

Universal Design for Learning and Life Designing in the Italian school system - An integrated inclusive model for students with disabilities

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ABSTRACT

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and the Life Designing paradigm integrate seamlessly within the Italian school system, particularly for students with disabilities, as both frameworks effectively address individual needs. Applied in Italian schools, UDL focuses on adapting teaching methodologies and content representation, overcoming physical, cognitive, and social barriers. In a school system characterized by increasing student diversity, including individuals with disabilities, UDL ensures an accessible learning environment by personalizing educational experiences.

Although primarily focused on career and life path planning, the Life Designing paradigm plays a crucial role in the education of students with disabilities. This approach complements UDL by fostering self-awareness regarding personal resources and inclinations, promoting reflection, and enabling autonomous and inclusive future planning. Life Designing does not merely guide career choices but supports students with disabilities in constructing their professional and social identity, enhancing their potential, and fostering social inclusion.

UDL, through content personalization, reduces learning access inequalities, while Life Designing fosters the development of transversal skills essential for navigating the job market and leading a fulfilling and participatory life, respecting individual diversity. For students with disabilities, UDL provides equitable access to educational content through assistive technologies and flexible teaching strategies. Simultaneously, Life Designing helps students recognize their attitudes and strengths, emphasizing autonomy and personal development.

This integrated approach not only fosters classroom inclusion but also enables students with disabilities to set long-term goals, building a life plan that aligns with their abilities and aspirations. By doing so, it helps mitigate the risk of social and professional marginalization. In conclusion, integrating these two frameworks within the Italian school system offers an effective response to the educational challenges faced by students with disabilities, promoting an education that is not only inclusive but also equitable and future-oriented. This holistic approach supports students throughout their academic journey, equipping them with cognitive, emotional, and professional skills essential for constructing an independent, active, and fulfilling life within a diversity-valuing context.

Keywords: Universal Design for Learning, Life Designing, Disability, Italian school system, Inclusion