



DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20967152

SELF-PERCEIVED INSTRUCTIONAL COMPETENCE AND PREJUDICE TOWARD DISABLED AND NON-NATIVE STUDENTS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Received: 12/04/2026
Accepted: 26/05/2026

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ABSTRACT

The presence of the foreign and/or disabled student reflects the idea of a multicultural and complex society, based on inclusion. Its notable increase in Italian schools has contributed to reshaping social and educational proposals so that everyone can feel accepted and valued. The present research measures the relationship between latent and manifest prejudice of teachers towards disabled and/or immigrant students as predictive variables of teaching-learning strategies. A cross-sectional study was conducted involving 410 Italian teachers, working in four school stages: nursery, primary, middle and high school. Participants completed a constructed ad hoc anamnestic questionnaire, the Assessment Teaching Scale, the Italian Modern and Classical Prejudices Scale towards people with ID, the Pettigrew and Meertens' Blatant Subtle Prejudice Scale. Results confirm the relation between manifest and latent prejudice toward disabled and non-native students, and the partially predictive role of teachers' prejudice on their self-perceived instructional competence. The valorization of diversity is the prerogative of school, suggesting strategies aimed at clarifying the process of identification and accompaniment of students with difficulties and their subsequent social inclusion.

KEYWORDS: Disability; Immigrant; Inclusion; Instructional Competence; School Teacher.

1. INTRODUCTION

Prejudice is defined as a multi-dimensional construct which incorporates the cognitive and affective dimension: in particular, it would be a process of an affective nature which causes some particular social conditions (such as categorization and social identity) to automatically activate, determining discriminatory behaviors and implicit (or subtle) and explicit (or blatant) prejudice.

According to the Pettigrew and Meertens' Model, blatant or classical prejudice is characterized by an intense perception of threat and rejection of outgroup; it is represented by an open and direct refusal, which does not pose problems of social desirability; it corresponds to traditional racism. Otherwise, the subtle prejudice is characterized by attitudes characterized by defense of cultural values, amplification of cultural differences and denial of positive emotional experiences towards outgroup members. It is considered as an unconscious negative but socially acceptable attitude; it can be assimilated to modern prejudice, as it implies a defense of individualistic values, combined with the belief that minority groups benefit from undue favors (Bergamaschi et al., 2022; Coenders et al., 2001).

One of the social groups that has often been the object of prejudice is that of migrants, followed by those with physical and/or mental disabilities. This is a very current issue that, considering the expansion of migration in Italy in recent years and the growing number of subjects with disabilities, requires attention and responses.

In detail, one of the explanatory factors for anti-immigrant prejudice today is perceived threat. Many non-immigrants worry about the economic burden that immigrants pose to society and the potential danger that they pose to the dominant culture and society. Overall, research shows that believing that people from other cultures are a threat to one's culture and survival determines prejudice and discrimination.

Attitudes toward immigrants and immigration have become less positive during the outbreak of the current refugee crises in Europe. But, despite the increase in immigration and attempts to manage it, the threat and prejudice against immigrants remain a major concern at the individual and societal levels and often emerge as a key political, economic and social issue.

Bar-Tal and Teichman (2005) in their "Integrative Model of Formation of Stereotypes and Prejudice" highlight the influence of social context and ingroup's messages; in detail, when comparing children and adolescents, authors detect an elevated

influence of peers on levels of prejudice in the school context. In confirmation of this, Mitchell (2019) underlines that more studies should focus on relation between adolescents and adults into the school setting, which sees an ever-increasing increase of immigrant and disabled students (Váradi, Barna, & Németh, 2021).

In school context, in fact, teachers find themselves in situations where they are asked to manage multiple tasks at the same time in often overcrowded classes and respond promptly to situational demands. These conditions often do not allow teachers to engage in controlled and reflective processes, leading to the activation of automatic and implicit stereotypes and prejudices, with the risk that even if unintentionally, they influence their evaluations of students, teaching practices and their own behaviors, especially towards students with disabilities and/or immigrants. In particular, the literature highlights the importance of assessing the implicit level of prejudice, showing that when teachers' levels of explicit prejudice are low, they may still have negative implicit expectations about students from ethnic minorities and/or with disabilities, as well as negative implicit attitudes towards this group of students.

In relation to the differences that inhabit the world of school, scientific research has shown that teachers' prejudice depend on the students' need, the type of diversity and the severity of the student's disability: in fact, in the case of students with disabilities, a greater complexity of the deficit corresponds to attitudes of reluctance and inadequacy, while a special educational need, such as belonging to an ethnic minority, corresponds to assertive and proactive attitudes (Heyder et al., 2020).

For the reasons stated above, it seems essential to analyze, through a constructivist approach, the phenomenon of prejudice within a complex socio-educational context, such as the world of school.

Infact, the constructivist approach represents a lens through which one can analyze and improve the teaching-learning process school today, open and flexible towards diversity and multi-culturalism (Gervasi, 2023). According to this model, knowledge is "constructed" starting from lived experiences, which are then interpreted and elaborated. Constructivism places the student, or rather the learning subject, in the center of the training process, with their specific cognitive architecture and schemes, through which they interpret the world around them. According to this approach, teachers focus more on students' interests, adapting the teaching style to students' needs and increasing their

motivation to learn; they encourage the construction of knowledge, not its reproduction; they prefer a type of learning based on case studies and contextualize the knowledge that is the subject of study; they limit the use of predetermined instructional sequences and offer multiple views of reality, promoting a cooperative learning (Jonassen, 1991).

The constructivist model, therefore, represents the guiding theoretical framework for the present research, finalized at investigating the relation between latent and manifest prejudice of teachers towards disabled and/or immigrant students as predictive variables of teaching-learning strategies.

2. DIVERSITY AND EQUITY IN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT: LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the latest data provided by MIUR (Ministry of Education and Research, 2022) the percentage of students with non-Italian citizenship (out of the total number of students in Italy) is equal to 10.3%, only in the 2020-2021 school year.

In regards to their presence in the Regions: in the North there are 65.3% of the students that aren't Italian citizens, followed by the Center with 22.2%, and the South with 12.5%. The Region with the largest presence is Lombardy (Northern Italy), which in the last school year, hosted 220.771 students that weren't Italian citizens, or approximately a quarter of the total present in Italy. Second generations are also constantly growing, reaching 66.7% in 2020/2021, and more than 65.4% in 2019/2020. The majority, that is 44.42% of immigrant students are of European origin; followed by students of African (27.25%) and Asian (20.27%) origin. With respect to the regularity of the school path chosen, the gaps between Italian students and those of migrant origin remain considerable. In the 2022/2023 school year, 7.9% of Italian students are behind compared to 26.4% of students that aren't Italian citizens. The maximum gap is found in secondary schools where the percentages of delays become 16.0 and 48.0 respectively.

Increasing percentages have also been noted regarding the population of disabled students. In the 2021-2022 school year, 316 thousand students with disabilities attended Italian schools (+5% compared to the previous school year). Observing the regional distribution, the percentage of students with disabilities out of the total number of students varies from a minimum of 2.64% in Basilicata to a maximum of 4.12% in Sicily, in particular: 3.67% in Southern Italy, 3.77% in central Italy and 3.82% in Northern Italy.

In detail, 96.8% of the total number of certified

students have a psycho-physical disability, specifically: 69.5% have an intellectual disability, 2.8% have a motor disability and 24.5% have another type of disability, i.e. early psychiatric problems, specific learning disorders certified in comorbidity with other disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

The population of immigrant and disabled students, therefore, continues to constitute a significant presence in Italian schools; this determines the need to pay attention to a series of organizational, teaching and training aspects. One of the most visible consequences in Italian schools is the overcrowding of classes attended by students with difficulties. Carrying out teaching activities in an overcrowded classroom influences the quality of teaching and the teaching strategies implemented by teachers. Sometimes overcrowding in classes leads to: a lower level of learning on the pupils' part, especially in classes attended by students with disabilities and/or immigrants, difficulties in managing educational relationships and caring for social relationships; so, the relationship between overcrowded classrooms, effective teaching and learning is very low (Mankgele, 2023).

For example, Onwu and Stoffels (2005) revealed that the following problems in an overcrowded classroom impacts on the performance of teachers: lack of physical space; less opportunities for learners for the active participation in the learning process; the impersonalizing of teaching; disproportionate workload assigned to teachers; reduced opportunities to meet students' needs.

Similarly, Emmer and Stough (2015) show that overcrowded classrooms are the cause of poor instructional delivery, which negatively affects the teaching process. Masry-Herzallah (2021) show that overcrowded classrooms negatively affect the achievement of the objectives of the teaching and learning process (Ahmad, Arshad, & Qamar, 2018), causing teachers to have difficulty interacting with students (Mankgele, 2023). Similarly, Hachem and Mayor (2019) report that a challenge for teachers is the exponential growth in the number of students, the shortage of specialized teachers and the lack of funding, which have a negative impact on the ideal class size, that is, about fifteen to twenty students per class (Seherrie, 2023).

Given the multi-formity and multi-dimensionality of the prejudice construct, it appears essential to pay attention to the school context, to education for diversity in all its forms, and to the reduction of prejudice toward disability and/or immigration students. Unfortunately, research and

investigations carried out on this topic have been mainly limited to analyzing only one of the two dimensions: disability or emigration. The convergence of these two areas, that is, the double condition of a foreign person with a disability, is poorly delineated in the literature, although this phenomenon opens up to a reformulation of the concept of intersectionality, that is, the need to take into account the various/multitude axes of difference that condition the lives of students. For example, the limited literature shows that teachers exhibit more inclusive behaviors toward students with physical disabilities than toward students with behavioral disorders, primarily because of their influence on classmates (Zappulla et al., 2023).

In general, the literature highlights that the inclusion process of students with physical disabilities - regardless of gender and refugee status - is easier than that of students with behavioral disorders, whose inclusion process represents a challenge due to the perceived negative impact on peers (de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert 2010).

The gender variable can also influence teachers' attitudes, since girls are represented as less disruptive than boys, who show more problems of behavioral adjustment (Beaman, Wheldall and Kemp, 2006); this requires greater attention from teachers, who therefore demonstrate to be more positive towards girls.

Interestingly, a study conducted on Austrian immigrant students with and without disabilities shows that: attitudes towards the inclusion of refugee children without disabilities were more positive than those towards native children with behavioral disorders. Thus, in the absence of disabilities, the process of inclusion of refugee children is perceived as less challenging than the inclusion of children with behavioral disorders. Therefore, the type of disability (behavioral disorders) seems to influence the teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of refugee students more than refugee status (Bešić, Paleczek, & Gasteiger-Klicpera, 2020).

For these reasons, it seems essential to analyze teachers' explicit and implicit attitudes, and their instructional competence, in order to make them aware of their own prejudices especially towards students with disabilities and/or immigrants, providing them with tools to control them.

2.1. Main Obstacles in the Teaching-Learning Process: Teacher's Instructional Competence and Prejudice

Today more than ever, school and education focus, above all, on issues such as meeting,

relationship and managing differences.

School, as Ligorio (2010, p. 13) states, is the place where we not only learn to discover who we are, but also who we could be [...] and where we build our possible identity. It is a cultural and symbolic-relational context within which clashes are generated between belief systems and cultural models of diversity of which teachers are bearers, and which condition the cultural models of students, within an educational relationship that is configured as asymmetrical (Ligorio, 2010). As such, the asymmetry is capable of creating/facilitating significant encounters and dialectical processes, or, on the contrary, conflictual dynamics that consolidate intergenerational distances.

Teachers, in particular, can contribute - with their prejudices - in preparing a fertile ground on which behaviors of rejection and exclusion towards those who are different can proliferate; they can, vice versa, prepare a space to learn about differences, in order to promote and spread the culture of inclusion and the acquisition of methodologies and teaching tools aimed at equal opportunities and existential pluralities in school.

Various theoretical models of teaching styles have been proposed in literature, which can be grouped into two categories: on the one hand, there are unidimensional teaching models, which are organized according to a single factor (Phelan & Schonour, 2004); on the other hand, there are multidimensional teaching models, organized according to different factors, which analyze the teaching-learning process from a complex perspective.

In detail, the multidimensional model of the Primary School Teacher Self-Perceived Competence Assessment Scale (ECAD-EP) is aimed to identify the teacher's strategic skills and to outline an effective inclusive teacher profile according to the constructivism approach. In the ECAD-EP model, the concept of effectiveness is conceived as a container that encompasses three areas of competence (Valdivieso, et al., 2013): social-emotional competence which includes variables that concern interpersonal and relationship skills and inner balance; the communicative-relational competence which includes aspects related managing of interactions and communication dynamics; and finally, competence didactics concerns the didactic abilities and the development of actions that concern the teacher's institutional role.

The ECAD EP model analyzes - through a constructivist perspective - the concept of teaching, models and theories on teaching styles, classifications and educational implications of the

teaching process, through three factors: socio-emotional, communicative-relational and didactic; these dimensions are made operational by including within the model not only behavioral factors, but also procedural, situational, attitudinal, reflective and self-perceptive factors. This model, made up of a set of holistic and integrative dimensions of cognitive, communicative and interactive, socio-relational and technical-instrumental variables, makes it possible to correlate teaching strategies with the possible presence of teachers' prejudices towards students.

The model underlies the importance for the teaching group to possess emotional and communicative-relational skills, and the consequent implementation of metacognitive, psycholinguistic, socio-cultural and psycho-pedagogical skills, which mediate teaching and learning process of students with difficulties.

These skills in teachers appear fundamental because teaching practice appears to be influenced by intrinsic variables, that are linked to the formal characteristics of the school context in which the teacher operates, such as the number of students in the classroom, the type of difficulty of the student, age and years of service of the teacher; to which are added extrinsic variables, i.e. linked to the socio-emotional and informal characteristics of school context, such as the educational relationship, previous contact experience with different students and above all the possible presence of prejudice.

2.2. Influence of Intrinsic Variables

In relation to the differences that inhabit the world of diversity in schools, scientific research has shown that teachers' attitudes could be influenced by the type and severity of the student's impairment (Chhabra, Srivastava, & Srivastava, 2010). For example, some studies point out that teachers perceive students with behavioral and emotional disorders as more "difficult" than other students with different disabilities. Generally, major difficulties of students are related to attitudes of reluctance and inadequacy, while assertive and proactive attitudes are connected to a mild deficit (Van den Bergh *et al.*, 2010).

Regarding age and years of service, research shows how younger teachers show more condescending attitudes towards inclusion and disability, but, at the same time, declare they are inexperienced. On the other hand, teachers who have been dealing with the world of hardship for several years are more exposed to stressors and burnout syndromes.

Furthermore, despite efforts by the teachers'

preparation programs to promote greater awareness for the needs of diverse students, some teachers with limited professional experience may nevertheless maintain negative attitudes toward certain groups of students. In other words, in turn, this can have negative consequences on students' learning and performance (Gaspari, 2018).

Therefore, the intrapersonal or intrinsic dimensions that raise concern in the literature can be grouped into two areas (Agbenyega & Examining, 2007), namely the absence of inclusive physical contexts, characterized by architectural barriers, and the reduced personal and professional skills of teachers, especially when faced with large classes (Boyle, *et al.*, 2020). In reference to the first area, teachers often believe that schools are not suitable places for disabled students, particularly those with sensory disabilities; in reference to the second one, the literature has showed how the presence of extensive professional knowledge, material and human resources and experience improve teachers' work, positive attitudes and their willingness to implement inclusion (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000; Lindner *et al.*, 2023; Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2005).

2.3. Influence of Extrinsic Variables

Beginning from the last years of the 20th century, psychological research has begun to examine some implicit forms of prejudice, that involve a lack of awareness and involuntary activation. Implicit displays of attitudes and stereotypes exist and reliably predict some behaviors, often independently of explicit attitudes and stereotypes (Pettigrew & Meertens, 2005).

The literature shows that towards a specific ethnic group, rather than completely negative attitudes such as the overt prejudice, people often foster complex attitudes, partly positive and partly negative. According to Glick and Fiske (2001) this factor can be traced back to two constitutive aspects of relations between groups: socio-economic status and the type of interdependence achieved (cooperative or competitive). These aspects address stereotypes on two dimensions of judgment: 1. Competence, which concerns the descriptive aspects of groups, such as intelligence and efficiency, linked to social status; 2. Warmth, which concerns aspects such as sympathy and passion, linked to the type of interdependence that is created between groups.

The union of these two dimensions determines different forms of prejudice and influences each individual's ways of relating to those who are "different".

At an interpersonal level, it seems essential to highlight how the contact with a disabled person positively influences the teachers' attitudes, offering them the possibility, in a muffled and protected atmosphere like that of the classroom, to approach to the world of diversity, with serenity.

Furthermore, in managing the conflict, the teacher's attitude within the classroom becomes of particular importance in being able to transform the relational conflict into an opportunity for the evolution of the relationship, and in greater knowledge between those involved. Understanding what role prejudice plays and how this is used in relational dynamics between people can represent, for the teacher, a further interpretative piece for understanding that happens in the group of students and in the relationship between adults.

In particular, teachers' beliefs about disability, ethnicity, attitudes and diversity concerns, can influence educational practice, teaching strategies and even the quality of teaching materials provided to students (Pellerone, 2021; Salmeri & Pellerone, 2015).

Some teachers may show anxiety or lack of preparation for working with disabled or immigrant students; conversely, classes may present feelings of anger and frustration because they may think that the presence of classmates with difficulties could affect academic standards (Gary, 1997; Parey, 2019; Pellerone et al., 2020). For example, a study conducted by Lucas underlines that teachers manifest a source of frustration when teaching styles used successfully with native speakers fail in the case of foreign students, ending up attributing to the students the difficulties created by the school context and language, as if they were intrinsic characteristics of themselves (Lucas, 1997).

Literature highlights how teachers' explicit and implicit attitudes can be important predictors for the use of teaching practices focused on the needs of students with difficulties, especially those belonging to ethnic minorities (Kumar, Karabenick & Burgoon, 2015). Teachers' implicit biases appear to influence teaching strategies and students' performance levels (Stephens, Rubie-Davies & Peterson, 2022). Furthermore, students seem to benefit most academically when their teachers' implicit biases favored the minority group (formed by disabled and/or immigrant students) to which the student belongs: results indicated that teachers with low levels of implicit bias had a reduced academic achievement gap within their classrooms, compared to classrooms with teachers with high implicit bias.

These issues become further complicated and

compromise the teaching-learning process even more when the migrant is also disabled. Therefore, it is fundamental, in this case, to examine the different dimensions as they intersect since these are aspects of diversity which, when added together, can increase possible forms of discrimination and prejudice. Analyzing this double condition of diversity (caused by disability and immigration) means analyzing the historical-cultural dimension of subjects: reflect on language, on their ways of perceiving and thinking on the representation of oneself and others, reflecting on the system of value and representation of diversity and new educational practices.

Italian literature, in fact, underlines that, although it is a topic that is not addressed much on a theoretical and methodological level, the action of the school appears to be decisive, as a place of education and literacy in the complexity of the signs and languages present in the current socio-cultural landscape (Goussot, 2010). Literature underlines the possibility of reducing teachers' prejudices towards double diversity through a teaching practice based on an inclusive climate, adapting the needs of students in difficulty to those of the class, adjusting the objectives of the class to the needs of the student with difficulty, simplifying and organizing study materials for the whole class, differentiating didactic mediation, using peer-mediated teaching methods and assertive and prosocial communication (Marone & Buccini, 2020).

3. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESIS

The need to pay attention in the school context, reducing prejudice and education for diversity in all its forms represents, therefore, a central aspect in the psycho-pedagogical debate relating to the themes of inter-culture and inclusion.

In accordance with literature, the present research investigates the relationship between latent and manifest, classical and modern prejudice of teachers towards disabled and/or non-native students, as predictive variables of teaching-learning strategies.

In accordance with the literature that affirms the influence of students' difficulties (especially at a communicative-relational and linguistic level) on the development of teaching practices, we hypothesize that the presence of non-native and/or disabled students can influence the use of social-relational, communicative and didactic strategies in the participant group (Fiorucci, 2014).

Furthermore, we hypothesize the presence of a correlation between teachers' prejudice towards disabled and immigrant students, according to the literature which underlines as these represent two

sides of the same medal, that is, aspects of diversity which - if both present - can increase forms of discrimination and exclusion of students and their families (Marone & Buccini, 2020).

Finally, we hypothesize the predictive role of prejudice on teaching styles and strategies, a role moderated by teachers' experience and their previous contact with disabled and/or non-native students. This would confirm Allport's model according to which the contact with a disabled person could positively influence teachers' attitudes; on the other hand, however, contact could represent a tool for confirming and legitimizing prejudicial attitudes towards others (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005).

4. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research involved 410 Sicilian teachers (on which 19.1% men and 80.9% women), chosen through a random selection process, aged between 22 and 59 years old ($M = 40.64$; $SD = 8.38$). In particular, the participation was requested from all teachers in service in Sicilian comprehensive institutes, who attended - in the last year - the Specialization Course for Educational Support Activities for Students with Disabilities at the "Kore" University of Enna.

Participants have a professional experience between 1 and 27 years ($M=4.10$, $S.D=4.64$); they worked in four school stages: kindergarten, primary, middle and high school; schools are located in the 9 provincial capitals of Sicily, that is: Agrigento, Caltanissetta, Catania, Enna, Messina, Palermo, Ragusa, Siracusa, Trapani. For the purposes of the research, The Sicily region was chosen because it represents a land of immigration, especially illegal ones, thanks to its geographical position, surrounded by the sea.

The school director's consent was signed before the distribution of the tools. According to the guidelines of the CNR Research Ethics and Bioethics Commission, the participants were provided with

the following data: the aims and structure of the research, duration and method of carrying out the research, explanation of how to manage and communicate results and the guarantee of anonymity. All participants signed informed consent. Participation in the research was voluntary, without disadvantages at the time of withdrawal.

The only criterion for inclusion in the research was the possession of a specialization qualification for educational support activities for students with disabilities.

The tools were administered by trained researchers; the average time to complete the instruments was 40 minutes and teachers were given 60 minutes to complete them; if participants were unable to complete the instruments within the allotted time, they were given additional time to complete the compilation. Participants completed an ad hoc anamnestic questionnaire, the Assessment Teaching Scale (ECAD - EP; Valdivieso, Carbonero & Martín-Antón, 2013), the Italian Modern and Classical Prejudices Scale (MCPS-IT) towards people with ID (Marcone et al., 2019), the Pettigrew and Meertens' Blatant Subtle Prejudice Scale (2005).

The anamnestic questionnaire measures basic (age, sex, years of experience of teachers) and specific information (student number per class, presence of disabled and or immigrant students, and grade they teach).

The ECAD-EP questionnaire, or Escala de Evaluación de la Competencia Autopercibida, is a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", that measures the teachers' strategic skills. The questionnaire consists of 58 items divided into three dimensions: Factor A or socio-emotional dimension), Factor B or communicative-relational dimension and Factor C or didactic dimension).

The Table number 1 reports sufficient estimates of the internal validity of the tool for the present study and the Italian version of instrument (Gervasi, 2023).

Table 1: The Estimates of the Internal Validity of the ECAD-EP.

Factors	Dimensions	Cronbach's alpha in the study	Cronbach's alpha
Socio-emotional factor	Coexistence	.86	.78
	Empathy	.74	.74
	Communicative adaptation	.85	.63
	Communicative sensitivity	.91	.62
	Mediation	.90	.56
	Affective bonding	.71	.54
	Group Dynamization	.89	.53
	Self- efficacy	.90	.51
Communicative -relational factor	Nonverbal communication	0.72	.76
	Assertiveness	.67	.69
	Executive leadership	.81	.62
	Conflict resolution	.86	.55

	Paraverbal communication	.68	.46
	Affective leadership	.75	.46
Didactic factor	Instructional control	.90	.80
	Planning	.87	.71
	Adaptation	.82	.55

The Modern and Classical Prejudices Scale-Italian Version was adapted from original 19-item Modern and Classical Prejudices Scale (Akrami et al., 2009) to assess prejudice about people with intellectual disabilities (ID). Two forms of prejudice are measured: classical (overt/divert) and modern (covert/subtle). The Scale on Classical and Modern Prejudices was developed in order to minimize the social desirability bias (Falanga, De Caroli & Sagone, 2012; Hofmann, Gschwendner & Schmitt, 2005).

The internal reliability was $\alpha = 0.73$ for classical prejudice and $\alpha = 0.74$ for modern prejudice. The present research reports a Cronbach's alpha equal to .84

The Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Scale by Pettigrew and Meertens (2005) in the Italian version by Arcuri and Boca (1996) consists of 20 items: 10 items to explore subtle prejudice, and 10 items to analyze the blatant prejudice.

The internal reliability was $\alpha = 0.70$ for subtle prejudice and $\alpha = 0.74$ for blatant prejudice. The present study reports a Cronbach's alpha equal to .80 for subtle and blatant prejudice scales.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 26.0 was used for statistical analyses.

The Multivariate analysis of variance was used in order to measure: the influence of gender and professor's experience on teaching strategies; the influence of independent variables (presence or absence of disabled and/or immigrant students) in ECAD-EP subdimensions; the influence of independent variables (teacher's experience and presence of students with difficulties) on prejudice towards people with ID and immigrants.

The multivariate regression analysis was used in order to explore the predictive contribution of prejudice on the self-perceived instructional competence, including anamnestic data (teacher's experience, presence of disabled or immigrant students), the modern and classical prejudices toward disabled students, and the subtle and blatant prejudice toward immigrant. In fact, the objective of regression is to find the equation of a curve that best interprets the mechanism by which one variable is related to another.

Finally, in order to measure the predictive role of prejudice on teaching and strategies, including the role moderated by teachers' experience and their

previous contact with disabled and/or non-native students, a predictive analysis using linear regression with two mediating variables were conducted: teachers' experience (M1) and presence of disabled and/or non-native students (M2). When conducting a mediation analysis, a mediating variable is expected to convey the causal relationship between an independent variable (X) and a dependent variable (Y). Running a 'multiple mediators' model we are tried to test the mediated effect of teaching experience and the status of people's place of birth.

6. RESULTS

6.1. Preliminary Analysis

In reference to the school grade, 39.5% of participants worked in a high school, 31.2% teachers in a middle school, 18.2% in kindergarten, and 11.1 % in a primary school.

The teachers had an average experience of 4.10 years (S.D = 4.65), with an average number of students for each classroom equal to 17.46. Furthermore, 68.5% declared to have students with intellectual and/or physical disability, 48.2 % to have immigrant students.

In reference to the ECAD-EP scores, the first analysis shows that, with reference to socio-emotional factors: a greater experience seems to influence coexistence ($F=1.88$, $p<.05$), communicative adaptation ($F=2.26$, $p<.001$), affective involvement ($F=1.93$, $p<.01$), group dynamics ($F=1.77$, $p<.05$) and perceived self-efficacy ($F=1.66$, $p<.05$). Regarding communicative-relational factors, experience seems to influence executive leadership ($F=1.98$, $p<.05$), conflict resolution ($F=2.20$, $p<.05$) and effective leadership ($F=1.75$, $p<.05$). Finally, with reference to educational factors, experience influences institutional control ($F=2.10$, $p<.01$), planning ($F=2.02$, $p<.01$) and adaptation to new situations ($F=2.08$, $p<.01$).

The same analysis is carried out in order to measure the influence of independent variable on prejudice; it shows the influence of teachers' experience on manifest prejudice ($F=1.78$, $p<.05$), and gender on latent prejudice ($F=7.03$, $p<.01$); descriptive statistics show that men obtain higher average scores than women.

6.2. Inferential Analysis

In reference to the first hypothesis, the MANOVA shows how the presence of foreigner influences:

- teacher's empathic abilities (F=4.52, p<.05),
- the sense of self-efficacy (F=4.06, p<.05),
- the communicative sensitivity (F= 3.88, p<.05), which also appears to be influenced by the presence of students with disabilities (F=5.84, p<.05).

Mediation capacity appears to be influenced by the presence of immigrants (F=7.74, p<.01), and disabled people (F=5.32, p<.05).

Furthermore, the presence of ID students seems to determine:

- the affective involvement (F=5.43, p<.05),
- the group dynamization (F=7.71, p<.01),
- the teachers' self-efficacy (F=4.13, p<.05).

In reference to the emotional factor, the same data analysis underlines that the presence of students with disabilities influences:

- the use of non-verbal communication (F=4.89, p<.05),
- assertiveness (F=4.88, p<.05),
- executive leadership (F=4.06, p<.05),
- the use of a paraverbal communication (F=3.97, p<.05).

Similarly, the presence of foreign students leads to greater use of:

- non-verbal communication (F=4.94, p<.05),

- paraverbal communication (F=5.54, p<.05),
- assertiveness (F=4.94, p<.05),
- executive leadership (F=4.16, p<.05),
- ability to resolve conflicts (F=8.57, p<.01).

With reference to educational factors, the MANOVA shows how: the presence of students with disabilities seems to influence:

- the effective leadership (F=6.32, p<.05),
- a greater presence of instructional control (F=6.65, p<.05),
- the adaptation to new situations (F=4.03, p<.05).

Otherwise, the presence of foreign students seems to influence only the planning skill (F=9.61, p<.01) and the adapt to new situations (F=4.13, p<.05).

The same analysis does not show the influence of disabled or immigrant students (into the classroom) on prejudice, classic, modern, latent and manifest (p>.05).

In order to confirm the second hypothesis, the table number two shows results of the Pearson's correlation analysis, that underlines: the correlation between classical and modern prejudice toward immigrants, and the correlation of modern prejudice toward ID student with classical and modern prejudice toward non-native student.

Table 2: Correlation Between Different Form of Prejudice.

Variables	A.	B.	C.	D.
A. Classical Prejudice	-			
B. Modern Prejudice	.637**	-		
C. Manifest Prejudice	.439**	.391**	-	
D. Latent Prejudice	.025	.147**	-.083	-

Note: ** p<.001

6.3. The Predictive Role of Prejudice

A linear regression analysis was conducted, including as predictive variables the teachers' experience, the presence of students with disabilities and

foreigners, and the possible presence of classical, modern, latent and manifest prejudice. The table number three shows the predictive role of teacher's experience, the modern, manifest and latent prejudice, and above all the presence of disabled students on Factor A.

Table 3: Multivariate Hierarchical Modeling of the Socio-Emotional Factor.

Variables	R	Ad. R	SE	B	T	P
Teacher's experience	.38	.15	.007	.118	2.435	.015
Disabled Students			.074	.191	3.966	.000
Immigrant Students			.069	.073	1.502	.134
Classical Prejudice			.060	-.046	-.720	.472
Modern Prejudice			.081	.154	2.426	.016
Manifest Prejudice			.045	-.188	-3.490	.001
Latent Prejudice			.045	.142	2.934	.004

Abbreviation: B, Beta Standardized Coefficients; SE, Standard Error.

Note: The Teacher's Experience Is Expressed in Years.

The table number four shows similar results, indicating the predictivity of presence of disabled students, modern prejudice toward immigrants, but

above all manifest and latent prejudice toward ID on the communicative-relational factor.

Table 4: Multivariate Hierarchical Modeling of the Communicative-Relational Factor.

Variables	R	Ad. R	SE	B	T	P
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Teacher's experience	.38	.15	.008	.086	1.777	.076
Disabled Students			.078	.195	4.047	.000
Immigrant Students			.074	.068	1.389	.166
Classical Prejudice			.063	.004	.055	.956
Modern Prejudice			.086	.162	2.560	.011
Manifest Prejudice			.048	-.199	-3.679	.000
Latent Prejudice			.048	.151	3.118	.002

Abbreviation: B, Beta Standardized Coefficients; SE, Standard Error.

Note: The Teacher's Experience Is Expressed in Years.

The table number five shows the predictive role of independent variables on the Factor C, that is: the teachers' experience, the presence both disabled and

non-native students, the level of modern, manifest and latent prejudice.

Table 5: Multivariate Hierarchical Modeling Of The Didactic Factor.

Variables	R	Ad. R	SE	β	T	P
Teacher's experience	.39	.16	.008	.112	2.322	.021
Disabled Students			.082	.178	3.717	.000
Immigrant Students			.077	.100	2.069	.039
Classical Prejudice			.066	-.030	-4.75	.635
Modern Prejudice			.090	.156	2.471	.014
Manifest Prejudice			.050	-.226	-4.204	.000
Latent Prejudice			.050	.135	2.796	.005

Abbreviation: B, Beta Standardized Coefficients; SE, Standard Error.

Note: The Teacher's Experience Is Expressed in Years.

In reference to the third hypothesis, an analysis of multiple mediation with two mediating parallel variables was carried out. This model is called 'parallel' model because neither mediator is allowed to affect the other. One mediating variable called Teacher's Experience (MV1), and the second mediating variable named Disabled Students (MV2), Prejudice (classic and modern prejudice, IV) and teaching strategies (communicative - relational factor, DV) are carried out through PROCESS v. 4.2 (Model 4) to test the model.

The linear regression analysis (Figure 1) shows that: firstly, the IV, Prejudice (Modern) is not a significant predictor on MV1 ($\beta = .597$, S.E. = .399, $t = 1.496$ $p < .135$, LLCI = -.187 and ULCI = 1.381); this is path a1. Modern prejudice is also found to be a non-significant predictor on MV2, ($\beta = .065$, S.E. = .041, $t = 1.566$, $p < .118$; LLCI = -.016 and ULCI = .147); this is path a2. MV1 (teacher's experience) shows a non-

significant relationship on teaching strategies (communicative-relational factor - IV) ($\beta = .014$, S.E. = .007, $t = 1.850$, $p < .065$; LLCI = -.187 and ULCI = 1.381); this is path b1. However, MV2 was also found to have a significant impact on teaching strategies (communicative-relational factor IV) ($\beta = 3.603$, S.E. = .075, $t = 4.764$, $p < .000$); this is path b2.

The total effect model of modern prejudice on teaching strategies (communicative-relational factor) was found to be significant ($\beta = .164$, S.E. = .065, $t = 2.518$ $p < .012$, LLCI = .036 and ULCI = .293), with $R = .123$, $R\text{-sq} = .015$ $MSE = .550$; $p = .012$). The direct effect of IV on DV shows a significant impact ($\beta = .132$, S.E. = .063, $t = 2.080$, $p < .038$, LLCI = .007 and ULCI = .257). The total indirect effect of X on Y shows a significant influence, ($\beta = .032$, S.E. = .018, LLCI = .001 and ULCI = .072) which means that as a whole model it mediated IV on DV.

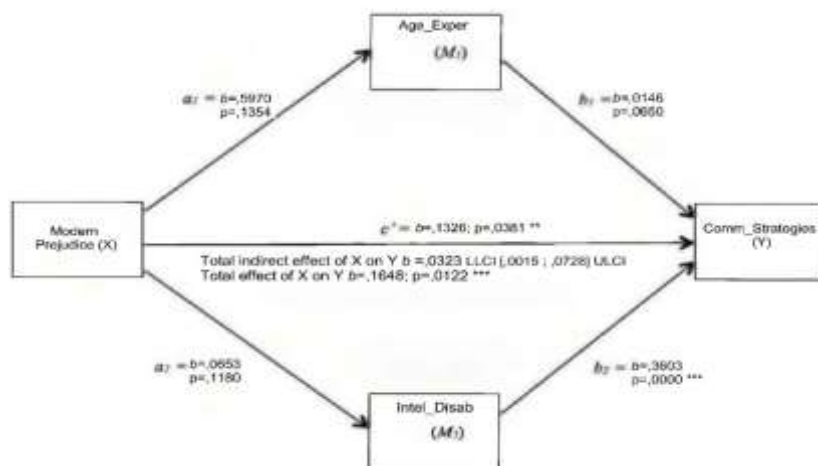


Figure 1: Parallel Model Teaching.

Abbreviation: Age_Exper, Teacher's experience; Intel_Disab, Disabled Students; Comm_Strategies, Communicative-Relational Strategies

The other model that proved significant used as a second mediating variable the presence of 'immigrant' or foreign student in class; the data in Figure 2 show results revealed that firstly, the IV, Prejudice (Modern) is not a significant predictor on MV2 (foreign student, ($\beta = -.037$, S.E.=,045, $t = -.827$, $p < .407$; LLCI= -,125 and ULCI= ,051); this is path a2. MV1 (teacher's experience) shows a non-significant relationship on teaching strategies (communicative-relational factor IV) ($\beta = ,015$, S.E.=,008, $t = 1,958$, $p < ,050$; LLCI= -,000 and ULCI= ,0319); this is path b1.

However, MV2 (foreign student) was also found to have a significant impact on teaching strategies (communicative-relational factor IV) ($\beta = ,164$, S.E.=,072, $t = 2,272$, $p < ,023$, LLCI= -,022 and ULCI=,358); this is path b2.

The total effect model of Modern prejudice on teaching strategies (communicative-relational factor) was found to be significant ($\beta = ,164$, S.E.= ,065, $t = 2,518$ $p < ,012$, LLCI=,036 and ULCI= ,293). The direct effect of IV on DV shows a significant impact ($\beta = ,161$, S.E =,065 $t = 2,482$, $p < ,013$, LLCI=,033 and ULCI=,289). The total indirect effect of X on Y shows a non-significant influence, ($\beta = ,003$, S.E.= ,012, LLCI=-,020 and ULCI=,029).

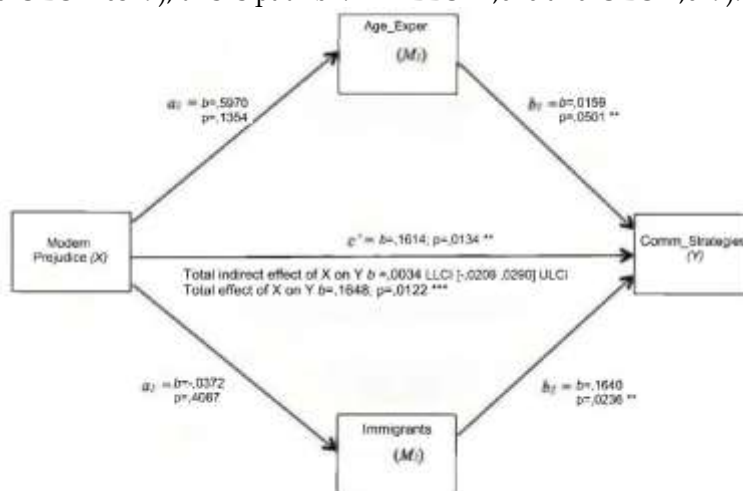


Figure 2: Parallel Model Teaching.

Abbreviation: Age_Exper, Teacher's experience; Intel_Disab, Disabled Students; Comm_Strategies, Communicative-Relational Strategies

7. DISCUSSION

Literature highlights how prejudice towards disabled people and immigrants represents two sides of the same coin. Miller, Parker and Gillinson (2004), for example, introduce the term dysbliss to indicate that set of discriminatory and oppressive behaviors, determined by the thought that subjects with diversity are inferior individuals. This attitude can manifest itself, indiscriminately, towards people with disabilities or ethnically different and is often involuntary (Pellerone and Bellomo, 2015). Especially in the school context, we see a significant correlation between ethnocentrism and attitudes towards people with disabilities: in particular, teachers with a high level of ethnocentrism towards ethnic minorities tend to express similar opinions and attitudes also towards subjects or groups of subjects with disabilities. In socio-educational contexts characterized by an intense need for social

adaptation and conformism, attitudes towards foreign and disabled children are very similar.

On the other hand, literature emphasizes that the trained teacher with socio-emotional and relational experience has skills that guarantee an inclusive teaching proposal, but above all determines the reduction of prejudices and negative emotions towards those who are different. The school is the basis of all this, but the teacher's action determines the expansion of new proposals that make the school environment an opportunity for growth and learning, not only from an educational point of view, but also from a human one.

The present study fits into this complex scenario, aimed at investigating, in a group of 410 Sicilian teachers, the relationship between latent and manifest, classic and modern prejudices of teachers towards disabled and/or immigrant students as predictive variables of learning-teaching strategies.

Preliminary analyses show how the teacher's experience seems to influence their ability to work in a group through cohesion skills, communicative adaptation and greater emotional involvement; all

dimensions connected to the teacher's sense of self-efficacy, which seems to increase with experience (Wolters & Daugherty, 2007). Infact, teachers who believe in their skills, appear more satisfied and motivated in their profession (Zee & Koomen, 2016). These findings confirm Bandura's model (Bandura, 1997) which states that self-efficacy is strongly influenced by four sources: active mastery experiences, indirect experiences (through observation of a model), social persuasions, and temporary physiological and affective states.

Teachers' experiences also seem to influence the communicative-relational dimension, even though it limits itself to the presence of effective and executive leadership and the ability to resolve conflicts within the class group. This data appears to be confirmed by the literature which underlines the importance of leadership in schools in order to determine effective practices for the students, and how leadership could be influenced for years of experience rather than another type of experience (Hitt & Player, 2019). As far as didactic factors are concerned, the experience seems to influence the ability to adapt and manage control within the class group. The data confirms a part of the literature, that evidences the potential use of educational control in maintaining appropriate behavior for younger students, above all, with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or disabilities (Falcomata, 1997; Voroshilova & Chernyshova, 2021).

Confirming to the first hypothesis the presence of foreigners and/or disabled students seems to influence the socio-emotional, relational and didactic strategies. In particular, with the presence of a foreign or disabled student, teachers tend to manifest greater empathic abilities and communicative sensitivity, which are expressed through the ability to mediate between student's needs and class; furthermore, they tend to modify the relational strategies through the use of paraverbal and non-verbal communication, while maintaining good executive leadership and planning skill, which determine a greater ability to resolve conflicts within of the class group. In addition to what has been said, the study shows that only in the presence of disabled students (but not foreign students) does the teacher seem to pay more attention to group dynamics, and to operate greater environmental control, demonstrating adaptation ability to new situations. Data confirms that, sometimes, teachers who deal with "different/disabled" people can express embarrassment, fear of failure and misunderstandings, which are naturally activated in the relationship with others, strongly influencing teaching styles (Caldin, 2012; Traina & Caldin, 2014;

Colombo, 2016). In some circumstances, acceptance of one's limits and awareness of personal and professional resources can reduce the sense of failure and fear of others. Entering into relationships with others means negotiating parts of oneself, getting involved with one's own fragilities, and this is possible in teachers with greater professional experience, as in the group of participants involved in the research. This experience often leads teachers to use a constructivist approach, aimed at enhancing individual resources, encouraging the construction of knowledge, negotiating individual and collective meanings, and developing a metacognitive and reflective attitude in students.

A partial confirmation of the second hypothesis, classical prejudice correlates with modern prejudice towards students with disability, although manifest prejudice isn't correlated to the latent prejudice towards non-native students; these results underlines that prejudices towards disabled students, are stronger than that towards non-natives, who are victims, instead, of a system of invisible discrimination (O'Brien et al., 2010; Singh et al., 2015).

Similarly, the manifest prejudice towards immigrant correlates to both classical and modern prejudice towards disabled students. This could be explained by the assumption, according to which human beings tend to show greater prejudice in the absence of knowledge and/or direct contact with what is different from them; the fear of the unknown generates prejudice towards students with disabilities.

It appears interesting how the latent prejudice towards non-natives correlates with the modern prejudice towards disabled students, demonstrating the fact that teachers would manifest an unconscious prejudice towards all students in difficulty, associating ethnic problems with those linked to a condition of impairment or handicap. This data confirms the literature, which underlines how implicit attitudes can be activated in the presence of a person with a different ethnicity or peculiarities, such as a disability (Glock & Karbach, 2015).

Therefore, even if a teacher might reject the stereotype that there is an ethnic gap in learning or social interaction processes in his or her classroom, he or she might still implicitly display discriminatory behaviors.

Likewise, according to literature, teachers may unconsciously direct more ethnic minority children towards better learning outcomes and more ethnic minority students into special education programs, as is the case for students with disabilities (Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007).

Confirming to the last hypothesis, having a greater experience, the presence of disabled students into classroom, and above all, manifesting reduced classical prejudice toward immigrant, and reduced manifest prejudice but elevated latent prejudice toward disabled students determines a greater use of socio-emotional strategies.

Furthermore, the presence of disabled student, an elevated level of latent prejudice toward immigrant and disabled students and, above all, a reduced level of manifest prejudice toward immigrant, lead a great use of communicative-relational strategies.

In different way, the presence of ID students and immigrants, having major experience, but elevated latent prejudice and reduced manifest prejudice, determine a higher level of didactic strategies.

The aforementioned data show how teacher would tend to use emotional-relational teaching styles more when his manifest prejudice towards disabled people is very low and especially when the class is attended by students with disabilities; the adoption of emotional teaching styles could be induced by a greater awareness of the usefulness of the emotional channel in the presence of students with physical and/or mental disabilities.

Otherwise, the teacher would adopt a communicative-relational teaching style when his manifest prejudice towards immigrants is very low and in the presence of a high number of foreign students; the adoption of this teaching style could be induced by a greater awareness of the use of the relational modality in the presence of foreign students, in order to facilitate faster adaptation within the classroom context.

The third hypothesis also assessed the mediating role of teaching experience and the presence of ID students on the relationship between modern prejudice and teaching strategies within experimental group. Partially confirming the research hypothesis, data underlines that the total effect model of modern prejudice on communicative-relational factor was found to be significant; however, when mediating variables are treated in isolation, the influence did not occur.

The other model that proved significant used as a second mediating variable the presence of foreign student in class. The total effect model of modern prejudice on communicative-relational factor was found to be significant. It is important to underline that when we used the variable foreigner student in class as a mediator between modern prejudice and the communicative-relational strategy as the dependent variable, we observed that there was no mediation effect, i.e. the presence of foreign students

did not produce changes in the teachers' behavior in response to modern prejudice. This data confirms the study conducted by Lucas (1997) which underlines the presence of frustration and modern prejudice among teachers in the presence of immigrant students with difficulty learning the Italian language through traditional methods; such prejudices would not seem to influence the teacher's teaching styles towards these students in difficulty (Pellerone *et al.*, 2020)

Recognizing and identifying some specific difficulties of students, allows us to reflect on the importance and meanings of caring; to identify possible risk and protective factors linked to disability and/or the migratory experience, and the process of insertion into the host society.

8. CONCLUSION

The research has potential limitations, such as the use of a cross-sectional measurement, which leaves out the temporal relationship and causal effect. Furthermore, the use of convenience sampling methods for data collection may make it difficult to generalize the research findings.

The presence of a group of participants composed only of teachers working in Sicily could determine another limit to the generalizability of the results. The choice to involve Sicilian teachers was motivated by two factors, namely: the geographical position of Sicily; the reduced presence of full-time Sicilian schools, which limits school activities, compared to students in the North.

In reference to the first aspect, Sicily, in the past, has always been a land of emigration due to the lack of work; today, thanks to Sicily's geographical position, surrounded by the sea, it has become a land of illegal immigration. For some time, in addition to the usual Maghreb component of migrants (who come to Sicily for economic reasons, such as looking for work), there has been an increase in migrants coming from Somalia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Iraq, Pakistan, Liberia, Chad, Congo, Sri Lanka, due to ethnic persecution and ongoing armed conflicts. From 1 January to 31 December 2022, 105.131 irregular migrants arrived in Italy via the various Mediterranean routes following 2.539 disembarkation events. In 2022 there was an increase of +55.80% compared to the previous year, and the regions mainly affected were Sicily with 79.016 landed and Calabria with 18.100. This clandestine phenomenon has probably caused a double feeling in the host Sicilian population: an increase in the sense of solidarity, which contrasts with a rejection and fear of what is different, which undermines our need for

security, generating a consequent increase of prejudices.

In reference to the second aspect, recent research conducted by the Svimez institute (2023) finds that in the Southern Italy about 18% of students access 40 hours of lessons per week, that is, one student in five: in Sicily only 10% of students, compared to 48% of students who attended schools in Northern Italy. Two shortcomings have an impact in the South: the school canteen and gyms. According to Svimez data, about 650 thousand students in state primary schools in the South (79%) do not have any canteen service; in particular in Campania 87% and in Sicily 88%. All this is justified by the drastic reduction in funding provided to schools; in fact, the lack of investment and adequate facilities forces Sicilian students to attend a smaller number of school activities, compared to students in the North, which would lead to less social contact between student-teacher and a worsening of prejudice towards ethnic minorities or disabled students.

Furthermore, although all participants had attended the Specialization Course for Educational Support Activities for Students with Disabilities, the study does not explore the role of teacher education programs in shaping attitudes toward inclusion, missing the opportunity to highlight how pre-service and in-service training can promote inclusive practices in the Italian school. In detail, in the Italian school system, students with special educational needs attend common classes in which curricular teachers are helped by support teachers. Support teachers are part of the teaching team, as they participate, together with the curricular teachers, in planning the activities of all students and in their evaluation. Furthermore, their training path includes a specific university training, which includes at least 300 hours of traineeship activities related to the school level in which they are going to work.

Furthermore, self-assessment instruments have been used to assess the teacher's ability, which could cause a magnifying of the social desirability effect.

Finally, results should be interpreted with caution due to the type of participants, particularly because our study is predominantly composed of female teachers, which makes generalizations difficult. This limit reflects the percentage of female teachers in Italy, which in the 2022/23 school year were 768,667 out of a total of 943,681 teachers, equal to 82.7%, of which 75% were permanent and the remaining 25% were substitutes.

For future research it would be useful to compare male and female teachers, and also note the possible presence of burnout in the participants, as the

literature has highlighted how teachers who have been dealing with the world of disability and disadvantage - for several years - are more exposed to stressogenic agents and burnout syndrome. Literature, in fact, literature highlights the presence of gender differences in teaching approaches: male teachers tend to give more general directions and explanations, although with the help of deep learning strategies, compared to female teachers who tend to offer more answers and generate practical discussions with students (Copur-Gencturk, 2023).

Moreover, data lead us to believe that there may be other dimensions that distort the results such as the type and grade of disability, the classroom climate or the socio-cultural context in which the school is located, which influence the possible presence of prejudices and the way to reduce them within the classroom context.

For future research it would be interesting to investigate, through a specific survey tool, the type and degree of disability of the students present in the classes of the teachers interviewed; this would help researchers to better understand how the type of disability influences teachers' attitudes. In this research, in fact, teachers were only asked about the number of students with physical and/or mental disabilities and immigrant students in each class, leaving out the type of disability.

In this scenario, the pedagogical debate is careful and is enriched by theoretical reflections and national and international research regarding the possible educational implications of this dual diversity, identifying strategies and tools favorable to inclusion with the aim of analyzing and understanding the impact of this phenomenon on the education of the host countries (Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001). It would be interesting, in fact, to replicate the present study comparing curricular teachers with specialized teachers, since the literature highlights that the teachers who have joined specific training courses appear more inclined to experiment with courses oriented towards school inclusion.

However, all teachers share similar concerns regarding the implementation of inclusion in the Italian context: they believe that students with disabilities will not receive effective instruction in an inclusive classroom and that this may damage their self-esteem and hinder their learning process (Fiorucci, 2014).

Freeing ourselves from these archaic inclinations presupposes recognizing that if disability participates in the global structure of the human person, this is not reduced and cannot be defined by

its "shortcomings", but by an original structure that depends not only on the objective deficit, but also on the context from the attitudes and behaviors of his living environment. Starting from this, it will finally be possible to recognize each of them since they represent an irreducible totality and which will lead them to be recognized for themselves.

To this end, it would be useful to train future teachers starting from the training phase at the university, through laboratory activities based on contact and empathy, encouraging a process of cognitive decentralization.

Furthermore, specific workshops could be structured for teachers and future teachers aimed at implementing the process of de-categorization and subsequent categorization: in fact, while de-categorization allows us to reduce the anxieties that characterize contact between groups, categorization allows us to reintroduce the categories, favoring generalization of attitudes. In particular, the de-categorization process allows us to focus on the individual aspects that characterize people, regardless of their belonging to a group, reducing the anxiety linked to contact with groups of people who do not know each other. Otherwise, the categorization process allows positive differences between groups to be highlighted, and people from the other group would be seen as members of a different group in a positive perspective (Dovidio *et al.*, 2010; Sharma, 2002).

In addition to this, collaboration between colleagues and families appears fundamental, as the relation constitutes an effective resource, which allows us to refine a holistic look at the individual and social peculiarities of students with difficulties.

The present research values a specific country with particularly odd sociopolitical circumstances. In Italy, with a view to planning effective inclusion interventions and an adequate organization of services, a positive response to the problem can only come from effective collaboration between school and territory. Therefore, it is necessary to organize a network that contributes to sharing experiences, to indicating possible paths and project settings in order to favor the process of inclusion of migrant and or disabled students in society, in schools and in the territory. The network should have both a formal and informal character: on the one hand, educators, service operators, on the other hand, the contribution

of family, friends and places of aggregation.

Finally, the dual condition of migrant-disabled person can generate problems of a social, cultural, educational nature, which complicate the inclusion process by worsening inequalities, discrimination and social exclusion phenomena. The multidimensionality of the problem requires observation skills and responsibility that, starting from personal knowledge, materialize in projects, adopting strategies aimed at seeking inclusion. With a view to planning effective inclusion interventions and adequate organization of services, a positive response to the problem can only come from effective collaboration between school and territory. The organization of a network that, working jointly, contributes to sharing experiences, to indicating possible paths and project settings in order to promote the process of inclusion of migrants with disabilities in society, in school and in the territory.

It is important to underline that an effective school inclusion cannot ignore the creation of an educational context, attentive to the valorization of differences and the management of the classroom in its systemic complexity. Furthermore, the welcoming and competent accompaniment of the foreign student and the student with disabilities involves the formation of a basic inclusive professional habit (Gervasi, 2023), aimed at strengthening the development of "special" knowledge, skills and competences, not necessarily specialized and/or hyper-specialized. It seems, therefore, that the presence of these students contributes to highlighting in teachers the differences between ways of perceiving and living one's profession, leading teachers to review their teaching styles and skills (Pellerone, *et al.*, 2023). Being aware of the complexity of one's role, leads to greater attention towards the students in difficulty and to the request for more training.

There is a need to focus on continuous professional development through the provision of multiple and incentivized learning opportunities, because the cultural awareness, sensitivity and communication competence help teachers understand both the sociopolitical, multicultural and emotional issues facing students in the education system (Aricindy, 2022; Formica *et al.*, 2017; Meetoo, 2020).

Author Contributions: "Conceptualization, M.P. and S.G.R.; methodology, M.P. and J.M.T.; software, S.G.R.; validation, M.P. and J.M.T.; formal analysis, M.P. and J.M.T.; investigation, M.P.; resources, M.P.; data curation, M.P. and J.M.T.; writing—original draft preparation, M.P. S.G.R. and E.P.; writing—review and editing, M.P., S.G.R. and E.P.; visualization, M.P. and J.M.T.; supervision, M.P.; project administration, M.P. All authors have

read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript”.

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to express their special thanks to Dr. Laura Miano for her collaboration in administering the psycho-diagnostic instruments.

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