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Social Inclusion of Students from Disadvantaged Backgrounds: New Strategic Approaches to Educational Counselling and Communication

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Abstract: The need to provide education for all has continued to be at a high level even now when access to education is easier and considerably wider than in the previous historical periods. There is a general causality as well as a specific one supporting this necessity. The latter includes an additional set of reasons which connect defining characteristics of disadvantaged learners with the limitations of the pandemic crisis and its effects on communication. They also continue to manifest themselves after the health restrictions have been lifted and further hinder communication and educational counselling, thereby imposing additional barriers to inclusive education. This study is a literature review through which we aim to make a synthesis of current communication and educational counselling new strategic approaches suitable for use in the post – COVID context for facilitating access to education for disadvantaged students. The objectives of the study are as follows: O1: to identify a set of strategies which correspond to the specific communication pattern and information needs of the children and teenagers nowadays; O2: to identify current educational counselling strategies which can be successfully used in the post - COVID context to enable well-informed career decisions for disadvantaged students; O3: to develop a formative intervention model for social inclusion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The study findings may be useful in school and career counselling in pre-university education, but also in collaborative approaches between pre-university and academia in order to facilitate the inclusion of the disadvantaged students.

Keywords: *educational counselling; communication; social inclusion; students from disadvantaged backgrounds; post-COVID.*

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1. Introduction – terminological and paradigmatic anchors

The term COVID-19 refers to a pandemic period full of challenges and opportunities of hard struggles, especially for the disadvantaged groups of learners, a stage which, although it may seem to be over, in fact, it continues to manifest itself in the form of numerous disruptions, which will certainly be felt for a long time to come. The post-pandemic period has shown a number of expected/unexpected effects, both for all categories of education beneficiaries and, in particular, for those belonging to students from economically disadvantaged families, further affected by the lockdown measures. An analysis of the profile of contemporary post-pandemic society, equally old, new and scary, reveals that it has essentially changed and, because of this, "we cannot return to the world as it was before" (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2020, p. 6). Based on the fundamental value highlighted herein - *solidarity* - the authors of the report highlight nine action suggestions for public entities with educational impact in the post-COVID period: strengthen education as a common good; expand the definition of the right to education; value the teaching profession and teacher collaboration; promote student, youth and children's participation and rights; protect the social spaces provided by schools; make free and open source technologies available to teachers and students; ensure scientific literacy within the curriculum; protect domestic and international financing of public education; advance global solidarity to end current levels of inequality (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2020, p. 5-6). An analysis of these directions allows us to see that any type of current educational counselling and communication approach, especially with disadvantaged students, is more connected to the dimension of social inclusion, ensuring the right to education and equal access to education. Reviewing a number of studies on the topic, we identified the following anchor-ideas for our research:

- Social inclusion is the process of improving society's ability to integrate the disadvantaged people, to ensure them the opportunity to participate in social life, process in which aspects such as social acceptance, caring and ensuring involvement are defining;
- The contexts in which we can refer to social inclusion are seen as process (defined as above) and paradigm;
- The social inclusion paradigm has been growing since the end of the 20th century, highlighting, at the beginning of the 2000s, the need for change in schools from this perspective. It refers to ensuring equal

access to quality inclusive education for all learners. The necessary transformation in this respect entails not only adjustments in the collective mindset but, above all, at the level of teachers' attitudes towards their own students, towards their diversity (generated by a multitude of criteria) as well as their educational, counselling and communication practices, the rethinking of schools as a whole, from the perspective of equal access and the right to education for all, in the direction of eliminating all the barriers that sustain inequality and exclusion from school and society. (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021; Boghian, 2019). This paradigm is a generally valid one, reflecting the spirit and the right to equal opportunities in social life, in education from pre-school to university and postgraduate levels, from formal to non-formal education, from teaching to counselling and educational communication. It is only by ensuring this continuum of pathways that the paradigm can be translated into practice;

- Inclusive education is the process of ensuring the conditions for all students to participate in school activity and to achieve performance, to access the learning approach, especially for those who are usually excluded on the basis of gender, socio-economic, psychological criteria (Mcclain-Nhlapo, 2020);
- After the pandemic, the generation of post-pandemic scenarios (action responding to a growing need for support for inclusive education and all its categories of beneficiaries) required an axiological re-orientation, a reconsideration of values and principles to (re)guide inclusive education, a multidisciplinary and collaborative process, but also other categories of related and relevant impact measures (political, financial, managerial). Among the pillars identified there is the "right to education for all throughout life" (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021, p. 153).
- This principle emphasises the proactive and continuous dimensions of the approach, the need not only for adaptive measures, but also for measures which attempt to anticipate and bring under control the discriminatory factors still operating in the school environment, increasing the resilience of school institutions and their agents in the face of crises and their unpredictability. One of the recommended directions which can support this effort is precisely "to strengthen

national and subnational-level support to vulnerable groups" (OECD, 2021, p. 5). Among the key strategies recommended by the World Bank for the inclusive education sector planning, we can mention "the use of the twin-track approach" (Mcclain-Nhlapo, 2020, p.15), whose first step refers to "ensuring that mainstream education programmes are designed for all learners" (p.16) - a point of view relevant not only during and after the pandemic, but on a permanent basis;

- Beyond age particularities, teenagers coming from economically disadvantaged groups present some needs and specific psycho-social characteristics, which manifest themselves more subtle and powerfully than in their peers and which have been intensified during the pandemic period, coming to the surface in the post-COVID-19 period, dimensions which our own work with these young people over the last year has revealed apathy, lack of involvement, fear, anxiety, hostility (Karaman et al, 2021), much lower self-confidence, altered self-image, pessimism, withdrawal from group/social/school life, lack of initiative, enthusiasm, lack of clear career goals, minimal very short-term goals. This context necessarily requires special counselling and communication approaches which start with self-awareness/self-knowledge, provision of individualised support and which combine in an appropriate way individual activity with teamwork, collaborative and interactive dimension, playful and creative dimension, individual and group activities, collaboration and communication. All these approaches can only be considered in close connection with digital education;
- The need for psychological, educational and professional counselling is increasing in the post-COVID period. It expresses both one of the effects of the pandemic and, at the same time, the confidence and hope that counselling could be one of the useful support mechanisms. In fact, the scientific literature considers that our present is full of "challenges and opportunities for counselling" (Vostanis & Bell, 2020, p. 389) and the integration of technology in counselling approaches seems to be one of them. If online counselling has gained ground in the pandemic, it can remain a post-pandemic asset, all the more so since it is cheap, relatively

convenient, easy to implement, confidential and can ensure complete individualisation of the approach, provided that beneficiaries have access to the necessary infrastructure;

- Communication strategies, part of the counselling process for students from disadvantaged groups, must in turn be adapted and appropriately focused: communication strategies with students; special communication campaigns with parents; large-scale direct communication with students and parents; low-cost coaching and communication methods to support teachers, online communication strategies combined with face-to-face; diversity of communication channels;
- Exploring and exploiting new approaches to educational counselling and communication requires an analysis of the post-COVID19 context, identifying successful practices from the pandemic, examining the new needs of the students from disadvantaged backgrounds and generating a mix of measures, practices and techniques which can better fit this context. Here are some of them: supporting students and parents in overcoming their prejudices about seeking and using counselling services; "forming/encouraging help-seeking behavior" (Brown et al., 2020, p. 23); guiding students towards acquiring/consolidating a so-called "sense of hope" (Brown et al., 2020) to give them energy and direction for their future actions; improving communication with and counselling of the students' families (Baten et al., 2022; Brown et al., 2020; Vockel & Ştefănescu, 2020); combining pre-pandemic approaches with newer, online approaches (lectures with parents, studies to analyze the needs of parents, online counsellors/meetings for parents and home visits); diversifying techniques by attracting "artistic media as an additional resource" (Loscalzo, 2022, 8) and making greater use of art therapies (drawing, sand therapy, theatre, music therapy - STAMP, 2018 - a very interesting and creative guide to achieving social inclusion for disadvantaged students using art techniques); combining face-to-face and digital techniques (Let & Brown, 2020): (individual counselling (online/face-to-face), form filling (online), interview (online, face-to-face, phone), group counseling (online/face-to-face), peer counselling, vocational guidance, preventive counselling, and social assistance. Hence, the approaches will be ones which could lead in

the medium and long term to the maintenance/recovery/initiation of well-being (Loscalzo, 2022; Bell et al., 2021) of the students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The onset of the pandemic required counselling programmes to support the continuation of social life and educational activity in a completely new context, which put humanity on high alert, with severe measures, in a format that neither educational institutions nor educational services were prepared to address - the hybrid/online format. After more than two years, the gradual return to the face-to-face activity seems to be generating, somewhat unexpectedly, a new set of difficulties, related to the ability of schools and their actors to re-enter a world which is only to a small extent now conducted in front of screens, where people have to lift their heads from their phones and computers and communicate authentically. Students from disadvantaged groups need additional support in this endeavour, as they feel the negative effects of the pandemic (economically, educationally, psychologically, professionally) amplified in this post-COVID19 period, which become additional barriers to their access to inclusive education and/or the labour market.

2. Methodological research aspects

The present study starts from the assumption that specialists, families, institutions, national and international bodies remain concerned (also) in the post-pandemic period with identifying/providing new mechanisms specific to inclusive education for students from disadvantaged groups.

The aim of the research is to identify in the scientific literature strategic counselling and communication approaches which can be used in the post-COVID19 period for students from disadvantaged groups.

Research Objectives:

- O1: to identify a set of strategies which correspond to the specific communication pattern and information needs of the children and teenagers nowadays;
- O2: to identify current educational counselling strategies which can be successfully used in the post – COVID 19 context to enable well-informed career decisions for disadvantaged students;
- O3: to develop a formative intervention model for social inclusion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Research methodology

The research was conducted between May and November 2022. We have used a peer review research methodology. Based on methodological solutions identified in recent studies of the same type in the field (Belando-Montoro et al., 2022) we proceeded to the following methodological steps: 1. establishing keywords for study search; 2. establishing criteria for study selection, i.e. criteria for inclusion and exclusion in the review; 3. searching for studies based on the keywords; 4. applying the grid of criteria for the selection of studies; 5. determining the total number of studies identified (quantitative dimension); 6. analysing the selected studies in relation to the research objectives; 7. elaborating the design of the formative intervention model for social inclusion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (qualitative dimension). These steps were carried out in the following stages:

Research stages

1. research process - May- June 2022 (steps 1- 2);
2. search process - June - August 2022 (steps 3-5);
3. analysis process - September - October 2022 (step 6);
4. creative process - November (step 7)

Research tool

In Table 1, there is a grid with criteria for inclusion and exclusion in the review.

Table 1. Criteria for selection and exclusion in the review

Selection criteria	Exclusion criteria
1. language of publication – English	1. any language other than English
2. publication period: 2019-2022	2. published before the period 2019-2022
3. open access only	3. text not available in full online
4. availability of the text in one of the 3 databases: Web of Science, Scopus, Science Direct	4. any duplicated research articles

5. the text is relevant to the researched topic	5. the text is not relevant to the researched topic

3. Search process - Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the obtained results

Based on the criteria presented in Table 1, we will highlight a narrative synthesis of results obtained for each aspect of our study, in accordance with the research objectives. Table 2 shows the quantitative dimension of the results obtained as a basis for the achievement of O1.

Table 2. The quantitative data - O1

Database	topic	1	2	3	4	5	Final
Web of Science	1. Communication Strategies for Students with Disadvantaged Backgrounds	13	3	3	-	-	-
	2. post Covid Communication Strategies	270	270	209	209	9	9
Total 1							***9***
Scopus	topic 1	8	2	1	1	1	1
	topic 2	285	284	283	202	5	5
Total 2							***6***
Science Direct	topic 1	13881	858	857	855	11	11
	topic 2	10574	10574	10574	10574	7	7
Total 3							***18***
Total							***33***

Out of 33 identified articles we have drawn the following ideas of major relevance for the implementation of O1:

- the need to improve communication, all forms and channels (Aabdi et al., 2022; Landa et al., 2021), the diversification of strategies among all parties involved in the educational act is not new, but it becomes all the more imperative in the post-COVID context (Wu, 2022; Makgahlela et al., 2021; Rubinger et al., 2020);

- a priority that all educational actors agree on is the "provision of efficient Information Communication Technologies (ICTs)" (Makgahlela et al., 2021, p. 130; Landa et al., 2021);

- even if virtual communication has its advantages (Garro-Abarca et al., 2021) and is recommended, the communication model considered useful and effective (especially in terms of counselling) remains the hybrid one, precisely because it can provide both remote communication and direct communication, eye contact, persuasive nonverbal communication (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021);

- there are suggestions of methods/strategies that could enhance communication, both in teaching and research and in the specific field of counselling (especially group counselling). Even if some of them are explicitly proposed as part of online communication (plenary sessions, paper/breakout sessions, workshops/small group sessions, poster and demonstration sessions, social events) (Rubinger et al., 2020, p. 1465), "social media use" (Michela et al., 2022, p. 4), online communications platforms, computer-based communication, use of email or social networks (González-Betancor, 2021) or face-to-face ("courageous dialogue") (Johnson et al., 2020, p.24) this does not mean that some of them could not be carried out in both scenarios. For example, the topics proposed by students for courageous dialogue are an expression of their needs for clarification, communication and counselling: "thinking like a nurse; religion bias; finding and establishing support in the programme; dealing with anxiety; interviewing skills/getting hired; gaining support for future job references; carers beyond the bedside for new nurses" (Johnson et al., 2020, p.25) and they could also be discussed in the online or hybrid format;

- An example of good practice of a face-to-face programme aimed at improving communication skills can be seen in the pilot study proposed by Gee et al. (2021) *Paths to the Future for All*, which aims at a "developmental approach to college and career readiness" (p. 80). The programme provides teenagers with socio-emotional development strategies in directions such as "self-awareness, goal setting and persistence as well as builds their knowledge of how to prepare for college and career pathways after high school" through a curriculum consisting of 3 units (My Story - My Strengths, Navigational Tools, My Destinations (p. 81);

- for online communication, the most used channels are various digital platforms (Microsoft Teams, Blackboard Collaborate), email for submission of tasks and WhatsApp for other communication (Philips, 2021, p. 5), cloud computing, mobile apps (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021);

- a complex solution to respond to the growing need to improve communication in relation to the wide range of young people's needs could be "to create a communication centre" (Aabdi et al., 2022) which includes various lines and channels of communication between students, counsellors, teachers, parents, representatives of the institution's management, related organisations with an educational role, representatives of the labour market, stakeholders.

Table 3 shows the quantitative dimension of the results obtained as a basis for the implementation of O2.

Table 3. The quantitative data – O2

Database	Topic	1	2	3	4	5	Final
Web of Science	1. Students from Disadvantaged Backgrounds - Educational Counselling	4	1	1	1	-	-
	2. Post COVID Educational Counselling Students Disadvantaged	1	1	1	1	1	1
	3. Educational Counselling Strategies for Students with Disadvantaged Backgrounds	1	-	-	-	-	-
Total 1							***1***
Scopus	topic 1	3	-	-	-	-	
	topic 2	1	1	1	-	-	
	topic 3	1	-	-	-	-	
Total 2							***0***

Science Direct	topic 1	3648	711	169	169	7	7
	topic 2	130	130	57	56	3	3
	topic 3	2769	592	280	276	18	18
Total 3							***28***
Total							***29***

The qualitative analysis of the 29 articles led us to the following findings:

- the studies highlight and confirm the need for an increased need for counselling for students in general, and for disadvantaged students in particular, whichever subgroup they belong to, for a wide variety of needs and demands: psychological, financial counselling (Silva-Laya et al., 2020); academic or those related to career decision (Reiling et al., 2022; Pietrzyk & Melinda, 2020). Even if during the pandemic period the education systems initiated online counselling solutions, for the disadvantaged students the inequalities became more pronounced, they could benefit from these solutions much less or not at all than their peers, in the absence of the necessary infrastructure, online learning devices and/or adult support;

- A number of new solutions are identified, which education systems and institutions are generating to provide support and counselling for vulnerable young people: 1. the emergence in upper secondary schools in Norway, by law, of a specialist called "the student welfare counsellor" (Reiling et al., 2022, p. 1). This counsellor has the task of putting each student in touch with the appropriate welfare services in order to provide support on financial, medical and family issues. It must provide both welfare counselling and career guidance, making it easier for pupils to get the most appropriate help so that they stay in school as long as possible. Although its basic task is "to help students with personal non-academic issues" (ibidem, p. 2) through its support type intervention it contributes to reducing the risk of dropping out and, on this basis, "to improve students' chances on the labour market" (ibidem, p. 5); 2. carrying out group counselling and peer-to-peer sessions in the form of debate and work-together workshops (e.g. The Bridge) (Stahl, 2021) in which students discuss and practise different ways of being and doing in disadvantaged (racial) groups; 3. career counselling and Content-Process-Context (CPC) intervention models (Lent & Brown, 2020); 4. "summer counselling interventions including college financial aid advising, short messages and scholarships" (Pietrzyk & Melinda, 2020, p. 14); 5.

complex programmes having a strong personalised counselling component, carried out during the summer for disadvantaged students to establish appropriate, contextual lines of financial support for further study; 6. conducting "bridge-building" counselling programmes (Arendt et al., 2019, p. 39) consisting of activities "lasting at least one week, in which the student attends an upper secondary school or has an internship at a workplace", they focus mainly on providing "vocational education options" (idem); 7. dropout prevention summer school programmes in the transition to secondary education (Vinas - Forcade et al., 2019); 8. establishment of national scholarship programmes that "improve access to high-quality university studies among vulnerable and disadvantaged youth" (Cosentino et al., 2019, p. 1), programmes containing complex categories of "academic and social supports (such as orientation and tutoring); leadership, entrepreneurship, and community service training activities; and access to networks, resources (such as counselling), and opportunities for professional preparation (such as internships)" (ibidem, p.3);

- studies highlight relatively classic online/face-to-face individual and group counselling forms and techniques (Pietrzyk & Melinda, 2020) which are also used in the pandemic period: "phone + mail counselling; home-based telephone counselling + information & feedback via mailed newsletters;" (Linder et al., 2022, p. 4); "leaflets, reminders, individual counselling, group based activities" (ibidem, p. 7); "flyers, newspaper announces, radio spots" (ibidem., p. 10) to promote activities; "psychoeducational methods (e.g., workshops, career courses, blogs), online and computerized assessment and guidance systems, and individual and group career counselling" (Lent & Brown, 2020, p.2), which, through the concern of counsellors and institutions can be updated and become modern;

- although counseling activities can contribute to increasing self-confidence and improving self-image, the best counseling strategies are not always identified (Silva-Laya et al., 2020).

Table 4 shows the quantitative dimension of the results obtained as a basis for the achievement of O3, variants a and b.

Table 4. The quantitative data – O3

Database	Topic 1	1	2	3	4	5	Final
Web of Science	Social Inclusion of Students from Disadvantaged	37	32	7	7	4	4

	Backgrounds						
Scopus	Idem	35	7	3	1	1	1
Science Direct	Idem	10768	3596	338	338	26	26
Total 1							*31*

Database	Topic 2	1	2	3	4	5	Final
Web of Science	Post COVID Inclusion Disadvantaged Students	1	1	1	1	1	1

Scopus	Idem	-	-	-	-	-	-
Science Direct	Idem	631	631	266	263	9	9
Total 2							*10*
Total							*41*

Based on the 41 articles identified, we have drawn the following ideas of major relevance to the topic under investigation:

- Students coming from disadvantaged categories (vulnerable groups) belong to diverse subgroups, generated by different criteria (socio-economic, gender, race, disabilities) (Fortes et al., 2022; Dawkins, 2021; González-Betancor, 2021; Jones et al., 2021; Lohndorf et al., 2021; Parker & Bickmore, 2020), always interpreted from a cultural perspective as well, which makes their unitary approach, as if they represented a single category, difficult to achieve. This is why research is pointedly oriented towards their different subgroups (Gerra et al., 2020). Unfortunately, students' belonging to one of these groups is also often associated with lack of/restricted access to capitalizing on digital strategies (digital inequity), generating, in a vicious circle, new vulnerabilities (development, study, school results, labour market insertion);

- As causality is complex, counselling and communication strategies should be tailored to the specifics of each subgroup (Tai et al., 2022) (which cannot be homogeneous either - Tai et al., 2022), "beyond one-size-fits-all approaches" (Themelis&Tuck, 2022, p. 158). All the more so as the pandemic has accentuated pre-existing vulnerabilities (Oberg et al., 2022; Jones et al., 2021);

- The completion of studies (pre-university, university) will represent for these categories of students a series of obstacles and challenges additional to those existing for other students, given the traces left by the stigma of labelling which they have felt many times in the type of studies and its impact on self-esteem and confidence in their own strengths (Machado et al., 2022). As such, their inclusion in studies is only the first step in their human and professional development, as they have a lot to build and compensate in building their own personality;

-many of the causes of exclusion are deeply rooted in the individual and, above all, collective mindset, are preserved over time, are hard to change and the counselling work must be extensive, lengthy and carried out with all categories of students/teachers/parents/adults. The attitude of the teachers towards inclusion it will be decisive for these pupils for their entire development;

- Among the counselling and communication strategies nominated and presented in these studies, with applicability during the COVID period and with a proposal for post-COVID preservation, development, valorisation are the so-called innovative virtual strategies (Themelis & Tuck, 2022) (with application, rather, to the didactic process but which can also be transposed to the counselling process with disadvantaged categories of students): seminar and workshop programmes on zoom, podcast series in which "diversity and inclusion were also a priority in selecting and inviting speakers for the zoominars and guests for the podcast" (Vila-Concejo et al., 2022, p. 1), "creating communities through regular online seminars" (idem, p.6), diversifying communication media (Leonardelli, 2022) trained in counselling (according to the students' technical possibilities);

- symetrically, face-to-face strategies are meant to compensate both for the effects of the pandemic and to supplement the psychological dimension of vulnerable students' development: "faculty/advisor counseling, peer mentoring, and academic clubs and other group activities" (Fortes et al., 2022, p. 51); "support programmes, such as counselling services; tutorials programmes" (Dawkins, 2021, p.432) of major importance there are aspects "such as social-emotional learning (Zain, 2021) (e.g., perspective and turn taking, empathy, communication), cognitive training through games and activities (e.g., thought experiments, sustained joint attention, dramatic play, storytelling)" (Lohndorf et al., 2021, p. 70). For example, the peace circles method (Parker & Bickmore, 2020) can be successfully used in group counselling to educate the ability to overcome conflict situations that may arise due to the students' very different backgrounds;

- an effective post-COVID solution is crystallising, one which combines online and face-to-face approaches, not only for psychological reasons but also for technical ones, in order to ensure "that students are not 'left behind' by a lack of access to particular formats" (Jones et al., 2021, p. 2). The studies propose sets of measures which combine different perspectives, allowing the expression of vulnerability and self, "that help to traverse the 'us versus them"' (Leonardelli, 2022, p. 8);

- a systemic, holistic, coherent and flexible approach to counselling ("we cannot act alone") is required (Vostanis & Bell, 2020, p. 392) (Fortes et al., 2022; Themelis & Tuck, 2022; Dawkins, 2021; Zain, 2021), in which counsellors work in partnership with schools/teachers (Yada et al., 2021), families (Lohndorf et al., 2021; Silva-Laya et al., 2020; Vinas - Forcade et al., 2019), with social workers (Linder et al., 2022), with the local community (Reiling et al., 2022; Silva-Laya et al., 2020), with other educational, national and international organizations, with employers and different stakeholders (Vostanis & Bell, 2020) to strengthen their competences "in a caring and collaborative context" (Jonsson & Goicolea, 2020).

Based on this, the following formative intervention model for the social inclusion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds was developed (Figure 1).

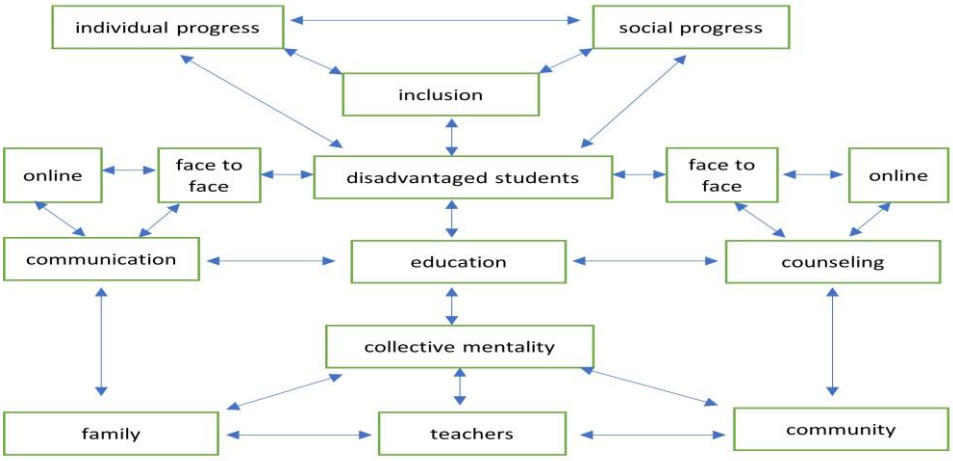


Figure 1 - Formative intervention model for the social inclusion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds

4. Conclusions

The qualitative analysis was performed on a total of 103 studies for the 3 objectives (33 studies for O1, 29 studies for O2, 41 studies for O3). Our first finding is that despite the great interest expressed in this issue, the reality is that it is expressed rather than translated into in-depth research, with practical solutions differentiated on different categories of students. The articles analysed address the issue of social inclusion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds predominantly theoretically, quite generally, in terms of necessity, usefulness, principles, difficulties and present far fewer practical solutions, experienced in school practice, to achieve this approach. This explains why the proportion of identified strategies for counselling and communication with disadvantaged pupils is not impressive. In other words, there are very few studies on the topic that offer innovative solutions.

The pandemic and all the issues it generates, including educational ones, represent, beyond all its negative connotations and effects, a special opportunity to generate innovative solutions (Themelis & Tuck, 2022). Both for school practices and for research on the topic, it is necessary to increase/expand and diversify counselling activities with students from disadvantaged backgrounds both in pre-university and university education (Fortes et al., 2022; Vostanis & Bell, 2020). There is a real need and usefulness to investigate more systematically and specifically these and the results generated, in order to obtain feedback for improvement and generation/exchange of good practices. Universities could diversify their ways of increased academic support in the team: personal advisers, mentors, support teachers, psychologists and counselors (especially where the risk of dropping out is high).

This huge current responsibility of educational institutions leads to an increase in the usefulness of counselling services and centres in pre-university (Reiling et al., 2022) and university education (Fortes et al., 2022; Vostanis & Bell, 2020) "which have become integral to student success and functioning" (Bell et al., 2021, p. 4). Although humanity has returned to face-to-face learning and seems to be reintroducing the former normality, online communication and counselling will nevertheless remain in the post-COVID period as a variant of activity, with all the forms known and validated in the pandemic period (Linder et al., 2022). We may even see the extension of online services because they are useful not only for inclusion but also for ensuring sustainability (Vila-Concejo et al., 2022, p. 7; González-Betancor, 2021; Philips, 2021).

Theoretical syntheses will prove useful to the extent that they provide systemic models which include all components of support for disadvantaged students (Fortes et al., 2022). An example of such an approach is that proposed as a result of the Learning through COVID-19 project run by the Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR), University of Queensland, Australia. The four action directions detailed and illustrated in the latest project report are: 1. student mental health, wellbeing and hope (with action directions for students and their families); 2. the future role of teachers, schools and communities (with action points on providing meals for students, remedial teaching activities, curriculum, counselling, alternative career paths, support for students' families); 3. protections for the most vulnerable students; digital equity (McDaid et al., 2021, p. 42-44).

The approach being one of social inclusion, studies highlight the need for a systemic approach, in which specialised counsellors in educational institutions team up with different training/activity institutions in various fields: tourism, economic, managerial (Leonardelli, 2022; Makgahlela et al., 2021), nursing and, generally, medical (Aabdi et al., 2022; Fortes et al., 2022; Linder et al., 2022; Dawkins, 2021; Johnson et al., 2020; Rubinger et al., 2020), engineering, ICT (Garro-Abarca et al., 2021).

The economically disadvantaged high school students require additional actions specific to career counselling, due to both the financial restrictions which aggravate their entire educational path and perhaps to the lack of authentic career models in the socio-cultural environment in which they live. Studies underline the crucial importance of financial aspects/investments for returning to school and for these social inclusion strategies (ensuring access to online infrastructure and investments for IT support (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021; González-Betancor, 2021; Jones et al., 2021); ensuring meal conditions, transport, curricular aids; different forms of financial support - scholarships, vouchers, subscriptions.

Our proposed model attempts to provide the authors' perspectives on this topic based on studies investigated through peer review analysis.

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