guidelines) and within set boundaries (for example the International European Standards, the PISA studies and the European Council of Lisbon benchmarks).

In line with the Autonomia Scolastica, the government in place during my data collection laid down another relevant school reform, known as the Moratti Reform (Law n. 53/2003). It aimed at modifying the original stages of schooling by creating two main cycles of instruction. The first cycle (eight years) would have included primary and lower secondary education, while the second cycle (five years) would have included upper secondary education in grammar schools or, alternatively, in vocational centres (four years). While the grammar schools were to be run by the state, vocational schools were to be administered by regional education bodies. Due to the collapse of the Berlusconi Government in 2006, only some of the modifications envisaged for the first cycle of schooling came into force. Nevertheless, the possibility of this reform coming into force had an impact upon schools in which the research was conducted and it was often the object of debate among school practitioners.

Although, the Moratti reform did not directly oppose the process of integrazione scolastica, it put an emphasis on standardised student performance and accountability
of educational sites, which inevitably reduced the possibilities for fostering optimal conditions for the development of inclusive principles. For example, when the INValSI tests were first carried out, disabled students were basically excluded from assessment procedures. Students who were perceived as unsuitable to qualify for the national tests, essentially pupils with intellectual impairments (for example autistic spectrum disorders and learning disorders) were provided with a different test paper, created by support teachers rather than by ministerial experts and identified with a ‘code’ (know as codice di particolarità) attached to test papers. When collected, coded test papers were not sent to the ministerial department for evaluation along with the other students’ papers, but they remained within school buildings. In this way, the tests taken by disabled children were not counted and they could not influence the overall outcomes in terms of school performance. Although, policy makers officially reported that they attempted to safeguard students from failing and experiencing frustration, they ended up discriminating against them. Disabled students were not only discriminated against, but they were also cheated by a system that pretended to ‘include’ them, by having them sit for the tests along with their peers whilst at the same time, excluding them as learners. The then disability rights movement, supported by the National Observatory for the Integration of Disabled People, was working to produce national tests that could be adapted to meet the requirements of disabled students. This body is still attempting to bring about an end the discrimination experienced by disabled students. In 2007, the INValSI required that the tests prepared by support teachers in 2005 were sent to the Institute. This was an attempt to share those tests among the teaching community and to have materials to administer depending on the type of impairment. At the same time, the assessment of disabled students’ performance remained embedded within a framework that considers assessment of disabled students as an additional and separate aspect of the education system, and often of an ‘inferior’ type, rather than an integral component of Italian schooling.

THE LEGISLATIVE MEASURES THAT PAVED THE WAY TO THE POLICY OF INTEGRAZIONE SCOLASTICA

Historically speaking, the origin of an ‘integrationist mentality’ in Italy could be traced back to the promulgation of the Italian Constitution in 1948 (articles 3, 33, 34, 38), the enactment of which represented a turning point in anti-discrimination legislation. Soon after World War Two a democratic Constitution was passed (1948) and it triggered the enactment of social integration policies, which inevitably contributed to the development of integrazione scolastica. Women voted for the first time in Italy and different conflicting forces (Catholic, liberal and communist) were united against Fascism. Since the Fascist dictatorship had denied individual freedom, one of the first targets of the democratic Constitution was to put the dignity of the person and the rights of minorities at the centre of the constitutional charter. For example, participation was to be guaranteed by the State, which now had a duty to remove all social, economic and cultural obstacles (article 3) to citizen participation. All citizens had the right to education, including disabled people (articles 34 and 38).
Thus, although traditional accounts of the policy of integrazione scolastica claim that the first legislative act that favoured the placement of disabled students into regular classrooms was Law n.118 in 1971, the spirit and ethos for integration was already encapsulated in the Constitution charter. Nevertheless, Law n. 118 entitled civil invalids and physically impaired people to education alongside their ‘normal’ peers. Despite the innovative content of this legislative measure, however, Law n. 118/1971, was still inscribed within what Armstrong defines as a ‘functionalist’ approach to disability (Armstrong, 2007). This law in fact focussed on the benefit payments, assistance and protection, and humanitarian concerns of social welfare, to be guaranteed to those who were perceived as different from the norm. Law n. 118 was not particularly concerned with pedagogical and organisational issues but with the provision of special services and financing such as free transport to schools for a particular ‘category’ of students and the removal of architectural barriers – pending the availability of funding. Furthermore, the word ‘invalid’ suggests a link between the role of financial compensation played by the national welfare system in relation to war veterans, and the role of the education system whose duty was to assist civil invalids also as learners.

Although Law n. 118/1971 was an important legislative measure which started off the process of mainstreaming (de Anna, 1997), yet the word integrazione does not appear in the text of the legislation. Moreover, the legislative measure fails to address issues related to the closing down of special schools. Conversely, it leaves room for manoeuvre for those supporting the maintenance of special education (see Nocera, 1988). This is evident in section 28 of the Law, which states that:

Compulsory education must take place in regular schools, in public schools except in those cases in which the subject suffers from severe intellectual deficiency or from physical handicaps so great as to impede or render very difficult the learning processes in the regular classroom. (Booth, 1982:15)

In this extract, a translation of the original Law by Booth (1982), the education of impaired people must take place in normal state schools, unless there are severe physical or intellectual impairments that prevent students’ placement into normal classrooms. This clause, therefore, indicates that Law n. 118 only envisaged ways of ‘facilitating’ the process of integration, rather than struggling to make it compulsory. Similarly, special schools and classes were not abolished but rather reinforced (Nocera, 1988), and school officials could have easily evaded the enrolment of disabled children whenever they could not (or rather, did not want to) integrate them. In 1975, senator Franca Falcucci coordinated a national enquiry to provide research data, which would support the process of integration of disabled students into ordinary settings. It was the first attempt to conduct research to provide findings to support the principles of integrazione scolastica and also the first time when the definition of integrazione scolastica was officially used. The Falcucci document (Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, 1975) was a milestone in the process of integrazione scolastica as it contained some inclusive features that later legislative measures did not contain (for example Law n. 517/1977, Law n. 104/1992). In this document, for example, the barriers to the process of integrazione scolastica were cultural and
social prejudices and not only the biological conditions of the child. Moreover it suggested that integrazione scolastica should start with a transformation of the entire education system, its methodology and its conceptualisation. Clearly, this was a more ‘inclusive’ legislative measure when compared to recent legislative measures that focus on individual impairments (for example Law n. 104/1992, Presidential Decree, 1994). At the same time, the language used in the document is evidence enough of the central role still played by the medical model of disability, in particular when it positioned the experience of disability as a personal tragedy to which society was to provide a remedy. This is also visible in the role of the expert, who is considered essential for the process of integrazione scolastica, and in the need to rely on a medical diagnosis to take action concerning disabled pupils. The Falcucci document had its impact on legislation that began to investigate ways of reviewing traditional teaching. However, the challenging ideas incorporated in this document lost their original power and were hardly to be found again in later legislative measures.

Officially, the policy of integrazione scolastica is linked to the enactment of Law n. 517 in 1977, which demanded the closing down all differentiated classes and schools. In this Law, the term inserimento (placement) is finally replaced with the term integrazione specialistica (specialist integration). However, the term integrazione scolastica still does not appear from the text, since this terminology was only formalised in 1992, with the passing of the Law n. 104 also known as Legge Quadro (Framework Law henceforward). Not only did the Law n. 517/1977 officially abolished differentiated classes and special schools, but it also provided additional resources by which ordinary schools could be improved, such as support teachers and local specialised personnel. Thus the schools were provided with a series of technical and pedagogical instructions as to how to implement integrazione into practice, such as special training required by the support teacher (section 7), the organisation of interdisciplinary activities to support the learning of disabled students (section 7) and the principle of individualisation of learning (section 2). Although this Law amended the terms invalido (invalid) and minorato (impaired), usually interpreted as synonyms of subnormal and abnormal people with handicap (handicapped) or portatore di handicap (carrier of handicap), it failed to address issues concerning structural factors that might have impacted upon the learning of disabled people causing them difficulties. Conversely, despite Law n. 517/1977 having usually been considered as the milestone of integrazione (Canevaro, 2007), I argue that it has, paradoxically contributed to the reproduction of special education courses inside the mainstream – as the term integrazione specialistica, used throughout the text, also suggests. Consequently, although discourses in relation to the policy of integrazione scolastica began to change from an earlier discourse of segregation to a discourse of special expertise (section 2, Law n. 517/1977), disability was constructed as individual impairment that required the assistance of specialist personnel and the protection of the state.

In the 1980s the policy of integrazione scolastica was implemented in infant schools (1982) and in upper secondary schools (1987). The implementation of the policy of integrazione scolastica in other grades of schooling did not necessarily correspond to an increase in the participation of disabled people in society. On the
contrary, with national financial problems accompanied by the increasing individualistic mentality dominating the newly born Italian capitalistic society, the state reinforced the welfare state through the passing of incapacity benefits for disabled people, to the detriment of their actual participation in society. Thus, society guaranteed marginalised sections of the population basic economic support, but the cultural and psychological distance between disabled and non disabled people grew wider (Selleri, 1987). For example, many disabled people had to renounce their employment in order to obtain incapacity benefits. Segregation was not taking place through physical separation, but through the lack of debate with disabled people and the reduction of social participation.


Despite the economic and cultural barriers, the process of integrating disabled students into ordinary classes was considered as something of a ‘natural phenomenon’ of the Italian education system. As Canevaro (2001) argues, however, such ‘naturalness’ represented a double-edged sword. Whilst it promoted the placement of disabled people in ordinary schools by opposing segregationist forces, it also prevented the undertaking of a ‘scientific’ study of this policy on a large scale. Put simply, some commentators (Adams, 1990; Meijer and Abbring, 1994; Mittler, 2000; Johnson, 1993 in Thomas and Loxley, 2001) claimed that Italy not only was implementing inserimento selvaggio ('wild' integration - placing disabled students in common settings without changing the conditions in which their education took place), but also that it did not provide any satisfactory empirical evidence that showed how disabled students’ achievements improved once they were educated in integrated settings. Although very little information is available at an international level and in English language, some research was indeed conducted (Cornoldi and Vianello, 1989; 1990; 1995; Vianello, 1999; Nocera and Gherardini, 2000, Vianello and Lanfranchi, 2009). To define the first steps of integration only in terms of ‘wild integration’ would not do any justice to the work that, despite the numerous difficulties, was done in Italy in those early days. Instead, some Italian research showed how integrazione could positively influence the learning experience of disabled people when compared with the experience of other disabled students placed in special settings, and how the education system could take advantage from the adaptations – curricular and organisational – required for the ‘mainstreaming’ of disabled students in ordinary settings. The underlying principle was that what benefited disabled students could benefit all students and that such awareness would have an impact on the rigidity of school settings (Fiorin, 2007). At the same time, however, many policy makers often interpreted integrazione scolastica primarily in terms of locational integration without placing sufficient emphasis on the changes required in the nature of schooling.

In order to clear integrazione scolastica from assumptions and doubts concerning procedures, roles and competences, in 1992 the Framework Law n. 104 was finally laid down. This law provided a detailed description of how disabled people were to be integrated into society, since it encompassed all social sectors – employment, housing, services – and, of course, education. The Framework Law underlined the
importance of networking among institutional bodies (local education authorities, local health units) and schools, paving the way for the experimentation of new approaches to teaching and learning (such as team teaching and cooperative learning) with actions to be taken in all grades of schools (from infant schools to universities) and all sectors of society (from training centres to employment settings).

With the benefit of hindsight, the Framework Law was a revolutionary legislative measure as it envisaged the removal of social barriers that could hinder the participation of disabled people in society (section 14). This Framework Law adopted a change of emphasis, from focusing on the individual deficit to the settings in which people were situated. Today, it can be considered as the bridging legislative measure between previous policy documents entirely embedded in a special education framework, and which focussed only on the individual deficit - to policies which began to take into consideration societal and environmental factors. On the one hand, this law was characterised by sections concerning specialist assistance, medical rehabilitation (section 7), eugenic discourses on pre-natal screening and medical diagnosis (section 6), provisions allocated according to the severity of impairment (section 3), and the creation of special institutions for severely impaired people (section 8). On the other hand, it seemed to anticipate the notion of disability as something that should be reduced by removing environmental factors (sections 1, 5, 13, and 14). Yet, from an inclusive perspective, the Framework Law remains enshrined in a construction of the notion of disability in terms of deficit, thus sharing continuity with the special education paradigm. This is evident because although it argues for the need to remove societal barriers, it fails to focus on which social obstacles may impact on participation and even determine the very limitations individuals encounter and how they could be removed. Moreover, when it does mention societal barriers, they are always identified in relation to a specific impairment that needs to be adequately provided for, either with professional and/or economic support (section 5). This position is also reinforced by the use of a discriminatory and outdated language that does not distinguish between disability and impairment, the former still considered as the direct consequence of personal deficiencies (section 3). The Framework Law certainly sanctioned legal entitlement for many disabled people in all sectors of society, along with the provision of services and educational facilities, but perhaps, to the detriment of full active citizenship (Selleri, 1987). In particular, in the Framework Law, issues such as self-representation and self-advocacy are not introduced and disabled people were still deprived of their chance (and power) to self-determination.

The limitations embedded in the Framework Law 1992, such as the predominance of a medical model of disability, the lack of self-representation by disabled people, and the fact that it was not a coercive measure, resulted in the passing of further legislative measures that are clearly stepping back from an environmental perception of the notion of disability. In particular the Presidential Decree passed in 1994, known as the Atto di Indirizzo which was concerned with the coordination of rights and duties of local health units to provide disabled students with adequate responses to their ‘special’ needs. This Presidential Decree sanctioned the dominant role of physicians and psychologists in the implementation of integrazione scolastica in
schools and reinforced the lack of self-regulation by disabled people. Along with the use of outdated language, such as *portatore di handicap* (carrier of handicap), the decree not only constructed disability as a personal problem, but also reinforced the hierarchical position of medical professionals in the issue of *certificazione di handicap* (statement of ‘special educational needs’). For this reason, while the Framework Law n. 104 set out to undermine fixed categories of ‘handicap’ by focusing, when possible, on existing environmental barriers, the Presidential Decree in 1994 clearly re-established them. For this reason the Italian Ministry of Public Instruction is officially planning to substitute the Presidential Decree 1994 with a new diagnostic assessment procedure based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (WHO, 2001) which requires the participation of a committee of experts for the issuing of a statement of ‘special educational needs’ rather than of a single medical expert. Such a new procedure is an attempt to reinforce the role of non-medical personnel in the process of issuing a statement of special educational needs and to emphasise the role that environmental barriers may play in the process of learning of pupils with impairments. At the same time however, some commentators (Iosa, 2008; Nocera, 2008) have argued that this new procedure could be another administrative device to reduce the number of certifications (Ministerial Decree n. 185/2006) and financial support allocated to schools and students. Clearly, as I will explain in more details in Chapter three, the problem with the adoption of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF henceforward) as the new diagnostic assessment procedure lies in the fact that there is no real attempt to question the procedure of categorisation as the standpoint of the process of *integrazione*.

AN ALTERNATIVE HISTORY OF *INTEGRAZIONE SCOLASTICA*

Traditional accounts of the policy of *integrazione scolastica* claim that this policy resulted from a sudden political decision encouraged by the civil rights movement along with disability associations and their lobbying (Canevaro, 2001; Mura, 2007). At the same time, however, it is necessary to investigate the wider historical and political scenario of those years, in order to interrogate other possible sources of knowledge that could provide alternative accounts of the reasons why the policy of *integrazione scolastica* was enacted.

The enactment of the policy of *integrazione scolastica* has usually been associated with the socio-medical movement led by the Italian psychiatrist Franco Basaglia. This psychiatrist campaigned for the dismantling of mental asylums and contributed to the passing of a Law in 1978 that bears his name: the Basaglia Law, which shut down all mental hospitals (Segal, Maigne and Gautier, 2003). As Canevaro (2001) argues, however, although there may be links between the process of *integrazione scolastica* and the dismantling of mental asylums, these relations are only secondary. This position is due to the fact that the process of *integrazione* not only began before the actual dismantlement of mental asylums (in 1971) but was the result of a broader social campaign and lobbying and not simply the advanced idea of a single person or of a small group of ‘forward thinking’ scholars (Canevaro, 1999). Nevertheless,
the closing of mental asylums, along with special schools, are clear indications of political priorities in those years. In particular, the de-institutionalisation process was a way of responding not only to general demands to safeguard constitutional rights and social justice (as social upheavals led by students and workers required), but also to provide economic and political responses to unemployment and recession after the international oil crisis of 1973. It is important to keep in mind that, as Foucault (1977) also observes, a process of de-institutionalisation does not necessarily correspond to the termination of state surveillance and control. On the contrary, it may represent a ‘swarming of disciplinary mechanisms’ (1977:211) that function in an invisible and widespread way of maintaining order and it is necessary to explore who benefited from the closing of special institutions. This view, therefore, entails taking into account that the process of de-institutionalisation may cost less than maintaining such institutions and that it also produced job opportunities within the new disability-related professions which proliferated (Wolfensberger, 1989).

The years in which integrazione scolastica became compulsory (1970s) are also known as the anni di piombo (the leaden years). These years were characterised by political upheavals, which saw opposing forces - new fascist movements and radical communist forces - fighting against the state. Italy has always been characterised by many internal divisions and apart from Catholicism, there has never been much internal national cohesion (see Boggs, 1976). A civic effort to contribute to the development of an ideological cohesion capable of awakening the conscience of those involved in fighting against fascist reactionary anti-democratic forces was represented by the Constitutional Charter. Nonetheless, during the 1970s police and other military forces were often the object of bombing raids. Consequently, the political and social climate was tense and the state needed to provide an adequate response to this situation. The response was two-fold: firstly the state sought to control opposing social forces by incorporating them into institutionalised bodies – such as trade unions. Secondly, it conceded many of the social demands – for example by creating employment opportunities and by passing welfare assistance policies. Therefore, the policy of integrazione scolastica could also be interpreted as a state managerial effort to answer to pressure groups. This is also evident by the fact that the policy of integrazione at school did not, at first, concern disabled students, but migrant students who were abandoning the southern agricultural regions for the northern industrial towns. In those years, therefore, the lobbying of disabled people’s associations in favour of mainstreaming was not a separate voice but part of a broader social movement which saw workers and university students campaigning together for justice and democracy for all social minorities.

In the 1970s, the disability rights movements, in particular represented by parents associations, joined the global intellectual movements for democracy and justice and fought for the passing of anti-discriminatory legislative measures. Thanks to their lobbying, segregation in education was practically banished. At the same time, it is important to note that the disabled people’s associations were mainly comprised of parents and voluntary organisations lobbying on behalf of disabled people; at that time, only a few associations were run by disabled people themselves, such as the Fronte Radicale Invalidi - Invalids Radical Front - (Tescari, 2004), while the majority
of disabled people were not considered capable of representing themselves in court or in Parliament. These associations campaigning for disabled people’s rights were known as the associazioni storiche. Although such associations helped many disabled people emerge from a condition of total marginalisation and poverty, they also inevitably contributed to the spreading of discourses of assistance and care, which possibly contributed to the construction of disability in terms of dependence.

The politics of lobbying and campaigning by organisations, families and unions played a central role in the passing of anti-discriminatory policies and their subsequent implementation. The pressure applied upon governmental bodies and decision makers allowed voices to be heard and preliminary changes to occur. As Gramsci (1971) also indicates, it is only by organising themselves into pressure groups that marginalised social groups and their own intellectuals may lead the process of change. Thus, the policy of integrazione scolastica may have provided a fertile terrain for the voices of previously marginalised groups of the population to be heard and listened to. At the same time, it seems that historical descriptions of the policy of integrazione scolastica as a humanitarian policy which fought for the civil rights of disabled people should also be complemented with other accounts which are not only concerned with education but which engage with issues around state control and management of difference/deviance, as the following sections will attempt to describe.

**Social and Economic Factors**

The post-war years witnessed a wider movement of reform across Europe both from a social and economic perspective (Armstrong, 2003). After the destruction of the war period, modern societies aimed to (re)constitute social order, civic unity and economic prosperity. They began to organise themselves in such a way that anything that threatened to destroy the new order was necessarily deemed in need of identification and designation, and consequently, destined to be excluded or, alternatively, incorporated. Arguably, societies were more prone to incorporate diversity – assimilating difference into the norm – rather than allowing the existence of diverging forces, which could challenge the structure of the social system (Stiker, 1999). As Stiker argues, in the Western world, ‘integration is more of a constant in human society than exclusion’ (1999:15). Consequently, an inclusive trend was privileged over an exclusionary one (Armstrong, 2003). This rationale could be traced back in social and economic policies which were passed in the aftermath of World War Two. One example of this was the paternalistic policies enacted by the state which aimed to rehabilitate and re-integrate veterans into society. Stiker (1999) asserts that it was only a question of time before similar treatment was reserved for disabled people and other disadvantaged groups (for example migrants from southern Italy). This attitude, in particular, is evident in the Italian Law n. 118/1971 which establishes benefits and services for civil invalids and impaired people. However, the benevolence of the state cannot be read only in humanitarian terms. There are instead other reasons that originated in social and economic rationales that promoted the passing of integrative policies over segregating ones.
From an economic perspective, for example, integration policies could be seen as a way of promoting the development of capitalism. They not only maximised the potential of labour forces by providing education for all citizens (see the Constitution Charter), and hence motivated the workforce as well as making it more skilled, but they also helped the state to keep public spending upon poor people to a minimum (Armstrong, 2003). The new order required new citizens. Thus, the education system was considered as a crucial tool to create social cohesion and, most importantly, a productive working force to boost the economic revival (Armstrong, 2003). Unlike Britain, however, Italy prioritised integrative policies, over segregating ones as it attempted to re-create a new society by sweeping away the legacy of Fascism. This choice resulted in the closing of special schools (Law n. 517/1977) and the dismantling of mental asylums (Basaglia Law 1978). At the same time, the resilience of a regulatory framework of identification, assessment and categorisation of difference/deviance was maintained within society and mainstream schools.

When *integrazione scolastica* was implemented, the welfare state played a central role in the redistribution of wealth in a post-war poverty-stricken Italy. As Stone (1984) also argues, people were entitled to economic support on the basis of two presuppositions. Compensation was to be given for a loss (for example of a limb during the war) or for incapacity (for example civil invalids). What was important though, was that individuals were not ‘found guilty or responsible’ for their loss or incapacity. In order to identify and ascertain such a condition, the role of the medical professionals as arbiters of the re-distribution of wealth became central. Possibly, a similar rationale of compensation and remediation was transferred into the education system which enacted integrative policies towards those students who were identified as lacking a social or economic background [see Don Milani (Scuola di Barbiana, 1996)] or were perceived as being defective in their body/mind.

The welfare system became a tool for re-distributing wealth according to the severity of ‘needs’ and it represented the rationale for the allocation of resources within the policy of *integrazione scolastica*. At the same time, it is necessary to remember that Italy should be identified as a ‘welfare society’ rather than a welfare state (Rodger, 2004). As Rodger (2004) argues, unlike the British welfare state system, the Italian welfare system is characterised by the presence of intermediate bodies between the state and its subjects. These bodies, which are responsible for the re-distribution of wealth, contribute to the creation of a supporting network in the management of financial resources. The former is based on the principle of subsidiarity and suggests that although the state remains the main welfare provider, local bodies are responsible for wealth re-distribution policies. The welfare society differs from the welfare state since the former is based on the principle of ‘horizontal subsidiarity’ rather than ‘vertical subsidiarity’ (the state and its local bodies). Horizontal subsidiarity in fact, allows the participation of private bodies (the so-called third sector) in the redistribution of resources and services along with the state ones. This is particularly true for the province of Adriazzurra, where the research was conducted. The local policy maker reported that the province of Adriazzurra was renowned for
cooperating with private associations and bodies whose contributions were crucial in the implementation of integrazione scolastica:

Law n. 328/2000 establishes the criteria of vertical and horizontal subsidiarity. The vertical one, which has now been substituted by the article V of the Constitution, consisted of a separation of competences among different institutional bodies, from the region down to the province and the municipality. Instruction remains centrally and state regulated in terms of national indications and educational objectives to be achieved. Horizontal subsidiarity instead consists of a partnership among different local bodies which work in the area and that can make decisions concerning education and schools. The novelty is the participation of the third sector in this decision making process. Whilst the state and provincial bodies have an institutional responsibility, the third sector instead, which is to say the non-governmental organisations and associations, they bring the surplus, they are another important resource ... they do not substitute the institutional bodies but they add to them. (Interview 19, policy maker, Provincial Education Authority)

As this statement shows, the principle of horizontal subsidiarity was perceived as a value added factor. Thus the participation of non-governmental organisations in the field of education was favoured and promoted. Although such a principle could be viewed as an example of a strong social fabric in the province in which the study was conducted, it took for granted that third sector organisations are ‘people with good-heart’. Clearly it is not possible to question intentions, but such a principle can be negative since it endorses voluntary sector and non-governmental organisations whose purposes may not always align with the process of empowerment and independence of disabled people. Furthermore, as Mura (2007) also argues, these associations may risk transforming their original voluntary mission into a more entrepreneurial one, thus serving their own needs, rather than addressing the requirements of the people they ought to represent. The principle of horizontal subsidiarity therefore needs to be carefully analysed in particular in those regions where there is a limited civic tradition and where the state is often absent, allowing the maintenance of criminal organisations (such as the Mafia), often disguised as third sector associations.

The development of a welfare society based on the collaboration among different local bodies and state schools is still a crucial ingredient of the policy of integrazione scolastica as it contributes to the development of a social approach to disability and education which is based upon solidarity, community assistance and networking among local bodies (see Law n. 328/2000 and Policy Guidelines, 2009). However, unlike the social model of disability, this solidarity and community approach to disability does not focus on the need to differentiate between impairment (individual) and disability (social), and on the active political role disabled people should play in the process of change, but rather on the need to ensure social and economic resources and public assistance to those people who needed additional state support.

The role of this sympathetic and civic approach to disability and education is also corroborated by the study of Putnam (1993). He argued that ‘social capital’ - strong social fabric, a sense of community, solidarity, civic traditions - was the relevant
factor that contributed to the making of democracy in Italy (Putnam, 1993). The growing societal links enabled collaboration among local forces to implement the democratic policies formulated at the top. Following Putnam’s analysis, some Italian policy makers claimed that ‘social capital’ was to be identified as a fundamental factor for the development of integration (Stellacci, 2003). At the same time, however, this position fails to examine possible economic explanations as the basis of this civic collaboration. Putnam’s study actually fails to mention the possible links between the development of a community care system for dependent social groups and the fight against unemployment. As Oliver (1985) and Wolfensberger (1989) argue, it is evident that segregated provision provided a limited amount of work placements compared to community care provision and, consequently, the latter was also a way of creating extra employment at a local level. Providing care within the community ameliorated the lives of former asylum patients and promoted integrazione, but it was also a way of increasing the opportunities for social and assistance workers of the third sector. Many professionals who were originally working in segregated institutions moved into community services. This could also corroborate the idea, as shown in the following chapter, that a special education paradigm was exported along with the expertise of the personnel from special schools within the new mainstream setting.

The third sector contributed to the increasing employability of disabled people and therefore, to the reduction of public expenses. Disabled people who become independent and autonomous, thanks to community services, require less assistance in the long term, and, from an economic perspective, less funding than those disabled people who are dependent and live in segregated institutions for their entire lives. Evidently, this consideration motivated policy makers to increase the financial resources allocated to education and in particular to the education and training of disabled people. On the other hand, though, the role of the third sector, and the professionals working for disabled people, very rarely challenge the relation of power between disabled ‘clients/users’ and non-disabled ‘providers’ of services, leaving in place the hierarchical relation of those who define the needs of others and those who are in need (Armstrong, 2003). Such situation contributed to the production of discourses of dependency that construct disability as an individual deficit.

**Pedagogical Factors**

Unlike the English setting, the Italian context possesses a strong pedagogical tradition which identifies pedagogy as a ‘scientific basis to the theory and practice of education’ (Simon, 1999:38). The importance of pedagogical studies in the country was a crucial factor that paved the way to integrazione scolastica. The impact of international pedagogues and psychologists, in particular from France and the USA, contributed to the development of special pedagogy, a specialist branch of pedagogy dedicated to the study of learning of pupils with impairments (Canevaro, 1999).

Among the French scholars, the research of Séguin and Itard with the young boy Victor was a fundamental pedagogical underpinning that confronted the discourse of ‘ineducability’ in relation to disabled students. At the same time other theorists
such as Maria Montessori (1870–1952), Sante de Sanctis (1862–1935), Giuseppe Ferruccio Montesano (1868–1961), Oury (1920–1998), Freinet (1896–1966), Decroly (1871–1932), Claparède (1873–1940), Dewey (1859–1952), Piaget (1896–1980), Vygotskij (1896–1934) and Bruner (1915–) contributed and still contribute, to the development of educational theories supporting the process of integrazione of disabled people in ordinary settings. Furthermore, the work of Don Milani (1923–1967), a priest and an educator, had a strong influence upon Italian teachers. He founded the school of S. Andrea of Barbiana where he argued against a selective and rigid education system, which reproduces social class division between the rich and the poor. He challenged traditional teaching methods by introducing new tools and procedures that could meet the requirements of under-privileged students, especially those migrating from the south of Italy and/or the countryside.

Indeed, a crucial pedagogical factor that paved the way for the enactment of the policy of integrazione scolastica was the psychological study of learning exploring how it takes place and how it can be improved. Many Italian scholars (see Rugiu, 1979; Canevaro and Gaudreau, 1993; Cambi, 2005) emphasised that learning needs a stimulating setting for its development to take place and that, as in the work of Vygotskij (1987), it gains from the interaction between two or more individuals. Moreover, the pedagogical studies in Italy focussed on the process of learning of pupils rather than on the idea of fixed and inherited learning capacity. With this in mind, learning could be improved depending on pedagogical means and the development of research studies in cognition (Bruner, 1972). These studies challenged the traditional idea of learning as a one-way transmission of knowledge and underlined the importance of the central role played by the learner and the interaction with peers. Consequently, to promote significant learning, the school context needed to be modified both in terms of its structures (Oury and Vasquez 1982) and also in terms of cultural assumptions and practices (Bruner, 1996). Clearly, special school settings did not provide such encouraging conditions in relation to the development of learning as outlined by pedagogues and psychologists. Such considerations presented a fertile terrain to those opposing segregated schooling and aiming at creating an education system capable of ameliorating society.

Subsequently, the ‘active school movement’ developed by Decroly, Claparède, Bovet and Piaget as well as the ‘progressive pedagogy’ of Dewey, paved the way for a vision of schools that could modify society into a democratic arena (Borghi, 1984). The influence of Dewey was incorporated into the development of CEMEA (Centri di esercitazione ai metodi dell’educazione attiva – active education training centres), and of MCE (Movimento Cooperazione Educativa – movement for educational cooperation) and, in the pioneering experience offered at the CEIS (Centro Educativo Italo Svizzero – Swiss-Italian Educational Centre) in Rimini. Such experiences were all attempts to break with the rigidity of the Italian education system and they anticipated some of the changes that integrazione scolastica attempted to introduce in regular school settings such as the process of individualisation of learning and the principle of learning through experience (active learning).

Clearly, pedagogy, and more specifically special pedagogy, has always played a crucial role in the development of teaching and learning. This position has been
particularly relevant for developing ways of promoting learning for disabled students, as it has reinforced the idea that disabled students, in particular those with intellectual impairments, can improve their learning depending on the modalities within which they are taught and where they are taught. As in the work of Corbett and Norwich (1999) on connective pedagogy, Canevaro (1986) developed the concept of ‘sfondo integratore’ (integrative framework) in order to underline how the quality of teaching and of the school support are crucial elements to promote the link between individualised teaching and classroom curricular objectives. However, what was crucial for special education pedagogues (Cornoldi and Vianello, 1995; Canevaro, 1999; Neri, 1999; Vianello, 1999; Canevaro, 2002) was that the principles behind teaching and learning for disabled students were not fundamentally different from those of students without impairments. What needed changing was the degree and the intensity of teaching and learning modalities (such as adaptation) for students with impairments compared to students without impairments (Ainscow, 1994). Special pedagogues argued that teaching and learning modalities specifically adapted for learners with intellectual impairments could become significant levers of change to enhance education for all students (Canevaro, 1999). Put simply, the experience of schooling of disabled students was conceived as the ‘tip of the iceberg’ of an education system that needed to be renovated and improved, by starting with testing out new teaching approaches and materials deriving from special education. Much in agreement with the work of Corbett and Norwich (1999), special pedagogy in Italy attempted to find models of pedagogy that could suit the common, specific and unique individual needs of each pupil and at the same time, that could be transferred from the special to the mainstream sector. However, as this book illustrates, distinct pedagogies were difficult to implement in the schools I visited for my research. Furthermore, theoretical studies about school change were rarely formalised into school practice and the processes of systematisation of adapted teaching procedures remained at a local level. With hindsight, what seemed to emerge was that special education was transplanted into the mainstream settings by means of focusing on individual adjustments and personalised responses for disabled pupils, without any formalised attempt to plan for a re-organisation of the mainstream setting nor for the identification of learning goals and teaching skills that could be shared by all students, as inclusion should do (Ainscow, 1997; 2000). Consequently, specific pedagogic approaches often led to separate learning pathways, either in segregated or in mainstream settings, rather than improving the quality of education for all students.

Nevertheless, the predominance of psychological and educational theories, contributed to the production of discourses about ‘learning’ constructed in cognitive, developmental and constructivist terms as well as to the construction of a specific type of educated subject (Fendler, 1998). Learning began to be interpreted in normative forms and in relation to average population referents. Consequently, although these pedagogical developments might have facilitated the dismantling of special institutions as places for learning, they also contributed to the construction of current assumptions of what is ‘normal’ learning and what counts as knowledge. For instance, they might have reinforced misconceptions about learning that determined the production of discourses and new labels such as ‘special educational needs’ (Corbett, 1996), ‘learning
difficulties’ (Nind et al., 2005; Rix et al., 2005) and most recently ‘attention deficit hyperactivity’ and ‘behavioural disorders’.

Religious Factors

Although Italy is a Republican State, the Church has always played, and still plays, a crucial cultural role, with the Catholic religion representing the dominant ideology. This was evident in the political role played by the Christian Democratic Party which ruled the country for more than 40 years and in the teaching of Roman Catholic religion in all state schools following the Concordato – a document signed between the Pope and Mussolini in 1929. As Foucault (2003) also indicates in most Western countries, ecclesiastical power has always sought the support from disciplinary and educational systems to establish its role. In order to understand the ideological role played by the Church in Italy I shall draw on the work of Gramsci (1971) who distinguished between political society - the State, bureaucratic and clerical bodies - and civil society - private sector and other voluntary and religious associations. My argument is that possibly, as a consequence of the signing of the Concordat between the State and the Church, there was a unification of political society (State) with civil society – mainly represented by the Roman Catholic Church. Somehow the Church was incorporated by the State so that they could both maintain their hegemonic power against opposing forces (such as communism). As Boggs (1976) indicates:

Church in Italy was not merely part of the institutional status quo, a privileged bastion of economic wealth and social status; nor was Catholicism strictly a metaphysical set of beliefs. Religious ideology performed a concrete political function in containing and distorting popular rebellion, for example by stressing the natural (God-given) character of existing structures such as private property and the family, the importance of transcendental commitment over everyday (‘earthly’) collective action to change the world, the supposed moral virtues of poverty and weakness, and the sacrosanct nature of all forms of established authority. (Boggs, 1976:43)

This statement suggests that Catholicism permeated all social ranks and contributed to the development of discursive formations that complied with Church values. The influence of the Catholic Church impacted upon the construction of the notion of disability, and consequently, on the formulation and implementation of the policy of integrazione scolastica. In particular, the role of the Church seems to have been central for the construction of disability as something inevitable, or a ‘personal tragedy’ where the disabled person is perceived as someone in ‘need’ of cure and assistance. This is particularly true when reading the Gospels (see for example the Gospel of St. Matthew) where Jesus Christ restores health to the poor and the deformed. This incident is often mentioned in public speeches and is exemplary of the role of the Church in the conceptualisation of the notion of disability. For instance, in the speech delivered by John Paul II during the Jubilee of Disabled People, the Pope referred to disability as a ‘ruin for the world in which we live
today but a joy for the other world’ and to disabled people ‘as the blessed creatures who will be compensated in Heaven’ (Giovanni Paolo II, 2000). These statements, not only circulated discourses of charity and assistance in society, but also had a negative impact on the lives of disabled people, as they promulgated passivity and acceptance rather than political action, participation and possibly rebellion. Clearly, with hindsight, the Church might have contributed to the replacement of eighteenth and nineteenth century assumptions of sin and guilt, usually associated with disability, and might have substituted these misconceptions with alternative notions of acceptance and human dignity (Onger and Robazzi, 2008). Nevertheless, I argue that the Church articulated discourses of charity and pity that negatively influenced the development of an independent and empowering disabled people’s movement, deceived by a discourse of a better life after death.

In addition, the role of the Church and its alliance with the State can be considered as an example of ‘pastoral power’ (Foucault, 1982), and ‘bio-power’ (Foucault, 1978) and how the state manages to perpetuate its power through mechanisms of control. This pastoral power is not only concerned with the salvation of each single individual, but also with the modalities in which the shepherd keeps watch over, and manages to control, his flock individually. As Foucault indicates in the interview on ‘Politics and Reason’ (Foucault, 1988), this pastoral technology is a matter of constant attention that individualises, normalises and governs individuals. To put it simply the Roman Catholic Church has always played a central role in Italy and its influence is still visible in the organisation of the welfare state and in the reinforcing of discursive practices of dependence, vulnerability and assistance concerning disability and the management of disabled people in society. As Gramsci (1971) pertinently writes, the alliance between the Church and the State to achieve, maintain and sustain the unification of the country was an exemplar of hegemonic bloc.

This alternative account of religious factors is an attempt to increase social awareness regarding taken-for-granted discourses of ‘benevolent acceptance’ and ‘voluntary assistance’ and to start questioning the limits embedded in religious-based constructs and organisations.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have provided an account of the context relating to the reasons that led to the passing of this historically ‘progressive policy’. As this chapter has shown, the policy of integrazione did not arise from a research-based decision about education. Although some research was conducted to demonstrate the validity of the policy from a pedagogical, social and economic perspective, the policy of integrazione scolastica appears to be the result of the fusion – or the hegemonic bloc - of different social groups. They were used to support the ruling group’s major interests and to maintain the status quo of the newly born state against possible perils (Armstrong, 1999) as exemplified by the social upheavals of the 70s. The interests of ruling groups – for example state and Church - were transferred and shared by different lobbies – teachers, psychologists, educationalists, parents, and disabled people – and it was only through such a social consensus that integrazione scolastica was conceived.
as the only possible alternative to segregated education. Subsequent legislative measures therefore, attempted to add educational value and quality to decisions taken under the pressure of political, economic and social contingencies. By acting as a hegemonic bloc, the policy of integrazione scolastica managed to concretely disseminate a philosophy of integration and to put an end to segregated education throughout a divided country. Despite the existence of a few exemplars of special schools (which should be further investigated), nowadays almost all students attend local schools and this is certainly one of the most important legacies brought about by the policy of integrazione scolastica that needs to be acknowledged. At the same time, this chapter indicates that this policy shares continuities with the special needs education paradigm. In the following chapters, evidence to substantiate such an argument will be presented.
CHAPTER 2

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

Much in agreement with a radical interpretation of the notion of inclusion, this chapter exemplifies the differences among the concepts of inclusion, special needs education and integration and their being embedded in different theoretical frameworks. The argument presented in this chapter will seek to break out of the traditional ‘special education’ rationale which immediately locates the issues of inclusion and exclusion with the identification and remediation of students categorised as ‘different’ on the basis of an individual impairment, social and economic disadvantage and/or ethnic origin (Ainscow & Booth, 1998). The chapter will be divided into four main sections beginning with an analysis of why inclusive education is usually associated with disability and an investigation into inclusive education as an international educational imperative. Then a section will address the issue of inclusive education as a theoretical and sociological concept with its own critical approaches to education and educational goals. The chapter then looks at the notion of inclusive education in Italy and how different contexts and histories may determine different interpretations of such a concept. Finally, after a brief historical description of the development of special education in Italy, the chapter will focus on the resilience of special education language and how such a language may represent a barrier for the development of inclusive education.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND DISABILITY

An increasing number of supra-national and governmental bodies suggest that inclusion is the key educational principle through which to address issues of equality and diversity in education and to improve the overall quality of the education systems (Department for Education and Employment, 1997; Department for Education and Skills, 2004; Kyriazopoulou & Weber, 2009; OECD, 2004; UNESCO, 1994, 2003b). Under the banner of inclusion, many struggles, concerned with the removal of all discriminatory barriers, are being fought for the construction of a more just and equitable society. It is not surprising that the inclusion principle becomes morally and ethically shared by those who believe in the development of a more democratic education as the basis and requirement for wider social reforms. Although this principle is widely shared among theorists and policy makers, there is still, arguably, a lack of consensus about what inclusion means and, most importantly, what its implications are at the level of policy and practice (Ainscow & Booth, 1998; Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006; Felicity Armstrong & Barton, 2001; Campbell, 2002). Slee and Allan (2001) argue, that the notion of inclusive education is often misinterpreted and considered as a progressive continuum stemming from a special education needs
CHAPTER 2

standpoint. This latter misconception inevitably results in many people, in particular disabled people, still experiencing exclusion in modern societies (DPI, 2005; EDF, 2004) despite the passing of anti-discriminatory legislative measures.

A common aspect of the policy of inclusion is that although there are different interpretations, they usually focus on the learning experience of disabled people and of those students defined as having ‘special educational needs’. The interpretation of inclusion used within this book makes a case that inclusive education does not concern only disabled people and students perceived as having ‘special educational needs’. The focus on the experience of disabled people is due to the fact that firstly, disabled people continue to experience discrimination at school, as exclusionary practices become more visible ‘along the lines of class, ‘race’, ethnicity and language, disability, gender and sexuality and geographic location’ (Slee, 2001:116)’ and secondly, because their experience of political and social struggle may be relevant in understanding how exclusion manifests itself in society today (Armstrong and Barton, 2001). As Armstrong et al. (2000) state, disabled people have taken the lead in exploring political aspects of education and they have embraced the principle of inclusion as their underpinning value (DPI, 2005). For this reason the issue of how disability is conceptualised suggests a useful and important starting-point in understanding how different actors make sense of inclusive education both in terms of theory and of practice. At the same time, the focus on disability issues does not preclude the incorporation of issues of discrimination and exclusion concerning the wider society; nor does it confine its focus to legal entitlements and particular requirements for an identified and ‘categorised’ minority (F. Armstrong, 2003b).

In addition, the disability movement is relevant as an emerging new social movement at the forefront of the struggle for a more inclusive society and education (Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespeare, 1999; Barnes, Oliver, & Barton, 2002; Charlton, 1998; Mike Oliver, 1990). Much in line with a Gramscian vision of the potentially transformative effects of action of new social groups (1971), the role of the disabled people’s movement can be conceived as a new social movement capable of triggering radical changes that can influence politics and promote action for change by ‘presenting old issues in new forms’ (Oliver, 1990:130). Moreover, it is necessary to underline that disabled people have for a long time been on the sideline of the social fight for civil rights in the history of disability and education. Therefore it is necessary to provide a space for their voices and perspectives to be heard (Armstrong, 2007; Barnes, et al., 1999).

As argued elsewhere (D’Alessio, 2009), inclusive education therefore, has got nothing to do with the inclusion of disabled pupils into regular classrooms but it is concerned with the making of inclusive education systems. Inclusive education goes beyond issues of access and equality related to pupils identified as having special educational needs in order to encompass issues of systemic educational change – radical changes of the education systems for all students. How changes are to occur, and what types of changes are required are the main questions confronted by those who are involved in the struggle for inclusion (Barton & Armstrong, 2007).
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FROM AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Soon after the international Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994), the word inclusion appeared in almost all major international documents and reports of most supra-national bodies (Meijer, Soriano and Watkins, 2003b; OECD, 1997, 1999; UNESCO, 2003b). In these reports, the education of children at risk of being excluded and marginalised is promoted as one of the main points on the international agenda. Following the demands of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) and the subsequent United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalizations of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 1993), all children, youth and adults ‘with disabilities’, are, in principle, entitled to the same educational opportunities in an integrated setting (UN Standard Rule n. 6). Similarly, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) has reasserted the principle of inclusion as a way of fighting all forms of discrimination (including segregated education) as an issue of human rights. This international commitment to inclusion, however, has not resulted in a common interpretation of the concept of inclusive education, which still means different things to different researchers, reflecting contrasting theoretical and ideological contexts in which inclusion is considered (D’Alessio and Watkins, 2009).

As is evident from cross cultural studies conducted by different international bodies such as UNESCO (2003b, 2008), European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADSNE, 2008; Meijer, Soriano and Watkins, 2003a) in some countries, inclusive education is mainly concerned with the dismantling of segregated education, whereas in other countries it is concerned with the attempt to increase the number of pupils accessing basic education. In particular, in the European context, we may identify two main conceptualisations of the notion of inclusive education: the first one concerning the provision for children identified with ‘special educational needs’ - either in regular or special settings – and how these settings can respond to pupils’ different needs (Meijer, Soriano and Watkins, 2003; 2003b), and the second one concerning the ‘education for all’ (EFA) project and how to guarantee basic education to all pupils (UNESCO, 1990, 2000, 2003b). As a consequence of these two international priorities - the ‘mainstreaming’ imperatives and the ‘education for all’ - some countries have enacted anti-discrimination policies which have been mainly concerned with the entitlement of disabled students to attend local schools – for example the Special Needs Education and Disability Act 2001 (HMSO, 2001) in the UK and the Law 12/2/2005 in France.

Different interpretations of the concept of inclusive education, however, determine the enactment and the implementation of different and often diverging educational policies and practices in different contexts. An example of this problem emerges from the report of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (Meijer, Soriano and Watkins, 2003a) in which inclusive education seemed to be interpreted, by some country members, as a new terminology for special needs education, thus allowing the maintenance of forms of segregated settings within the education system despite the passing of ‘inclusive policies’. Recently, however, the interpretation of inclusive education in Agency member countries has undergone relevant changes to include issues that go beyond the study of a ‘category’ of
pupils, such as those identified as having special educational needs to incorporate the study of how contexts and schools are attempting to undergo changes in order to welcome the diversity of the student population.

As far as the notion of ‘Education for All’ is concerned (UNESCO, 1990, 2000), inclusive education is often interpreted as a way of ensuring access to basic education to all children, notwithstanding the type of context in which education is taking place particularly in those countries in which people are fighting with issues such as poverty, famine, diseases and war. This target is to be achieved by developing policy guidelines that fight against all forms of discrimination and improve the quality of schooling for all, taking into account social, political and economic constraints that may impact upon the localised meaning and the making of inclusion. This view is also supported by the Disabled Peoples’ International (DPI henceforward) an international organisation of disabled people that understand and promotes inclusive education as an ‘Education for All’ policy (DPI, 2005). It has been suggested that this interpretation of the notion of inclusive education could contribute to the passing of legislation necessary to improve students’ access to curricula and their participation in learning (UNESCO, 2003a, 2003, 2008).

Lately, however, international organisations such as UNESCO and the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, have discussed inclusion in terms of participation, equality and quality of the general education system, thus supporting the current interpretation of inclusion as a human rights issue (UNESCO, 2009; D’Alessio, Watkins and Donnelly, in press).

Defining the Concept of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is a controversial field because there are almost as many definitions as there are people who study it and who rely on differing theoretical frameworks. Dyson (1999) for example, talks of ‘inclusions’ rather than ‘inclusion’. This view is also supported by scholars who argue that there exists, from a synchronic perspective, different types of inclusion which overlap with one another, such as ‘full’, ‘responsible’ and ‘cautious’ inclusion (Vaughn and Schumm, 1995; Hornby 1999 in Evans & Lunt, 2002). Likewise, Peter Clough and Jenny Corbett (2000) emphasise that there are many different diachronic interpretations of inclusive education depending on the dominant historical paradigms of the time. They distinguish between five key theories of inclusive education, each one characterised by a specific ideological approach to education as follows: the psycho-medical legacy, the sociological response, the curricular approach, the school improvement strategies and the disability studies (Clough & Corbett, 2000). Similarly, Cigman (2007) distinguishes among three different types of inclusion: radical, moderate and the UNESCO positions. She argues that the first position can be identified with the works of the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) and Parents for Inclusion, who strongly support the dismantling of special schools and the education of all pupils within regular school settings. The moderate position is the one supported by Mary Warnock and her followers who argue that for some pupils with profound learning difficulties and impairments (for example pupils with autism), ordinary schools are
'potentially catastrophic' (2007:XIX). Consequently, their interpretation of inclusion offers space for sustaining some special schools. The last position, which Cigman identifies with the UNESCO position is not concerned with the old debate which opposes special to mainstream schools, but focuses instead on the need to reform schools so that they can meet all students’ requirements. This vision, Cigman (2007) claims, takes into account the possibility of maintaining special schools, as some ‘needs’ may, it is argued, only be addressed in special settings. Inclusion, she argues is not about where you educate students, but how you address the ‘dilemma of difference’ (2007:XXII), hence to provide the adequate number of resources and distribute them equally according to peoples’ needs (Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 1992). The conceptualisation and the response to difference are very complex educational issues, especially for those pupils who have been identified as ‘more vulnerable’ (Terzi, 2005). Two opposing perspectives seem to emerge within the education sector. On the one hand there is an approach that supports the use of classification systems necessary to ensure adequate provision of resources depending on pupils’ needs (Warnock, 2005:11). On the other hand, there is an approach that argues for the need of eliminating these systems of classification as they may end up discriminating some pupils through a labelling procedure. The human right approach to education, as theorised by inclusive education theorists (Armstrong & Barton, 1999; Barton, 2008) is an attempt to address such a contradiction.

As a consequence of the different ways of defining inclusive education, each study concerning inclusion must have as its point of departure its own definition of inclusion. In this book, inclusive education is defined as the educational principle that aims at transforming education systems and creating more equal and just societies. It is concerned with all of us and suggests possible routes to make radical educational and social changes. It fights against political, social, economic and cultural barriers that hinder the participation of all students in the process of learning regardless of their biological condition, social and economic background and ethnic origin. As Barton puts it:

Inclusive education is not merely about providing access into mainstream school for pupils who have previously been excluded. It is not about closing down an unacceptable system of segregated provision and dumping those pupils in an unchanged mainstream system. Existing school systems in terms of physical factors, curriculum aspects, teaching expectations and styles, leadership roles, will have to change. (Barton, 1998:84)

This statement challenges current dominant interpretations and actions concerning schooling and education, stresses the way in which inclusive education demands a variety of efforts both at the level of theory and practice. Inclusive education does not only concern itself with the technicalities of teaching and learning (for example didactics) and how students with difficulties may access the curriculum. It must also explore the theory and ideology which informs teachers’ actions, and equally importantly, take account of issues related to what education is and what its fundamental purposes are (Ainscow, et al., 2006; F. Armstrong, 2003a, 2003b; Giroux, 2001; Slee, 1998, 2007).
CHAPTER 2

Inclusive education is a contentious issue that requires continuous conceptual re-definition depending on the context and the actors under discussion and analysis. However, as Barton (2001b) argues, the struggle for inclusive education is neither utopian nor inconclusive and despite the attacks in Mary Warnock’s pamphlet (2005), there is enough evidence that research has been conducted in the field of inclusive education to support its further development (Ainscow, 2005, 2007; Ainscow & Booth, 1998; Ainscow, et al., 2006; Allan, 1999, 2003; D. Armstrong, 2003; F. Armstrong, 2003b; Barton & Armstrong, 2007; Booth & Ainscow, 2000; Roger Slee, 2007; UNESCO, 2003b). The possibility of creating an inclusive society through an inclusive education system increases with the number of people who share that hope. That is why the experience of disabled people becomes central to the struggle for change. As Barton has argued, inclusive education is not an individual or a fragile aspiration, but a ‘collective hope’ (Barton, 2001a:4).

Exclusion Processes

Some commentators have argued that in order to overcome the issues of interpretations and policy implementation in different contexts, inclusion could be better understood in relation to exclusion (Ainscow & Booth, 1998; Booth, 1995). This view entails responding to questions such as: who is excluded, from where, for what reasons and which mechanisms determine exclusion.

Not only can exclusion take many forms (for example curricular, organisational and institutional), but it is often, also, invisible (Armstrong, et al., 2000). Like the issue of inclusion, exclusion is not as straightforward as it may seem. Exclusion may take different forms ranging from segregation in special institutions and classrooms to the process of effacing diversity by ‘fusing the abnormality with the normality’ (Stiker, 1999:136). As Stiker (1999) argues, exclusion is very often disguised in Western countries as a form of integration. Thus, integrative policies may paradoxically contribute to the disappearance of difference, rather than to its celebration (Stiker, 1999). Unmasking all different forms of exclusion is not only a matter of dismantling segregated systems of education, but may also include dealing with covert forms of exclusion inside the mainstream. In line with this consideration, Booth has introduced the issue of ‘coded’ forms of exclusion which may be found embedded in a system (Booth, 2000:91). Similarly, Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006) have described exclusion not only as a state of being banned from a local school but also as the perpetuation of discriminatory processes in place within schools (and society). In order to be discovered, such forms of exclusion require a thorough analysis of those practices and policies already in place, which are often taken for granted (hence their invisibility) and that can be discriminatory despite ostensible good intentions to be otherwise. An example of this is the process of statementing students with ‘special educational needs’ in the UK. This procedure allows the allocation of fundamental resources to promote the inclusion of some students into the mainstream, whilst nevertheless contributing to the construction of some students’ identities as ‘others’ in relation to the majority of peers without a statement of special educational needs or a Record of Needs.
The process of analysis of visible and invisible forms of exclusion requires a changing lens through which things have traditionally been seen and understood. Charlton (1998) for example, argues that when investigating the oppression of disabled people, we can be faced with the analysis of internalised paradigms – structures with which people have lived for so long that they consider them as natural. Educational changes from an inclusive perspective imply, of course, a change of these internalised paradigms, based on an understanding that things are not natural but instead result from decisions taken by specific actors, with particular aims and in particular historical and contextual settings (Apple, 2008). All these elements, including issues of power relation (such as who is making the decision, where and how), need to be further explored if we want to fundamentally challenge all forms of marginalisation and exclusion. Most importantly, in order to fight against exclusion in all its different forms it is necessary to listen to the voices of those who have been excluded. This view necessitates ‘listening to unfamiliar voices, being open and empowering all members’ (Barton, 1998:85) such as students, whose ideas and wishes are too often neglected by policy makers, as well as disabled people, migrants and travellers’ children, whose rights have often been put aside.

As Barton suggests, inclusive education should fundamentally be a ‘celebration of difference’ in which human diversity is valued and each individual’s dignity is respected (Barton, 1998:80) - not a system reinforcing existing inequalities. Consequently, discourses of valuing diversity and difference as educational resources must be detected and transformed in order to shift from a mere process of acceptance and tolerance into a real process of celebration of difference. In order to concretely develop the process of inclusion, a celebration of difference should include debates about how diversity can be valued within and outside schools and should also take into account the crucial changes that curriculum, pedagogy and assessment procedures should undergo in the mainstream settings. Taking full account of different forms of exclusion, the study that informs this book analysed those policies and practice that have been in place long enough to be considered as ‘natural’.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: A PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Inclusive education has been described as a continuum rather than as a static condition (Jordan & Goodey, 1996). Often defined as an ongoing process (Ainscow & Booth, 1998; 2000; Rustemier & Booth, 2005), inclusive education may be understood as requiring a continual effort to improve the level of responsiveness of schools to all of their students’ requirements, keeping at the forefront inclusive values and ethos (Corbett & Slee, 2000). It would be impossible, of course, to ensure universal inclusive education by devising a uniform model – not least, because a school cannot be ‘made’ inclusive by following a recipe for policy and practice. What can be implemented and disseminated is, rather, an attitude towards change in relation to all those conditions that hamper inclusion and foster exclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2000). Fundamental to such an undertaking is an understanding that schools are
embedded in different contexts which produce different constraints (D’Alessio & Watkins, 2009).

For this reason, inclusive education does not encompass only schooling and the way schooling is organised and provided, but must also be concerned with the radical and broader changes necessary to improve the living conditions of all citizens in which education plays a major role. As Armstrong et al. (2000) argue:

….inclusive education is not an end in itself. Nor ultimately is the fundamental issue that of disabled people. In educational terms it is about the value and well-being of all pupils. Thus, the key concern is about how, where and with what consequences do we educate all children and young people. This inevitably involves both a desire for, and engagement with, the issue of change. (Felicity Armstrong, et al., 2000:1)

These authors underline how inclusive education relates to the consequences of educating all children and to improvements in their life prospects and does not constrain itself to the process of mainstreaming disabled students into regular settings. For them, inclusive education concerns the wider society, in which education is conceived of as being an agent of change rather than being a reproducer of social inequality (Armstrong & Barton, 1999).

Developing inclusive education in any one school necessitates careful consideration of the school’s starting point and its specific cultural, historical and social contexts. Such an approach suggests that inclusion involves two processes:

…the process of increasing participation of pupils within the cultures and curricula of mainstream schools and the process of decreasing exclusionary pressures. (Booth, 1996:34)

The clear implication here is that the development of inclusion requires action inside and outside schools. Changes at the level of curriculum delivery inside the school, for example, would not result in any real change, if teachers were not relieved from external pressures that society and, most particularly, assessment procedures and standardised attainment of traditional knowledge, placed upon them [see the insights of teachers constrained by a highly selective and exclusionary education system (Armstrong & Moore, 2004)]. As a consequence of this view, interpretations of inclusive education entail a sociological analysis of education and pedagogy that explores the forces that may oppress schools and teachers along with the attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate exclusion.

As Mittler (2000) argues, inclusive education can also be defined as a process of reform. In this regard, inclusive education is not concerned with a particular group of students but with the restructuring of the education system in general; a system capable of responding effectively to the totality of children. Taking account of the limited amount of resources available and current curricular and assessment constraints in Western world systems of education, it may prove difficult in the immediate future to implement a change of the education system. Consequently, some authors indeed (Campbell, 2002; Ianes, 2005; Terzi, 2007) argue for the implementation and development of special schools, or of systems of classification, such
as the International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health (WHO 2001) for an equal (re)distribution of resources, in order to establish priorities whilst a more thorough transformation of the education system is developed. This view may be seen as part of the wider debate about how to tackle immediate problems. Nevertheless, it ends up reinforcing ill-founded claims (Barton, 2005) that deflect the attention from a necessary debate about how to improve schooling for all and how to transform and not only reform existing education systems. In fact, while a ‘transformation’ implies a re-conceptualisation of education systems by taking into account new challenges and educational objectives for the school of the twenty-first century, a reform implies a process of adaptation of already existing systems. Thus, when we are concerned with the redistribution of resources and the increasing of funding to manage diversity we are probably addressing inclusion as a process of reforming education systems, and therefore may risk reducing the issues regarding inclusive education to one of making a call on more public funds (Slee, 2007):

This often has little to do with establishing an inclusive curriculum, pedagogic practices or classroom organisation to reconstruct schools. More typically it is a systematic approach to acquiring human resources to mind the disabled student. (Slee, 2007:181)

In addition Slee observes that:

Authentic inclusive school reform is costly as it does imply the need for reforms to workforce preparation, pedagogic practice, curriculum orientations and materials, evaluative frameworks and the physical design of many existing school structures. The redeployment of existing structures and incremental increases to special educational resources is regarded as an easier option for government and is industrially more palatable. Such conditions place different students at continuing risk of exclusion in and out of regular schools. (Slee, 2007:181)

Much in agreement with the previous statements, inclusive education is not about meeting the needs of a ‘vulnerable’ minority in a mainstream setting, but should rather be concerned with answering fundamental questions about what type of school is needed to meet the requirements of all students and, most importantly, what the goals of education should be:

A movement towards inclusion is not about making marginal adjustments but rather about asking the fundamental questions concerning the way in which the organisation is currently structured. (Ainscow, 1997:5)

It is within this radical position of inclusive education and the issues around change that this book has chosen to align with.

**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: ITALIAN STYLE**

The use of terminology such as inclusive education is rather new in the Italian context (Caldin, 2004; Canevaro, 2006b, 2007; Canevaro & Mandato, 2004; Dovigo & Ianes, 2008; Ianes, 2005; Ianes & Tortello, 1999; Medeghini, 2006, 2008). Historically
speaking, the term inclusion in Italy has always been used to refer to ‘social inclusion’ without any clear reference to education. Documents from the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Ministry of Social Solidarity report that *inclusione* consists of a social policy which aims to foster equal opportunities to access education, training, employment, housing, services and health, particularly for disadvantaged groups within the population such as migrants, prisoners, drug users, disabled people and in general all those who are at risk of being excluded from society. Lately, however, a clear reference to the concept of inclusive education has been made by the Ministry of Public Instruction with the carrying out of a national action-research project named ‘I CARE’ (Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, 2007).

Until recently there has been a general tendency of rejecting the term inclusive education considered as inappropriate for the Italian context (Canevaro, 2001; Vianello, 2008). Yet, there is the need to create a new terminology which encapsulates the new international trend of inclusion and to maintain, at the same time, the legacy of *integrazione scolastica* (de Anna, 2007). With this in mind, the new expression ‘*integrazione da una prospettiva inclusiva*’ – integration from an inclusive perspective – was coined (Canevaro & Mandato, 2004). Evidence of this general tendency can be found in the following extract:

Let’s take into consideration the possibility of adopting, as required, the Anglo-Saxon terminology, and change the word *integrazione* to that of inclusion. According to the Anglo-Saxons, inclusion indicates, without any ambiguity, a person who is born in an inclusive environment, such as an environment which includes him since the very moment in which he is born and does not need to integrate the newly born in the future (as also said elsewhere). Nevertheless, the Italian language does not refer to inclusion with the same positive connotations of the English language. Perhaps, under the constraints to conform with international trends, we might end up adopting this terminology [such as inclusion] - although, in the past, we have argued that it was inadequate for the Italian context; at the same time, however, we do not want that the strength, which is implicit in the word *integrazione*, intended as a continuous process which has never been taken for granted, may be lost forever. (Canevaro and Mandato, 2004:168)

From a linguistic perspective, the word inclusion does not seem to possess positive connotations when translated into Italian as it may echo the idea of being ‘enclosed’ (put inside or alternatively segregated). At the same time, in the statement above, inclusive education is not always used interchangeably with that of *integrazione scolastica*, as the latter is considered to possess a legacy of cultural, political and social struggles that the concept of inclusion does not express and encapsulate. The Italian scholar provides a possible interpretation of inclusion that is interpreted in terms of ‘environmental’ adaptations which foster universal access. Arguably, inclusive education is mainly perceived as a new mainstreaming policy that focuses on school settings rather than focussing only on pupils’ deficits. Nevertheless, such an interpretation failed to make sense of the complex paradigmatic shift that the appropriation of the term inclusion should entail.
Clearly, there seems to be a pressure to adopt a new terminology. Yet, this is a very difficult situation as different theories can reclaim the appropriation of inclusion without taking into account the theoretical principles supporting it. The concept of inclusive education could be easily usurped by forms of argument that pretend to support inclusion, but which are instead only a reproduction of previous discriminatory mindsets (Slee, 2007).

At the moment, it is possible to identify two main definitions of inclusive education in the Italian context. The first definition suggests that *integrazione* and inclusion are considered as synonyms. This is particularly visible in the recent Ministerial Policy Guidelines for the Integration of Pupils with Disabilities (Ministero dell’ Istruzione Università e Ricerca, 2009) in which the term integration is used together with that of inclusion. Inclusion is also used in connection with the following words: ‘inclusion of pupils with disabilities’ and ‘scholastic inclusion of disabled pupils’, thus suggesting a link with the process of mainstreaming disabled students into regular schools (as integration does) rather than with a process of transformation of school cultures and contexts (as inclusion implies). The second definition interprets inclusive education as a broader type of *integrazione*. Such a definition associates inclusive education specifically with the experience of those students at risk of being excluded from the process of learning, such as those students identified as having ‘special educational needs’ but without a statement (Canevaro, 2006a; Ianes, 2005).

In relation to the second tendency, which links inclusive education with the education of students perceived as having ‘special educational needs’ without statements, Ianes argues that:

…it is important to distinguish between the practice of *integrazione* and those of inclusion. *Integrazione* concerns disabled students, such as those students who have statements of SEN, whereas, inclusion refers to the praxis of individualisation. The latter tackles all educational needs of all students with special educational needs [such as those without a statement]. By taking into account all special educational needs, we are inevitably responding in an inclusive way, such as taking on board all students’ requirements and respecting their dignity. A true inclusive intervention consists in providing the necessary individualised formative response. (Ianes, 2005:70).

Although Ianes seems to be genuinely concerned with the learning processes of all students, he appears to envisage meeting their requirements through a special needs education approach. As this statement indicates, inclusive education is perceived as the type of education that caters for all students individually, and in particular for those students who have difficulties at school but are not provided with a statement of special educational needs. Thus inclusive education is interpreted as a way of tackling the limits of a re-distribution policy that does not take into account those students who fall outside the medically constructed eligibility criteria, but who still need extra support and resources. The focus, therefore, is still on the pupils and their deficiencies rather than on the structures of the education system.
Recently Canevaro (2007) takes into account the possibility of changing the theoretical perspective from which scholars and practitioners alike should consider inclusion:

Inclusion is a fundamental right and it is in relation with the concept of ‘belonging’. People with or without disabilities can interact as peers. An inclusive education allows the ordinary school to improve its quality: a school in which all children are welcomed, where they can learn according to their own pace and, most importantly where they can participate, a school where children manage to understand all diversities and that these diversities are enriching. Thus diversity becomes normal. The same for the work place, for transportation, for social and cultural life. The purpose of inclusion is to allow each individual to access ‘normal’ life in order to grow and develop as a complete human being. (Canevaro, 2007:12)

This definition seems to officially set the date that records the Italian turn for the approval of the new terminology of ‘inclusion’. Eventually, it could also sow the seeds of a new conceptualisation of inclusion in terms of participation and belonging within the theoretical framework of human rights. However, this interpretation retains the dichotomy between normality and disability that shares continuity with that which is found in special needs education. In particular, some interpretations of the concept of inclusion still do not question a dominant abilist view of normalcy (Oliver, 1999). In contrast they seem to argue for facilitating the access of disabled people into normal life by accepting diversity as a common human feature and by reducing its ‘specialness’.

Lately, a small group of researchers (Fornasa & Medeghini, 2003; Medeghini, 2006, 2007, 2008; 2009; Medeghini & Valtellina, 2006) including myself (D’Alessio, 2004; 2005; 2007a; 2007b; 2008; 2009; 2010) have sought to address the issue of inclusive education through the application of new premises, such as the social model of disability (Oliver, 1990; 1996). They support the need to adopt inclusion not as a linguistic and semantic exercise, but as an attempt to challenge current school organisation and routines as the starting point for a discussion regarding inclusive education. They argue that the terms integrazione and inclusion are not synonyms, rather they are based on different conceptual standpoints:

The approach used by integration currently refers to the special education needs principle and the forms of rationalisation of the school system (resources, procedures and structures); the approach of inclusion, based on a non-deficitarian notion of difference, focuses on all people that take part in social and institutional life, on social and educational relations, and on the barriers to learning and participation that may determine exclusion or marginalisation from education and training pathways (Medeghini, et al., 2009:51)

This statement indicates that there are different interpretations of the concept of inclusive education, and that whilst integration is usually interpreted in relation to pupils with statements and the way to respond to their ‘needs’, inclusion is interpreted in terms of exclusion mechanisms that need to be identified and dismantled in order to allow the full participation of all pupils in the process of learning. Such an
interpretation, however, still constitutes a small academic niche in the debate concerning the development of inclusive education in Italy.

As a result of the Italian translation of the English *Index for Inclusion* (Dovigo & Ianes, 2008) the term *inclusione* has been used as a substitute of *integrazione* or in association with the latter. Nevertheless, the dominant Italian definition of inclusive education remains ontologically different from the definition used within this book that is derived from and influenced by usages from British social modellist theorists and literature sources. Put simply, in Italy, when adopted, the term inclusive education is generally interpreted as a new definition of *insegnamento inclusivo* and it usually refers to pupils at risk of being excluded from the process of learning in the mainstream setting. Therefore, it refers to the pedagogical attempts (such as processes of adaptation, differentiation and individualisation of teaching and learning) made by specialised personnel to respond to the ‘needs’ of ‘vulnerable’ minorities (such as migrant students, disabled pupils or pupils with ‘special educational needs’ without a statement) and with the allocation and re-distribution of extra resources to ordinary schools.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION IN ITALY: A HISTORY OF CARE AND COMPENSATION**

The issue of special education and schooling – either private or state – is an under-debated topic in the Italian literature. This is clearly a limitation as, when looking at the history of special needs education in Italy through the lens of the social model of disability and the works of Foucault, it is possible to find enough evidence of how the special needs education paradigm might have influenced the development of integration policy and consequently limited the development of inclusion. For example, most Italian literature concerning the policy of *insegnamento inclusivo* takes for granted that special schools and institutions have completely disappeared (de Anna, 1997). On the contrary, national statistical data available on the international database of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADSNE, 2006; 2008), for example, illustrates that special schools are still part of the education system in Italy. Although they occupy a very peripheral position, they clearly have not been completely dismantled. These schools include special schools for blind and deaf students (9 in total in 2008). Similarly, the president of the national federation for disabled people (known as FISH - Federazione Italiana Superamento Handicap), Pietro Barbieri (2007) recently argued that institutionalisation is still a reality in this country and that it squanders the financial resources that could be better used to promote integration.

It is important to emphasise that unlike Britain (Tomlinson, 1982), the history of special education in Italy paid very little attention to the study of possible social motives that might have contributed to the implementation of segregated education. It focussed instead on the need to provide special education facilities for those children with impairments who were usually hidden at home, victims of ignorance, superstition and religious fears. For this reason, segregated settings and primitive forms of special education in Italy were inevitably positively accepted, especially when comparison was made with previous forms of marginalisation of disabled pupils who were usually kept at home (Meijer & Abbring, 1994). Thus, although Italy was
the exception to the big growth of special needs institutions throughout Europe (Stiker, 1999), and state special education was introduced very late as a consequence of the economic boom of the early 1960s (Meijer & Abbring, 1994), it was clearly welcomed as a valid and widely accepted alternative for the education of disabled people within the national education system.

From a historical perspective, the first legislation to explicitly engage with the education and assistance of disabled people was Law n. 753 enacted in 1862, when charitable institutions began to cater for ‘the poor and the sick’. A clear reference to the education of idioti – people with intellectual impairments – was made in 1884 when the first mental asylum was opened in Rome (Zappaterra, 2003). Subsequently, in 1890, the State promulgated a series of legislative measures to create and administer new public charitable institutions (known as IPAB, Istituzioni Pubbliche di Assistenza e Beneficenza – Charity and Public Assistance Institutions) that were in charge of educating and guiding marginalised groups of the population. Gradually, other institutions were opened and people, first considered as ‘uneducable’, were provided with some sort of education, yet in segregated settings. The underlying assumption, which justified their segregation, was that these individuals were ‘dangerous, both for the community and for themselves’ (de Anna, 2000:138). That is to say ‘the individual who is not exactly ill and who is not strictly speaking criminal’ (Foucault, 2003:34) but who requires medico-legal intervention to control their dangerousness. Consequently, as Gelati (2004) has also argued, since the nineteenth century, the role played by medico-judicial officers has continued to be crucial, and it has influenced the conceptualisation of disability as an individual condition caused by functional deficits.

Depending on geographical proximity, philosophical heritage and linguistic similarities, the pedagogical experimentations held in France at the beginning of the nineteenth century, strongly influenced the development of special education in Italy. In their study on the history of special education in Italy, some scholars (Canevaro & Gaudreau, 1993; Gelati, 2004) locate the theoretical underpinnings of integrazione scolastica in the works of two French doctors, Jean Marc Gaspard Itard and Edouard Séguin. The historical and pedagogical ‘myth’ (Canevaro, 2007:14) within which the policy of integrazione scolastica is originated is the account of how Itard (and Séguin) managed to educate a young ‘wild boy’ found in the French forests of Aveyron, and subsequently ‘named’ by his educational tutors as Victor. On the one hand, this episode clearly contributed to the understanding that all students could be educated regardless of their physical and mental conditions, if they were provided with adequate support and assistance. On the other hand, it inevitably suggested continuities between the special education framework and the integrazione epistemological paradigm, both intended specifically as the academic subjects concerned with the education and rehabilitation of disabled pupils. As Foucault remarked in his works on the three major figures of abnormality in Western society (Foucault, 2003), it was in the nineteenth century that the discourse of rectifiability, promoted by the French medical establishment, substitutes that of the incorrigibility of abnormal individuals:

Disability may well be something that upsets the natural order, but disability is not monstrosity because it has a place in civil and canon law. The disabled
person may not conform to nature, but the law in some way provides for him.
(Foucault, 2003:64)

The ‘wild boy’ Victor could be seen as an example of what Foucault (2003) identifies
as the individual to be corrected and who falls under the technologies of particular
types of knowledge (for example medicine, psychiatry, eugenics). This subject
becomes the centre of an apparatus for correction, and it runs counter to an interpre-
tation of integrazione scolastica as an inclusive policy. In contrast, this narrative
contributes to the re-production of misconceptions of disability as something ‘wrong’
located within the person that must be ‘rectified’ and ‘corrected’ by professionals.
Consequently, by linking the roots of integrazione scolastica to the works of Itard
and Séguin, Italian and French scholars (Canevaro, 1999; Canevaro & Gaudreau,
1993; Gelati, 2004) reinforce the link between special education and what Armstrong
(2007) defines as a ‘functionalist’ history of disability:

The ‘functionalist’ perspective is based on the premise that disabled children
have particular needs as a result of their impairments which require specialist
 provision, often including separate structures and the involvement of specialist
 professionals. The response to impairment is understood in terms of the policies
and adaptations put in place that are seen as being necessitated by the impair-
ments and difficulties of the individual child. (Armstrong, 2007:563)

This statement is illuminating in understanding how particular assumptions about
disability were socialised into the education system, until they were transformed
into discursive formations. In particular, the narrative of Victor might have brought
into existence dominant discourses of ‘educability’ and ‘doing good’ to disabled
children, which are still regularly deployed in policy documents. Finally, disabled
children could learn as ‘normal’ children do, with the only difference that dis-
abled pupils required particular kinds of specialist treatment, based on the identified
characteristics of their needs, first in special institutions and subsequently in ordinary
settings.

Following the example of Itard and Séguin, a group of Italian researchers
and educationalists, Montessori, Montesano and De Sanctis, began to open many
institutions for ‘mentally’ and sensory impaired pupils. Maria Montessori, in partic-
ular, was one of the first Italian scholars who struggled for the education of ‘dis-
advantaged’ children. She argued that ‘disadvantaged’ children did not need to be
 treated or catered for, but only educated. Although Maria Montessori was a physician
with a strong orientation towards remediation and care, she understood that econo-
mically and socially disadvantaged children were not uneducable because they were
‘mentally retarded’ but because they had been deprived, throughout all their life, of
all necessary inputs and supports to learn (Montessori, 1991). This pedagogical stand-
point strongly influenced the development of primary education in Italy and the
development of student-oriented teaching theories and practices in ordinary schools.

Education for disabled students was generally a matter dealt with by private
and/or charitable initiatives. Prior to the Fascist Royal Decree, the only legislative
measure that referred to special education was the Daneo Credaro Act in 1911 that
established the patronati - private boarding schools assisting disabled students. It was
only in 1923 that Gentile, Mussolini’s minister of education, passed a series of legislative measures to guarantee state education for the illiterate masses. There followed a strong division of school careers between poor and wealthy pupils, the first attending vocational schools and the latter attending grammar schools. During the Fascist period state special education for blind and deaf students became compulsory in Italy (Royal Decree n. 577/1928). In the 1930s and 1940s there existed three main types of segregated education: differentiated classes in ordinary schools for ‘difficult’ students, special schools for ‘sensory and mentally’ impaired students, and special boarding schools for severely impaired students. Later on, in 1952, education for blind children up until the age of 16 became compulsory in state special schools and in the 1960s local health units were accountable for the education of people ‘outside the norm’, either in differentiated classes in ordinary schools or in separate special schools (Circular n. 4525, July 1962 and Circular n. 934/6 2nd February 1963).

Drawing on Zelioli’s historical account of the development of special education in Italy (in Canevaro, 2002), differentiated classes reached their peak during the 1960s and 1970s (after the economic boom), with the number of schools increasing from 3,394 in 1965 to 6,692 in 1974 when, suddenly, the rate of special schools along with that of differentiated classes began to decrease (see Nocera, 1988). This decrease can be accredited to many different factors, as I shall illustrate later on in this chapter, but certainly a central role was played by negative economic conditions. Moreover, the cultural climate of the 60s and the 70s, which was dominated by an ideology of social justice, democracy and participation, clearly opposed the maintenance of segregated provisions. Nevertheless, in the 1960s special education was still a valid option in Italy as many acts, which were concerned with the organisation and maintenance of special institutions, (Law n. 1073 - 24th of July 1962; and Law n. 942 - 31st of October 1966) were passed during that decade. Even the groundbreaking Law n. 1859 for the scuola media unica in 1962 included indications for the development of differentiated classes within the ordinary settings for alunni disadattati scolastici – ‘maladjusted’ students (section 12). Similarly, in 1968, the legislation envisaged the creation of special schools, classrooms and institutions for young children with intellectual, sensory and physical impairments attending kindergarten schools (Law n. 444/1968).

It is not surprising, therefore, as Nocera (1988) also illustrates in his historical account of special education in Italy, that special schooling was never really dismantled. His study, dating back to the 1980s, made a strong case that special education remained a real menace and that policies should not leave room for manoeuvre for those people supporting the re-opening of special education systems. Nocera’s analytic study of pro-integration legislative measures pinpointed the way in which integration policies often included clauses that, on the one hand seemed to oppose segregation, but on the other hand, seemed to ensure the very maintenance of special schooling for specific categories of people (Nocera, 1988). For example, the Delegate Decrees enacted in 1974, sanctioned the legal validity of special schooling by legislatively for the presence of professional health practitioners in ‘normal and special schools’ (Decree n. 416/74). This is evident in article 9 of the Decree n. 970/75
which speaks about the maintenance of special schools by acknowledging that support teachers could qualify as specialised teachers for ordinary schools by ‘training in special schools’. It is possible that the state had to face the problem of unemployed specialised teachers who were forced to leave special schools caused by the dramatic decrease in enrolments of pupils at the end of the 1970s. As a consequence of this, the Supreme Court of Cassation ruled that ‘severely handicapped students had to be educated in special schools’ (Sentence n. 478, 1981). Soon afterwards the state issued two ministerial circulars (n.185/1982 and n. 258/1983) by which the minimum quota of disabled students per class in special schools was established and which also underlined the practice of educating ‘severely handicapped’ students in segregated settings either in special schools or in special classes.

Although accurate and indicative of the contradictions arising within the education system, Nocera’s account of special education is still embedded in an interpretation of special education as concerned only with segregation and special institutions. This account fails to investigate other forms and mechanisms of special education that can be reproduced within ordinary settings. Special education instead is a resilient form of social organisation that utilizes different mechanisms to maintain its role in place. Some of these mechanisms can be identified with the macro-mechanisms of segregation and exclusion in separate settings, but there also exist other micro-mechanisms that can be reproduced within the mainstream settings. Although under different names and labels, the outcomes of these mechanisms are equally discriminatory and excluding. As Derrick Armstrong (2003) argues, special needs education is an expression of modern societies which struggle to maintain social cohesion:

…the ‘defective’, in ever increasing numbers, were to be controlled, not merely excluded, and the mechanisms of control were to be but one aspect of the application of broader technologies of differentiation and control that normalised the regulatory power of reason. (2003:14)

In alignment with the above considerations, therefore, this book has attempted to identify those technologies of power that have been in place for more than thirty years and that still share a legacy with special education thinking and framework in the Italian setting.

The Resilience of Special Education: Why Language Matters

Inclusive education is usually discussed and described in relation to, or in conjunction with, special education and with pupils identified as having special educational needs. Although, there is a general agreement that there has been a considerable shift from special to inclusive education, at least at the level of principle and policy making (Clough & Corbett, 2000), the boundaries between these two concepts remain blurred. Special education still plays a major role in education (Ainscow & Booth, 1998), especially whenever inclusive education is discussed only in relation to students with Records of Needs (Allan, 1999). One example of the role played by special education, which is particularly relevant is when professionals and practitioners
claim that they are working for the benefits of disabled students whilst at the same
time disabled people are deprived of the chance to speak for themselves.

In order to combat the resilience of the dominant concept of special education, it
is important to approach the issue of language (Slee, 2001). The terminology we
use is not neutral but reflects attitudes and influences our practices. Problems do
not necessarily reside within the linguistic structures of discourses, but rather in
the legacy that some terminology can bequeath. The issue of language is therefore
central because it relates not only to the domain of communication, but to the way
researchers, practitioners, and teachers - as well as disabled people - interpret and
shape reality through a series of discourses. Moreover, from a definitional pers-
pective, the need to challenge current linguistic usage and conventions, in relation
to discourses around special education derives from the attempt to identify inclusive
education by virtue of such confrontations. This might include for example, consider-
ations of ideas of integration in relation to inclusion.

In 1986 Barton began to question the use of ‘special educational needs’ which
on the need to replace the language of ‘special’ with a new language that is not
weighed down with assumptions and biases. The language of ‘special’ that is used by
practitioners today, she argues (1996), belongs to the medical domain. Consequently,
this language supports an individual/medical model of disability, and an idea that
disability is a personal tragedy (Oliver, 1990). Thus, disability and its language
become a ‘stigma’ that marks the boundaries of normality (‘we’) from the abnormality
(‘they’), by focusing on the impairment rather than on the person. Much in agree-
ment with Corbett and Barton’s critiques, Slee argues that:

Special educational needs became an all-embracing metaphor for the defective
child. In turn, the functional label of ‘special educational needs child’ has
metaphorically become a refugee camp for the casualties of schooling. (Slee,
1998:102)

From an educational perspective, the use of the language of special, hence the
labelling process, does not speak of a discourse that encourages students to develop
their potentialities. By defining a pupil as being ‘with special educational needs’,
schools run the risk of influencing both the way people will perceive that pupil and
the way those pupils will perceive themselves. As Stiker (1999) argues, language
matters and the language of ‘special’ in education may be dangerous for the deve-
lopment of inclusive education:

To name, designate, point out, is to make exist. Our natural assumption is to
believe that language expresses the real, that it duplicates reality so that we
can think about …and manipulate it, in our minds and in our conversations!
But quite the contrary, language operates, transforms, creates. In one sense,
there is no other reality than the language… (language) is an institution, in the
double sense that is socially established and that it arranges the social fact.
(Stiker, 1999:153)

In this analysis, Stiker (1999) indicates how language may maintain existing
assumptions and influence actions. The process of naming and, at the same time,
marginalising through naming, is a dilemma over which researchers working in the field of inclusive education often stumble ‘by positioning some groups as being naturally the subject of marginalisation’ (F. Armstrong, 2003b:2) and analysis in the studies of inclusive education.

Language is the most effective channel through which a dominant ideology can be acted out and reproduced, not only by behaviours, attitudes and deeds, but also by the way we speak about things (Stiker, 1999; Armstrong, F., 2003b). Thus, the phenomenon of labelling people via the language of special education reinforces the medical practice of classifying them into specific categories and of justifying the work of social workers and other intermediary figures who can deal with ‘that knowledge’ behind a label. The process of labelling, although sometimes ‘born of the best intentions’ and aimed at benefiting students at risk of being further marginalised, is often used as an administrative procedure to obtain additional provision or assistance. Stiker states that such a procedure is paradoxical since it is likely to provide somebody with ‘an alien passport to be like the others’ (Stiker, 1999:151) - to possess a label in order to become ‘normal’ citizens. Disabled people simply ask for rights (in education, employment, access to transport and information) that other people have always possessed without the need to be stigmatised.

Following on from this analysis, we should seek to understand what it is about societies that produce the need to categorise and label some citizens and not others: Labels and categorisation originate in social structures much more than in simple fact of physical and psychological affliction. In our Western society the desire to integrate rises out of the incapacity of the social fabric to permit the disabled person to live there. (Stiker, 1999:159)

It seems that the main problem lies in society’s incapacity to deal with the diversity of its populace and the need to manage such diversity, by diluting it to the norm (Stiker, 1999). Stiker (ibid.) underlines the ways in which society may construct ‘disability’ as a social, economic and administrative category arguing that Western societies, in particular, are historically obsessed by social conformity, and homogeneity. His analysis, however, does not specifically address the issues of conformity and homogeneity in terms of political and economic oppression and social control as the social model of disability does. Nevertheless the issue of language and how it develops across centuries offers an important illustration of how the greatest challenge is not simply about avoiding the use of the language of ‘special’ but about challenging the language of the ‘norm’ by exploring where it originates and why.

Evidence of the reminiscence of a special needs education tradition in Italy is visible in the language used to refer to disabled students. In the two schools investigated as my case study sites, the following terms were often articulated (in Italian):

- studente in situazione di handicap (student in a situation of handicap)
- studente con certificazione di handicap (student with a statement of needs)
- studente con handicap (student with a handicap)
- studente con disabilità (student with a disability)
- portatore di disabilità (carrier of a disability)
- portatore di handicap (carrier of a handicap)
Despite the differences, a common element can be found in these definitions; a tendency to construct disability as something related to the biological conditions of pupils with impairments. Nonetheless, the need to disentangle the concept of disability from a notion of disease and adopt a terminology that differentiates between ‘deficit and handicap’ is not new in Italy. Drawing on the ICIDH (1980), some Italian scholars argued for the need to introduce a new definition for disabled pupils, namely ‘student in a situation of handicap’ (Canevaro, 1999; de Anna, 1998; WHO, 1980). Such definition was meant to differentiate between impairment (functional limitation) and handicap (social problem), the latter being a form of disadvantage in which the person with deficits finds him/herself as a consequence of the way in which society is structured. As my research will show, however, teachers still use the notions of ‘handicap’ interchangeably with that of ‘individual deficit’ or ‘disability’, thus failing to acknowledge the complexity of the notion of disability and disablement.

Considering the centrality of language and the need to use language to facilitate a cultural change, Ainscow and Booth (2000) suggest that we should substitute the word ‘needs’ with that of ‘barriers to learning and participation’. While the former locates the learning difficulties within the child, thus reinforcing a deficit model, the latter suggests that barriers can be, and often are, at the level of the system rather than at the level of the individual.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided some insights into current debates concerning the nature and the development of inclusive education both at an international and national level. By acknowledging and valuing opposing and diverging voices, I have positioned the discussion about inclusion used in this book within the radical position of the on-going debate around inclusive education. The history of special education and the perpetuation of the language of ‘special’ addressed in this chapter have also given examples of the way in which exclusion may occur in mainstream settings disguised as integration. This chapter has clearly indicated that inclusive education is a complex process and that there should be a differentiation of the theoretical premises in which special needs education, integration and inclusion are originated. Put briefly, in this chapter I have tried to indicate that inclusive education:

‘[…] is a time consuming, demanding and disturbing task and there are no easy short-cut recipes and therefore there is no room for complacency’ (Barton, 2005:319).