

The “Diplomado para docentes de apoyo a la inclusión”: training as a factor of empowerment in El Salvador

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Abstract

Il Dipartimento di Scienze dell’Educazione Università di Bologna ha realizzato un progetto di cooperazione internazionale in El Salvador (2009-2014) con il Ministero dell’Educazione locale a sostegno dell’inclusione scolastica. L’intervento ha sviluppato il percorso formativo "Diplomado para docentes de apoyo a la inclusión" (Corso di Alta Formazione per docenti di sostegno all’inclusione) che ha avuto l’obiettivo di formare un primo contingente di docenti di sostegno, frutto del processo di trasformazione del sistema scolastico in prospettiva inclusiva.

Tra i principali risultati del Diplomado si segnalano: la dimensione interprofessionale realizzata attraverso i project work; l’empowerment dei partecipanti sulla capacità di promuovere processi inclusivi nelle comunità educative sulla base delle risorse esistenti; il consolidamento delle competenze sull’inclusione già presenti nel sistema; rafforzamento del ruolo sociale della scuola per uno sviluppo umano più inclusivo. Promuovere localmente la sinergia di azione tra mondo accademico ed istituzionale ha rappresentato un’opportunità per capitalizzare le competenze attraverso il riconoscimento certificato e congiunto dei percorsi formativi rivolti alle figure educative.

The Department of Educational Sciences of the University of Bologna has implementing an international cooperation project in El Salvador (2009-2014), in partnership with the local Ministry of Education to support the schooling inclusion. In this framework, the training experience of the "Diplomado para docentes de apoyo a la inclusión" was implemented and finalized to prepare a group of support teachers: figure born from the process of transformation of education system in inclusive perspective.

Among the key results of the course we underline: collegiality and networking dimensions have been developing; empowerment of participants on the ability to promote inclusive schooling processes, starting from existing resources; the consolidation of existing expertise on inclusion; strengthening of social role of the school to support the inclusive society. Promote synergy between academic and institutional sectors has been an opportunity to capitalize skills through certificated and joint acknowledgment training processes addressed to educational figures.

Parole chiave: inclusione, empowerment, formazione, educazione, sviluppo.

Keywords: inclusion, empowerment, training, education, development.

Introduction

The project entitled “*Support to the promotion and development of inclusive schooling in El Salvador*” is part of a complex system of interventions funded by the Italian Development Cooperation programme supporting inclusive local educational policies promoted by the Salvadorian Ministry of Education (Mined). The Department of Educational Science of the University of Bologna participated in these interventions, as promoter in some projects and as manager of the scientific component in others (Caldin, Guerra, Taddei, 2014).

In the field of education for persons with disabilities, over the past thirty years Mined has matured a political and cultural position which, while still conserving the special schools that are still operational in the country, has in any case begun to progressively open to the concept of inclusion, with strong acceleration particularly since 2009 linked to the changes in the country’s overall political framework. That was in fact the year in which, for the first time in the history of El Salvador, a progressist government was elected, marked by an inclusive approach in terms of the development of social and educational policies. The change in tack adopted by the Ministry of Education was demonstrated by the drafting of the “*Política de educación inclusiva*” (Mined, 2009) and the Social Education Plan “*Vamos a la escuela*” (Mined, 2009): these are strategic documents providing the theoretical and operational indications for initiating a process of overall transformation of the education system and the pedagogic model to refer to.

As mentioned above, the evolution of the concepts of inclusion in political terms was accompanied on the pedagogic level by the contributions of the Italian Development Cooperation, funding three interventions to support the development of the Salvadorian educational model:

1. The first intervention, developed from 2005 to 2009, initiated processes of integration for students with disabilities in the “*Repubblica di Haiti*” primary school, located in the Department of Sonsonate, one of the country's toughest areas due to widespread social violence. The intervention contributed to making school accessible in both architectural and cultural terms, through the development of two key actions: on one hand, the elimination of physical barriers in the school and the construction of a resources centre for inclusion managed by the school, though benefiting the whole local community; on the other hand, teacher training and awareness raising activities targeting local stakeholders on the issues of integration and inclusive education. The “*Repubblica de Haiti*” school inclusion experience and the activities of the teaching staff have become a national reference for the issue of school inclusion, thanks above all to the innovation of experimented pedagogic practices and the accessibility to the school facilities. These choices have in fact led to the increase in the number of disabled and/or socially disadvantaged students attending the school and the qualification of the educational programme addressed to them. The outcome of this cooperation project has highlighted some elements of “*transferability*” of the experience gained at the “*Repubblica de Haiti*” school to other schools in the country interested in initiating a process of transformation and re-interpretation of their own educational model, in an inclusive key. In this perspective, the Mined aimed to disseminate the experimentation of the pedagogic experience of the Republica de Haiti school in all 14 Departments in El Salvador, with the technical assistance of the teaching staff of the Faculty of Education Sciences of the University of Bologna, which from 2012 became the Department of Educational Sciences.
2. Faced with the spread of social problems in the education system, the Mined had to tackle the problem of access to and attendance of school, not only for children with disabilities but all children, including those in situations of psycho-social hardship determined by serious con-

ditions of socio-economic and cultural disadvantage. From here, the design of a second cooperation project (“*Support to the promotion and development of inclusive schooling in El Salvador*”) again in collaboration with the Italian Development Cooperation, the University of Bologna and the - conservative - local government - in office since prior to 2009. This second project was started and managed overall by the progressist government elected in 2009, the administration which based its political and social manifesto on inclusion.

The perspective of an inclusive society was also embraced by the intervention promoted by the international cooperation and the development of local education policies: a solid synergy of action was created among these.

The project “*Support to the promotion and development of inclusive schooling in El Salvador*” involved 18 pilot schools of different types (15 regular schools with different management methods and three special schools) throughout the country, in rural, urban and suburban areas. Systematically, during the activities the Mined made recourse to the expertise of the Faculty of Education of the University of Bologna, the promoter of the local initiative run by the Italian NGO EducAid, an organisation with extensive experience in the education field in countries in the south of the world.

The project, substantially focused on capacity building, mainly targeted key figures in the school system, through the following actions: tutoring activities for middle management and technical staff of the Mined; technical assistance through training delivered both locally and in e-learning by UniBo professors; development of inclusive pedagogic and educational experiments in the pilot schools; monitoring of inclusive educational processes with the involvement of UniBo professors and local technical staff. Finally, the project included the establishment of a National Observatory to measure and document inclusive educational practices in the country's school system: the purpose of the observatory is to support the design of new scenarios for development and innovation in the field of inclusive education at national level and in Central America.

Specifically, the project lasted for two years: the first phase was developed between October 2009 and March 2011. The second, after a period of suspension linked to the activation of the third intervention, ran from November 2013 to August 2014.

As said, 18 pilot schools were identified by the Mined:

- 14 “ordinary” schools (some of which were already involved in initial inclusion experiences), each acting as a reference for the local school community for the process of developing and disseminating inclusive education;
- 3 special schools, each acting as a reference in their respective areas - East, West, and Central Salvador, to develop synergic actions with the regular schools in the same territory;
- The “*Republica di Haiti*” school, where the first pilot experience of integration was performed, funded and promoted by the Italian Development Cooperation in the first project.

The intervention particularly targeted teachers, heads, deputy heads, education councillors (local civil servants providing pedagogic support), technical staff and officers of the Mined who were directly involved in the technical assistance activities.

The project aimed principally to pursue the following macro objectives:

- To contribute to improving the level of teacher training in both general and inclusive education.
- To contribute to raising the awareness of the institutions involved in the Salvadorian education system and public opinion in the country concerning the issues of school education fostering social inclusion.
- To establish cooperation relations with local organisations working in university education, those working to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and other International Cooperation

organisations.

- To foster access to education services by disabled and socially excluded minors.
Specifically, the project worked to ensure a significant, long-lasting increase in the education services open to disabled, socially disadvantaged and vulnerable minors in El Salvador, in terms of both quality and quantity.

The main results achieved can be summarised in the following points:

- a) Training paths were defined and experimented for subject teachers, support classes, special schools and school heads.
- b) A path of renewal for university-level teacher training towards a model of inclusive schooling was initiated.
- c) Officials and operators at various levels were trained in order to improve skills in reading and analysing the phenomena of social/school exclusion and inclusion and to design and experiment the relative measures to respond to these.
- d) Opportunities were made available for sharing inclusive educational practices with other Latin American countries.
- e) A Salvadorian model of inclusive schooling was defined and experimented.

It must be underlined that the executive political and pedagogic policies were defined through the action of the Strategic and Control Committee, consisting of representatives of the Mined and UniBo. The Committee had the task of monitoring the Cooperation intervention as a whole, considering the local political and pedagogic contingencies and ensuring constant dialogue with the local Italian Development Cooperation representatives.

3) Parallel to the second intervention, a bilateral project was initiated under the funding channel laid down in Art.15 of the Italian law on Italian Development Cooperation, which foresees the allocation of economic resources directly to the Mined and the overall management of activities under the full responsibility of the Mined, the pedagogic component of which was assigned to the University of Bologna and EducAid. This third intervention, aiming to develop Escuela Inclusiva de Tiempo Pleno – EITP (Full Time Inclusive School), in synergy with the previous project filled the technical gap between the first and second years of the project “*Support to the promotion and development of inclusive schooling in El Salvador*”, targeting the same beneficiaries. While with their own specific character, the activities developed in this third programme were fundamental for generalising the results achieved in the previous project to a broader population, consolidating the hypothesis of full-time education to support inclusion. Concerning the third intervention, here we provide this information only to offer an idea of the general context, given that the action studied specifically here is part of the second project promoted by UniBo.

Marginally to all this, we must add that the action of the Italian Development Cooperation currently includes the completion of the third intervention and the start of a grant linked to the issues of inclusion, though more focused to supporting both the expansion of full-time education to subsequent school ages and to vocational training.

Genesis and development of the “Diplomado para docentes de apoyo a la inclusión” training path

As part of the project “*Support to the promotion and development of inclusive schooling in El Salvador*” (the second intervention in the above-described system) the training course “Diplomado para Docente de Apoyo a la Inclusión (DAI)” was designed and developed during the second year. This experience came on one hand from the need of the Salvadorian Ministry of Education to train a new educational figure, working specifically to promote inclusive actions, called the “Docente de Apoyo

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a la Inclusión” (Mined, 2013); on the other hand it came from the proposal of UniBo to certify the training of local professionals and ensure greater qualification and marketability of their skills in the education field. The Mined designed the profile of this new teaching figure based on the process of transformation of the school system with an inclusive perspective.

The introduction of this figure certainly represents a strategic innovation in the management of educational processes in schools, opening up to a new concept of "support" to learning and teaching processes: a perspective that goes beyond the relationship of assistance limited to a one-to-one logic (teacher-pupil) and which on the other hand promotes a social and community approach to inclusive processes.

Presentation of the course

Based on the needs highlighted by the Mined and following the transformation process initiated by the project, the Diplomado targeted a larger number of schools than those involved during the first year; indeed, on the basis of the indications given by the Mined, it aimed to target: a) teachers in the 75 regular schools selected by the Ministry as experimental centres of the new figure, the “DAI”; b) 14 departmental technicians and 8 technical officers of the Central Mined (2 from the "Curriculum" department, 2 from “Inclusive Education”, 2 from the “EITP Management”, 2 from the "Technical Assistance" department); c) 10 participants (students and teachers) from the Evangelical, Central American (UCA) and Francisco Gavidia universities.

The course set out to provide psychological, pedagogic, educational and legal competences required to support the development of inclusive education in Salvadorian schools. The *docente de apoyo a la inclusión* – DAI (teacher support inclusion) is responsible for developing pedagogic and educational activities through the promotion of actions to support the class and the school as a whole, in order to foster inclusive processes targeting students with disabilities and/or those in situations of psychosocial disadvantage. The DAI figure was designed to work in school centres, aiming to offer a significant contribution to strengthening the collegial dimension of the corpus of teachers, and the co-responsibility of each school stakeholder with a view to the sustainable development of inclusion.

The course consisted of ten modules tackling the basic elements of inclusive education in psychopedagogic, educational and organisational terms, required to understand the educational needs of students, recognise situations of disadvantage, design educational interventions shared collegially and functional to the process of inclusion of all students in the school¹. To design quality education, teachers must be able to read and integrate the local resources, and be able to document educational practices based on evaluation and design in an inclusive perspective. In tackling the central theme of inclusive education, skills were also provided in the technologies for reducing handicaps. These topics were set against the Salvadorian reality, which in its process of transformation offers a multitude of different visions of schools dealing with students in a range of situations of difficulty. In this regard, in the initial phase of the course it was deemed important to place the issue of disability within the Salvadorian legal framework, also examining the state of the art of the inclusion process within the education system.

The course was divided into three parallel sections held in the three facilities of the Mined “Teacher Training Centres” in Santa Tecla, Santa Ana and San Miguel, respectively in the Centre, West and East of the country.

Each section included:

- 19 training days on site, of 6 hours each for a total of 114 hours (76 lesson and 38 workshop).
- The delivery of 7 Learning Objects for a total of 28 hours of study.
- 40 hours of practical training exclusively for the teachers of the Diplomado, with the drafting of a final report supervised by a tutor made available by the UCA University. The practical

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training was based on a specific project and performed in classes where the trainee teachers worked.

- A final exam consisting of an interview with a specific board chaired by the Head of the Department of Educational Science of the University of Bologna. During the exam each participant discussed some topics dealt with during the course and presented the report on their practical training.

Everyone passing the final exam (with a grade of at least 70/100) was given a certificate describing their skills and grade. This certification was accredited by the Mined.

The practical training was organised and supervised by a group of professors from the local UCA University, which was a fundamental ally in the implementation of the Diplomado through the support given to the working groups in the 75 schools involved in the Project Work.

Methodology

The training method used aimed to respond to two fundamental needs: on one hand, to ensure that all teachers acquired the basic knowledge and skills concerning inclusion; on the other hand, to guarantee that the knowledge acquired was not the result of a transmissive type educational process but of an action based on the co-construction of knowledge accompanied by the practical experimentation of what they had learned.

In the light of these basic methodological choices, the Diplomado course used four different learning strategies:

- a. Classroom learning.
- b. E-learning.
- c. Project Work.
- d. Monitoring and evaluation actions.

a. Classroom learning

The classroom learning covered 10 training modules produced by the professors of the Department of Educational Science of the University of Bologna. Specifically, the following modules were developed:

- Module 1: Basic elements of inclusive education, learning and socialisation, the role of parents and adults.
- Module 2: “Life Project”: understanding and integration of the local resources The classroom learning was accompanied by a workshop component aiming to strengthen the theoretical contents through direct experience.
- Module 3: Documentation as a tool for project design and evaluation.
- Module 4: The educational and/or assistance relationship: methods and tools.
- Module 5: Management of the class in an inclusive perspective. The relationship between teachers and between teachers and parents.
- Module 6: The issue of disability in Salvadorian legislation: the state of the art.
- Module 7: Technologies for reducing handicap.
- Module 8: Programming and evaluation.
- Module 9: Social psychology and the development of the inclusive perspective.
- Module 10: The role of the support teacher.

The classroom learning was accompanied by a workshop component aiming to strengthen the theoretical contents through experiences of working group simulations and the analysis of operational tools.

b. E-learning

For each course module, study materials and virtual exercises were placed on-line in the form of learning objects. Each learning object included bibliographical elements and websites useful for personal study of the subjects covered.

c. Project Work

The classroom learning activities aimed to provide the participants with the basic theoretical elements and inputs required to experiment the knowledge acquired during the practical training. This activity was particularly important for initiating the research-action path in which theory and practice become mutually supportive, providing the tools to manage the obstacles and opportunities emerging during the practical training, thinking about the action, identifying new solutions and modifying the practices in order to improve their results. To document the work carried out, it was proposed to use tools including interviews, focus groups, diaries, photographs, minutes of meetings, materials used, examples of the work of the students and other figures involved in the project.

Specifically, all participants were required to produce Project Work based on the everyday working context, according to the following indications:

- The DAI teachers and heads of each school had to produce a project focusing on one or more elements deemed necessary for developing inclusive educational practices in their own schools, in cooperation with the *asistente tecnico pedagogico – ATP* (technical pedagogic assistant)
- The ATPs had to produce Project Work developed with an inclusive perspective, based on the function they held in the education system.
- The local university experts of the UCA were responsible for assisting the ATPs to ensure that they were able to support the teacher in their own schools. In practice, the technical assistants are not always able to perform this function satisfactorily. The difficulties emerging during the learning process highlighted the relative skills of these figures for which, even though they took part in the group work, the ATPs were not able to monitor or steer the progress.
- The teachers of the local universities, who took part in the course as students, had to produce Project Work aimed at introducing an inclusive perspective into their own facilities.

The Project Work activities had to last for around three months.

d. Monitoring and evaluation

The experimental part of the Diplomado involved a combination of monitoring and evaluation actions:

1. The monitoring was performed by the group of teachers made available by the UCA, who had the task of providing tutoring support to the participants for the production of the Project Work through specific meetings. The following paragraph is in any case dedicated to the role of the UCA.
2. The evaluation was performed at the end of the experience and focused on the documents produced by each Project Work group, also focusing on the role of each individual participant.

The tutoring role of the Simeon Cañan Central American University (UCA)

The UCA was involved at the request of the Department of Educational Science of the University of Bologna, also following other experiences of cooperation during the years that UniBo has been working in the country. As mentioned in the previous pages, the UCA delivered one of the classroom learning and on-line modules and supported the learning process of the Diplomado by providing technical assistance to the working groups involved in the Project Work. The team made available by the UCA consisted of eight professors from the Pedagogical Area of the Salvadorian university. Their intervention contributed to defining the Project Work together with the groups of participants, and supported the processes of reflection on the actions undertaken, also with a view to drafting the reports

for the final exam. The technical assistance was delivered in the three geographical areas of the country (West, Centre and East). The UCA professors met twice with the course participants during the preliminary phase to define the work instruments: the matrix for identifying the intervention, the guide for producing the first draft of the final report and a section of self-assessment of the work done. This section was agreed in advance between the UCA professors and the UniBo course managers, and was subsequently used, in a more detailed version, as an evaluation tool for the reports produced for the final exam.

The section was divided into two parts:

a. General presentation of the report

Criteria	Present	Lacking	Comments
Name of the School/University			
Title of the intervention project			
Full name and function of the participants			
Administrative department			
Summary of the teaching experience in the practical training:			
Criteria	Present	Lacking	Comments
• General data (student name, school level, age, gender)			
• References			
• Attachments			

b. Report evaluation criteria

Criteria	Positive	Requires revision	Not sufficient
Short description of the family context (max. one page)	The report provides important data for understanding the conditions of the family context and whether it can facilitate or hinder the student's inclusion.	The report provides poorly organised data which makes it difficult to understand the conditions of the family context and whether it can facilitate or hinder the student's inclusion.	The report provides unsuitable information for understanding the situation of the family context and whether it can facilitate or hinder the student's inclusion.
Presentation of the pupil's school history	The report provides important data for understanding the pupil's school history and whether it can facilitate or hinder the student's inclusion.	The report provides poorly organised data which makes it difficult to understand the pupil's school history and whether it can facilitate or hinder the student's inclusion.	The report provides unsuitable information for understanding the pupil's school history and whether it can facilitate or hinder the student's inclusion.
Criteria	Positive	Requires revision	Not sufficient

Motivation for choosing this project case	The motivations and aims of the educational inclusion intervention covered by the Project Work are clearly indicated.	The motivations and aims of the intervention are indicated without suitably defining the inclusive dimensions.	The information is generic and does not help to understand the inclusive purposes of the intervention in depth.
Description of the intervention	The report describes and documents the various phases of the intervention specifying the objectives, tools, timing, social context, various educational spaces developed, and results pursued.	The report presents and documents the intervention omitting some data required for an in-depth analysis.	The report presents and documents the intervention insufficiently to effectively understand the scope and methods used.
Self-assessment of the intervention	Suitable comments are presented, also of a critical nature and with a view to potential further developments of the intervention carried out.	The comments on the intervention do not appear to be complete and are not placed within a perspective of development.	Self-assessment comments on the intervention are not presented, or are presented inadequately.

Analysis of the reports produced by the participants in the “Diplomado para docentes de apoyo a la inclusión”

The following initial considerations can be made on the reports produced on the Project Work and their evaluation:

- the choice of integrating the Project Work in the course was shown to be particularly positive. The Participants tackled the task enthusiastically and skilfully, despite the fact that this was an unusual and burdensome activity. It should be remembered in this regard that the majority of course participants do not come from university education, and are professors and technical staff working over 40 hours per week, in addition to the difficulties linked to a lack of adequate public transport.
- The set of materials produced offers an extreme interesting overview of the Salvadorian school world, in its relations with a particularly difficult territorial context. The reports are certainly not of a uniform standard, due to the varying quality of the intervention design and management tools used and the varying cultural and political awareness of the participants, but they underline a common dimension of commitment to inclusion, open to an overall review of the role of schools.
- A dozen university teachers (from the University of El Salvador (UES) in San Miguel and San Salvador and the Evangelical University) not only took part in all the course learning modules but also decided to perform specific Project Work on the dimension of inclusion in university contexts. In almost all cases, this represented the opening of a new perspective of commitment, involving the establishment of working groups including various professional figures.

The report evaluations allowed us to confirm that all participants share the cultural and methodological perspective with the representatives of the Ministry on the evaluation board: Denis Tercero, representative of the Department of Inclusive Education of the Mined, an official member of the board and Janet de Lopez, manager of the Pedagogical Unit of the Mined, who replaced him on some days.

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One session of the works of the board also saw the participation of the Vice-Minister for Education, Dr. Francisco Humberto Castaneda, in an auditor capacity.

Analysis of the reports by individual criterion

A total of 75 Project Works were performed, presenting the following context characteristics:

a) Geographical location of the educational institutions

The participants in the Diplomado were distributed in a representative manner in the geographical areas of the country, as can be seen in the table and the graph below, also considering that the Centre is the most populated area.

Geographical area	Number of schools
East	26
Centre	29
West	20
Total	75

Table 1 - Distribution of educational institutions by geographical area

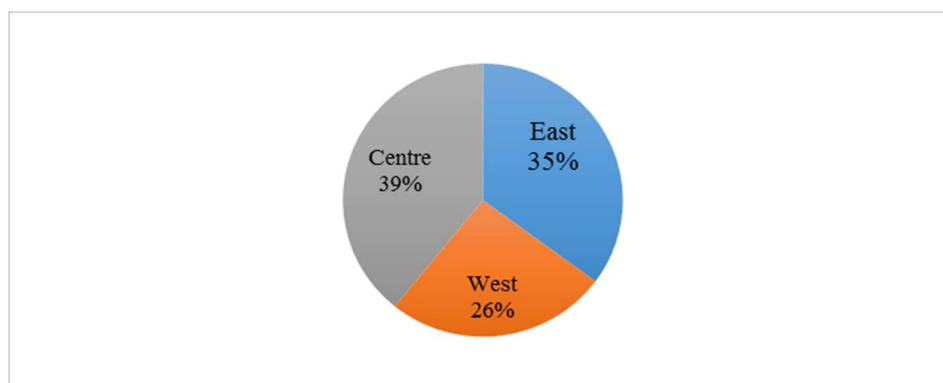


Figure 1 - Distribution of educational institutions by area

b) Type of educational institution

As can be seen by the table and graph concerning the type of institutions in which the Project Work was performed, the majority of course participants work in regular state schools, which nationally represent 85% of the whole school education system. Only a small minority work in special schools and universities.

Educational institution	Number
"Regular" school	67
Special school	2
University	6
Total	75

Table 2 - Distribution of educational institutions by educational type

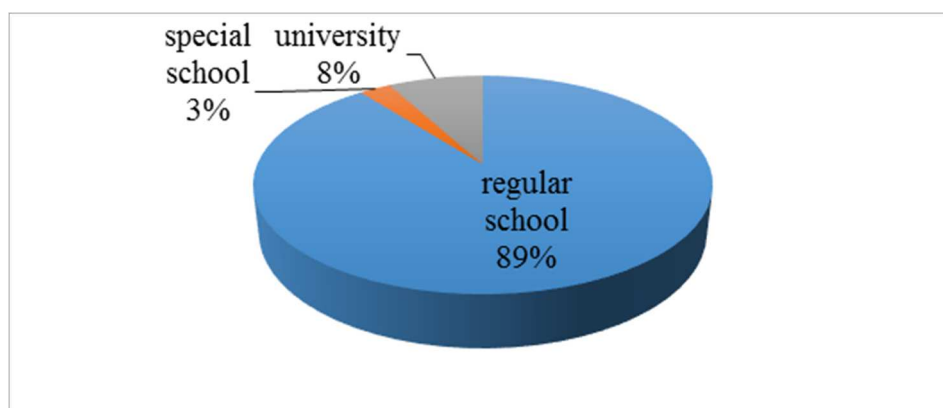


Figure 2 - Percentage distribution of educational institutions by educational type

c) Type of inclusion intervention

The majority of the Project Work referred to school inclusion experiences targeting students with motor, mental or mental-physical disabilities. Around 30% of the cases reported on the other hand study the inclusion of students in conditions of social disadvantage. It is important to underline that the situations of disability are often structurally associated to socio-economic and cultural difficulties, this can be stated generally but is even more true in the specific case of El Salvador. Only a small percentage of the Project Work concerned interventions aiming to foster a better quality of inclusion in schools generally, without specifically referring to cases of disability or disadvantage.

Type of inclusion intervention	Number of responses
inclusion in general (situations in which the school designs inclusive projects not referred to specific students)	3
inclusion of disability (situations in which the school designs inclusive projects for students with declared disabilities)	50
inclusion of social disadvantage (situations in which the school designs inclusive projects for students characterised by socio-cultural disadvantage)	22
Total	75

Table 3 - Distribution of responses according to type of inclusion intervention

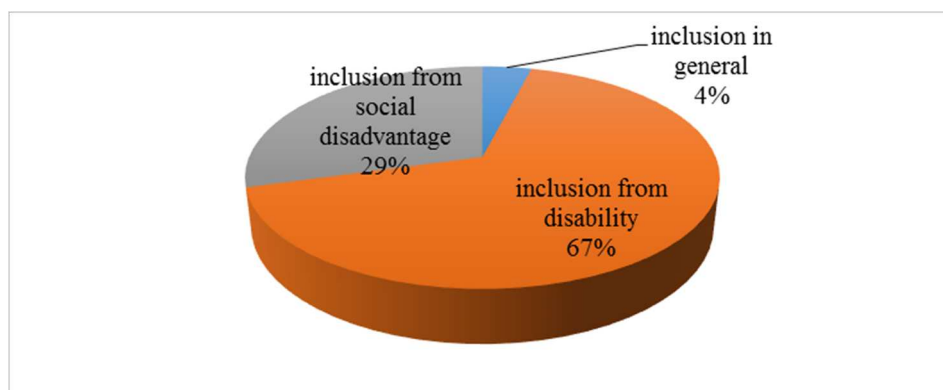


Figure 3 - Percentage distribution of responses according to type of inclusion intervention

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d) Prevalent intervention method

The experiences of school inclusion documented in the Project Work were performed mainly in normal classes within the teacher-pupil relationship (sometimes with the participation of both the support teacher and the regular teacher). Some inclusive experiences promoted a social approach with the participation of the whole class, enhancing the role of the group of students as a resource for supporting inclusion. Only a few of the groups involved performed inclusive interventions in settings separated from the regular class, in particular in the support classroom. As can be seen in the graph, the interventions promoted at school were rarely developed also focusing on the quality of the students' experience in extra-scholastic settings.

Prevalent intervention method	Number of responses
individual in the support classroom	2
individual in the normal class	58
social in class (inclusion intervention involving the whole class group)	6
social at school (inclusion intervention involving the whole school)	3
social in the territory (inclusion intervention with actions involving extra-scholastic experiences)	1
no response (method not clearly identified)	5
Total	75

Table 4 - Distribution of responses according to prevalent intervention method

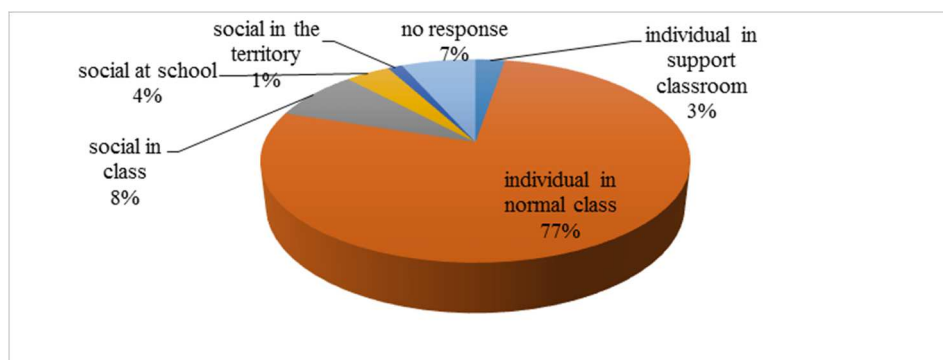


Figure 4 - Percentage distribution of responses according to prevalent intervention method

e) Strategies used – first choice

As the projects were usually characterised by the use of several correlated strategies and instruments, it was decided to firstly examine the dominant strategies of each project and subsequently the strategies significantly accompanying the first ones. The prevalent methodological and educational strategies used in the interventions developed by the working groups consisted above all in the introduction of specific teaching methods targeting the identified problems (almost half the Project Work has this characteristic). In many cases, use was made of digital programmes. Although to a lesser extent, significant curricular adaptations were noted (i.e. reducing the complexity of the programmes and the choice of minimum objectives. Moreover, the Salvadorian teachers have always asked to acquire better skills in curricular adaptation). As can be seen from the graph, the educational interventions

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experimented with a view to inclusion were to a minimal extent designed and developed in a life project perspective, underlining the existence in the cultural approach to inclusion by the school staff of a concept of inclusive interventions limited mainly to the present and to the institutional educational context.

Strategies used – first choice	Number of responses
use of ICT (hardware or software falling in the category of information and communication technologies)	18
specific teaching methods (use of individualised educational instruments or strategies with an inclusive function)	34
compensative teaching (use of educational strategies functional to recovering pre-requisites)	5
life project (strategies functional to continuing the inclusive intervention outside of school and with a future perspective)	3
curricular adaptation (interventions to reduce the quantitative or qualitative elements of the competences laid down in the programmes)	11
peer group (use of peer education strategies, mutual help, peer tutoring)	1
no response (strategies not clearly identified)	3
Total	75

Table 5 - Distribution of responses according to the strategies used – first choice

f) Strategies used – second choice

It was possible to identify a second significantly used strategy supporting or in combination with the first in only in two thirds of the projects. It is in any case interesting to note how second strategies with a specific inclusive significance, if somewhat limited, such as those linked to the involvement of peer groups (12%) and those with an attention to the student's overall life experience (13%).

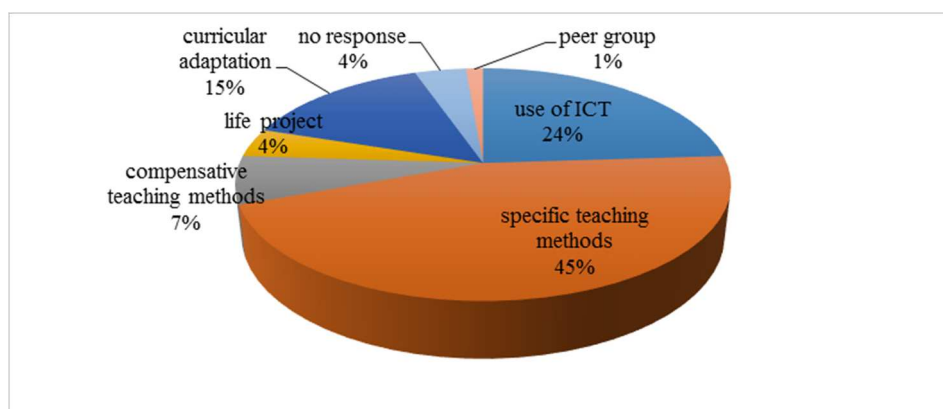


Figure 5 - Percentage distribution of responses according to the strategies used – first choice

Strategies used – second choice	Number of responses
use of ITC	4
specific teaching methods	15
compensative teaching methods	7
life project	10
curricular adaptation	5
other	1
no response	24
peer group	9
Total	75

Table 6 - Distribution of responses according to the strategies used – second choice

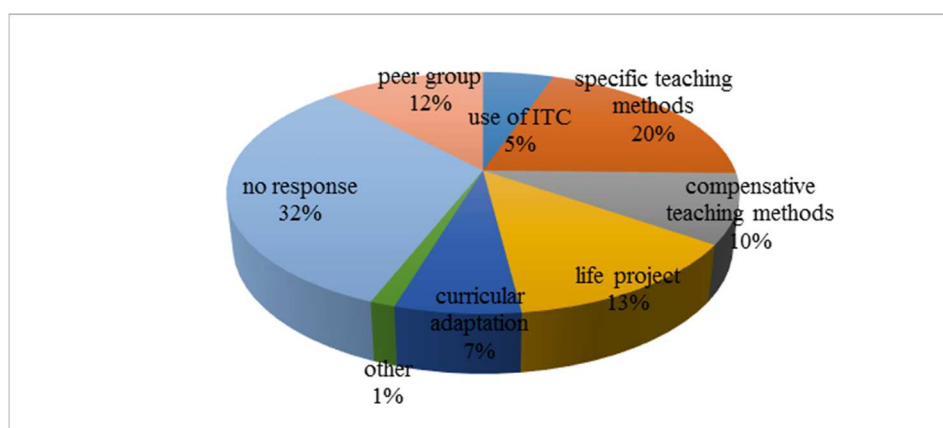


Figure 6 - Percentage distribution of responses according to the strategies used – second choice

g) Intervention on educational figures

As regards the methods of intervention on school educational figures outside of the Project Work group, a great variety can be seen in the solutions adopted. The distribution of the percentages demonstrates that in particular the work team invested in educational monitoring and study of diagnostics, by holding interviews with significant adults in the school life of the students the Project Work targeted. Situations in which the project involved working towards the qualification of the collegial aspects of the intervention were also significant.

Intervention methods	Number of responses
provide instruments (make available specific educational instruments to the class teacher)	7
support collegial work (ensure collegial opportunities for designing and monitoring the intervention)	14
study diagnostics (increase and quality the school's knowledge of the students' school and personal history)	22
monitor teaching (accompany the everyday teaching action with opportunities for reflection, evaluation and project work)	20
no response (method not clearly identified)	12
Total	75

Table 7 - Distribution of responses according to the intervention methods

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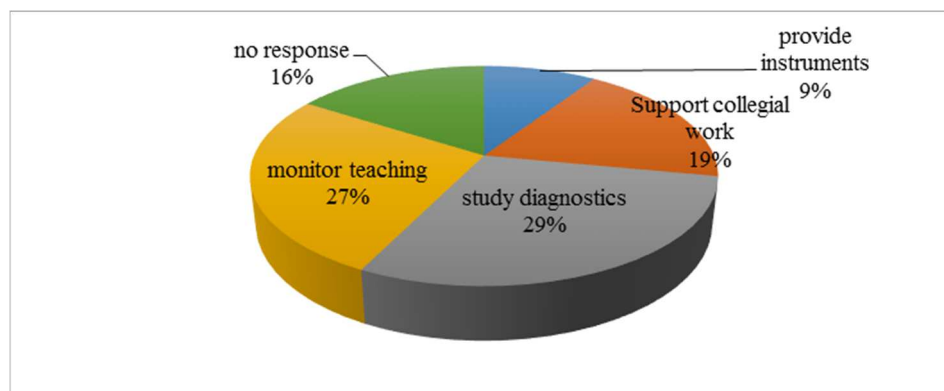


Figure 7 - Percentage distribution of responses according to the intervention methods

h) Intervention on the families

In the experience documented by the Project Work, the involvement of the families in the intervention supporting inclusion was partial, and in most cases was limited to the meetings required to construct the so-called diagnostics. As can be seen in the graph, around 60% of the experiences did not involve the active participation of the families during the management of the intervention. In those cases in which the family context was identified as a possible interlocutor, the purposes of the intervention included raising awareness of the families towards a better quality of extra-scholastic educational experiences. It should be noted that the parental contexts of the students to which the Project Work refers have particular characteristics of social and cultural degradation and frequent factors of conflict.

Type of intervention for improving/enhancing:	Number of responses
the school experience (improve the families' perception on the importance of the school experience)	6
study at home (qualify educational schedules in the family context)	17
socialisation at school (obtain the support of the families to ensure better school socialisation)	4
socialisation in the family (qualify the relationships in the family context)	1
socialisation in the territory (quality extra-familiar social relationships)	2
recourse to technical services (use the competence of social and health services experts)	1
no response (type not clearly identified)	44
Total	75

Table 8 - Distribution of responses according to type of intervention to improve/enhance the quality of the educational intervention in a social perspective

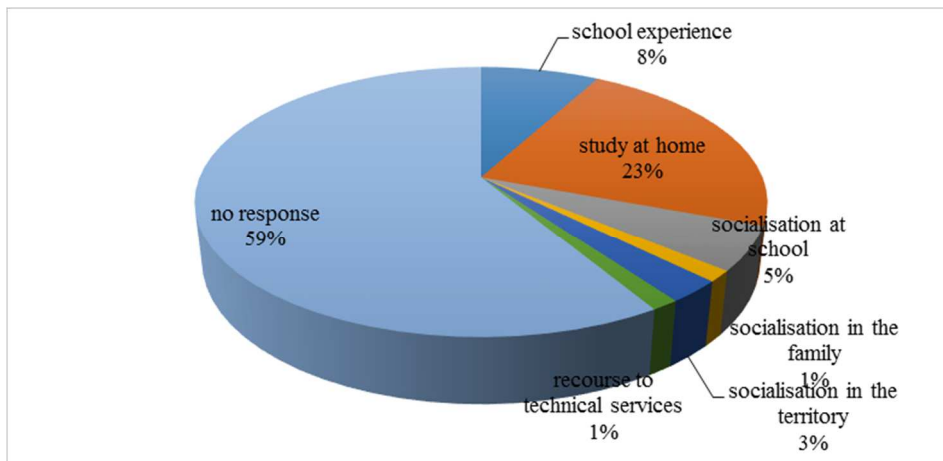


Figure 8 - Percentage distribution of responses according to type of intervention to improve/enhance the quality of the educational intervention in a social perspective

i) Interventions in cooperation with the local territory

The criterion concerns the areas of intervention based on formal and informal educational experiences in the local territory within the project, in the perspective of an inclusive intervention covering the students' whole life.

The graph shows how the schools involved met with clear difficulties in designing and implementing inclusive interventions able to involve local resources, limiting the actions supporting inclusion mainly to school settings. This is coherent with the low adoption of the "life project" among the instruments used by the working groups in promoting inclusive processes. It must be said that the Salvadorian context is not normally marked by an appreciable wealth of formal educational figures in the local community.

Activation of interventions with the local territory	Number of responses
involvement of local resources	6
no response (intervention not clearly identified)	69
Total	75

Table 9 - Distribution of responses based on the activation of interventions based on cooperation with the local territory

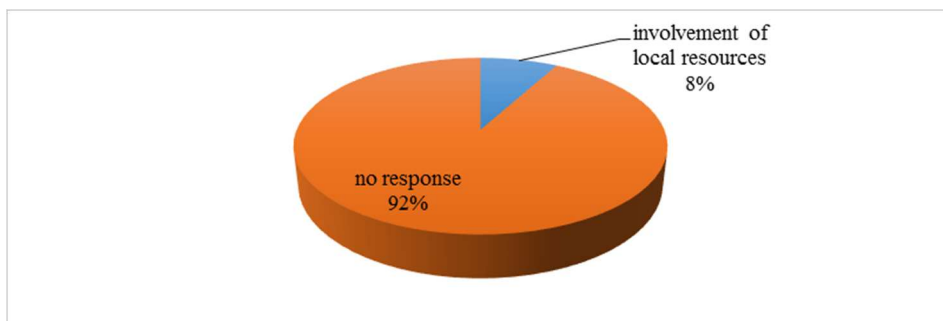


Figure 9 - Percentage distribution of responses based on the activation of interventions based on cooperation with the local territory

Analysis of reports using cross-referenced criteria

In the above analysis the data is given and commented on analytically, with no reference to the relationships between the different criteria used. This paragraph proposes some cross-references among the various criteria in order to offer a more in-depth evaluation of the quality of the experiences produced and discussed in the Diplomado. The particular aim of this data analysis is to study the characteristics of the experimented educational practices by grouping them according to their being indicative of a “lesser” or “greater” development of the inclusive dimension. The practices based on an approach to inclusion with a lower inclusive quality were paired to the indicator: a) educational interventions performed in the support classes. On the contrary the practices which bear witness to greater innovative quality of educational experiences were related to the indicators: b) the involvement of peer groups in school inclusion processes; c) the involvement of extra-scholastic settings in formal educational interventions; d) the use of ITC as an instrument supporting inclusive teaching; e) the promotion of collegial works in the school.

The practices selected were analysed according to the following variables: geographical area of the educational institution, gender and professional role of the figures involved in the inclusive experience.

a) Educational interventions performed in the support classes.

The type of intervention based on education interventions performed predominantly in the support classes, separated from the normal classes, was recorded in only two schools (out of the 75 documented) located in the Central part of the country. These schools have a balanced presence of male and female educational figures (heads and DAI) involved in the interventions developed. Moreover, despite the indications given by UniBo, in both schools the participation of the subject teachers in the working group was not foreseen, and in only one case a pedagogic technical assistant took part. The composition of the group was therefore indicative of the type of experience developed.

b) The involvement of the peer groups in the school inclusion processes

The data processed confirms that the experimentation of the involvement of peer groups in school inclusion processes was an exception within the overall panorama of the schools involved. Indeed, this method was practised in only one school, in the East of the country.

The team in charge of the Project Work was exclusively female, represented by the DAI teacher and the head. The subject teacher and the ATP did not participate.

The involvement of extra-scholastic settings in formal educational interventions

The choice of involving extra-scholastic settings in formal educational interventions was adopted significantly by a limited number of educational institutions distributed throughout the country as follows: 2 centres in the East, 3 in the Centre and 1 in the West. Concerning the educational figures involved, the presence of only one subject teacher is reported (in the East), along with 7 female DAI teachers, 2 female and one male head and 4 ATPs (2 men and 2 women). In only one school, in the East, the team was integrated by all professional profiles that according to the UniBo indications were to be involved.

c) The use of ICT as an instrument supporting inclusive education.

The ICT tool, compared to the above described practices, appears to be relatively the most common among the 75 educational institutions. Indeed, the use of different computer tools in experiences developed was recorded in 18 school centres: 4 in the East, 9 in the Centre, 5 in the West. In the 18 centres all together, participation was recorded by 3 female subject teachers, 10 female DAI teachers and 2 male DAI teachers, 4 female heads, 4 male heads, 7 female ATPs and 1 male ATP. As can be seen in the above list, female participation is generally greater than male participation.

d) The promotion of collegial work in the school.

Experiences promoting collegial works to qualify the implementation of inclusive school processes were documented by a limited number of schools, according to the following distribution by geographical area: 2 schools in the East, 2 in the Centre and 3 in the West. The total participation recorded was 6 female DAI teachers, 4 female subject teachers concentrated in the West, 3 female heads, 2 female ATPs and 1 male ATP.

In the light of the above, the educational experiences presenting a clear polarisation towards a lesser or greater inclusive perspective in any case remain circumscribed to a limited number of educational institutions: 2 in the direction of lesser qualification (approximately 3% of the 75 schools) and 32 overall in the direction of greater qualification (approximately 42% of the 75 schools).

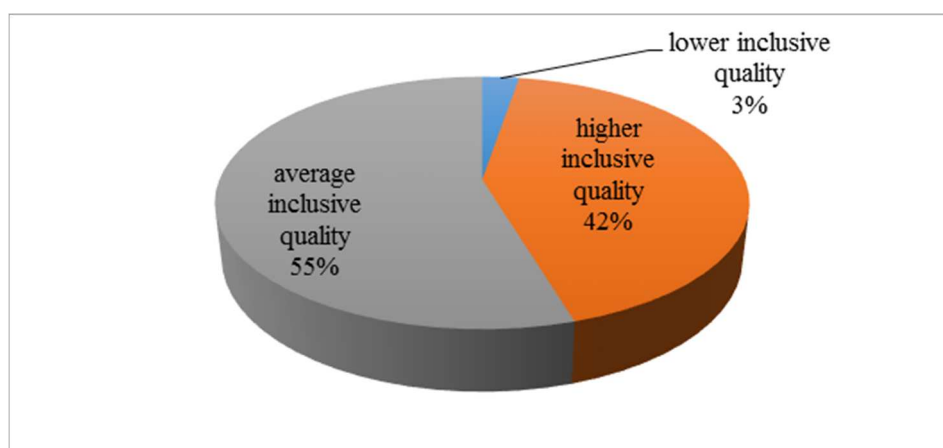


Figure 10 - Percentage distribution of schools with lesser, greater or average quality of inclusion in the practices developed

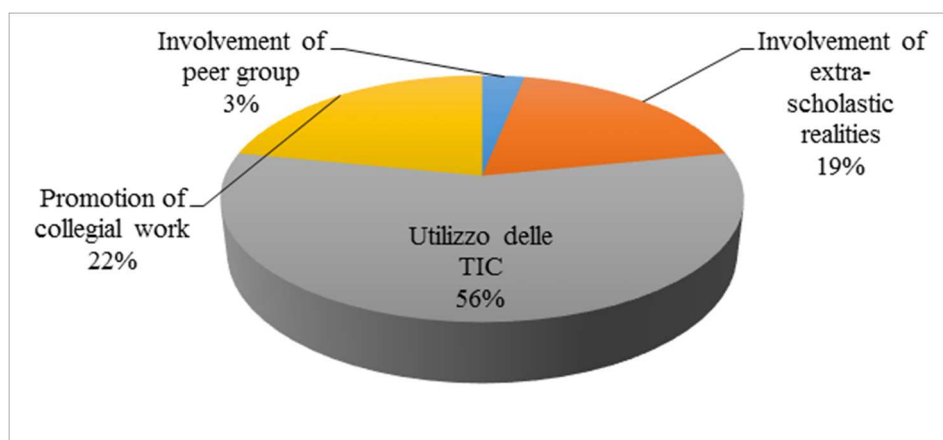


Figure 11 - Percentage distribution of schools implementing practices with a greater quality of inclusion

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Two aspects in particular emerge: 1) the first, certainly positive, concerns the fact that the figures involved from training onwards were stimulated and motivated to design educational interventions promoting the inclusion of students with disabilities in a logic that is increasingly removed from the "separatist" logic ("de apoyo" classes isolated from regular classes); 2) the second, on the other hand, indicates that there is still significant difficulty in introducing intervention methods and approaches that are able to optimise and integrate the resources of the school and extra-scholastic worlds in a perspective of inclusion. Indeed, the experiences involving peer groups and educational settings in the local territory are circumscribed, despite the feedback received on several occasions from the project participants, accompanied by enthusiasm and strong agreement on the opening to pedagogical and educational innovations of this kind. The contrast between what stated and what actually done confirms the need to continue the capacity building process in order to generate and consolidate competences in the field of general teaching and specifically in that of inclusive teaching.

As regards the collegial dimension, this factor recorded very limited development due to a lack of school culture which makes this aspect a strength for the overall development of educational institutions. Indeed, an individualist culture still prevails in those working in schools, which is in clear opposition to the inclusive approach the country is pursuing in both social and educational fields. The responsibility of promoting inclusive interventions targeting students with disabilities continues to be carried by specific figures, such as, in this case, the DAI teachers. This data is also clear in graph 13, which shows the quantity and type of professional figures involved in the Project Work experiences: as can be seen, there is a clear prevalence of DAI teachers, a minimal involvement of subject teachers and an even more limited participation of both school heads and ATPs.

Some thought should be given to this latter figure, beyond the specific experience of the Diplomado. On one hand, ATPs (pedagogic technical assistants) were invited to participate in both the training and the Project Work because they have always been considered strategic figures in the system for improving the quality of the educational practices of the school staff, disseminating and fostering the exchange of educational experiences between schools and supporting the transformation processes in progress in a perspective of inclusion. On the other hand, as can be seen from the data collected, only a limited number of them participated, and this can be linked not only to their effective institutional commitments but also to the difficulty perceived and expressed by many of them in assuming the role of assistant in an area in which they have not developed sufficient professional skills. Investing in their training in a perspective of empowerment also means setting the conditions for activating and consolidating a process of change in the education system in a perspective of sustainability supporting inclusion. It is clear that the qualified work of the ATPs can have a positive impact on other educational figures they set out to support through their technical assistance.

The most innovative educational instrument documented in the Project Work was the use of ICT (in 18 schools) as part of the inclusive education experiences. ICT are certainly of great interest to local education stakeholders, although from a careful reading of the reports produced (on the Project Work) sometimes the ICT were included in the teaching projects with a limited pedagogic awareness in terms of teaching objectives and the overall purpose of the action.

The professional figures taking part in the Project Work were mainly female and as shown in the graphs the proportions of male and female figures involved in the experimentation of greater quality educational practices substantially mirrors the overall distribution of men and women involved in the 75 Project Works. This means that the "gender" variable did not significantly affect the implementation of interventions representative of a lesser or greater quality in school processes in an inclusive perspective.

Professional figures by gender in practices with greater quality			Professional figures by gender overall in the 75 Project Works			
Figures involved	F	M	Total	F	M	Total
DAI	33	4	37	66	6	72
Directors	13	7	20	28	18	46
ATP	15	7	22	27	10	37
Subject teachers	5	0	5	10		10
Total	66	18	84	131	34	165

Table 10 - Distribution of professional figures according to gender involved in the practices with greater inclusion quality and the professional figures, according to gender, involved overall in the 75 Project Works.

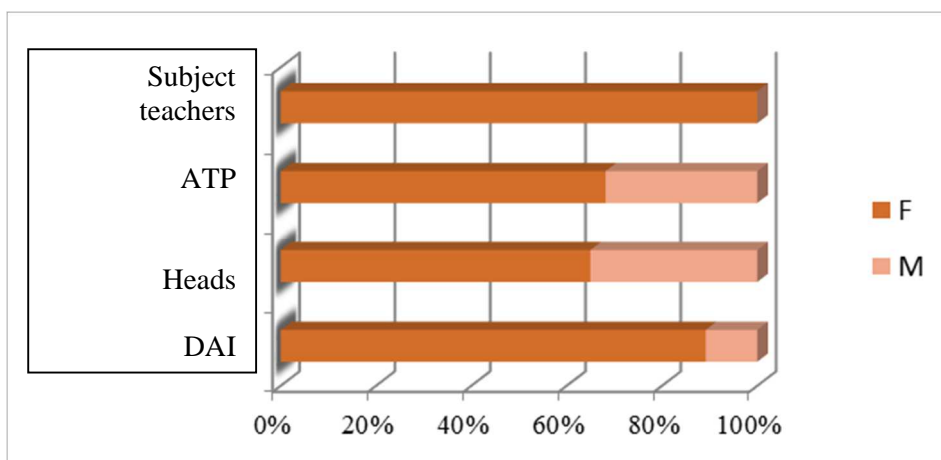


Figure 12 - Percentage distribution of professional figures by gender in the 75 Project Works

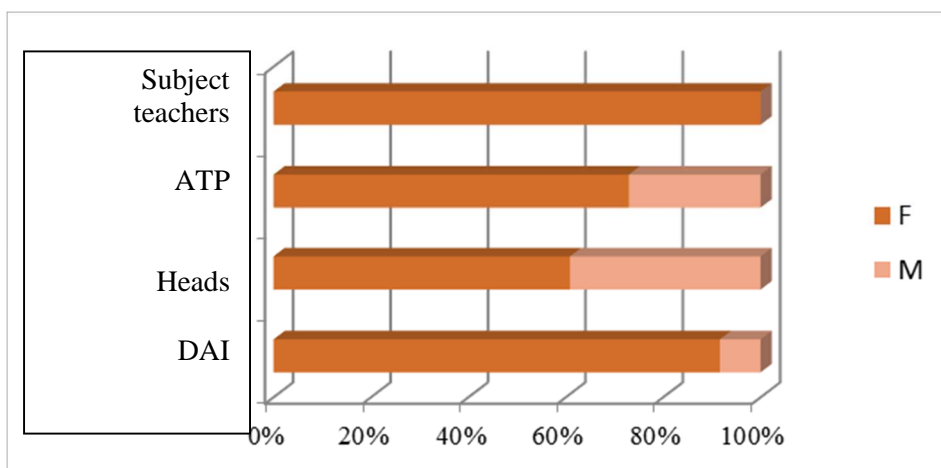


Figure 13 - Percentage distribution of professional figures by gender in the 75 Project Works

Conclusions

The training intervention described in these pages represented a significant change in the usual methods used in El Salvador for the continuing education of the educational figures. All the figures involved particularly appreciated the introduction of the Project Work experience in the Diplomado, which saw the structural cooperation of professional figures used to working mainly in sealed compartments. In other words, it appeared to be of great quality, also for the future, to have ensured that

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the individual projects required the joint work of school heads, subject teachers, support teachers and pedagogical technical assistants: the latter are considered in a separate section of the Ministry with their own rules and operational traditions. For the participants, the continuing education methods represented a substantial opportunity for empowerment. This because the fundamental basis was not the delivery of lessons to a substantially passive audience, but rather the establishment of authentic research-action groups required to implement local projects based on what they had learned in the theoretical modules, adding to these the skills learned in the practical training context. Many teachers openly admitted that the Project Work was one of the first opportunities in which as individuals they were led to assume responsibility as designer-teachers, not required to merely implement the programming strategies decided at higher levels but autonomously developing educational projects.

To fully assess the extent of the innovations being introduced into the Salvadorian school system towards inclusion, we must always remember that the country suffers from a situation in which the majority of people with disabilities continue to not attend school and the solution for those attending generally continues to be that of special schools. Having introduced the figure of the support teacher and having established that these teachers will work progressively in normal classes is a very courageous choice also due to the structural contexts in which this takes place, marked by both architectural barriers and limited professional training for the majority of the teachers.

Specifically referring to the Diplomado, alongside the considerations developed in the previous pages, it is possible to draw some final conclusions that do not aim to end the debate but rather to highlight the elements which may be focused on in constructing new sustainable development scenarios for inclusive education in El Salvador. In particular:

- The analysis of the Project Work reports certainly highlighted the significant commitment of the Salvadorian teachers, considering the conditions of the local context, which is complex from many points of view: the lack of a safe public transport network covering the whole territory, a condition that inevitably complicates the ability of many teachers to reach their respective schools; the salaries, which do not generally guarantee sufficient economic conditions for maintaining the average Salvadorian family and which do not help to enhance the fundamental role of the teacher figure in the country's social and educational system;
- The quality of the documents produced demonstrated an overall need for further development of the technical skills of education professionals allowing them to transform their - widely reported - enthusiasm for inclusion into scientifically qualified projects. This enthusiasm, which in any case must be strengthened also in pedagogical terms, must be supported by appropriate educational competences to ensure the adoption of formalised inclusion practices in the education system;
- There does not yet seem to be a sufficiently effective development of "life projects" involving the family contexts and the local community in a perspective of a real process of social inclusion for students in situations of disability of socio-cultural disadvantage. An authentic inclusion perspective can only happen if the development of interventions in schools goes hand in hand with a parallel and significant improvement of local services in a network logic of the school and extra-scholastic worlds;
- The variables considered in the analysis of the reports (professional composition of the working groups, gender of course participants, location of the schools, type of educational institutions) do not highlight any significant differences in the quality of the reports. However marginal, there appears to be a more consistent effort in the areas (such as the East) marked by greater socio-economic contradiction, bearing witness to the awareness of the corpus of teachers on the social value of the school intervention;

- An unusual fact to be underlined, beyond the effective quantitative consistency, is the participation in the course by university teachers, convinced of the need to develop inclusive interventions not only targeting the initial phases of school attendance.

Notes

¹The teaching materials used in the modules were produced according to international literature on the various subjects covered. Within the project, the UniBo professors and the Mined technical officers drafted specific bibliographical materials, tailored to the Salvadorian situation. These include: Mined (2014), *Gestión Pedagógica en la Escuela Inclusiva*, San Salvador, El Salvador C.A.; Mined (2014), *Fundamentos de la educación Inclusiva*, San Salvador, El Salvador C.A.; Mined (2014), *Estrategias metodológicas efectivas en la Escuela Inclusiva*, San Salvador, El Salvador C.A.; Mined (2014), *Evaluación de los aprendizajes en la Escuela Inclusiva*, San Salvador, El Salvador C.A.

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