



Conference strand: Exploring the field of educational effectiveness–innovation processes, research methods and techniques

Title: How to support schools to self-evaluate the quality of inclusion?

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Long Abstract

This contribution presents a study on tools and indicators that could support schools to evaluate the quality of inclusion, implemented in Italian National Evaluation System. Italian school system is trying to achieve an inclusive school, supporting, as UNESCO says, the full participation of everyone, in particular removing the barriers to access for those, individuals and/or groups, that are at risk of exclusion and underachievement. Italy has a well known tradition of inclusion policies: since the 1970s it has implemented a common school system for all students, included those with disabilities. The Italian school inclusion policies are supported by a legislation that has been updated over time. Despite this, actual implementation of the norms at school and classroom levels represents a weakness. Although inclusion represents strong commitment for schools, they have many difficulties in practice due to structural aspects. At the same time some studies also show that instructional activities are still far to be inclusive in most of schools (Treille, Caritas e Fondazione Agnelli, 2011; Ianes e Demo, 2015).

School Self-Evaluation (SSE) can be an important opportunity to promote school-inclusive change. Through evaluation, schools could increase their capability to provide an equitable, high-quality education for all and become more skilled at responding to the differences of individual learners (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017). In this direction, some evaluation tools, as Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2011), could represent an approach to guide schools through a process of inclusive school development.

In order to support schools in using data to inform decisions, INVALSI has developed a national framework for SSE focused on three dimensions of analysis: context, processes and outcomes (INVALSI, 2014). Among processes dimension, in the area called “Inclusion and differentiation”, schools are involved to examine activities, projects and policies adopted to include students with special educational needs, enhance diversity and promote equity at school. During the SSE process,

schools are supported by a set of indicators developed by INVALSI. Inclusion indicators are taking into account different aspects, such as teacher's characteristics, school services and resources, classroom environment and educational technologies, instructional strategies, differentiation and personalization, parental involvement and school collaboration with other bodies and organizations. This set of indicators, through national comparisons and benchmarks, could be used to evaluate the quality of school inclusion at system level.

In our experience, it is feasible to collect data on school services and resources available at school level, and use them to evaluate school underlining strengths and weaknesses. On the contrary collecting and comparing data on educational activities, teaching/learning processes and quality of the environment at classroom level presents relevant difficulties due to, for example, the introduction of complex instruments (classroom observation, teacher's and student's questionnaires) and the evaluators' training.

This is the challenge we are facing: how to collect data on educational activities and processes in order to improve and support SSE regarding the quality of inclusion.

References

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