

EDITED BY ROSA BELLACICCO
AND DARIO IANES

TEACHERS WITH DISABILITIES

DILEMMAS, CHALLENGES
AND OPPORTUNITIES



TRAIETTORIE
INCLUSIVE

FrancoAngeli 



TRAIETTORIE INCLUSIVE

COLLANA DIRETTA DA
**CATIA GIACONI, PIER GIUSEPPE ROSSI,
SIMONE APARECIDA CAPELLINI**

La collana “Traiettorie Inclusive” vuole dare voce alle diverse proposte di ricerca che si articolano intorno ai paradigmi dell’inclusione e della personalizzazione, per approfondire i temi relativi alle disabilità, ai Bisogni Educativi Speciali, alle forme di disagio e di devianza. Si ritiene, infatti, che inclusione e personalizzazione reifichino una prospettiva efficace per affrontare la complessa situazione socio-culturale attuale, garantendo un dialogo tra le diversità.

I contesti in cui tale tematica è declinata sono quelli della scuola, dell’università e del mondo del lavoro. Contemporaneamente sono esplorati i vari domini della qualità della vita prendendo in esame anche le problematiche connesse con la vita familiare, con le dinamiche affettive e con il tempo libero. Una particolare attenzione inoltre sarà rivolta alle comunità educative e alle esperienze che stanno tracciando nuove piste nell’ottica dell’inclusione sociale e della qualità della vita.

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I “*Quaderni Operativi*”, invece, documenteranno esperienze, progetti e buone prassi e forniranno strumenti di lavoro per professionisti e operatori del settore.

La collana si rivolge a tutti i professionisti che, a diversi livelli, si occupano di processi inclusivi e formativi.

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Preface

Follow the hummingbird, not the white rabbit!

by *Filippo Barbera*

Keating: «Keep ripping, gentlemen! This is a battle. A war. And the casualties could be your hearts and souls. (...). Now, my class, you will learn to think for yourselves again. You will learn to savor words and language. No matter what anybody tells you, words and ideas can change the world».

In one of his poetry classes, teacher John Keating invites the students to rip out the pages of the introduction written by Professor Emeritus Jonathan Evans Pritchard. After a brief moment of hesitation, the students complete the extravagant task assigned by the teacher. Crazy idea? Maybe! But the lesson was learned, and the intended goal achieved.

With the hope that this introduction will have a completely different destiny than that of illustrious Prof. Pritchard, I would like to share the importance of this volume, a potential engine of generative thoughts. Generative thoughts are a necessary condition, but their effectiveness is linked to the FAITH in the possibility of improving the current state of things. This Faith is not a simple desire or hope, but a deep conviction in one's own abilities and in the usefulness of one's own contribution. There is a tale about a great fire that broke out in the forest which only a small hummingbird thought to face. The hummingbird dived into the waters of the river, took a drop of it, and then, rising in flight, let it fall over the forest invaded by smoke. The lion who was observing, asked him what he was doing. The small bird answered, "I am trying to put out the flames". The lion laughed and started to make fun of him together with the other animals. The hummingbird, heedless of the laughter and criticism, continued with his feat. He wanted to do his part. At that point a little elephant dipped his trunk in the river, sucked up as much water as he could and sprayed it on a burning bush. A young pelican also followed suit, filling his beak with water to release it on a tree invaded by flames.

5. Teachers with disabilities/SLDs and their colleagues: an analysis of experiences from university to professional career

by *Ines Guerini, Clarissa Sorrentino*¹

1. Introduction

The teaching profession is undoubtedly one of the most stimulating jobs from the perspective of enhancing personal and professional experience, but at the same time requires numerous competences as well as a certain predisposition.

We refer, for instance, to communication skills, to flexibility in what you do, teamwork and problem-solving skills, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) skills, organizational skills, logical-mathematical skills, and so on.

Competences, skills and abilities believed to be essential in determining teacher professionalism, also in the light of the perceived need to dispel the common idea that teaching is «a “pseudo-profession” linked either to a personal vocation (“I love children, so I want to teach”) or to an apprenticeship, i.e. the job is learned as you go, almost by osmosis, from those who have more years of experience» (Nigris, 2017: 303).

What has just been stated finds an answer in the care and attention that, for several years, Pedagogical Sciences have given to the issue of teacher training. In this regard, we can cite the contributions dedicated to the tutor training of newly hired teachers (Fiorucci & Moretti, 2019) and to the problematic situation of secondary teacher training (Bocci, 2018; Baldacci *et al.*, 2020).

1. The present contribution is the result of the joint work of the two authors. With regards to the identification of the parts, it should be noted that the paragraphs *Introduction, Method, Sample* and *Conclusion* are to be attributed to Ines Guerini. The paragraphs *Data Analysis* and *Discussion, Conclusion* are to be attributed to Clarissa Sorrentino.

Given these beliefs, the question then arises as to whether a Specific Learning Disorder (SLD) or a disabling condition related to a physical or sensory deficit can hinder the development of the competences required by the teaching profession. In other words, the question is whether a person with disabilities/SLDs can become an effective and competent teacher. At the same time, we are interested in understanding what encourages teachers to openly talk to their colleagues about their condition of SLD/disability or what, on the contrary, discourages them, and if the social and cultural context around schools is ready to welcome teachers with disabilities/SLDs.

These questions reflect some important aspects investigated in the present research.

In the previous pages, it has been possible to highlight that becoming a primary school and/or kindergarten teacher requires a long and sometimes demanding training process. The complexity lies in the variables involved in the path which leads to the job itself: from the procedures to access university, to traineeship, to the competitive selection for the role.

This chapter, instead, will deal with all those elements that come into play in facilitating or not the teaching profession in the eyes of school stakeholders and, in particular, teachers and colleagues of teachers with disabilities/SLDs.

The next pages will focus on the issues emerged from the interviews conducted with teachers with disabilities/SLDs and colleagues of teachers with disabilities/SLDs.

2. Method

Qualitative techniques were chosen for the data collection and the analysis conducted was descriptive. In particular, the opinions of privileged witnesses to the topic of disability and teaching profession were surveyed through interviews conducted online (using the platforms Teams and Zoom) and recorded. Informed consent was obtained from all interviewees.

To conduct the interviews, the researchers used a structured interview (Table 1) built on the theoretical background emerged from the systematic review (Bellacicco & Demo, 2019) conducted on the research which investigated the experiences of teachers with disabilities/SLDs (cf. Ch. 5).

Table 1 - Interview format adopted with teachers with disabilities/SLDs

<p>1. Let's start by focusing on your professional career. Let's imagine that, like all teachers, there have been difficulties but also elements that have supported you in the process. To identify them, we will go through the different stages of the process together, starting from, for instance, the work period during university. If you've had this experience, what were the obstacles and facilitators? Let's move on to the trial period. What were the obstacles and facilitators? Let's move on to daily school work. What are the obstacles and facilitators?</p> <p>2. Let's now focus on the disclosure process of the condition of disability/SLD. Have you openly talked about your disability/SLD in the professional environment? If so, with whom in particular? What motivated this decision?</p> <p>3. If and how has your SLD/disability and all that it entails affected your relationship and socialization with your colleagues in the various contexts?</p> <p>4. To manage some of the professional activities, did you have to develop also individual coping strategies? If so, which ones?</p> <p>5. Let's now focus specifically on "institutional/structural" compensatory/dispensatory measures. Have you by any chance requested or been suggested any kind of support – also in terms of positive organizational actions – by the school?</p> <p>6. Have you ever found teachers/staff reluctant towards offering one of these measures? If so, why in your opinion?</p>	<p>7. In literature, some studies conducted on the topic report the existence of a dilemma between the right/importance to provide these measures and the school's duty to guarantee quality teaching to all students. Have you perceived this dilemma in your experience or in any case can you find it in your colleagues' experiences? More in general, what is your opinion on the dilemma? What solutions did you adopt/would you suggest to overcome it?</p> <p>8. We're almost at the end of the interview. Investigating a more subjective dimension, could you tell us the main reason why you chose the teaching career?</p> <p>9. Overall, would you judge your experience at university positively or negatively? Do you think that such events have somehow affected your subsequent professional life?</p> <p>10. Are there any features linked to your personal condition of disability/difficulty that you think you have blended into your professional identity and that represent a strength in performing your profession?</p> <p>11. Beyond your individual situation, do you think that people with disabilities/SLDs can become effective and competent teachers?</p> <p>12. Based on your experience, do you think that the socio-cultural context (especially universities and schools) is ready to include teachers with disabilities/SLDs in the teaching staff?</p>
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In particular, as highlighted in the interview format shown in Table 1, the researchers aimed at investigating the aspects emerged in literature (Burns & Bell, 2011; Sharoni & Vogel, 2011; Lamichhane, 2016; Hankebo, 2018; Ianes *et al.*, forthcoming) such as, for instance, the development of individual coping strategies; the obstacles encountered; institutional facilitators; the attitudes of colleagues and disclosure of the condition.

The interviews were then transcribed for analysis. To facilitate their reading and interpretation, the textual data collected were subsequently processed in a systematic way and reassembled by association with the single categories, using ATLAS.ti 7 software.

2.1. Sample

As shown in Table 2, the sample (non-probability snowball sampling) that took part in the research consisted of 20 teachers. More specifically, it consisted of 3 teachers (1 with SLDs; 2 with physical/sensory disabilities) from kindergarten and 17 teachers from primary school. Of the latter, 6 have a specific learning disorder, 5 have a sensory/physical disability and the other 6 are colleagues of teachers with a physical/sensory disability. The majority were female teachers ($F=15$; $M=5$) working as subject teachers (*Subject Teachers*=13; *Support Teachers*=7).

The teachers, whose age ranges between 27 (minimum value) and 60 (maximum value), come from Northern, Southern and Central Italy. The sample is heterogeneous also for the years of service, with a range that varies from a minimum of 3 years to a maximum of 44 years.

Table 2 - Features of the sample

	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>SLDs</i>	<i>Disabilities (physical/sensory)</i>	<i>Subject Teachers</i>	<i>Support Teachers</i>
Kindergarten	3	1	2	2	1
Primary	11	6	5	5	6
	<i>Colleagues</i>	<i>SLDs</i>	<i>Disabilities (physical/sensory)</i>	<i>General Education</i>	<i>Special Education</i>
Kindergarten	0	0	0	0	0
Primary	6	0	6	6	0

3. Data analysis and discussion

Each interview was analysed in two stages. First, a “paper and pencil” content analysis was undertaken, and then the data were analyzed using Atlas.ti 7 software. The objective was to identify, within the interviews, the categories emerged in literature through the systematic review. More specifically, the categories found are the following:

- a) barriers perceived in the school environment;
- b) institutional facilitators;
- c) non-institutional facilitators;
- d) coping strategies implemented;
- e) perception of the dilemma;
- f) overcoming of the dilemma;
- g) disclosure;
- h) readiness of the socio-cultural context (to include teachers with disabilities/SLDs);
- i) strengths of being teachers with disabilities/SLDs;
- j) competence and effectiveness of teachers with disabilities/SLDs.

The elements characterizing the different categories under investigation are reported below.

In relation to the category of *perceived barriers* in schools, teachers with disabilities/SLDs indicated the presence of negative attitudes from colleagues and parents, the existence of chaotic space in the classroom (i.e. characterized by noisy, disorganized, small environments with desks placed in such a way as to cause accidents or bumps when going past them); the persistence of architectural barriers in the school where they work; the lack of understanding (from their colleagues) of the specific needs related to their particular condition and the awareness of having some memory difficulties (Ianes *et al.*, 2021; Ianes *et al.*, forthcoming).

While discussing the barriers, colleagues of teachers with disabilities/SLDs also reported the presence of negative attitudes from colleagues and parents (especially at the beginning of the child’s schooling). Other interesting issues that emerged concern the presence of rigid bureaucracy (in terms of slow procedures for requesting certain tools); the lack of flexibility of colleagues in adapting teaching (both organizational aspects and communication methods) to the needs of the teacher with disabilities/SLDs and the lack of financial resources in schools (not all schools are equipped with interactive whiteboards in rooms that enable the teacher with disabilities to bypass some difficulties in managing the teaching).

On the opposite axis of barriers are *facilitators*, i.e. all those elements that can support the teacher with disabilities/SLDs in the teaching profession. The analysis of the interviews shows that both teachers with disabilities/SLDs and colleagues claim that classes with limited number of pupils; the use of co-teaching and the location of the school in accessible areas (i.e. located in noise-free areas, with limited distance across its various sites and no physical barriers within them) are supportive factors.

In addition, teachers also mention the use of devices, the possible use of compensatory tools (for example memory aids) and the adoption of dispensatory measures such as the writing of minutes during board meetings, councils or other school meetings.

Alongside institutional factors, the presence or absence of *non-institutional facilitators* is noted. In this regard, teachers indicate that the same communication processes with children – based on face-to-face communication – facilitate interchange (especially for teachers with hearing disabilities). Another non-institutional factor considered fundamental is the support of colleagues and the creation of good relationships.

Colleagues, from their point of view, mention the school location. The importance of the location of the school near or at a short distance from the domicile of the person with disabilities emerges again as a means of facilitating their mobility and improving their life quality. In addition, colleagues believe that frequent breaks and, in some situations, the possibility for the teacher with disabilities/SLDs to hold lessons outdoors are essential. The support of colleagues and maintaining good relationships with them are transversal factors in the perception of facilitators for teachers and their colleagues. As a result, the possibility of experiencing a serene working environment, above all in terms of the possibility of relationships, exchange and support, are highlighted as fundamental.

A further aspect that is worth pointing out is related to face-to-face/distance learning. Given that the research was conducted in the midst of a global pandemic, one issue that emerged was precisely that of teaching in emergency situations. In this respect, the analysis shows the usefulness of distance teaching and the possibility of better organizing activities for children through this method – less chaotic in the eyes of the teacher. The following passage from the interview with a deaf teacher is significant:

last year, we suddenly found ourselves from face-to-face teaching to distance teaching. For me this was a success. I'm sorry about the pandemic, but at primary school I've been doing a lot of supply face-to-face teaching over the

last few months, but with distance teaching I've played the real role of a support teacher, trying to integrate two children with difficulties in grade 4 and grade 5 into the class group and learning... for that period I preferred distance teaching because if we had been in the classroom, with the mask, it would have been even more complicated. I saw face-to-face teaching here and there as more of a barrier than distance teaching, which actually allowed me to focus on just two classes.

A further category surveyed was that of *coping strategies*, used to deal with problematic situations with particular reference to the professional activity. Among the strategies indicated by teachers with disabilities/SLDs, multi-channel learning, prior planning of daily school activities, and again the use of compensatory tools emerged. Learning from error is given specific attention. In particular, according to many teachers with SLDs, the possibility of making a mistake and accepting it becomes a learning opportunity to share with the student the processes of accepting difficulties and the strategies to deal with situations of school failure.

With reference to the strategies adopted by teachers with disabilities/SLDs, colleagues report the importance of having extra time to plan (teaching or school) materials; the use of compensatory tools (computers, apps, and devices); a greater disposition than other colleagues to perform activities to feel actively part of the team and the school environment; and the quantity and quality of time spent at school. In fact, colleagues report that teachers with disabilities/SLDs spend more time at school than other colleagues, commit extra time and are generally very helpful.

Investigating the perception of the dilemma (cf. Ch. 3) that teachers and their colleagues experience has become a significant aspect of the research. In this regard, the data analysis shows that teachers mainly perceive the dilemma from colleagues and/or pupils' parents (to the point that many teachers choose to keep their condition as a person with disabilities/SLDs hidden as much as possible) and they themselves perceive to a lesser extent the existence of the dilemma between being a teacher with SLDs (and, therefore, using compensatory measures) and being an effective and competent teacher.

Furthermore, teachers with SLDs believe that according to their colleagues and pupils' parents "it is impossible to be an effective teacher if you have a SLD" (Table 3). Subsequently, the presence of a SLD would hinder the acquisition of competence and effectiveness. As mentioned above, this is also a question for teachers with SLDs themselves (Table 3).

Table 3 - Teachers' interview extracts (Category "Perception of the dilemma")

<i>Dilemma</i>	
<p>4:2 instead, parents are obviously perplexed: "how can a teacher with a hearing impairment work at school?"</p> <p>5:1 Mainly because having had this practicum experience where I was told very clearly, "but you can't teach", well, this fear remains a bit, you know?</p> <p>12:5 Anyway, my summer was awful, because I relived those moments from... when I was a young girl, of this experience that you always have of stupidity, of not being up to certain things and therefore... also saying, "but how can I be a teacher, if I am dysorthographic or dyslexic or whatever?"</p>	<p>4:5 meaning that they have often raised the question whether I could work at school, having this problem</p> <p>1:3 There's still a lot of obtuseness, the teacher with SLDs does not exist for them, your colleagues don't believe you have this problem, as for the child who suffers of SLDs</p> <p>7:8 There's a dilemma but it's also a contradiction, it's pointless to ask for an accommodation if there is no training at the base. For example, some colleagues of mine this year used to wear a mask behind plexiglass, which didn't favour the quality of teaching... or made it useless to call the LIS interpreter at primary school for a deaf child, if then that interpreter stood in front of a light source</p>

Contrary to teachers with disabilities/SLDs, their colleagues initially do not seem to perceive the existence of the aforementioned dilemma. However, reflecting on this during the interview, and exploring this perception in more depth, some of them argue that it is important to invest in teacher and school leader training and to increase the number of teachers in order to find solutions to overcome the dilemma (Table 4).

Teacher training on disability is also one of the conditions mentioned by teachers with disabilities/SLDs to overcome the existing dilemma. Other *solutions* concern the opportunity to demonstrate one's competences during the whole professional career (competition phase, the training itself and in the classroom); the dissemination of the positive experiences of teachers with disabilities/SLDs and, in extreme cases (as previously mentioned) the choice to hide one's situation of disability/SLD. In this regard, we report some extracts from interviews with teachers concerning the overcoming of the dilemma (Table 5).

Table 4 - Colleagues' interview extracts (Category "Overcoming of the dilemma")

<i>Overcoming of the dilemma</i>	
<p>3:8 The problem is precisely what investments are being made to increase the number of teachers? Because this is the issue. It's a matter of training, of teachers that are trained to provide support and it's a matter of investments and, therefore of general choices, because at the moment there is no perception of this need... the idea of a non-functioning teacher does not exist. The non-functioning teacher is sent elsewhere</p>	<p>6:1 In my opinion everything has to be managed upstream, it's so important, as to say the imprinting that a school leader gives to a certain operational framework within a school, it's so important if the school leader gives messages that show they have no interest, they don't particularly care about these individuals who are more fragile, then a certain part of the team... perceive this as a form of weakness of the individual and as such considers them, marginalizes them</p>

Table 5 - Teachers' interview extracts (Category "Overcoming of the dilemma")

<i>Overcoming of the dilemma</i>	
<p>1:4 To overcome this dilemma, this idea, your colleagues must not know too much and you must not say this, it's so sad. We are in the year 2020 and inclusion is doing a lot, but you can't still say this</p> <p>5:4 For sure, providing the school with aids that may help them be included in the school environment, [...] and for sure the fact that in schools, especially in primary schools, there is more than one teacher present in class can be helpful for the teacher themselves and... I'm thinking about a borderline case... a blind teacher, but anyway there's a teacher next to you who manages to check on children, [...] I mean, I don't know to what extent this is a problem</p>	<p>11:14 Yes, I think that it can be overcome through examples of people who do make it</p> <p>4:6 Well, but I let it go because well, I didn't think it was a good idea, let's say, let's say... to start discussions..., I just did my job and that's it. Let's say, I carried on with my work demonstrating that I was capable of doing it</p>

Another element of reflection within the interviews was the process of communicating one's disability/SLD defined as *disclosure*. In this regard, the teachers' answers are controversial and diversified among teachers with disabilities and teachers with SLDs. Almost all teachers (with disabilities/SLDs) think that it is opportune to talk about diversity with children and parents. However, numerous teachers with SLDs think that it is better not to talk about their disorder due to the significant prejudice regarding the presence of a specific learning disorder and of a competent teacher. In Table 6 we report some extracts that we believe are particularly significant for our discussion.

Table 6 - Teachers' interview extracts (Category "Disclosure")

<i>Disclosure</i>		
4:1 when I approach new parents, new colleagues, I talk about my problem first thing. I immediately say, I have this problem, I'm deaf. I need to read your lips well	8:2 Because visual and hearing disabilities are linked to a rare congenital disease from the paternal side, when I first approach hesitant pupils, who are scared and ask why I'm like this, I say I've got radars in my ears and that I see them well with my glasses	8:1 I talk in depth about my disability only with my dearest friends or colleagues as soon as we get to know each other

Colleagues also perceive the existence of a prejudice that revolves around living with a disabling condition and being a teacher, to the extent that they claim that teachers with disabilities prefer to elect a few colleagues as *confidants* to talk about their lives, rather than disclose their condition to everyone.

Regarding the strengths of being a teacher with disabilities/SLDs, both the teachers and the sampled colleagues report an improvement in the teaching-learning process in terms of greater openness to diversity, greater empathy with students with disabilities/SLDs, accurate screening competences (in the sense that they recognize in their pupils some predictors of specific learning disorders and are particularly attentive to some recurrent errors in the composition of texts, oral production

and are more likely to notice difficulties in vocabulary access or in retrieving numerical facts, having experienced the same difficulties as pupils at school) and inclusive teaching competences (in the sense that they design teaching activities/units in such a way that each pupil does not feel excluded). In particular, a colleague reports the use of alternative communication channels as a strength of a deaf teacher and a colleague says that the condition of the teacher whom she talked about led him to be extremely creative (and hyperactive) in the activities he did for pupils (Table 7).

Table 7 - Colleagues' interview extracts (Category "Strengths")

<i>Strenghts</i>	
<p>3:9 it led him to live every moment as a precious one. So he is a person... I think one of the most hyperactive people I've ever met, a person that would do activities for children that no teacher had ever, in my opinion, done in class. For instance, one day I saw him arrive with two Ikea-like bags full of wooden logs that he wanted the children to cut up to make fishes</p>	<p>5:3 he focused much more on oral activities. So starting from his condition, he encouraged children to develop speech and therefore they never experienced it as a difficulty most importantly the colleague never made the children feel burdened and by the end of the year they not only had acquired the study topics but also a greater ability to express themselves on what they had studied so I saw this as a positive thing</p>

Lastly, the analysis of the socio-cultural context and, specifically, the *readiness* to welcome teachers with disabilities/SLDs, highlights that universities are prepared to include, within their environment, teachers with disabilities/SLDs, while schools are often less inclusive. In fact, some interviewees report that normally «it depends on your colleagues» or «it depends on the school where you work» (Tables 8-9) o «on the school leaders' leadership skills».

Table 8 - Colleagues' interview extracts (Category "Socio-cultural context")

<i>Socio-cultural context</i>		
3:4 So, the university is, because university is historically also ideologically always ahead of the game. The school is not, but not because there wouldn't be the elements culturally, but because of the type of organization, of requests... what I was saying earlier, that are made, they have such a complex apparatus that... then means how can I translate what I had imagined in a practical manner? In my opinion now it's not ready [...] or maybe it is, depending on the area	4:2 I don't know, from a theoretical point of view, in my opinion, we do lots of things, we implement lots of research also tools, you know, novelties. We do a lot. From a practical point of view, however, it seems to me that everything stops at a certain point	6:2 well honestly I don't think so even though you know it's not good to say but in the light of what I see every day and that I have seen in many years it's now been 19 years since I've worked at school... what I see every day and I've seen over time... I think we still have long way to go. Unfortunately, it's a long way away

As an explanation, teachers and colleagues claim that entrance tests for degree courses and the professional practicum often do not take into account the specificities of individual situations of disability/SLD. Moreover, they do not consider that current workplace policies are unclear about the construction of inclusive organizational environments and that colleagues and parents are in many cases not completely in favour of the presence of teachers with disabilities.

Table 9 - Teachers' interview extracts (Category "Socio-cultural context")

<i>Socio-cultural context</i>	
<p>2:4 well, I'd love that but for SLDs I think, yeah, for disabilities the Italian school is not ready yet. Other countries are – the Italian school is not</p> <p>6:2 What I have noticed [...] is the high competition existing both in the university and working sphere, which leads to always see the negative side of others, highlighting then more the faults than the potentials... so it's difficult to create a welcoming environment when you just think: "this person can't do this, this person can't do this, this and this". I think we really must change our mindset...</p> <p>11:17 Well, not yet unfortunately but there are, let's say, the foundations to build something and now precisely it's about understanding what we want to do with the experience and history that have been built thanks to, I repeat, the Law 170 that for better or for worse uncovered positive and negative aspects that now... before we could not build anything, now we can do a little something</p>	<p>4:3 It has a prejudice that I have often let's say... had to get others to overcome, in spite of my 18-year career that should be enough as, as a curriculum... as feedback let's say for families, but it's not always like this</p> <p>3:9 here and there. First, because there are no facilities, I mean, the school itself as a building doesn't allow so. I mean, think of the children... those in wheelchairs must be picked up to go down to the canteen, you know. Now a teacher cannot be picked up, you know</p> <p>5:5 the teacher faces these and even seeing a peer with a disability does not make as much of a clamour as it did before, you know. Therefore, in my opinion, we are ready, for sure. Then the resources are what they are, especially in state schools</p>

4. Conclusion

What has been illustrated so far shows that teachers with disabilities/SLDs still struggle to feel fully accepted in the school system. For example, think of the dilemma they usually perceive as a result of stereotypes on disabilities/SLDs; the secretness they maintain on their condition and the choice to *confide only* in those whom they feel are more ready to accept them.

It is therefore clear that schools need to improve (in terms of accommodations) so that teachers with disabilities/SLDs are truly included in the teaching staff. It should be highlighted that the cultural-disciplinary,

methodological-educational, organizational, institutional-social, training-professional dimensions of teachers with disabilities/SLDs can be effectively achieved with the accommodations due. However, these are not always and not necessarily granted by the reference schools – but acquired thanks to the individual problem-solving skills of the person with disabilities/SLDs.

On the other hand, the presence of teachers with disabilities/SLDs is a forerunner to the management of a more inclusive classroom (d'Alonzo *et al.*, 2015; d'Alonzo, 2016) and of a competent process integration management in light of specific needs. These teachers, as the interviews emphasized, seem to have greater skills and aptitudes in the field of special education. For example, consider teachers' empathy, which appears to be greater among those with disabilities/SLDs towards pupils with disabilities/SLDs or other differences.

Moreover, the pupils can compare themselves more with less mainstream models of teachers and therefore become more open to what is commonly understood as *diversity*. This may produce further positive outcomes in the pupils' education, at the heart of any action that is to be considered educational.

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