

Scuola  
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First  
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Conference



# Proceedings of the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference of the Journal Scuola Democratica

**EDUCATION AND POST-DEMOCRACY**

5-8 June 2019 Cagliari Italy

**VOLUME I**

**Politics, Citizenship, Diversity and Inclusion**

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EDUCATION AND POST-DEMOCRACY**

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Diversity and Inclusion**

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**ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA  
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***Title* Proceedings of the First International Conference of the Journal "Scuola Democratica" - Education and Post-Democracy VOLUME I Politics, Citizenship, Diversity and Inclusion**

This volume contains papers presented in the First International Conference of the Journal "Scuola Democratica" which took place at the University of Cagliari on 5-8 June 2019. The aim of the Conference was to bring together researchers, decision makers and educators from all around the world to investigate the concepts of "education" in a "post-democracy" era, the latter being a set of conditions under which scholars are called to face and counteract new forms of authoritarian democracy.

Populisms, racisms, discriminations and nationalisms have burst and spread on the international scene, translated and mobilized by sovereigntist political movements. Nourished by neo-liberalism and inflated by technocratic systems of governance these regressive forms of post-democracy are shaping historical challenges to the realms of education and culture: it is on this ground, and not only on the political and economic spheres, that decisive issues are at stake. These challenges are both tangible and intangible, and call into question the modern ideas of justice, equality and democracy, throughout four key dimensions of the educational function, all of which intersected by antinomies and uncertainties: ethical-political socialization, differences, inclusion, innovation.

The Conference has been an opportunity to present and discuss empirical and theoretical works from a variety of disciplines and fields covering education and thus promoting a trans- and inter-disciplinary discussion on urgent topics; to foster debates among experts and professionals; to diffuse research findings all over international scientific networks and practitioners' mainstreams; to launch further strategies and networking alliances on local, national and international scale; to provide a new space for

debate and evidences to educational policies. In this framework, more than 600 participants, including academics, educators, university students, had the opportunity to engage in a productive and fruitful dialogue based on researches, analyses and critics, most of which have been published in this volume in their full version.

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## Premise

In the European space of liberal democracies, the post-economic crisis era has seen the appearance of populist movements, sometimes anti-democratic (to the extent that they deny citizenship rights, ethical-cultural differences, individual life choices), sometimes anti-scientific and anti-modernist. Those phenomena may erode democratic values and make the pluralistic context slip into the risky and ambiguous territories of post-democracy.

The democratization of basic and higher education stands as a solid defence against populist tendencies. Ethical-political socialization, acquisition and development of civic, social, citizenship and character skills may be a precious resource to hold democratic life on together. Democratic life, political participation and active citizenship needs to be rearticulated, reshaped and reinforced as fundamental educational pivots in our overchanging societies.

Throughout the world, there have been continuous attempts to reform education at all levels. With different causes that are deeply rooted in history, society, and culture, inequalities are difficult to eradicate. Nonetheless, although difficult, education is vital to society's movement forward. It should promote citizenship, identity, equality of opportunity and social inclusion, social cohesion as well as economic growth and employment. Unequal educational outcomes are attributed to several variables, including family of origin, gender, and social class. Achievement, earnings, health status, and political participation also contribute to educational inequality within Western countries as well as or deeper within other world countries. Diversity applies to a number of aspects of student identity, including race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, age, and political and religious beliefs. Even if there are no official educational policies aiming at reproducing inequalities, teaching and learning practices are still unable to protect diversity and be effectively inclusive of student identities. This would imply giving thought to the attitudes, beliefs and expectations of students as individuals, and considering how these influences their approaches to learning and their interactions with teachers and with peers in the design of curricula, in the translation of curricula into day-to-day teaching and learning, and in the assessment of learning. Therefore, inequalities in educational opportunity, in educational access, in educational attainments are still the main dilemma nowadays. Several and differentiated tracks of research and conversation are packed into this stream in order to face the multidimensional dynamics of inclusion, integration, equal opportunities a diversity valorisation in both the educational spaces and knowledge society at large.

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## ***Bildung* and Democracy in Contemporary World**

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**Keywords:** *Bildung, Democracy, Postmodernism, Education, Citizenship, Politics.*

### **Introduction**

The relationship between democracy and education is one of the central themes of 20th-century pedagogy and philosophy of education. We can cite John Dewey's 1916 work, which is indeed entitled *Democracy and Education*, as the key text behind these considerations (Dewey, 1916). This work clearly delineates the reciprocal relationship that must take place between these two categories, underscoring that a democracy cannot function without educational processes directed at everyone: these must allow for an efficient circulation of culture and promote the acquisition of critical and creative thinking in individuals. At the same time, however, Dewey emphasizes that this education runs the risk of being ineffectual if it is not organized along democratic lines, if the educational institutions (the school, above all) do not foreground their 'community' component, if teaching is understood simply in terms of transmitting knowledge: what is instead needed is a conception of a school able to interest students by putting itself in touch with their social life and making the latter readily comprehensible to them.

The title of the present essay makes specific reference to another work by Dewey, written in 1937 and again focusing on the theme of the relationship between democracy and education. Twenty-two years after the publication of what is probably his best-known work, the American philosopher returned to the topic. On the occasion of a conference in honor of Felix Adler, Dewey presented a paper entitled *Democracy and Education in the World of Today*. Dewey felt the need to re-examine these questions in light of what was happening in the world in those years and months, as indicated by the second part of the title. We need only think of what Dewey meant by «the world of today» to understand his worries about the lack of global reception of his ideas: in Italy, for example, 1938 was the year of the racial laws; moreover, Europe was characterized by various totalitarian societies, which were preparing the scenarios that would lead to the Second World War.

If a significant number of European political systems were founded on ideas that were obviously diametrically opposed to Dewey's, the American philosopher pointed out that the risks of anti-democratic tendencies were also to be found in the US. Indeed, he warned against the risk of conceiving of democracy only in terms of a political system. Rather, it should be understood as

a way of life, social and individual. [...] [It is] the necessity for the participation of every mature human being in formation of the values that regulate the living of men together: which is necessary from the standpoint of both the general social welfare and the full development of human beings as individuals (Dewey, 1937: 458)

For all their pride in a long democratic tradition, not even Americans should lose sight of the fact that democracy needs education as much as education needs democracy. As in Dewey's time, one can argue that today too it is urgent

to continue focusing on democracy, to theorize about it, to place it *sub judice*. But above all it is crucial to develop strategies to make it authentic, open and suited to contemporary contexts. To achieve this, we may find it useful to reflect on the link that connects democracy to education: regarding the terminology used by Dewey, it might be helpful to refer to Italian notion of *formazione*, understood as the heir to the concepts of *paideia*, *humanitas* and *Bildung*. To avoid ambiguity with respect to the polysemous 'education' and at the same to facilitate the spread of the idea throughout the world by means of the English language (which lacks an equivalent of the Italian *formazione*), we would do well to make reference to the notion of *Bildung*: this concept was formulated by German Romanticism and then adopted by various authors (both in Germany and the United States) during the 20th century and in recent decades.

## 1. From *paideia* to *Bildung*

In order to comprehend the relationship between democracy and *Bildung* today, it is first necessary to provide a short historical overview of the concept of *formazione*. Indeed, it is not by chance that we refer to *paideia* in precisely the same historical context in which the idea of democracy took hold. In Greek culture between the 6th and 5th centuries BCE, a profound transformation began, characterized by the emergence of new social classes, the rise of a mode of reasoning based on commercial activity, and increased affluence, factors which led to a strong demand for democracy. Athens is the emblematic example of the *polis* as a «collective educational undertaking», in which participation in political decision-making by a broad sector of citizens was established. In this environment, the concept of *paideia* became crucial, understood as the shaping of adult citizens according to ethical principles (Marrou, 1948): this approach to education allowed young males to acquire a 'fully developed' spirit and to realize their entire potential, thus becoming truly 'human'. The Greek concept was bequeathed to Rome under the name *humanitas* and to the Middle Ages in the guise of *paideia Christi*, before evolving into Renaissance Humanism. It was in this last period, which not by chance was characterized by the rediscovery of classical thought, that pedagogy took centre stage in culture, becoming the vehicle for an organic reconstruction of social life. In a constantly changing society, characterized by modern states and tight social control, the family and the school became increasingly relevant educational institutions in the experience of the individual, who was now called upon to take on a 'human' form (Cambi, 1995).

The concept of *Bildung* refers to a new idea of education, understood as a spiritual development that takes place through one's relationship with culture. Between the 18th and 19th centuries, *Bildung* – or 'human education' – promotes the idea of the 'whole' man, one, that is, who is able to harmonize sensitivity and reason: through his constantly active relationship with culture, he is able to independently acquire full liberty and to assume a balanced 'form' (Genari, 2001). The close connection between the sensitive and rational dimensions gives rise to a description of a man's education as one of constant spiritual tension. Schiller, for example, speaks of the need to form a man who has the ability typical of Greek culture to strive for inner harmony through a relationship between sensitivity and reason (Schiller, 1875). For Goethe, *Bildung* not only aims at developing inner harmony in each individual but also endeavors to promote respect for oneself, for nature and for others (Goethe, 1840).



## 2. *Bildung* between disenchantment and postmodernity

According to various historical interpretations, the course of modernity begun during the humanist period culminated in the Enlightenment and then entered crisis during the 20th century. One of the most significant categories for interpreting the changes that occurred at the beginning of the 'short century' is that of disenchantment. In particular, we can cite Max Weber's description of a society marked by *Entzauberung*, or the 'disenchantment of the world'. Early 20th-century man was aware of not having a 'heroic' destiny but of merely forming part of a productive capitalist society, of being in an 'iron cage' from which escape was impossible and in which processes of rationalization brought the individual to formulate his/her actions in relation to predetermined objectives (Weber 1919). This concept of 'disenchantment', closely connected to the processes of secularization and laicization typical of the same historical period, can be related to the phenomenon that in 1979 Jean-François Lyotard defined as the «postmodern condition» (Lyotard, 1979).

Postmodernity refers to the cultural transformations that took place beginning in the mid-20th century as a result of changes in the sphere of knowledge, in particular with regard to modes of transmission and processes of legitimating. This era marked the onset of the crisis of the 'great narratives' (Enlightenment, idealism, Marxism, capitalism, Christianity) which had characterized previous eras: now humans were potentially freer, but at the same time more anxious, fragile, precarious and fluid. Even if the definition of postmodernity is not accepted in all branches of philosophy (above all in analytical philosophy), it is clear that forty years after Lyotard's analysis culture is increasingly characterized by self-legitimizing systems of knowledge, by structural uncertainty in the life of every individual, by increased risk, by fragmentation and by complexity, as in the case of epistemological paradigms. We need only think of the Internet and the difficulties encountered by many people in understanding the reliability of the information found there; or of the job market, which is increasingly characterized by flexibility, not only with regard to contractual conditions, but also to the constant transformation of professional roles.

For precisely these reasons, it becomes an urgent task for contemporary humans to envision a model of personal growth that manages to accompany the processes of acculturation (assimilating the behaviors, beliefs and practices that characterize a culture) and education (acquiring techniques and knowledge, learning specific skills) with one of *Bildung*. This last process is one that promotes personal development as well as a free and critical reworking of the cultural forms in which humans are immersed. *Bildung* without *Bild*, therefore: a troubled process which does not aim to provide predefined forms to which to conform but which is marked by freedom, criticism and creativity and is constantly *in fieri*. Such a process leads the individual to become independent and emancipated but also more responsible vis-à-vis others. In an era marked by fewer and fewer certainties and more and more volatility, it becomes urgent to reflect on more efficacious educational practices to give individuals the tools to navigate the variety of information they encounter, to be able to adapt to different and constantly changing contexts, to reflect on their own experiences, and to learn to live ecologically (Bauman, 1997; Nussbaum, 1999; Morin, 2015). Indeed, this idea of *Bildung* takes us back to Dewey, who at the beginning of the 20th century saw the school as playing a fundamental role in interpreting and governing social progress. He also underscored the importance of a form of education able to fully develop the aptitudes and abilities of each individual. Democratic education today cannot avoid the task of determining the best

strategies for «living in disenchantment», according to the definition coined by Franco Cambi (2006).

### 3. Strategies for 'living' the postmodern condition

In his 2006 work, Franco Cambi invites reflection on some useful strategies for 'edifying' us in the current era. What he has in mind are approaches which in fact act on behalf of *Bildung* and which today have become urgent for cultivating an open understanding of democracy, one that is based on responsibility, solidarity and authentic communication (Cambi, 2006). Among the Keywords under consideration here – in a list which is open, incomplete and always in need of updating – today we can cite 'care', 'metacognition', 'irony', 'laicism', 'difference' and 'ecology'.

The concept of care is defined as a 'pedagogic a priori': when conjugated in its three dimensions (care for oneself, for the other and for the world), it effectively links the personal development of the individual with building democracy and with the goal of promoting global education. Care for oneself is to be understood as an autobiographical undertaking and as such a task that has self-knowledge as a prerequisite.

Regarding care for the other, 20th-century pedagogy produced important reflections around such concepts as attachment, empathy, relation, dialogue, listening and support (Foucault, 1984; Mortari, 2009). Concerning care for the world, one of the most effective ideas comes from Martha Nussbaum, who advocates the cultivation of humanity and sees in the awareness of human 'fragility' a determining element for the construction of a 'genuinely human good', one that should be pursued beyond national borders (Nussbaum, 1999).

Metacognition is understood as a verification of the cognitive process, allowing one to analyze and recognize the structure of its pathways such that the individual is led to review past processes, checking and correcting them. In an era characterized by uncertainty, instability and precariousness, educating individuals to develop a metacognitive sense means cultivating the possibility of orienting themselves, of selecting and filtering information, but also of recognizing the limits and potential of their cognitive processes (Mariani, Sarsini, 2006). This examination of our own ways of thinking is linked to the ideas of Morin, who invites us to 'face uncertainty in order to learn how to live' by transforming information into knowledge and knowledge into wisdom, by forcing ourselves to think good thoughts, by coming up with new strategies, and by 'betting' on ourselves (Morin, 2015).

Next to metacognition, an important role is also played by ironic awareness: irony implies detachment from one's traditional way of thinking and acting and of being open to critical dialogue with opposing points of view. On a cognitive level, irony cultivates a contrasting thought, renders it productive and gives value to it. Although the concept of irony was discussed by Socrates and has appeared throughout the course of western art and philosophy, its development in recent years is the work of Richard Rorty (1989), who linked it to the notion of solidarity, pointing out that without irony and without solidarity it is impossible to build democracy.

The construction of democracy then touches upon other Keywords which pedagogy and the philosophy of education are entrusted with discussing and identifying as values. The concept of laicization, for example, takes on an important role: in a context characterized by the co-existence of various religious visions, it is necessary to avoid 'fundamentalist' deviations which embrace prejudice, and which feel threatened by diversity and difference. Once again with

respect to religion issues, the postmodern era must be 'lived' with the awareness of the need to value pluralism and promote forms of tolerance. As Bobbio (1992) emphasized, we must encourage dialogue by listening to and engaging in debate with the other.

Equally important is the concept of difference. This is a topic that spills over into various fields, which are all indissolubly linked with democracy: from intercultural pedagogy, to special pedagogy, to gender pedagogy, and so on. A contemporary understanding of democracy should be able to view difference not only as a danger or problem but also as a value. To achieve this, it becomes crucial to adopt a deconstructionist perspective, one which takes apart the prejudices and stereotypes that lurk behind common sense, which unmasks implicit and instinctual reactions, and which allows us to think about the other in a responsible way (Mariani, 2008; Felini, Di Bari, 2019).

Another key concept that we require to 'live' the postmodern era is ecology. This is a term that also implies equilibrium, in particular between forms of life. In the biosphere, humans must behave responsibly vis-à-vis other inhabitants of the planet and follow the precepts of 'care for the world', mentioned above, in their actions. At the same time, ecology also implies a balance within culture. As Neil Postman noted in the 1980s, the spread of mass media runs the risk of altering the equilibrium of educational processes (Postman, 1979). Indeed, he advocates a type of *Bildung* which through the school promotes abstract, critical and creative thought able to challenge and govern the instruments of technology. Such a task is even more relevant today, given that this equilibrium is essential for building digital and planetary citizenship among individuals.

## Conclusions

A question can guide us in making several concluding reflections: what is meant by post-democracy? Colin Crouch uses this term to describe the current drift away from democracy, which is based on forms of legitimating that are increasingly accessible on the part of citizens but paradoxically less and less participatory (Crouch, 2004). According to this perspective, post-democracy represents a risk in that it implies, for example, delegating essentially human functions to technology. It further fosters the belief that the Internet is a universally shareable and transparent tool and that opening online participation corresponds to the idea that everyone's voice will be heard. But it isn't so: especially among the young, there is a widespread perception that politics is phenomenon distant from their lives, one in which it is impossible to take an 'interest' (understood in Dewey's sense as something that links aspects that would otherwise remain far apart).

It is necessary to counter current forms of post-democracy by re-proposing elements that still today contribute to thinking of democracy as a value – not only as a political form, but also as a 'way of life'. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to think of this value in terms of its close relationship with *Bildung*. This requires attempting to provide contemporary individuals – who find themselves out of their element, disoriented, disillusioned, etc. – with the appropriate tools that allow them to gain their footing, to become active and responsible protagonists, and to develop awareness and critical thinking, freedom and creativity. This is an urgent task; one whose accomplishment is still an open question.

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## The Missing Element of 'Organic Relation' in Current Definitions of Active citizenship. Evidence from the Field

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### Introduction

The problem of active citizenship has mainly been approached through the perspective of participation. According to the most recent definitions, active citizenship «involves participation in the market [...] participation in other social spheres [...] and politics itself» (Dean, 1999:189); «is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society» (Council of Europe, 2003) and «incorporates a wide spread of participatory activities containing political action, participatory democracy and civil society and community support» (Mascherini et al., 2009:10). In a more recent definition, «citizenship competence [is defined as] the ability to act as responsible citizens and to fully participate in civic and social life, based on understanding of social, economic, legal and political concepts and structures, as well as global developments and sustainability» (European Commission; 2018: 22-23).

This paper takes a different stance and argues that the organic relation between the individual and its environment that has characterized citizenship in previous times is a fundamental precondition for the development of active citizenship in the EU context. In order to support this argument, the paper drew on political philosophy and urban theory to locate the types and forms of organicity that have been deemed fundamental in previous micro-scale political and territorial entities. In order to explore this argument empirically, this study explored how 180 students from three EU countries perceive Europe through a word association activity.

Research results revealed that not only students do not perceive to have an organic relationship with Europe but also that their perception of Europe is characterized by absence and detachment. In the succeeding sections, the paper outlines the theoretical framework that underpins the leading argument, presents the research methodology of the study and, on the basis of the research results, concludes that the limitation of active citizenship to the element of participation hides important risks in the direction of marginalization and undermines the effectiveness of the relevant EU policy.

### 2. The organic character of citizenship

This section details the types and forms of organicity between the individual and its environment, that have been deemed fundamental in the birth, development and flourishing of previous political and urban planning entities, such as *poleis*, cities and towns. Under the concept of organic relation or organicity, in this paper we refer to the concept of Heidegger's (1971) «dwelling as positioning of oneself 'within a system of metabolic exchanges» (Besse, 2013: 130).

The importance of organicity in relationships between the citizen and the polis was first expressed by Aristotle in *Politics*. According to Aristotle, polis has three main characteristics: (1) It has priority over the family, and the individual, similar to the whole, has priority over the parts [πρότερον δὲ τῆ φύσει πόλις ἢ οἰκία καὶ ἕκαστος ἡμῶν ἐστίν. Τὸ γὰρ ὅλον πρότερον ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι τοῦ μέρους] (*Politics*, 1253a: 20-24); (2) it is the space in which justice takes place [ἡ δὲ δικαιοσύνη πολιτικόν· ἡ γὰρ δίκη πολιτικῆς κοινωνίας τάξις ἐστίν, ἡ δὲ δικαιοσύνη τοῦ δικαίου κρίσις] (*Politics*, 1253a: 35-39); and (3) its aim is not only to assure the living (ζῆν) but also the living well (οὔσα δὲ τοῦ εὖ ζῆν) (*Politics*, 1252b: 30-34). For Aristotle, a citizen is not only one who lives in a city in the territorial sense but mostly an individual who actively participates in the administration of justice and the holding of public office (*Politics*, 1.1274b: 32 - 1279b: 10).

This organic relationship, which is *ex ante* political in Aristotle, is reiterated in Aristotle's statement that if the spirit of citizens' participation in the affairs of the polis is the same after they have come together as it was before they left their separate spheres, this community would not be a polis (*Politics*, 1280b).

In the later urban theory, Lynch (1960:63) by associating the «legibility» and «imageability» of urban environment with people's actual function and emotional well-being (*ibid*: 2-3), resumed in fact the organic relation between the citizens and the meaning processes related to the city. Alexander (1979: 101) also underlined the organicity between cities and citizens by emphasizing that a man's «harmony depends entirely on his harmony with his surroundings». In putting forward an ecological argument, Ingold (2000: 20) equally underscored «the importance of the dynamic synergy between the organism and the environment for the creation of mutual meaning making, growth and development».

Furthermore, the past years have seen increasingly frequent references to the code of cities, which encapsulates the previous elements of 'legibility', 'harmony' and 'synergy'. Montgomery (2013: 288), compared to Lynch (1976) was considerably more explicit in unravelling the power of the code, asserting that «the power that shapes [the] city is in the code» (Montgomery, 2013:288) and that this code «is invisible but it is in charge» (*ibid*: 290). Similarly, Anderson (2015:489) defined cities as 'states of mind'. Corroborating this argument on the basis of lived experience of different socio-economic groups, Bourdin (2014: 7) argued that the inhabitants of cities or of the periphery of cities go through experiences that extremely differ according to social situation, age, culture and life history, as well as according to their localization in the city and the localization of the city itself.

### 3. Research

Having set the theoretical basis of the argument, the study proceeds in this section by exploring how vocational education students from three EU countries perceive Europe, through a word association activity.

The sample consists of 180 14–19-year-old vocational education students, comprising 61 students in Italy, 51 students in France and 68 students in Greece. In Greece and Italy there are two schools per country, one in an urban and one in a rural area. In France, there are three schools on the periphery of Paris. Most students come from low socio-demographic environments, with less-educated parents in low-paid jobs, and in many cases one of the parents has recently become unemployed. During the word association activity, students were given the following assignment: *Associate up to six words with the word 'Europe'*.

In Table 1 below, it can be seen that in all three countries a) a significant number of students gave no response, b) followed by an almost equally significant number of students who only used one word to describe Europe, and c) that a poverty of expression manifests as in none of the countries did students use more than four words and the vast majority used zero to one word.

**TABLE. 1.** *Number of words used by students per country to describe Europe*

Countries	Number of words given by number of students							Sum of students per country
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Italy	21	21	10	5	3	-	-	61
France	22	15	9	1	4	-	-	51
Greece	30	24	8	5	1	-	-	68

In relation to students who gave no reply in the word association activity, because, as they declared, they have nothing to say about Europe, we need to mention that gender and type of specialization are not important. Moreover, the type of residential area could not be assessed in France, as the French schools were all in Paris. It is also no significant in Italy, as in the rural area we had 10 out of 37 students with no responses in comparison to 10 out of 24 in the urban area.

It needs to be mentioned, however, that both schools are situated in the north of Italy. In Greece, by contrast, the type of residential area is highly significant. Twenty-four out of 35 students from the urban area did not respond in this activity compared to six out of 33 students in the rural area.

In figures 1–3 below, the responses from the three population groups can be seen. Students' responses were collected, and word clouds were created for each population group with the MAXQDA 2018 software.

Given that the vast majority of students replied with up to three words, we established three as the minimum number of responses per word for inclusion in the word cloud. In the figures are presented the words in the national language as reported per population group and on the side is cited each word's translation in English and its level of frequency in the activity's word corpus per country.

The size of each word in the cloud indicates the frequency of its mention.

**FIGURE. 1.** *Word association with 'Europe'– Italy.*





FIGURE. 2. Word association with 'Europe'– France.



**Rien:** 22 hits  
(No response)

**Group:** 5 hits (Group)

**Bien:** 5 hits (Good)

FIGURE. 3. Word association with 'Europe'– Greece.



**Τίποτα:** 30 hits  
(No response)

**Ένωση:** 5 hits  
(Union)

**Όμορφη:** 5 hits  
(Beautiful)

**Ταξίδια:** 4 hits  
(Travelling)

**Διάλυση:** 4 hits  
(Disintegration)

**Χάλια:** 4 hits (Awful)

**Ψεύτικη:** 3 hits (Fake)

### 3. The missing organic relation

Research results revealed a) an alarmingly high number of students who used zero or an extremely limited number of words to describe Europe, b) that perceptions of Europe among Italian and Greek students are divided between positive and negative characteristics, whereas for French students seem rather neutral and c) that students' responses across the three countries are very similar. In relation to these results, the following observations need to be made.

First, the fact that the large majority of students used zero words to describe Europe, if combined with the almost equal number of students who used only one word for that purpose, is highly alarming. Students' response 'I have nothing to say about Europe' and the use of the word 'union' or 'group' as the most frequent word in all three countries express an absence of perceived relation as the words 'union' and 'group' lack a sense of opinion, judgement or emotional response. This element is important if we also consider Sokolowski's (2017:12–16) position that nouns have a referential function which moves away from a definite context, with the latter becoming even more irrelevant as the speaker is taken away.

Secondly, it can be observed that the first signs of evaluation appear in the second most-frequent word, which is good ('bien') for the French students, oscillating between divided ('divisa') and beautiful ('bella') for the Italian students and becoming more diversified when it comes to Greek students. In the Greek sample, it can be observed that there is a greater variety of words in the established three-word frequency level and also that there are only two positive evaluations such as travelling ('ταξίδια') and beautiful ('όμορφη') and three negative



evaluations such as fake (‘ψεύτικη’), awful (‘χάλια’) and disintegration (‘διάλυση’).

The important element about both remarks is that they provide insights on how students perceive Europe, and this perception is fundamental because perception reveals the ‘relations between the organism and the field’ (Simondon, 2013:3; translation from the French text). As Simondon (2013: 322) puts it, ‘both the organism and the field are active and the equilibrium between the two requires a constant adaptation of the organism to the field in order to avoid the ‘too soon’ or the ‘too late’». When this perception is the perception of non-relation, it can be realized that that the above equilibrium cannot be achieved. Moreover, if we consider that «man dwells in language» (Heidegger, 1971: 195) and that «I cannot dwell in a place I do not like» (Besse, 2013: 31). we realize that students’ responses are very alarming not only in the direction of active citizenship but also in the direction of their flourishing if seen under «the unity of experience» of Heidegger’s thinking building dwelling (Sennett, 2018: 218).

Finally, the fact that the students of the sample, who come from vulnerable socio-economic environments, perceive no real relationship between themselves and Europe recalls recent data affirming that ‘it is the level of income that influences the variations [of active citizenship] across the countries’ (Eurostat, 2017). This recalling apart from being highly alarming brings to the fore Sennett’s (2018: 204) argument that the Heideggerian ‘dwelling’ is not a given but «a skill the potentiality of which lies in most people» and therefore needs certain conditions of development for it to be activated. On the other hand, the substitution of the organic relation by the element of participation in the current definitions of active citizenship hides two further risks. First, it recalls that «many exclusions are made without the knowledge that they are being made» (Butler, 2015: 4) as we fail «to conceptualize the situation correctly» (Harvey, 2009: 22) and to capture the complexity of dimensions composing active citizenship. Secondly, in the policy making level, by ignoring students’ perceived relation with Europe when planning the development of active citizenship agenda means insufficient information about «the relevant planning environment» (Hall, 1980: 5) that undermines the effectiveness of the relevant EU policies as «the forces in a situation are real forces, [and] there is no getting around them» (Alexander, 1979: 34).

#### **4. Limitations and suggestions for further research**

This research presents three important limitations: first, given that this is a qualitative research, the sample is quite limited. This research methodology should be conducted at a larger scale in the same countries and in the same type of population to see if there are variations and if so, at what extent and towards which direction. Second, it would be interesting to extend the research in other countries and for the same type of population in order to further explore the working hypothesis. Third, it would be highly interesting, to reproduce the same methodology in the general education, in order to explore if there are variations within the students of the same country.

#### **Conclusion**

Through a word association activity, this study uncovered that vocational education students in three EU countries experience difficulties in describing Europe in an engaging manner. The research interpreted these results on the

basis of the organic relation between the individual and its environment, unraveled the risks behind the conception of active citizenship mainly in terms of participation and concluded with the contention that it is time to look at forms of disadvantage and social exclusion that derive from our ways to conceptualize active citizenship.

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## «It interferes wrongly, and in the wrong place» (J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*). Human Freedom and the Conundrum of Schooling in Liberalism and Literary Representation

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**Keywords:** *Victorian Age, Liberalism, Educational Reforms, Novel.*

### 1. On Liberty, on education

A milestone of 19th century Liberal thought, John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) did not write any organic, comprehensive work specifically devoted to the topic of education. Yet, as a requirement and outcome of progress and democracy, and in part also as a consequence of his peculiar personal experience as an «educational experiment» of his father James, considerations on education and schooling recur in his writings, be they letters or essays, since his juvenile period (Villa, 2017; Donner, 2007). The work *On Liberty* (1859) perhaps best clarifies the pragmatic status of the pedagogical issue for the philosopher, and we find it expounded in the fifth chapter, meaningfully named Applications (where the first analysed field is – also meaningfully– trade):

It is not almost a self-evident axiom that State should require and compel the education, up to a certain standard, of every human being who is born citizen? Yet who is not afraid to recognize and assert this truth? [...] It still remains unrecognized that to bring a child into existence without a fair prospect of being able, not only to provide food for its body, but instruction and training for its mind is a moral crime, both against the unfortunate offspring and against society (Mill, 1869: 188-189).

There are three parties involved in the matter – the State, families and children – and there are two grounding-maxims, obtained by squeezing the previous four chapters and concentrating «the entire doctrine» of the essay, around which Mill built his reasoning:

First, that the individual is not accountable to society for his actions in so far as these concern the interests of no person but himself [...] Secondly, that for such actions as are prejudicial to the interests of others, the individual is accountable and may be subjected either to social or to legal punishment, if society is of opinion that the one or the other is requisite for its protection (Mill, 1869: 169).

Mill's main points on education and schooling, undoubtedly seen as a democratic, although not public, institution are as follows: 1) The aim of education is to give people the opportunity to cultivate and enhance their individual aptitudes. 2) If the State directs formal education, this would lead to «moulding people to be exactly like one another». That is why the State must limit its efforts to make instruction compulsory, make it affordable to poor children, ascertain that families fulfil their duty to send children to school and that schools fulfil their duty in turn. The State could, potentially, offer its own schools, but they should be nothing more than one choice among others. 3) Schools should be neither denominational nor confessional, allowing their pupils to study everything, even beyond the field of their personal beliefs of what is true. 4) Degrees and public certificates of scientific or professional acquirements «should be given to all who

present themselves for examination, and stand the test'; but in the case of competition, such certificates should confer no advantage over competitors, 'other than the weight which may be attached to their testimony by public opinion».

## 2. Thomas Hardy's last novel

The novelist Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) never hid his estimation of his fellow countryman, staging in his narrative works many patterns and forms of that criticism against society which Mill so carefully theorized. He made a special profession of faith concerning *On Liberty*; in a letter, Hardy wrote that, in the 1860s, he and all the other law students knew the treatise almost by heart (Mill, 1999: 184), and in his last and most controversial novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1895), the female protagonist and (anti)heroine, Sue Bridehead, quotes a passage from Chapter 3 (*Of Individuality*):

She, or he, who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plane of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation (Hardy, 2003: 215).

This quotation occurs during a dialogue between Sue and her husband Phillotson, which is one of the tensest moments in the whole story. Although the story is quite famous, a summary may nevertheless be useful here: Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead are cousins and they are in love. He is a stonemason who yearns to become a scholar, naïve but resilient; she is a well-learned young woman, brilliant, very modern and unquiet as well. Jude had been wedded very young to an illiterate and meddlesome girl (Arabella) who found him spineless and soon abandoned him. Sue marries Phillotson, a conservative schoolteacher whom she does not love. Unable and unwilling to adapt herself to her new life and husband, Sue leaves Phillotson for Jude and the couple starts a family without marrying, although in the meantime they both have divorced. Their unconventional ménage causes a series of problems that suddenly explode into a tragedy, finally leading to Jude's miserable (physical) death and causing Sue to return to Phillotson, definitively giving up her dreams of freedom (spiritual death).

It is easy to comprehend that the core of *Jude the Obscure*, with reference to Mill's treatise, mostly deals with individual freedom and responsibility, the social and legal dynamics behind and around marriage, the social and legal status of women and the guilt and punishment of human beings as social creatures. In Hardy's sad novel a further social and individual field of investigation reminds us of Mill's discourses *On Liberty*, like none of Hardy's prior novels: the pedagogical field. Not only is *Jude the Obscure* decidedly an «anti-Bildungsroman» (Arnd, 1998; Giordano, 1972) focused as it is on the careful, attentive personal cultivation of the two main characters, which yields the opposite of the desired result, Hardy's final novel also questions in a subtle way the effectiveness of the main contemporary institution presiding over formal instruction – that is, schools and universities.

How does Hardy accomplish this? He does so by introducing the reader to three main characters who directly engage with the formal instruction of their time: Jude studies on his own, but he aims to enter an academy; Sue is a candidate schoolmistress; and Phillotson is an experienced and respected schoolmaster. The three characters sincerely love the knowledge that comes from books, although in three different ways. In the life of those people, formal education is present not as an accessory or a decoration, but rather as a steady, permanent structure that hosts their thought and addresses their behaviours. It often remains on the ground, incorporated in the scenery, or worn like an

everyday dress – it is not flamboyant, but already belongs to the habits and nature of its owner. The choice seems much more significant because these somehow formally educated characters are situated roughly between 1870 and 1895, a timeframe in which the Victorian government issued a group of educational reforms consistent, in part, with Mill's desired *Applications* on schooling (Stephens 1998: 77-97). The 1870 Elementary Education Act stated, among other things, that local authorities could establish and direct their own schools, called 'school boards', and should be 'non-denominational', so children could not be forced to attend «any Sunday school, or any place of religious worship, or [...] any religious observance or any instruction in religious subjects in the school» (*Elementary Education Act*, 1870: xxvi).

### 3. That obscure object of education

The beginning of Hardy's novel puts before the reader a schooling situation that is the result of this first Victorian reform:

The schoolmaster was leaving the village, and everybody seemed sorry [...] the schoolhouse had been partly furnished by the managers [...] The rector had gone away for the day, being a man who disliked the sight of changes (Hardy, 2003: 3).

It is an ordinary school situation that triggers the plot's mechanism: a schoolmaster is leaving the school in a small country village. His departure saddens a young needy boy, who had found in his lessons a fascinating distraction from his meagre daily life and a reason to dream of a better future full of books and knowledge. The child is our protagonist, Jude, while the schoolmaster is the antagonist-to-be, Phillotson. We learn that Jude is not a regular pupil and attends the night lessons, so we can assume an elementary education that is not yet compulsory (it became mandatory in 1880), Essential for the economy of the plot, Phillotson's parting words («My scheme, or dream, is to be a university graduate, and then to be ordained [...] Be kind to animal and birds, and read all you can») have young Jude decide that his adult life will be devoted to studies. Growing up, he studies in private for several years, in his spare time, to enter one of the colleges of Christminster (a mordant parody of Oxford), but when he writes to the provosts seeking some advice, frankly explaining his working condition and the experience of being self-taught, the academics reject him, giving him no chance to prove his qualifications. The experience of formal instruction proves to be disappointing and frustrating for Jude, who realizes that higher education is sealed off behind a social and economic barrier that is impermeable to mere cultural value (he later meets some Christminster undergraduates and demonstrates his superior knowledge of Latin better).

Phillotson's background is very different. He is some fifteen years older than Jude and he also, as a young man, wanted to study at the college and become a clergyman, but he soon bowed to the need to make a living (it is also implied that he was diligent but not extremely brilliant) and chose the career of schoolmaster. Phillotson considers schooling a profession and field in which one can invest, so he plans to open a larger comprehensive school for boys and girls with Sue. Considering Sue as both his bride and working partner, he contemplates the model of a small family business, perfectly compliant with the British expectation of the time as the proper lifestyle for the lower middle class. Notwithstanding his moderate entrepreneurial aims, quiet Phillotson is depicted as a good teacher, genuinely interested in teaching and scrupulous in following the school regulations. He has not totally given up his youthful dreams of erudition,

as he goes on studying Roman antiquities, and does not lack philosophical competence. No coincidence that his referential philosopher is Wilhelm von Humboldt, so important for Mill's *On Liberty*: there is verisimilitude in the teacher being stuck one 'cultural generation' behind. Once Sue asks him to release her from a marriage bond she can neither stand nor agree with, quoting the aforementioned Mill's passage, he freely admits that her demand is legitimate from the human point of view, although invalid from the legal one; and he decides to give priority to the human side over his own legal right (following his instinct rather than any 'canned' philosophical theory):

I shall let her go [...] I know I can't logically, or religiously, defend my concession to such a wish of hers; or harmonize it with the doctrines I was brought up in. Only I know one thing: something within me tells me I am doing wrong in refusing her. [...] I wouldn't be cruel to her in the name of the law (Hardy, 2003: 222).

Turning to Sue, her broad culture, when she meets Jude, has almost nothing to do with formal instruction:

You called me a creature of civilization, or something, didn't you? It was very odd you should have done that. I am a sort of negation of it [...] My life has been entirely shaped by what people call a peculiarity in me. I have no fear of men, as such, nor of their books (Hardy, 2003: 141).

Sue acquired knowledge driven by her enormous curiosity and helped by her brilliant mind, and has taken over the scholarship reserved for men in an unusual way: she has lived and studied with an undergraduate young man as though she was his peer. In this sense, Sue is not exactly a product of conventional Victorian civilization. Still, her first approach to schooling is a great success, and she reveals herself to be at ease in the classroom and very good in teaching children, in a pure didactic situation. To become a professional teacher and join Phillotson's project, she needs to achieve certification at a Normal School, a « species of nunnery », writes Hardy, in which dozens of young women, coming from every branch of the lower middle class, lived with scarce food and plenty of religious and even aesthetic rules. Great is the contrast, of course, with Sue's independence and cleverness – the authentic spirit of lively knowledge in opposition to its gloomy prison – and she soon gives up. But Hardy's objection is much wider: it is true that many institutions entrusted with elementary education actually correspond in part to Mill's ideal requirements of a school detached from central power, but the training of teachers, realized through the aforementioned normal schools, is still rooted in religious tradition (mostly Anglican) and tightly bound to a stiff idea of woman-educator – severe, moralizer and moralized. This constitutes a serious inconsistency in the public management of formal education and frustrates Mill's prevision according to which the simple imperative to educate the whole population will induce in the country a spontaneous, natural growth of different schools and a wide offering of different skilled and trained teachers.

## Conclusions

But the strongest of all the arguments against the interference of the public with purely personal conduct, is that when it does interfere, the odds are that it interferes wrongly, and in the wrong place (Mill, 1869: 150).

Jude Fawley, Sue Bridehead and Richard Phillotson, each in his or her own way – be it deep reasoning, natural inclination or both – theoretically comply

with Mill's vision of formal education because they also comply, in advance, with the two maxims from which the British thinker inferred his pedagogical applications. But the 'public power' – not exactly the State, but rather the social milieu acting in its name and applying, together with the law, all those accessory unwritten rules derived from the popular common sense of the majority – pervading educational institutions prevents them from settling in those institutions: Jude does not go to college; Phillotson is forced to quit the school because the managers judge it scandalous that he let Sue leave; and Sue, because she becomes a concubine, can no longer teach. On the level of personal self-realization, their sophisticated understanding of education grants them neither joy nor serenity. Phillotson survives because he is more inclined by nature to compromise and quiescence, but the couple cannot face society's denial when it really hurts them. Their real tragedy is not the painful death of their three innocent children (the oldest boy kills his younger siblings and then hangs himself to relieve the parents from the burden of raising them), but rather the self-forced conversion of Sue to conformism and religion and the consequent ultimate break with Jude.

The only character in the novel who really enjoys the most of personal liberty and achieves a sort of gratification is Arabella, Jude's uneducated wife. Of course, Arabella's gratification is not of the kind appreciating either the polite unfolding of one's own attitudes or the seed of civil progress inherent in a harmonic education. Indeed, as she pursues her advantage without any regard for repercussions on other people's interests, Arabella embodies the opposite of the civil ideal according to Mill's *On Liberty*. The effective outcomes of educational reforms partially inspired by liberalism, in Hardy's depiction, fail just in granting to the mass of lower middle-class people the development and safety of whom, among them, morally and rationally agree with its deepest principles.

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## «Indépendants que possible de toute autorité politique»? The Paradoxes of Condorcet's Report on Public Education

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**Keywords:** *Condorcet, Political education, Public schooling, French Revolution, Citizenship*

### Introductory remarks

This paper aims to reflect on a core text in the history of education as public policy, Condorcet's *Rapport sur l'instruction publique*, focusing on the controversial but crucial relation between politics and schooling. The subject of the paper has been brought to me by the questions posited in the panel theme. While building the panel with the colleague Andrea Giacomantonio, we discussed at length on the concept of *homo politicus*, without any derogatory flair, but meaning with it the whole of the attitudes of a citizen fully and critically aware of the *res publica* in which he lives and inclined to participate to it. We asked ourselves especially if public schooling was the right place to develop such attitudes and habits, and if all this coincided (or not) with the ubiquitous 'citizenship competences' recently promoted by the European Union and more or less received by European school systems.

In the vast array of connected issues, I was primarily concerned with the inevitable conundrum: how can public, state-financed schooling teach citizenship and participatory attitudes without conforming the citizen to the ideology of the political establishment or, in more Marxist terms, to the values of the dominant classes? Moreover, is this educating/conforming action to be avoided altogether, or is it to some extent useful and desirable? This last question looks all the more current, while populisms all over Europe are thriving on the illusion and danger of 'direct democracy', managed through social media and therefore unable to distinguish competence from incompetence both in technical and political terms.

### 1. Condorcet's Report: a key source

For all these reasons, it looked worthwhile to go back to a leading source of inspiration of French and later European public school systems, the project of public schooling written by Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, and presented «*au nom du Comité d'instruction publique*» to the French National Assembly on April 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> in 1792. The *Rapport sur l'instruction publique* details all aspects of a public school system free and open to all the citizens, following the provisions of the French Constitution approved September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1791: «Il sera créé et organisée une instruction publique commune à tous les citoyens, gratuite à l'égard des parties d'enseignement indispensables pour tous les hommes et dont les établissements seront distribués graduellement dans un rapport combiné avec la division du royaume» (Baczko, 2014: 107).

In Condorcet' plan, primary schooling must have been for everybody, while higher education and university should have accepted a smaller number of pupils on the sole basis of merit. However, Condorcet was aware that many sons



of peasants would have been limited in receiving primary education because of their social status and work duties («Elle doit être répartie avec toute l'égalité que permettent les limites nécessaires de la dépense, la distribution des hommes sur le territoire, le temps plus ou moins long que les enfans peuvent y consacrer»; Condorcet, 1792: 5). Scientific knowledge and a rational approach to morals were the cornerstone of education, following the tenets of liberal Enlightenment.

Scientific knowledge and a rational approach to morals were the cornerstones of education, following the tenets of liberal Enlightenment.

The convulsions of the Revolution soon thwarted the development of the project, and its author died in prison in 1794. Nevertheless, his Report, by far the most complete schooling project of the revolutionary era, was cherished and studied by educational reformers all through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and was explicitly credited by Jules Ferry (in a public speech in April 1870) as the inspirer of his well-known school reform, which in 1881-82 posited the groundwork for modern public schooling in France – even if with a moderation of Condorcet's strong egalitarian ideals (Dreux, 2012). Its influence cannot, therefore, be overestimated, and its ideals are generally clear-cut and described with realistic proposals for their application in the context of late 18<sup>th</sup>-century European society.

## 2. The paradox of political independence

The Report presents some interesting critical issues. One of them, of which I aim to focus in this paper, deals with the political character of public schooling: on how and in which terms the citizen can be educated to political values while maintaining a (perhaps utopian) full independence from political power.

Condorcet is adamant on the declaration of principle: educational institutions must be «indépendants que possible de toute autorité politique». At the same time, political education should be at the core of the citizenship-building aims of the school. The first passage concerning this issue lays in the first section of the Report:

La première condition de toute instruction étant de n'enseigner que des vérités, les établissemens que la puissance publique y consacre, doivent être aussi indépendans qu'il est possible de toute autorité politique; comme, néanmoins, cette indépendance ne peut être absolue, il résulte du même principe qu'il faut ne les rendre dépendans que de l'Assemblée des Représentans du Peuple, parce que de tous les pouvoirs, il est le moins corruptible, le plus éloigné d'être entraîné par des intérêts particuliers, le plus soumis à l'influence de l'opinion générale des hommes éclairés, sur-tout parce qu'étant celui de qui émanent essentiellement tous les changemens, il est dès-lors le moins ennemi du progrès des lumières, le moins opposé aux améliorations que ce progrès doit amener (Condorcet, 1792: 3-4)

To the modern reader, of course, the most striking feature is the normative appeal to the «truth» with which Condorcet opens his reflection (and it is noteworthy that he does the same in the concluding remarks of his Report, which we will analyze later). In this context, any reference to metaphysical truth is excluded, and we should read the concept with the meaning of 'what is apparent to the reason'.

It is equally clear that, according to Condorcet, the freedom of opinion in political matters will sooner or later yield to common values supported by the evidence of rational truth. In this ultimately normative approach, education must facilitate the progressive and unavoidable «progrès des lumières» and the

errors and passions of politics are a hindrance to the process. For this reason Condorcet insists on the fact that schooling must be «independent from political authorities», but being aware that education is always value-laden, and this independence is impossible, suggests to submit it to the authority of the Assembly of people's representatives – seen as the most 'democratic' organ of the revolutionary government.

As a whole, the solution proposed by Condorcet looks fascinating. Nevertheless, it is in the motivations of his choice that the complexities of the problem and its conundrums resurface. He advocates the Assembly because it is both «subject to the influence of enlightened men» and «less opposed to the progress of Enlightenment». However, how could the people resent the influence of intellectuals before public education had schooled it for some generations?

Here Condorcet clearly envisages a circular movement in which the state institutions educate the people so that they can decide in the direction desired by the intellectual élite. This is precisely the mechanism of state education as enforcement of bourgeois values as it will be critically analyzed by Karl Marx in the following century (Marx-Engels, 1848: 477-80; Marx, 1875: 30-1). But it is perhaps the only possibility to avoid the extremes of schooling as a mere reproduction of dominance mechanisms, on one side, and of its dependence from the passions of an uneducated crowd, on the other; and Condorcet's suggestion acquires a particular strength today.

### 3. Moral and political sciences, or the power of education

How does this influence of the learned on each citizen act in order to make him an enlightened *homo politicus*? According to Condorcet, «moral and political sciences» must be «an essential part of the education of the common man». The reflection on such disciplines appears in the Report after the section devoted to *Instituts* - which correspond roughly to our high schools -, so that the context of such political education remains ambiguous. In his description, it seems general and aimed at the people:

C'est d'après cette même philosophie que nous avons regardé les sciences morales et politiques comme une partie essentielle de l'instruction commune. [...] Jamais un peuple ne jouira d'une liberté constante, assurée, si l'instruction dans les sciences politiques n'est pas générale, si elle n'y est pas indépendante de toutes les institutions sociales, si l'enthousiasme que vous excitez dans l'ame des citoyens n'est pas dirigé par la raison, s'il peut s'allumer pour ce qui ne seroit pas la vérité, si en attachant l'homme par l'habitude, par l'imagination, par le sentiment à sa constitution, à ses lois, à sa liberté, vous ne lui préparez, par une instruction générale, les moyens de parvenir à une constitution plus parfaite, de se donner de meilleures lois, et d'atteindre à une liberté plus entière. Car il en est de la liberté, de l'égalité, de ces grands objets des méditations politiques, comme de ceux des autres sciences ; il existe dans l'ordre des choses possible un dernier terme dont la nature a voulu que nous pussions approcher sans cesse, mais auquel il nous est refusé de pouvoir atteindre jamais (Condorcet, 1792: 20-22)

Condorcet wants primarily to emphasize that political knowledge is not fixed or dogmatic: the ideals of freedom and equality are like a remote target unattainable by human society, and individuals must be free to look for new means to go towards them, through new political structures and ideologies. Nevertheless, adherence to enlightenment values is given as a necessity, and public education is the only power that can assure this. Thus, one of the aims of public schooling is building conformity to the ideals of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, and such power of education had been declared

explicitly only one year before at the very beginning of Talleyrand's *Rapport sur l'instruction publique*:

[...] l'Instruction Publique, que sans doute on aurait le droit d'appeler un pouvoir, puisqu'elle embrasse un ordre de fonctions distinctes qui doivent agir sans relâche sur le perfectionnement du Corps politique et sur la prospérité générale. (Talleyrand, 1791: 1)

Condorcet was undoubtedly no less aware of Talleyrand of such power, and this is the motivation behind his articulated schooling project. However, he was also worried to protect individual rights in front of the almighty political power experienced in the *ancien régime*. How to conciliate the building of critical attitude and the induction of 'right' human and political values? To this question, Condorcet formulated a highly reasonable but also controversial answer.

#### **4.«Indépendance des opinions»: for everybody or the happy few?**

At the end of the *Report*, the author reflects again on the core issues of political education and independence of educational system. His subtlety of analysis sees how these issues are both crucial and paradoxical, and he feels the need to go back to the problem:

Enfin, l'indépendance de l'instruction fait en quelque sorte une partie des droits de l'espèce humaine. Puisque l'homme a reçu de la nature une perfectibilité dont les bornes inconnues s'étendent, si même elles existent, bien au-delà de ce que nous pouvons concevoir encore, puisque la connaissance de vérité nouvelles est pour lui le seul moyen de développer cette heureuse faculté, source de son bonheur & de sa gloire, quelle puissance pourrait avoir le droit de lui dire : voilà ce qu'il faut que vous sachiez, voilà le terme où vous devez vous arrêter ? Puisque la vérité seule est utile, puisque toute erreur est un mal, de quel droit un pouvoir quel qu'il fût oserait-il déterminer où est la vérité, où se trouve l'erreur ? [...] On se trouverait donc nécessairement placé entre un respect superstitieux pour les lois existantes, ou one atteinte indirecte, qui, portée à ces lois au nom d'un des pouvoirs institués par elle, pourrait affaiblir le respect des citoyens ; il ne reste donc qu'un seul moyen : l'indépendance absolue des opinions, dans tout ce qui s'élève au-dessus de l'instruction élémentaire. C'est alors qu'on verra la soumission volontaire aux lois, et l'enseignement des moyens d'en corriger les vices, d'en rectifier les erreurs, exister ensemble, sans que la liberté des opinions nuise à l'ordre public, sans que le respect pour la loi enchaîne les esprits, arrête le progrès des lumières, et consacre des erreurs (Condorcet, 1792: 51-52).

The argument starts reinstating the necessity not to give limits to human reason and its power of discovery, from which descends the prohibition of any authoritarian limit to the research of 'rational truth'. The concept also applies to 'moral and political science', in which the diverging necessities of free research and cultivation of the 'right' values (respect of laws and Enlightenment principles) must find a synthesis.

Condorcet proposes «the absolute independence of opinions beyond the level of elementary instruction». Once again, this is a clever and reasonable solution, but that undoubtedly puts Condorcet's principles in a conundrum: the absolute freedom of human reason should indeed have a limit in the acceptance of the shared values, from which non-passive respect of laws descends. Also, the line between acceptance of values and freedom of opinion is set at the end of the first cycle of instruction, i.e., between the popular classes and the middle class (in theory secondary instruction is open to all citizens, but Condorcet

knows and declares that especially peasant children will not go beyond it). Paradoxically, we are not too far, on this side, from the enlightened but much less egalitarian Filangieri's proposal, where, about the «moral instructions» for the lower classes, it is said that «here we are not dealing with teaching a science, but with inculcating duties: not with defining, but with prescribing» («qui non si tratta d'insegnare una scienza, ma d'inculcare de' doveri; qui non si tratta di definire, ma di prescrivere», Filangieri, 1789: 87). Certainly, Condorcet would never have used the verb 'inculcate'; nevertheless, he somewhat recognized the necessity of a common ground of values to avoid the regression to tyranny and, therefore, leaves out elementary instruction from the imperative of freedom of opinion. In modern terms, his 'citizenship education' starts from building the consensus on the enlightened values and, only later, cultivate the critical attitude for the population accessing secondary education. Since Condorcet sees the *progrès des lumières* as a continuous evolutionary process, it is highly probable that he envisaged a future in which all the people could enjoy access to critical knowledge and each citizen could be *homo politicus* without pedagogical limitations. The access of this condition remains therefore reserved to the educated and is therefore not a fundamental human right.

We can conclude that, mainly because of their openness, Condorcet's statements can be the starting point of a renewed debate on 'citizenship competences' and the role of public schooling in the development of political awareness. The paradoxes embedded in the designation of a political body for the control of schooling to protect its own independence from politics – including the motivation of such choice as far as this political body thinks what it is 'right' to think according to the intellectual élite – powerfully question public education itself and design with unsurpassed clearness its 'original sin' and its potentialities. The core challenge remains the one pinpointed by Jean Jaurès in commenting Condorcet's Report: «le vrai problème reste donc celui-ci: organiser la liberté à l'intérieur même de l'enseignement national» (Jaurès, 1901: 1143).

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## Political Skills and Political Incompetence. Pierre Bourdieu and the Link between Education and Politics

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**Keywords:** *Symbolic violence, Social inequalities, Representative democracy, Political parties, Depoliticization*

### Introduction

The following pages are devoted to some significant and open questions concerning our chances of living together democratically and the very essence of democracy itself. To what extent are we *naturally* able to politically think and express ourselves? Is the human being a *zoon politikon* possessing an innate propensity waiting to be awakened and enhanced? Is it really possible to transmit 'civic art' or *politike techne* to others?

I shall try to answer by dialoguing with one of the most famous and important sociologists of contemporary times, Pierre Bourdieu, author of numerous works translated in many languages and studied with growing interest by groups of scholars in Europe as well as in the English-speaking world and South America.

In valuing the fundamental notion of «symbolic violence», I will initially briefly refer to the essential aspects of the Bourdieusian theory of education, intended as a powerful instrument of reproducing social inequalities. Subsequently, I will direct my attention to the Bourdieusian theory of politics, focusing both on the implications of the concept of 'habitus' and on the meaning of the comments against representative democracy made by Bourdieu himself. Lastly, I will try to combine the two aspects or, in other words, to investigate the link between education and politics.

### 1. Symbolic violence, education, political (in-)competence.

As a critical sociologist who considered sociology a tool to counter dominion in its many aspects, Bourdieu developed the fruitful idea of 'symbolic violence'. As he himself wrote,

symbolic violence is the coercion which is set up only through the consent that the dominated cannot fail to give to the dominator [...] when their understanding of the situation and relation can only use instruments of knowledge that they have in common with the dominator, which [...] make this relation appear as natural; or, in other words, when the schemes they implement in order to perceive and evaluate themselves or to perceive and evaluate the dominators [...] are the product of the incorporation of the (thus naturalized) classifications of which their social being is the product» (Bourdieu, 1997: 170).

It is easy to understand that schools and other places responsible for transmitting knowledge, normally exercise this kind of violence precisely because they impose arbitrary contents to the point that «pedagogical action» can be considered equivalent to «symbolic violence» (Bourdieu, Passeron, 1970).

Moreover, according to Bourdieu, all educational institutions play a decisive role in reproducing social inequalities typical of capitalist societies, as they enable the privileged to maintain their advantages. In fact, the dominant classes

have the power both to ensure that their culture is defined as ‘the’ culture (or, put another way, as the only legitimate one) and to make certain that schools and colleges evaluate children and young people in terms of the culture possessed by most of the dominant class students but only rarely (or almost never) by the working class students.

Therefore, in practical terms, one could speak of a giant deceit perpetrated against most of the people and especially against the poorest, who are placed at an educational disadvantage because they are assessed in terms of a dominant culture which they literally cannot learn. This is something Bourdieu has no doubt about:

by doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the educational system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture» (Bourdieu, 1977: 494).

Which is to say that schools and colleges do not teach what is really important to know, namely the dominant class culture that can be learned only in dominant class families, and what’s more, that the principle whereby capitalist education systems tend to be fair and meritocratic is merely a convenient myth disguising the reality of the reproduction of capitalist class structures.

Numerous critics have written about the abovementioned Bourdieusian indictment of ‘pedagogical action’ as well as the related notion of ‘cultural capital’ intended as the stock of knowledge and skills transmitted from parents to children in addition to wealth («economic capital») and useful social connections («social capital»). Nevertheless, Bourdieu’s work on the link between education and reproduction maintains its relevance intact as it still has the capacity to expose the contradiction behind the mask of democratic and meritocratic goals and reforms.

## 2. Political (in)competence and habitus

Bourdieu has left us also some extremely interesting pages in which he speaks of themes concerning citizenship and what he himself called the «political field». These are writings that must be read as opposed to the well-known theory of «ideological apparatus» of the State formulated by the philosopher Louis Althusser. Whereas the latter believes that political submission is the result of the indoctrination accomplished by specific structures, Bourdieu is convinced that citizens are subjugated primarily due to an unconscious psychosocial ‘mechanism’ which prevents them (or at least the majority of them) from acting consciously in the social world’ and which is related to the existence of the «habitus».

A key concept in Bourdieusian social theory, habitus is the acquired system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, by integrating past experiences and functioning as a matrix of perception and actions, allows social actors to adjust their subjectivity and the external objective influences (by family, education system, peer groups, environment). Furthermore, said concept makes it possible for social researchers to understand the subconscious reasons that drive men and women in making their own choices or, in particular, their political decisions. Therefore, habitus itself represents an objective confutation of the ideal of representative democracy and especially of the fundamental principle ‘one man one vote’, as it leads us to suppose that votes are for the most part

actually made by people who do not know what they are doing or, at least, do not know the reason why they are doing it.

This can make it clear why Bourdieusian views are rather pessimistic. In fact, on the one hand Bourdieu thinks that both political competence and citizenship competence are far from being innate skills in men and women or universal aptitudes that one can take for granted. On the other hand, he accuses the so-called 'democratic' societies of pretending to enhance human nature and of being, on the contrary, mendacious and unequal systems perpetuating the domination of the weak by the strong (Bourdieu, 1997).

### **3. The critique of political democracy and the crisis of the mass parties**

In order to better understand Bourdieu's point of view, it may be helpful to briefly distinguish among three different types of representative democracy critique.

Firstly, it has to be noted that reactionary thinkers and conservative liberals criticize representative democracy because it favours equality and, by reducing the social distance between the classes, produces what the reactionary body interpret as a catastrophic levelling down of individuals, families and groups.

Secondly, it should be kept in mind that many Marxists and left-wing radicals criticize representative and 'formal' democracy because, in their opinion, it is associated with a precisely formal and non-substantial idea of equality.

Finally, there is a third kind of criticism which must not be confused with conservatism or radicalism. In this case, representative democracy is accused of validating unrealistic and anti-social concepts of both human beings and co-existence. And it is precisely this approach, which is adopted by Emile Durkheim, the great classical sociologist who deeply influenced Bourdieu in many respects, both in a general sense and concerning the particular subject dealt with in this essay (Susca, 2011).

Durkheim (1990: 138) rejected the formal and liberal democracy of his times because he thought that it was founded on a concept of human beings seen as atomistic and self-sufficient individuals. Therefore as he influenced the Bourdieusian theory of democracy and citizenship competence (Bourdieu, 2000, 2005), one can talk about a kind of genealogy connecting these two social theorists as they reflected on the fundamental categories of politics underscoring the atomistic idea of voters/citizens expressed by the liberal model (Durkheim) and the depoliticization that is caused by the neoliberal model (Bourdieu).

However, talking about a conceptual link must not lead us to forget the obvious differences between the two. On the one hand, Durkheim aspired to go beyond democracy by enforcing the various intermediate groups and introducing corporations. By contrast, Bourdieu asked himself what needed to be done in order to improve the quality of contemporary democracy. And that was precisely the basis on which he looked at the crisis of mass political parties, that had started at the end of the 1900s and is now more acute than ever in several European countries.

According to Bourdieu, as ordinary people are politically incompetent and then forced to suffer 'alienation' from a political point of view, they can be alienated in two different ways: by the dominants, who want to preserve their supremacy and exploit the dominated (both in a material and a symbolic sense) or, alternatively, by large political parties or labour organizations (trade-unions) that recruit them and teach them what to do and what to think. Nevertheless, as Bourdieu considered the second way much better than the first one, he came



to a somewhat contemporary conclusion and observed that, far from being an achievement, the current crisis of mass political parties is principally an additional problem for low-level workers and poor people.

#### 4. Fighting against depoliticization

To sum up Bourdieu's idea, one could say that Bourdieu thought Rousseau was wrong. In his opinion, human nature does not constitute a valid support for political sphere, that the general will far from being the mere result of elections, is something which has to be constructed. In other words, it is the possible result of an advancement in the level of rationality. Furthermore, according to Bourdieu, the liberal idea of democracy is unrealistic and hypocritically optimistic because, ignoring or perhaps assuming that people are different with diverse abilities, it thus refers to an empty ideal of majority as it actually abandons citizens.

However, it is to be noted that, within this framework, where the majority is composed of individuals who are politically and even technically speaking incompetent, political socialization is essential. But which role should or could schools and universities play? To what extent is it possible that they develop a process of socialization which moulds the competent citizens of tomorrow?

As a matter of fact, Bourdieu doesn't seem to give his definitive answers. He rather offers a few interesting but partly contradicting suggestions about the possibility that most rational schoolwork and teaching methods reduce disadvantages for students from families of modest means. Furthermore, he suggests the need for new forms of political and labour representation in order to help ordinary people express themselves and demand their rights, or for the need to keep the 'cultural fields' sheltered from the economic laws of profit. Finally, he suggests there is a risk that public education works as an instrument for the state's symbolic violence. Moreover, once again he comes across as being rather pessimistic or at least sceptical about the possibilities of change. In fact, he thought that it would be necessary that a comprehensive political action be carried out by 'enlightened' political classes in order to increase the general level of political involvement, and not simply secondary aspects such as electoral turnout. However he was aware that, unfortunately, this was unlikely to happen, considering that, to put it in Bourdieusian terms, political competence could be conceived also as an unfairly distributed «political capital» (Swartz, 2013) and those who profit from the current distribution have no interest or wish to change things by fighting against depoliticization and improving the quality of our democracies.

All things considered, then, one might say that Bourdieu did not have high hopes about the ruling classes or education systems. On the contrary, mostly in his later years, he was convinced that political action aimed at improving the citizens' political competence could only be undertaken by intellectuals. This is because, as opposed to the politicians who usually want to prevail over competitors, intellectuals tend to believe in universal values (such as truth, human dignity, equality) and fight for common causes (Susca, 2011).

Of course, one could argue that 'intellectuals' are not infrequently professors and teachers employed in schools and colleges and that, in any case, classrooms and university halls are probably the best places to teach students to think in a rational manner also on political issues and to push forward with socialization both from a general point of view and from a political perspective. But for Bourdieu, for whom education rightly meant above all to honestly and fairly transmit cultural contents, the political and cultural fight had to be conducted at a more general societal level rather than within the educational system.



From this perspective, one can better understand the meaning of the battle against neoliberal policies and for the welfare state that Bourdieu fought in his final years, when he distinguished the 'right hand' of the state (substantially army, police and repression) from the 'left hand' (devoted to education, care and health) and, most importantly, incited the employees of that left hand to vigorously oppose cuts in public expenditure (Bourdieu, 1998, 2001, Laval, 2018).

## Conclusions

Bourdieu wrote enlightening pages both on the role played by education in reproducing inequalities and on the political exclusion or 'expropriation' of the majority and of the disadvantaged ones. However, one has to recognize that he tended to investigate those two issues separately, mostly in different writings and occasions, and that, generally speaking, he was not inclined to conceive education as a means of bridging the gap between the politically competent and the incompetent. Moreover, his views naturally don't completely answer the significant question of citizenship competence or even bring us closer to a definitive answer to the questions I raised at the beginning about the possibilities of transmitting 'civic art'.

Nevertheless, I'm convinced that Bourdieusian thought on the democratic involvement proves to be interesting for at least two reasons. In the first place because, although it doesn't provide immediate solutions, it goes deeper into the issue by reconsidering what we usually take for granted. I am referring specifically to the reflections previously mentioned above and derived from Durkheim's lesson, which underline the distinction between democratization and democratic representation pointing straight at the heart of the liberal doctrine, i.e. to the idea of an absolutely rational and self-sufficient human subject.

The second reason for interest, in my view at least, lies in the plea to counter neoliberal economic policies addressed to employees in education and health, who face the effects of poverty on a daily basis and are fully aware that citizenship is an ideal to laboriously achieve, not an established starting point. Bourdieu was not wrong in believing that the battle fought by the left hand was not a corporative reaction but an expression of commitment in favour of universal values and, hopefully, as a way of coming out of the current democratic crisis.

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## Italian Schools and Sustainable Development. A Network Approach: the Italian Case Study

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### Introduction

Over the years, the attention to Sustainable Development has become increasingly important. This is shown by the growing number of events and initiatives organized on a national level, the multiplication of university courses and educational insights in schools, the increase in the number of debates and political interventions on the subject. But this is not just a matter of numbers, but also of increasing sensitivity and awareness. It is, after all, there for all to see the need to undertake a transformation process capable of combining economic growth, rights and social integration and protection of the natural environment. Great goals such as those required by this new paradigm of Sustainable Development cannot be considered achieved if cultural, social and ethical resources are not activated, and the creation of networks between the actors is not promoted.

The aim of this paper is, first, to describe the role of educational institutions for Sustainable Development. The school must put forward the change that is taking place, as well as, be an incubator of innovative teaching methods in which sustainability is the keystone in which all aspects of school life are addressed. The school, along this path, which is virtuous but absolutely tortuous, is the main driving force behind the pursuit of the training objectives identified as priorities by the various national and international entities, such as equality, inclusiveness, the culture of the exchange of ideas and knowledge between public and private realities.

For this reason, this paper aims to define the basics of a theoretical framework useful to understand the importance of the network approach to achieve a sustainable growth. Given the objective of this work, in the final part of the chapter, in fact, it is highlighted how the need to meet common objectives (among the schools) of concretization of the outgoing students, staff training and improvement of the quality of services provided in the perspective of sustainability, has led to the creation of a network of schools, ReSS - Network of Schools for Sustainable Development - as one of the first experiences of coordination and sharing between Italian schools, of different order and degree, committed to the issues of social responsibility and environmental sustainability.

### 1. Collaborating for education for sustainable development

The role of propeller attributed to school education is promoted by the indications contained in the objectives of 2030 Agenda. Indeed, with the Goal 4 'Quality Education', the Agenda identifies the school as a carrier to spread sustainability in every field of society. School has also to support the sustainability

from an educational, scientific, technological, cultural and educational point of view. Therefore, it's evident that the school is not an institution that welcomes the principles that derive from the observance of the provisions contained in Goal 4 but is recognized as the body that allows the promotion of the entire system which revolves around Sustainable Development. This to represent an effective lever for promotion for the adoption of the entire 2030 Agenda. This is acceptable, since knowledge is a transversal element for change: the spread of the principles and of sustainable development in the culture of the new generations, the acquisition of knowledge and skills for a sustainable lifestyle, appear indispensable elements for the dissemination of virtuous models of responsible production and consumption and for the creation of a conscious and active citizenship.

**FIGURE 1.** *SDG 4: correlation between goals and network of target*



source: elaboration by authors

Reference to the 2030 Agenda and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, one of the specificities that emerges is the clear correlation between the 17 goals (Fig. 1). And it's this correlation that must also be encouraged among the bodies and organizations of the various sectors involved in the 2030 Agenda, as it is not guaranteed that any result will be achieved unless work is stopped in compartments within the system of Sustainable Development.

If the institutions would work together, more results would be obtained. The success of the Agenda will be possible only through a joint action of the various actors in the community. In fact, the ability to organize and manage education based on principles of sustainable development implies the existence of strong and cooperative institutions able to initiate inclusive, representative and reacting decision-making processes, involving various reference stakeholders through the creation of network, the creation of networks, and the interaction between different educational institutions. In this way, schools collaborate for sustainable development, sharing resources, tools and, above all, know-how. The virtuous circles triggered by the collaborative approach stimulate, indeed, the crossed fertilisation of innovative and sustainable ideas and projects, able to overcome

the limitations of the «mental models» (mix of knowledge, experiences and skills) of the single subjects. (Fiorani, Di Gerio, 2017).

Actively participating in sustainable networks, creating solid partnerships, in a scenario that sees sustainability as a fundamental factor for development, inevitably generates advantages, since it guarantees the sharing of knowledge and skills, resources and knowledge that an organization can have internally, often not sufficient, on their own, to face a rapidly changing reality. Being part of a sustainable network certainly means giving (sharing a part of your know-how) but also receiving (being able to have a greater number of ideas, suggestions, information).

Still, a further advantage lies in being stimulated to change, thanks to the fact that participation in a network makes it possible to face the difficulties that a change brings with it: one learns to consider it as a positive push, as an opportunity for growth and comparison with other realities. We must not forget that organizations are made up of people who sometimes struggle to change their beliefs and behaviours.

Third advantage concerns the possibility of feeling part of a community. It's like be part of a group that, sharing the same reality, reduces the risk of suffering the adverse effects of adverse situations and allows to seek solutions to the problems that are found in organizations operating in the same compartment. So the logic of network creation and the care of relationships are found to be basic aspects for the development of sustainable approaches and methods. For this reason, the patrimony of collaborations established between schools allows to optimize the realization of new project ideas, to share good practices and to implement interventions and activities in a synergistic way, directing the compass needle towards the pursuit of sustainable development in the field environmental, social, economic and institutional for the entity itself and for the community and the reference territory. In this perspective, in the following paragraph, it will be possible to analyse what is developing in the Italian school context through the establishment of the Network of Schools for Sustainable Development (ReSS) through which the commitment that the participating schools are implementing for the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## **2. The Italian schools, sustainable development and the network approach: the network of schools for sustainable development**

The marked interest in a collaborative approach between educational institutions has found a positive foundation in the Regulation containing rules on the autonomy of educational institutions, introduced with the D.P.R. 275/99 (implementation of art. 21, of the law 15 March 1999, n. 59), which, introducing the so-called 'School networks', provided the appropriate tools to actively involve the various schools, helping to promote growth and maturity of responsibilities connected with autonomy, creating projects with significant impact on the innovation of the current education system. Subsequently, the Italian government, with the Law of 13 July 2015, n. 107, has finally provided the conditions and bases for reforming the national education and training system. The reform, which has precisely the purpose of affirming the central role of the school in the knowledge society and raising the levels of education and the students and students' competences and preventing and recovering abandonment and dispersion, has provided for in paragraph 70 of the art. 1, the establishment of networks of scholastic institutions of the same territorial finalized scope for the upgrading of professional resources, the joint management of administrative and administrative tasks, as well as the creation of projects or educational,

educational, sports or cultural initiatives of territorial interest, to be defined on the basis of scholastic autonomy agreements of the same territorial area, defined as «network agreements». Subsequently, the MIUR, in the ministerial note of 7 June 2016, defined in detail the operating methods for the constitution of networks between schools, as well as suggested an organization of the networks at two levels, or two types of network: *i)* the area network, which regularly brings together all the state schools in the territorial area identified by the Regional School Office; private schools participate in the area network, in relation to the actions and activities that involve finality and fiction; *ii)* the networks of purpose, which spontaneously constitute themselves between the schools, even beyond the sphere of belonging, for the pursuit of specific goals that are reflected in the priorities identified for the territory of the area or in more specific local and national needs.

In this context, the *Network of Schools for Sustainable Development* is inserted, a network created during the *Summer Camp 2018 - Inspire Sustainable Innovation in the School Stakeholder Engagement and Participatory Design for the Creation of Shared School-Territory Value*. This was organized by the University of Rome Tor Vergata and formally established on October 2018, represents, as already mentioned, one of the first network experiences among all schools engaged in environmental sustainability and social responsibility issues. Currently, the network is made up of 17 founding members and 52 ordinary members. The choice to build this network was an important change of pace that today allows us to create systemic paths, positive relationships, and exchanges of good practices. It also shows that, despite common opinions, educational institutions are open to change and accept the challenge of guiding and guiding them, thanks to the transmission of knowledge, skills and knowledge they carry out every day during their training activities.

The need that led to the establishment of a network of schools engaged in following a sustainable path lies mainly in three reasons, related to the advantages mentioned in the previous paragraph. *i)* share experiences and best practices, already used by individual institutes: on the theme of sustainability, the Summer Camp event highlighted how a good number of participating schools already had in their activity a wealth of sustainability-oriented experiences that, through the creation of a network, could have been easily transferable, in terms of knowledge and skills, to all other participating schools. Communicating best practices also allows the nascent Network to act as a stimulus for other schools, not particularly virtuous in terms of sustainable development, to take concrete actions on sustainability issues; *ii)* satisfy the common interest in the design of methodological and didactic paths aimed at the realization of the outgoing profile of the students and students, the training of their staff for the development of professional skills and the improvement of the quality of the services provided, with a view to sustainability; *iii)* the creation of a community, necessary to manage activities that, each institute, would struggle to govern on its own.

The Network, an expression of collaboration between schools of different order and degree present on the Italian territory, represents a network of purpose, since it is spontaneously established between institutions beyond the sphere of belonging. Among the aspects that have favoured the birth, it includes the possibility of contributing to the adoption, among other things, of more effective initiatives to combat the phenomena of social and cultural exclusion such as the dispersion and school dropout, and the search for the best strategies for the scholastic insertion of disabilities, for the improvement of the quality of learning, for the educational success and to ensure a greater homogeneity of the quality of the training offer on a national scale, as well as to define an effective training

of internal staff, perfectly in line with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. In general, in fact, the institutional rationales that the Network sets itself are those of:

- a. transforming the network of the institutional collaboration as generative of new systemic, coordinated and essential arrangements. From this point of view, the education and training system enters into collaboration, contaminating itself with sustainable issues of relevance;
- b. promote ideas, experiences and projects that have already been successfully implemented by one of the members who, by communicating the results obtained and the way they operate, makes it possible to spread and transmit knowledge and useful skills so that others can also develop their own initiatives;
- c. train not only students about sustainable development issues, but also technical-administrative staff and teachers who are the first spokesmen for disseminating knowledge;
- d. develop innovative methodologies, transdisciplinary approaches and participatory methods to actively involve students;
- e. develop awareness-raising campaigns on a local, regional and national scale that involve all stakeholders that revolve around the educational institution:
- f. collaborate with the University of Rome 'Tor Vergata' which acts as a support for network coordination, project supervision;
- g. to foster collaboration, through agreements and conventions, with actors from the public, private and non-profit world who intend to give their support in achieving specific objectives.

The attention to the constitution of the Network allows to bring out how in schools committed to sustainable development a cultural change is beginning to take place. The result of a commitment that involves the entire school community. The key role is undoubtedly played by the school managers and the teachers who are the first convey knowledge; nevertheless, the commitment of the students, called to adopt sustainable behaviours and lifestyles, as «sustainability multipliers» (Calvano, 2017) inside and outside the school premises becomes strategic. It's in fact the very value that the school recognizes for the students that leads them to rethink the way of teaching, focusing on an active participation with the learners and among the institutes present on the local and national territory in order to activate educational and training courses capable of generating not just knowledge, but to construct and incorporate the ways of thinking that make sustainable development understand the guiding principle of social development, questioning its fundamental values and relating them to other social orientations.

### **3. Limitations and future directions**

In this paper, the analysis of a case study in an embryonic stage does not allow us to adequately conceive the potential of the network. In this sense, in order to understand more deeply the ReSS's ability to trigger virtuous inter-scholastic mechanisms in favour of sustainable development, an empirical analysis must be added to a purely descriptive study. A survey among the participating schools would allow, in fact, to bring out possible changes in the way of working to respond to global challenges.

## Conclusions

The path that schools need to take is long and very complex. It's a road in which the current educational systems must be rethought and where must be placing the goals of the 2030 Agenda at the centre, in order to create a full synergy between the knowledge system and sustainable development. Thinking today of a new educational paradigm, open to the integration of social responsibility and environmental sustainability logics and capable of responding to the changes brought by modernity, globalization and innovations, also integrating the objectives of the 2030 Agenda, represents a way for the same educational institutions can ask themselves about 'doing school'. This to improve and transform existing educational programs and paths. It's a fascinating challenge, ambitious but extremely complex, to which schools have to respond by opening their eyes to the world. With a strongly collaborative spirit, widening the boundaries and sharing the initiated initiatives, relaunching them vigorously and extending them throughout the national territory, in to allow more human, healthier, more sustainable growth. Therefore, the newly established ReSS presents enormous potential in bringing schools closer to sustainability and its principles, focusing on the diffusion of culture and good practices on sustainable development to all stakeholders, putting initiatives and skills together to increase the positive impacts in environmental, ethical and social terms of the actions put in place individually by the schools and at the same time strengthening the recognisability and value of the Italian experience at national and international level.

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## Global Citizenship and Education for Sustainable Development as a Stumbling Block in Italian Teacher Training

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### Introduction

The implementation of the Agenda 2030 is becoming increasingly urgent for society and the planet. Schools are being urged by society to participate actively as demonstrated by the rising wave of young protesters all over the world. Global citizenship and sustainable development education are among the political answers that many countries endorse to meet this need. The Italian protocol of understanding between ASviS (Alliance for Sustainable Development) and the Ministry of Education in 2016 foresaw teacher training in Sustainable Development Education, considering it to be a cornerstone for achieving the Agenda global goals. This paper synthesizes milestones as well as lost opportunities along this path.

The recent approval of Italian Law no.92 August 20, 2019, on civic education re-introduces a school subject that the Italian school has already repeatedly found on its path (Cavalli, 2019). A stumbling block that, since 1955, has been named in different ways: Moral and civil education, Civic education, Education for democratic coexistence, Education for civil cohabitation, Citizenship and Constitution, Education for active and global citizenship (ADI, 2019). Originally this teaching was combined with physical activity (DPR 503/1955), then it was considered as an addition to history (DPR 585/1958) (Chiosso, 1992); then it was included in history, geography, social studies and knowledge of social life (DPR 104/1985); also it was accounted for within all the subjects of the curriculum (Ministry decree 58/1996; Law 53/2003, Ministry Decree 59/2004); the topic has also been the subject of national experimentation (Law 137/2008, L. 169/2008); it was combined with the study of the constitution of Italy and Europe (DPR 89/2010 and Ministry Decree 211/2010, Law 107/2015). It was, eventually, seen as transversal and vertical teaching (Law 92/2019) as a transversal topic, thus reflecting the trend of major European school systems (Eurydice, 2017).

The elasticity of the terms used to address this subject and the various combinations with disciplinary matters bring both confusions as well as the risks of not exploiting what has already been done and/or not considering the theme with the new framework introduced by the Agenda 2030.

To overcome these limitations, it is useful to adopt UNESCO's (2018) definition of Global Citizenship Education (GCED):

any educational effort that aims to support the acquisition of skills, values, attitudes and behaviours that encourage students to take active roles to face and solve global challenges and to become proactive contributors in a more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and safe world. The GCED feeds the following three fundamental dimensions of learning: the cognitive dimension (to acquire knowledge, understanding and critical thinking on global problems and the

interconnection/interdependence of countries and different populations); the socio-emotional dimension (to cultivate a sense of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values and responsibilities, sharing empathy, solidarity and respect for differences and diversity); the behavioural dimension (to act responsibly at local, national and global levels for a more peaceful and sustainable world)

The tortuous path reiterating civic education in school reflects the evolution of the nations' awareness in considering civic collective problems as being central alongside mathematics, mother tongue, and science. Such understanding is sustained by OCSE (2018) cultural position introducing a new assessment in PISA standard tests, related to global citizenship competencies.

The evolution of the approach to civic education can be summarised to five main trends: from the caring approach of sustainable development of the 1970s and 1980s, we must rapidly make transition to the concept of urgent 'education for global citizenship' today, striving to take steps that are still not at all consolidated (Eurydice, 2017):

- Assistance-based charitable approach (first generation)
- Development approach and the emergence of development education (second generation)
- Education for critical and solidarity development (third generation)
- Education for human and sustainable development (fourth generation)
- Education for global citizenship (fifth generation)

The landmark Rio Conference in June 2012 led to the report *The future we want*, defining the basis of the current Agenda 2030 with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SGD) and 169 Targets, accounting for inter-generational justice. Intergenerational justice is a concept introduced in 1987 Brundtland Report: «Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs» (UN, 1987).

## 1. National policy context: teacher training in 2017/2018.

The 2017/2018 school year saw the launch of an agreement between the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research and ASviS (Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development) signed in order to promote the dissemination of the culture of sustainability in view of the implementation of the Agenda 2030 sustainable development goals in Italy. One of the main actions envisaged by this protocol relates to teachers training and its application in Italy represents an effective example of the operationalization of a policy aimed at pursuing Target 4.7:

By 2030, ensure that all students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development through, among other things, education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and valorisation of cultural diversity and the contribution of culture to sustainable development

Scientific research highlights how the pursuit of Target 4.7 - education for sustainable development and global citizenship - has a fundamental role in the design of effectiveness for achieving the Agenda's objectives, because it directly affects the quality of instruction. This is due to the fact that the same contents that refer to the field of education for sustainable development have the potential to transform the teaching-learning as well as the way of reading the

contributions of the individual disciplines; but also from the fact that the active pedagogies used or favoured in this context also contribute to the development of competences of global citizenship (Laurie et al., 2016).

In 2017/18 in Italy, sustainable development was taught through 3-hour classes for all newly qualified teachers, together with 2 hours on-line multimedia content to be autonomously followed. Working teachers were instead offered the possibility to access 20-30 hours Training Units on the topics of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship, within the national in-service teacher training plan.

## **2. Outcomes**

The implementation of the teacher education policies in education for sustainable development for the year 2017/18 is mirrored by the number of teachers benefitting from the training: approximately 32.000 newly qualified teachers took part in the three-hour training workshops and in two-hours online self-training. However, the brevity of the face to face training is not enough to allow teachers to bring to their classes' themes of this complexity. Nevertheless, for 37% of teachers in 2017/18 this stimulus was sufficient to make a connection with the experimental teaching activity in their classroom.

As for in-service teachers' training, about 60.000 working teachers successfully completed 25-30 hours Training Unit on topics related to Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development 2017/18. This training, although it is relevant from the point of view of contents, it is not systematized within the framework of vision and values assigned by the 2030 Agenda, risking the loss of the unity of the sustainability design underlying the Agenda itself.

The experience of 2017/18 leaves behind a national pool of trainers who have ventured into workshops with 32.000 teachers; we can continue to invest in these trainers also with the result of 'best practices' being returned and shared in a possible national repository.

### *2.1. Social Return on Investment (SROI) of new qualified teachers' workshops*

The impact analysis of the action related to training on sustainable development for all newly qualified teachers can be enriched through the use of the SROI (Social Return on Investment) methodology (2012).

The Social Return on Investment (SROI) is an approach for measuring and reporting the value created or not by certain actions. The concept of value within the SROI integrates social, economic and environmental costs and benefits in the analysis, returning a figure related to the change produced by those actions in the world (in terms of environmental inequality and degradation, improvement of well-being, etc.). Although the value created goes well beyond what can be rendered in financial terms, the latter constitutes a type of shared, measurable and accounted value, therefore the SROI measures social, environmental and economic outcomes using monetary values to represent them. This allows to calculate a relationship between benefits and costs. The result of the application of the SROI methodology is a ratio of X:Y which indicates that an investment of € X generates € Y of social value (Human Foundation, 2012). This complex calculation - which we have carried out only for new qualified teachers in year 2017/18 led to SROI=1,68. This value represents the relationship between cost and social value generated by the action being examined. A value of 1.68 means that in the face of an investment of € 1, the social value generated by

the investment for sustainable development education training of newly hired teachers as implemented in 2017/18 is € 1.68.

## Conclusions

The SROI calculation highlights a positive social value of the teachers' training initiative put into action in 2017/18. More than 33.00 newly qualified teachers and about 60,000 in-service teachers have met sustainable education content and a consistent pool of trainers has been engaged in this action throughout the entire nation. These actions can be a good basis for interpreting and applying the new upcoming law on civic education in Italian primary and secondary school.

Among the missed opportunities, the one with the greatest impact for the diffusion of the culture of sustainability, is the possible shift in the school year 20/21 to the reintroduction of civic education in first and second grade schools: this may be a controversial provision. «Approving a law is not enough to change reality» as sociologist Alessandro Cavalli states (2019).

The second opportunity lost at national level concerns the failure to adhere to PISA 2018 test on Global Competence which included in addition to the provision of context questionnaires for students, schools and families, also a series of cognitive tests for the detection of Global Citizenship skills designed in accordance with the dimensions of the Framework. For Italy, data deriving from context questionnaires will be analysed and published in 2020, which will provide many useful elements for reflection.

We must approach the stumbling block of sustainability in order to support greater equality and equity among schools, even in our country. Just as at an international level the Agenda 2030 has overcome the idea of third world countries in favour of a common struggle of all countries to reach the SDGs, so at an intra-national level the Agenda 2030 could contribute to better pursue Goal 4 - Quality Education: it can do this by overcoming the geographical, social and economic gaps that characterize our country. Strengthening teacher training in this area is one of the keys to opening up this scenario. At the national level, until guidelines related to civic education in school will be issued as envisaged by the law, it will be important to renew the MIUR-ASviS agreement which can remain a sound common ground for global citizenship education.

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## Learning to Learn Assessment: The KC-ARCA Model

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**Keywords:** *Learning to learn, Assessment, Key competences, Rubrics, Authentic tasks.*

### Introduction

The present paper outlines a research-training process carried out with a sample of primary and lower secondary school teachers aimed at assessing the key competence of citizenship learning to learn. For this purpose, an assessment model was developed called KC-ARCA Model (Key Competences - Assessment, Rubrics, Certification of Achievement Model) which was tested in an exploratory way within the schools involved in the research.

### 1. Theoretical framework: from the development to the assessment of competences

In recent decades, the construct of competences has been one of the most innovative issues within the framework of the scholastic curriculum. These changes have had an impact not only on curricular design, but also on learning assessment (Viganò et al. 2011). Therefore, it is necessary to use a variety of assessment tools able to detect not only thanks to a solid knowledge base but also the ability to apply it in real problematic situations. The aim should be to construct tools capable of detecting transversal skills such as problem analysis and problem solving, learning to learn and reflecting on one's own experiences, exploiting the past ones to be able to experiment in new fields of action (Lucisano, Corsini, 2015).

Referring to the studies related to the issue, the theoretical model that inspired this research is 'Authentic Assessment' which aims at developing multi-dimensional methods of assessment able to overcome the rigidness sometimes attributed to the testing assessment (McClelland, 1994). In this case, the task of assessment is really intended to provide information on the processes that generate learning and how the knowledge acquired is put into practice through effective behaviours inside and outside the school. Authentic assessment focuses on how the student builds up his/her own personal learning operating actively in different situations, rather than on standardization of the results. In so doing, it can also promote a new way of thinking of the assessment processes inside the school, referring to direct forms of performance assessment: authentic assessment doesn't assume any predictive or projective function, but evaluates the action produced directly in the field. Learning is seen as a product of contextualized knowledge accordingly, transferable in similar situations of use (*near transfer*). In this case it is useful to refer to the so-called «authentic tasks» or «reality tasks» (Wiggins, 1990).

An authentic task requires the use of internal capabilities and knowledge, skills and competences that students have learned at school or in other non-formal/informal educational contexts. Authentic assessment is therefore founded on the belief that academic achievements are not given by the accumulation of

knowledge base, but are based on the ability to generalize, modeling, identifying relationships, transfer the acquired knowledge in real contexts.

## **2. The in-field research**

### *2.1 Research context*

Over the last few decades within the Italian school system, the issue of competences has been supported by several regulatory measures. An important contribution was provided by the National Guidelines for curriculum (MIUR, 2012), as well as by decree no. 139 of 22 August 2007 which clearly indicated the key competences of citizenship to be developed in the course of compulsory education, recalling those provided for by the European Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning of 2006, as updated in 2018. The KC-ARCA Model was designed to respond to the need of schools to plan shared assessment tools that can evaluate a complex competence such as learning to learn.

### *2.2 Research methodology: objectives, questions, phases, instruments*

The research objectives were to choose and/or build assessment tools to learn how to learn competences that are valid and reliable within the sample schools; to contribute to the professional development of teachers regarding the assessment of competences. The research question was how to develop a methodological model that can support teachers in the assessment of learning to learn, so that it can be recognized in subsequent grades of schooling.

The research sample was represented by 7 schools in the province of Arezzo that established a network following a grant from the Regional Scholastic Office of Tuscany to carry out experiments for innovation and improvement of teaching. The research was attended by 52 teachers (29 from the primary school and 23 from the lower secondary school),

The research was conducted through the following steps:

1. setting up of the research-training group: 7 teachers in charge (1 per school), 3 researchers from the University of Florence and 1 delegate from USR Tuscany;
2. definition of the research design: sharing of the research methodology and of the tools to be used (rubrics and authentic tasks);
3. setting up of work groups aimed at constructing rubrics and authentic tasks on the competence of learning to learn;
4. peer review of the designed instruments;
5. socialization and dissemination of the evaluation tools designed within the schools involved in the training research project.

One of the activities that most involved the research group before the definition of the survey design was to identify a shared definition of the competence of learning to learn. We started from the analysis of some studies developed within two main research paradigms: a) the cognitive psychology paradigm which considers the mechanisms used to assimilate the knowledge base, and b) the social cultural paradigm which is focused on the process of learning embedded in social context (Stringer et al., 2010). In these perspectives, learning to learn refers to the ability to access, gain, process and assimilate new knowledge and skills, followed by the ability to critically reflect on the purposes and aims of learning. For other authors it is a complex mix of dispositions, experiences, social relations, values, attitudes and beliefs that coalesce to shape the nature of an individual's engagement with any particular learning opportunity of individual students (Deakin Crick, Broadfoot, Claxton, 2004). Learning to



learn has to be seen also as 'the ability and willingness to adapt to novel tasks, activating one's commitment to thinking and the perspective of hope by means of maintaining one's cognitive and affective self-regulation in and of learning action' (Hautamäki et al., 2002: 39). Therefore, learning to learn involves a set of principles and skills which can help learners learn more effectively and so become learners for life. The belief that learning is learnable represents the core principle.

These studies were then compared with the provisions of the reference legislation and with the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2006/962/EC) and Decree no. 139, August 22, 2007.

In view of the breadth of the processes underlying a complex competence and referring to McCormick's studies (2006), the research group decided to break down the competence of learning to learn in specific indicators easier to be considered in the construction of specific rubrics and authentic tasks. For the first circle of education the competence has been made to coincide with the ability to: 1. self-evaluation; 2. identification and selection of information; 3. use of information and acquisition of a study method; and 4. organization of school-work.

### 3. Research products and results

Having established a shared definition of the competence of learning to learn, vertical work groups, made up of teachers of primary and lower secondary school have been set up for each indicator, so as to proceed to the construction of the instruments to evaluate it (rubrics and authentic tasks).

In a second step in order to share the tools and verify their reliability both internally and transversely to the various working groups, peer review groups were set up with the task of revising the products fostering the triangulation of points of contact between teacher and researchers.

#### 3.1. *Setting up assessment rubrics*

The assessment rubrics were designed to highlight the progression of the indicator considered in the different classes of primary and lower secondary schools (Danielson, Hansen, 1999). Table 1 shows an example of competence descriptors for primary and lower secondary school classes referring to the indicator: 'Self-assessment'.

#### 3.2. *Planning authentic tasks*

According to Authentic Assessment theories it is necessary to consider the construction of specific reality tasks for the assessment of competences. A reality task: 1. Is based on real tasks and not on evidence which have a predictive value; 2. requires judgment and innovation, as it leads to the solution of problems that may have more than one right answer or multiple ways of solving the problems; 3. asks the student to participate in the construction of knowledge, identifying, recognizing and processing the main structures of the subjects; 4. requires the effective use of a *repertoire* of knowledge and functional skills to deal with complex tasks; not just to show the amount and extent of knowledge, skills and competences acquired, but to highlight the plasticity, integration, connectivity of knowledge among them and the surrounding reality; 5. gives the opportunity to select, repeat, test pattern of action, check resources, get feedback and improve performance by increasing levels of *mastery* (Wiggins, 1990).



**TABLE. 1.** *Assessment rubric of ‘Self-assessment’ in primary and lower secondary school*

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Class</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Class</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Class</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Class</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> Class</b>
<b>Competence descriptors</b>	<p>The pupil can ask for help</p> <p>If guided, the pupil recognizes the outcome of his work at a global level</p>	<p>The pupil recognizes and communicates the difficulties encountered</p> <p>If guided, the pupil uses error recognition and self-correction strategies</p>	<p>The pupil recognizes and communicates the difficulties encountered, talking about his own work</p> <p>The pupil in a mostly autonomous way uses (sometimes asking for help) error recognition and self-correction strategies</p> <p>The pupil identifies new learning</p>	<p>The pupil recognizes and communicates the difficulties encountered, talking about his own work</p> <p>The pupil in a mostly autonomous way uses error recognition and self-correction strategies</p> <p>The pupil identifies new learning</p>	<p>The pupil motivates his/her own work</p> <p>The pupil uses autonomously error recognition and self-correction strategies</p> <p>The pupil identifies new learning and can use it in new context</p> <p>The pupil identifies, by describing them, the main strengths and weaknesses of the task performed, proposing possible procedural and executive alternatives</p>

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Class</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Class</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Class</b>
<b>Competence descriptors</b>	<p>The student explains his own work</p> <p>The student recognizes his own weaknesses and, if guided, knows how to use his own strengths</p> <p>The student autonomously uses strategies to recognize errors</p>	<p>The student explains and analyses his own work autonomously</p> <p>The student recognizes his own weaknesses and, if guided, knows how to use his own strengths to face a task autonomously</p> <p>The student autonomously uses error recognition and self-correction strategies</p> <p>The student chooses the most effective learning strategies</p>	<p>The student motivates his work in a knowledgeable way</p> <p>The student is aware of his weaknesses and can use strategies to deal with difficulties</p> <p>The student autonomously and consciously uses error recognition and self-correction strategies</p> <p>The student chooses the most effective learning strategies</p> <p>The student identifies new learning and knows how to apply it in new contexts</p>

An authentic task designed for the assessment of the indicator ‘Self-assessment’ is exemplified below (Table 2).

**TABLE. 2.** *Authentic task - indicator 'Self-assessment' in primary and lower secondary school*

<i>Competence</i>	Learning to learn
<i>Indicator</i>	Self-assessment
<i>Authentic task typology</i>	Self-assessment questionnaire or cognitive biography related to the realization of an individual and / or collective task
<i>Recipients</i>	5th grade primary school class – 1st grade lower secondary class
<i>Activities</i>	<p>Compilation of a questionnaire or construction of a cognitive biography</p> <p><i>'Answer the following questions. When requested, indicate how satisfied you are with your job (not satisfied, not very satisfied, quite satisfied, very much satisfied, delighted with)</i></p> <p><i>Was the task you have just realized difficult/easy? Explain the reason why</i></p> <p><i>Did you encounter any difficulties during the realization of the task? If yes, what were they? How did you solve them? Did you need to ask for help? Were the aids provided useful?</i></p> <p><i>What were the mistakes you made? Were you able to correct them? If yes, how?</i></p> <p><i>How and what would you improve on the final product?</i></p> <p><i>What do you like most about the work you have done? What least?</i></p> <p><i>What did you learn anew?</i></p> <p><i>How could you reuse what you've learned?</i></p> <p><i>What did you like most about working on the task that was proposed to you? What less?</i></p> <p><i>How did you feel during the entire performance of the task (at the beginning, during, at the end)?</i></p> <p><i>(in case of group work) Did you collaborate easily in solving the task? How did you set up the work at the beginning of the task? ... and how did you finish it? What choices did you make during the task? Were there any reasons for dispute among you? If yes, how did you overcome them (or were they not exceeded)</i></p> <p><i>Would you like to be engaged in a similar task again?'</i></p>
<i>Products</i>	questionnaire / cognitive biography and analysis of the answers

### 3.3. Research group internal validation of the products

Once the planning of the assessment rubrics and of the authentic tasks was completed, the reliability and the degree of sharing among the participants in the research-training course was verified.

The following aspects were considered: clarity and progression of the descriptors of the assessment rubrics; the ability of the rubrics to discriminate qualitatively different behaviours with reference to the criteria of complexity, accuracy, extent, transferability of the expected actions; validity and consistency of the descriptors of the rubrics with the types of authentic tasks proposed; sustainability and viability of the designed authentic tasks. To this end, a process of triangulation relating to the products and to the teachers' and researchers' point of views has been set up through peer review (Sluijsmans et al., 2004).

## Conclusions

Despite the limits linked to the narrowness of the reference sample, the KC-ARCA model has represented a pilot project capable of stimulating the teachers to build new assessment tools and a more aware use of the rubrics and authentic tasks.

The added value of the research-training experience linked to the KC-ARCA model lies precisely in having broadened the range of teachers' assessment skills, looking beyond the fence of knowledge and disciplinary skills, to project itself towards more inaccessible and little known paths such as those related to the development of transversal skills and learning to learn.

The limits of the present research depend not only on the narrowness of the sample, but also on the external validity and the generalizability of the results that instruments such as those examined here are able to provide (Grange, 2017), but which are important since they may become heuristic devices able to widen the knowledge on the ways of competences construction and on how to evaluate their acquisition starting from the school context.

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# Civic and Citizenship Education in Italy: Results from the IEA-ICCS 2016 on Conceptualization and Delivery at 8th grade

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**Keywords:** *Civic and citizenship education, Italy, IEA-ICCS, Eight grade*

## Introduction

The Eurydice report on Citizenship Education at school in Europe (2017) has highlighted the latest developments in the field of civic and citizenship education (CCE) and has stressed the new, and also recurrent, challenges related to this area of school education. As shown by the report, CCE delivery at school is characterized by the use of different approaches, the curriculum content is multidimensional and broad in scope, there is still a lack of regulations or recommendations on the development of prospective teachers, and the assessment of students' knowledge and skills in this area is still a problematic issue. Findings from the IEA-ICCS (International Civic and Citizenship Education Study) provide a rich and in-depth overview and analyses on the characteristics and delivery of CCE in 24 countries across the world at grade 8th (Schulz et al., 2016, 2018; INVALSI, 2018).

This contribution uses Italian data from ICCS 2016 (mainly collected through the School and Teacher questionnaires) to delve into some of the key aspects highlighted in the Eurydice Report for 8th grade, i.e. CCE delivery and conceptualization in Italian schools (approaches to CCE, CCE most important aims reported by teachers and principals) and teachers' preparation and training on CCE related topics and teaching methods.

## 1. The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS 2016)

The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) is an international large-scale assessment promoted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) aiming at investigating how eight graders are prepared to undertake their roles as citizens in 24 countries across the world.

The IEA promoted the first cycle of ICCS in 2009 (Schulz et al., 2010); ICCS 2016 is therefore the second round of the survey and shares with the former study its main objectives, i.e. analysing students' civic knowledge and understanding of civic and citizenship education and their attitudes and activities related to CCE; examining the differences across countries in relation to CCE outcomes; investigating how contextual data (e.g. student characteristics, school and community contexts, and national characteristics) are associated with cross-national differences.

The study is based on national representative samples of students, for a total of 94,000 students selected in 3,800 school and involved 37,000 teachers across the 24 participating countries. In Italy 3,766 students in 170 school and 2,000 teachers were sampled.

ICCS 2016 adopted the same research instruments as the previous cycle:

- the student test of civic knowledge
- the student questionnaire related to students' background, attitudes and engagement
- teacher and school questionnaires (learning context)
- regional student questionnaires (for Europe and Latin America)
- contextual information provided by national centres (National Context Survey).

*a. CCE delivery and conceptualization in Italian schools*

The ICCS 2016 school questionnaire included a question asking school principals how CCE is delivered at target grade. The items included in the question were focused on five different delivering approaches: 1) It is taught as a separate subject by teachers of subjects related to civic and citizenship education; 2) It is taught by teachers of subjects related to human/social sciences (e.g. History, Geography, Law, Economics, etc.); 3) It is integrated into all subjects taught at school; It is an 'extra-curricular activity'; 4) It is considered the result of school experience as a whole.

Majority of Italian principals reported that CCE is taught by teachers of subjects related to human/social sciences (94,4%), that is considered the result of school experience as a whole (81,2%) and is integrated into all subjects taught at school (61,3%). Civic and citizenship education is an educational area characterized by different conceptualizations both at national level (i.e. top-level regulations) and at school level (principals' and teachers' perceptions). The ICCS study addresses this issue including a question on CCE aims in the two instruments aimed at gathering information on the learning context.

Principals and teachers were asked to indicate the three most important aims, according to their point of view, within a list of 10 CCE goals grouped into three main areas concerning the development of:

- civic and political knowledge and skills: knowledge of social, political and civic institutions; skills and competencies in conflict resolution; knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities; critical and independent thinking;
- sense of responsibility: respect for and safeguard of the environment; capacity to defend one's own point of view; developing of effective strategies to reduce racisms;
- active participation: participation in the local community; participation in school life; future political engagement.

As shown in Table 1, most of principals across the participating countries selected the items 'promoting knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities' and 'promoting students' critical and independent thinking' (respectively 61% and 64%) as the most important aims of CCE.

Italian principals' answers followed the ones of their international counterparts, stressing the relevance of 'promoting knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities' (75%, more than 10 percentage points above the international average) and 'promoting students' critical and independent thinking' (68%). The aims related to 'promoting respect for and safeguard of the environment', 'preparing students for future political engagement' were considered less important by Italian principals compared to the international average (with percentages significantly below the ICCS 2016 average) as well as the items focused on 'promoting the capacity to defend one's own point of view' and 'promoting students' participation in school life' (with percentages more than 10 points below the international average).

**TABLE. 1.** Percentages of students at schools where principals reported different aims of civic and citizenship education as one of the three most important aims

	Italy	ICCS 2016
Promoting knowledge of social, political and civic institutions	38	37
Promoting respect for and safeguard of the environment	28 ▽	38
Promoting the capacity to defend one's own point of view	3 ▼	21
Developing students' skills and competencies in conflict resolution	46	44
Promoting knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities	75 ▲	61
Promoting students' participation in the <local community>	24	24
Promoting students' critical and independent thinking	68	64
Promoting students' participation in school life	13 ▼	25
Supporting the development of effective strategies to reduce racism	8	8
Preparing students for future political engagement	4 ▽	10

More than 10 percentage points above Average ICCS 2016 ▲

Significantly above Average ICCS 2016 △

Significantly below Average ICCS 2016 ▽

More than 10 percentage points below Average ICCS 2016 ▼

Findings from the same question encompassed in the teacher questionnaire (Table 2), were mostly in line with those of the school questionnaire. Both teachers across participating countries and Italian teachers reported that 'promoting knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities' and 'promoting students' critical and independent thinking' were the most important aims of CCE. Differently from their international counterparts, Italian teachers also considered as relevant CCE objectives 'promoting knowledge of social, political and civic institutions' and 'supporting the development of effective strategies to reduce racism' (for both items we have found percentages significantly above ICCS 2016 average). The other items included in the question were deemed less relevant by national respondents, as they all register percentages significantly below the international average ('developing students' skills and competencies in conflict resolution' recorded percentages more than 10 points below ICCS 2016 average).

**TABLE. 2.** Percentages of teachers selecting different aims of civic and citizenship education as one of the three most important aims

	Italy	ICCS 2016
Promoting knowledge of social, political and civic institutions	37 △	29
Promoting respect for and safeguard of the environment	48 ▽	51
Promoting the capacity to defend one's own point of view	12 ▼	21
Developing students' skills and competencies in conflict resolution	32 ▼	47
Promoting knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities	69 ▲	55
Promoting students' participation in the <local community>	15 ▽	20
Promoting students' critical and independent thinking	62	61
Promoting students' participation in school life	14 ▽	23
Supporting the development of effective strategies to reduce racism	18 △	12
Preparing students for future political engagement	4 ▽	8

More than 10 percentage points above Average ICCS 2016 ▲

Significantly above Average ICCS 2016 △

Significantly below Average ICCS 2016 ▽

More than 10 percentage points below Average ICCS 2016 ▼

### *b. Teachers' preparation and training on CCE related topics and teaching methods*

The teacher questionnaire also included two questions aimed at gathering information on teachers' self-reported preparation to teach CCE-related topics and skills and teachers' participation in professional development (PD) activities focused on CCE-related topics and skills and teaching methods and approaches.

As shown in table 3, more than half of the teachers across participating countries reported that they felt quite or very well prepared in teaching ‘citizens’ rights and responsibilities’ (90%), ‘equal opportunities for men and women’ (90%), ‘critical and independent thinking’ (89%), ‘human rights’ (87%), ‘emigration and immigration’ (76%), ‘the constitution and political systems’ (73%), ‘the European Union’ (73%).

The majority of Italian teachers felt to be prepared in teaching the same topics, with percentages significantly above ICCS 2016 average for the items related to ‘human rights’ (96%) and ‘citizens’ rights and responsibilities’ (98%), while for the items related to ‘emigration and immigration’, ‘the constitution and political systems’ and ‘the European Union’ we found percentages more than 10 points above the international average. Italian teachers felt to be more prepared than their international counterparts in teaching issues related to ‘the global community and international organisations’ while, on the other hand, they felt less prepared in relation to ‘responsible Internet use’ and ‘conflict resolution’ (with percentages significantly below ICCS 2016 average).

The same list of items was included in another question in the teacher questionnaire asking whether teachers had the opportunity to take part in professional development activities (during in-service, pre-service or both).

Table 4 shows that, at the international level, more than 50% of responding teachers have attended trainings related to ‘conflict resolution’ (65%), ‘responsible Internet use’ (61%), ‘citizens’ rights and responsibilities’ (59%), ‘human rights’ (58%), ‘the environment and environmental sustainability’ (58%), ‘equal opportunities for men and women’ (53%).

With regard to Italian teachers participating in the survey, the situation differs substantially from the previous question on self-reported preparedness, as the majority of Italian respondents reported to have had fewer opportunities to be trained in almost all the CCE-related topics and skills compared with the international average. With the exception of the items related to ‘responsible Internet use’ and ‘emigration and immigration’, where percentages of Italian teachers are in line with the ones of their international counterparts, we found percentages significantly below or more than 10 points below the international average for all the remaining items.

**TABLE. 3.** Percentages of teachers who felt very well or quite well prepared to teach the following topics and skills

	Italy	ICCS 2016
Human rights	96 $\triangle$	87
Voting and elections	80	81
The global community and international organisations	81 $\blacktriangle$	67
The environment and environmental sustainability	87	84
Emigration and immigration	94 $\blacktriangle$	76
Equal opportunities for men and women	93	90
Citizens’ rights and responsibilities	98 $\triangle$	90
The constitution and political systems	90 $\blacktriangle$	73
Responsible Internet use (e.g. privacy, source reliability, social media)	72 $\nabla$	79
Critical and independent thinking	91	89
Conflict resolution	83 $\nabla$	87
The European Union	91 $\blacktriangle$	73

More than 10 percentage points above Average ICCS 2016  $\blacktriangle$

Significantly above Average ICCS 2016  $\triangle$

Significantly below Average ICCS 2016  $\nabla$

More than 10 percentage points below Average ICCS 2016  $\blacktriangledown$

**TABLE 4.** Percentages of teachers reporting having participated in training courses on civic-related topics during pre-service and/or in-service training

	Italy	ICCS 2016
Human rights	47 ▼	58
Voting and elections	18 ▼	46
The global community and international organisations	27 ▼	44
The environment and environmental sustainability	49 ▽	58
Emigration and immigration	44	45
Equal opportunities for men and women	31 ▼	53
Citizens' rights and responsibilities	43 ▼	59
The constitution and political systems	34 ▼	49
Responsible Internet use (e.g. privacy, source reliability, social media)	62	61
Critical and independent thinking	36 ▼	61
Conflict resolution	47 ▼	65
The European Union	33 ▽	43

More than 10 percentage points above Average ICCS 2016 ▲

Significantly above Average ICCS 2016 △

Significantly below Average ICCS 2016 ▽

More than 10 percentage points below Average ICCS 2016 ▼

Regarding teachers' participation in training courses on teaching methods and approaches (during pre-service, in-service training or both), findings highlighted that, at international level, majority of teachers have attended courses on pair and group work, problem solving and classroom discussion. Trainings on role play and research work were selected anyway by more than half of the respondents. Italian teachers, instead, had less opportunities to be trained in research work, role play and classroom discussion, namely those approaches generally considered more active and 'less traditional'. For those items, we found percentages either below the international average or 10 points below ICCS 2016 average. (Table 5)

**TABLE 5.** Teachers reporting having participated in training courses on teaching methods and approaches during pre-service and/or in-service training

	Italy	ICCS 2016
Problem solving	72	75
Research work	63 ▽	69
Role play	55 ▼	70
Classroom discussion	62 ▼	75
Pair and group work	80	83

More than 10 percentage points above Average ICCS 2016 ▲

Significantly above Average ICCS 2016 △

Significantly below Average ICCS 2016 ▽

More than 10 percentage points below Average ICCS 2016 ▼

## Conclusions

As shown by ICCS 2016 results, the delivering of CCE at individual school level is characterised by the adoption of more than one approach consistently with the schools' autonomy in planning their educational activities. This is probably due to different reasons: the individual school culture, the 'familiarity' of each individual school in developing cross-curricular projects, the availability of resources – in terms of teachers' preparation and competences – inside each individual school.

At the same time, these results show a lack of a systematic teacher preparation, both at the initial and in-service training levels. These results seem to confirm one characteristic of civic and citizenship education already identified



by several international studies (such as those of the Council of Europe): the gap between declarations of principles and general aims attributed to this area of school education and the implementation's measures needed to make it more effective.

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## Teaching for Tomorrow: Teacher Education for an Uncertain Future

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**Keywords:** *STEM, Industry engagement, Expertise, Neoliberalism*

### Introduction

The scholarship of education demands a special kind of criticality. In our educational space critique is insufficient. In responding to transformations in our society it is incumbent upon us to build social capacity for action in the midst of uncertainty.

This paper tells a story of an engagement in critical design that began when we were asked by the government of the state of South Australia to develop a program that would improve the capacity of new teachers to teach STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) ‘authentically’ and linked to ‘real world industrial contexts’. As advocates of authentic learning this task was essentially a good fit. The government’s insistence on the common policy discourse of industry need for so called ‘STEM skills’, however, was at odds with workforce research (see for example Smith, White, 2019) and this created a lingering doubt. Why are we being resourced to develop programs to address problems that do not seem to exist?

A response to these doubts is presented in this paper in two parts. Initially we will engage in the development of critique and explore the wider discursive and policy context of STEM education. In doing so we will argue that STEM is actually something quite a different thing from a simple acronym for science, technology, engineering and mathematics and that it is intended to drive an epistemic shift in education regarding the scientific disciplines that is consistent with other post-democratic transformations in our society.

Our purpose here, though, is not simply critique but critical design. In the second part of the paper we will consider how it is possible to take critical design action in response to educational policy directions. In this case we have ended up with a program that uses engagements with ‘real world’ industry to develop teacher knowledge and understandings of the kinds of expertise that can actually support democratic participation in our transforming societies.

### 1. STEM and the art of expertise

The idea of real-world connection is strong in STEM policies and strategies across the world. It is typically accompanied by a discourse that STEM jobs are the jobs of the future and the foundation to prosperity. Being critically engaged, however, we noted that the data supporting this widely held policy position is remarkably poor and it is actually hard to identify a real growth in demand for high-skill jobs in the STEM fields (Smith, White, 2019). As educational designers, therefore, we were forced to ask that if the evidence for workforce need is

actually quite poor, why is the STEM agenda being driven so strongly? The growing interest in education in post-democracy provides a critical opportunity to engage with this kind of practical problem.

## **2. Education and modern democracy**

Schools and universities have been an essential component of modern liberal democratic states since they emerged in the seventeenth century as education is foundational to sovereignty in these states. The creation of a sovereign state vests ultimate power and authority in the state. By definition this requires individuals to give up some degree of personal power and freedom to the state, an act that requires some basis for common consent.

In Western states before the enlightenment the basis for common consent was religion, typically with the monarch holding sovereignty anointed by God. With the enlightenment, however, the basis for consent to sovereignty shifted to expertise. In simple terms, in the age of reason, citizens agreed to give up power to the state because it was accepted that the state could marshal the expertise make better decisions. The modern democratic states never engaged in participatory democracy. Rather the citizens of these states handed over authority to their representatives in the parliaments, and to the experts located in institutions such as the civil service, the universities and the professions. Such institutional arrangements required a system of education that could supply both experts and, just as importantly, a capacity to understand the authority of experts.

In recent decades, however, our educational institutions and society's relationship with expertise have been radically transformed in line with the wider neoliberal project. In this paper we are particularly concerned with the impact the ideologies of neoliberalism have had on education in the sciences, and how that impact has been consolidated under the construct of STEM – notionally an acronym for science, technology, engineering and mathematics, but discursively so much more than that.

As presented in policy, politics and professional discourse around the world, STEM is actively shifting the epistemological foundations of education in the sciences. It is not simply a blurring of the boundaries of a set of aligned disciplines. Rather, it sets out to radically change the very purpose of education in and around those disciplines that sees the curriculum focus from 'curiosity about the world' to 'the development of skills needed in a transforming economy'. These outcomes of education, of course, lie on a continuum, but the policy discourse around STEM is almost always anchored on industry workforce needs. The need for a scientifically informed citizenry does usually get a secondary mention. Romantic ideas like the intrinsic value of knowledge, however, have been pushed to the very margins of the educational endeavour with the STEM discourse.

The discursive shift that is STEM echoes the criticisms of the sciences made by Hayek (1945), upon who's thinking so much of the neoliberal project is founded and appears to contribute to a trend towards post-democracy. Writing against the backdrop of the two world wars, and arguments that those wars had demonstrated the power of the total state to manage society, Hayek's critique quite openly questioned the expertise of modern science, scientists, and professionals. He argued strongly that the 'scientifically' managed state, led by experts, had led to an unreasonable impingement on personal freedom and, notably, to the entrenchment of bad ideas.

Hayek's alternative to the total state that had emerged in Europe and the United States in response to war was the free market and what was to become neoliberalism. His advocacy for the use of markets was not limited to the trade of goods and services. Hayek believed that a market approach should also be used to test ideas quickly and efficiently. Strongly critical of the forms of knowledge production that had been established in the universities and professions he called instead for the sort of useful knowledge employed by entrepreneurs. This critique is alive and well today in the 'populist' antagonism for 'elites' in which elite is not a signifier of wealth so much as of expert within the system created by the modern state. Entrepreneurial knowledge, however, is a different type of expertise all together. While the knowledge of science seeks generalisable truths, entrepreneurial knowledge has little interest in truth and seeks instead advantage.

Radical in the 1940s, Hayek's way of thinking has become engrained in our educational thinking of today. Our teacher education programs, for example, no longer have room for mediation on the nature and purpose of education but instead are driven by the need to ensure our graduates are 'classroom ready'. They require entrepreneurial knowledge. STEM is like this. STEM education drives a 'vocational' agenda for education in the scientific disciplines and openly positions the skill needs of the market at the top of this educational agenda.

This shift has not occurred simply because of the critique of Hayek and the concerted political efforts of those sharing his philosophy and we must be careful to avoid simplistic critique. For example, STEM can also be seen as a response to the changing nature of scientific expertise itself that has been so thoroughly examined in the scholarship of science studies since the late twentieth century. This work has powerfully shown that science does not have the special access to truth that had perhaps been assumed in modern societies, and that post-modern society no longer thought that it did (Collins, Pinch, 1993). The declining confidence in scientific expertise can be seen in the widespread rejection of the science of climate change and vaccination. Unlike Hayek, though, the scholars of science studies have recognised that their critique opens up a new problem. It is easy to agree that that society's technical decision making should be opened up beyond a core group of experts, it is a much more difficult task to determine how far this opening up should go (Collins, Evans, 2002).

From a neoliberal mindset, however, the question of 'how far?' is illegitimate. The question implies that an expert is making a decision on how far non-experts can intrude on their domain. From this mindset, this is a matter that can be resolved by competition within a market. And despite the fact that neoliberalism has clearly favoured a small and powerful oligarchy, the neoliberal mindset would see this question of 'how far?' as being entirely undemocratic.

This is a brief report, so we will come to the argument against which we sit the second part of the paper. The argument is this. STEM is not simply an educational fad. Rather, it is the outcome of very significant transformations occurring in our society and part of a paradigmatic shift. While advocating an increased participation in scientific education, STEM may actually be post-democratic in the sense that it is eroding the institutional arrangements of expertise established in the modern democratic states. This is an extraordinary and uncertain context in which to be designing educational programs. Why are we being resourced to develop programs to address problems that do not seem to exist? One reason seems to be that it fits so very well with Hayek's vision of the primacy of entrepreneurial knowledge and that it is a good way to transform the arrangements of state to fit such a vision. And that might be valid, we might agree with that and want it as an outcome. Clearly many people do, or we would not have seen the rise of neoliberalism and populism. But it is not the reason

that is being given. Our position as scholars of education provides the opportunity both for critique and design. In the second part of this paper we outline a design response that has shifted the focus of 'real-world STEM' from workforce skill development to a critical engagement with the nature of expertise.

### **3. Designing industry engagement in Teaching for Tomorrow.**

Teaching for Tomorrow is a now nearly four-year-old project in which pre-service teachers undertake an industry experience with a corporate partner. The project works with STEM industry partners as diverse as aerospace, fashion design, and blockbuster cinematic special effects. The experience varies depending on the partner, but students typically spend 10-20 hours observing the work of the partner and discussing the problems and challenges that the partner faces in their business. Following the experience, students work in cross-disciplinary teams to develop a unit of work for school that is connected to both the problems they have identified through their experience and the Australian Curriculum.

This educational design here diverges from the dominant STEM discourse in that it is fundamentally different to a work placement. Rather than being asked to simply replicate the activities of the workplace, students in this program are required to actively explore the ways in which expertise is used in the context. This is an enacted learning design, drawing guidance from the likes of (Dewey, 1954) to Lave and Wenger (1991) to (Engeström, 2006). It is enacted in the sense that we are asking our pre-service teachers to engage in the type of learning we want them to design for their students when they are in schools. That is, we are not simply telling them to use problem-based learning, we are actually asking them to engage in problem finding, and to respond to that problem using the real tools of the profession they are about to enter.

It is also enacted in the sense that we are asking them to use the real world around them as a learning resource. The philosophical and cognitive basis for understanding learning in this way is still relatively new in the west. It probably starts with the translation of the works of Vygotsky into the western languages and has been driven more recently in English language by people like Clark (2003) and Hutchins (2010). This body of scholarship is providing us with complex ways of understanding the mind in society that we are only beginning to explore in education.

### **4. A design in progress**

Our purpose here is to advocate for critical design in the face of post-democracy over and above showing the learning achieved through the particular design. Never-the-less, it is worthwhile noting that we are clearly seeing a discursive shift in the project. The policy documents for STEM learning have a strong jobs focus. For example, the strategy document in our state begins by stating that '[w]e know that 75% of the fastest growing occupations now require STEM skills and knowledge. It is critically important that we make sure that our children are learning the skills that they will need to fulfil these roles' (Government of South Australia, 2016).

Discussion within the project, however, has been far more nuanced. Here we find our industry partners talking about a wider purpose with reflections such as 'they got to understand that despite all the underlying theory I still use a great deal of creative thinking in problem solving, I still consider all the broader social,

economic and regulatory issues and as the definition of engineering says ‘the application of science for the benefit of society’ (MacGregor, White, 2018). Similarly, our students are identifying the opportunities that industry-based learning provide for developing essential skills beyond the workplace with comments such as ‘STEM is important because with the advancement in technology, students today are very aware of the life skills they need and the skills they might not need. Subjects like Maths and Science are being misunderstood because students are viewing them as unnecessary’.

## Conclusions

When we as educators are confronted with substantial social change like the neoliberal changes we have been living through, and the post democratic changes we have considered in this conference, we have a choice. We can be swept along by the bubbles of fast knowledge so favoured by Hayek, or we can contribute to developing new forms of expertise for our times.

The long-term outcomes of the Teaching for Tomorrow project remain to be seen, but as an example of critical educational design it provides an important example of taking action in the face of an uncertain, and possibly post-democratic world.

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## Education in the City: Young children, Public Spaces and Participation

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### Introduction

Educational processes are widespread within a plurality of environments that only partially coincide with the institutions formally responsible for education or instruction. Even if international studies show that both urban public outdoor spaces offer a richness of educational experiences (Bourke, 2017), the educational value of public spaces is often neglected or underestimated. It is not the case that in western cities children seems to be increasingly 'pushed away' from the public domain (Valentine, 2004).

Educational institutions must reflect on how to understand and experience public spaces with different degrees of anthropization, so that the experiences one has in/of these spaces are significant for the practices these institutions embrace.

### 1. Outdoor education

Donaldson and Donaldson (1958: 17) defined outdoor education (OE) as «education in, about, and for the outdoors». This definition indicates the place, the topic and the purpose of OE (Ford, 1986). This idea allows to identify the large number of possibilities of the settings of OE (school yard, playground in the city, but also forest in the wilderness), the necessity to put learning processes outside and the purpose of sustaining learning processes for the sake of the ecosystem.

Priest (1986: 13-14) suggest that OE is to define as «an experiential process of learning by doing, which take place primarily through exposure to the out-of-doors. In OE the emphasis for the subject of learning is placed on relationships, relationships concerning people and natural resources». Priest point the attention to six elements: the first is that outdoor is a method for learning, the second regard the process of learning defined as experiential and referred to Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Dewey; the third is that outdoor gives the «inspiration for learning»; the fourth empathizes the role of all senses and all domains for learning: the fifth indicates an interdisciplinary curriculum and the sixth highlights the relationships between natural resources, people and society (interpersonal, intrapersonal, ecosystemic, ekistic). Priest put in evidence two main approaches in OE: one referred to adventure education and one to environmental education.

Mannion and Lynch (2016) reports 3 emphases in OE: environmental education, personal and social development and outdoor activities. They also highlight that in the last fifty years the value of experiences in nature became more relevant. According Quay and Seaman (2013) studies, Mannion and Lynch report an overemphasis of personal and social development and outdoor activities



in the relation with outdoor experiences, and a reduced interest for environmental education. Even referring to Quay and Seaman (2013) studies, they recall the definition of Donaldson and Donaldson suggesting that 'in', 'about' and 'for' should have the same importance, putting people, place and activity in connection.

Around 50 years are passed and even if place is recognized as central in outdoor settings (Mannion, Lynch, 2016), in our country less often outdoor is considered important as a context for educational experience (Farné and Agostini, 2014; Guerra, 2015).

## 2. Childhood and urban public spaces

### 2.1. *What does 'public space' mean?*

The importance of public spaces for children's social and physical well-being has been well documented (Fincher and Iveson 2008). Nevertheless, what constitutes a 'public space' differ across place and time (Leahy Laughlin and Johnson, 2011).

Public spaces are often considered 'spaces in between' and include squares, sidewalks, parks, and open spaces (Atkinson, 2003), but also shopping malls, community centres and schoolyards (Carr et al., 1992). According to the 'Charter of Public Space' provided in 2003 by the 'Biennial of public space public', 'public space' is any place of public ownership or public use accessible and enjoyable by all, free and without a profit motive ([http://www.inu.it/wp-content/uploads/Inglese\\_CHARTER\\_OF\\_PUBLIC\\_SPACE.pdf](http://www.inu.it/wp-content/uploads/Inglese_CHARTER_OF_PUBLIC_SPACE.pdf)). The expression 'public open space' describes a wide concept that consists of a variety of spaces within the urban environment that are freely and easily accessible to the wider community, generally intended for amenity and recreation (Papageorgiou et al., 2016).

### 2.2. *Children at risk*

Space matters, especially for children, that in the early years they experience it by organizing their life in the units of their immediate surroundings (home, neighbourhood, infant-toddler, preschool). Thus, space is structured through a sort of 'system of spaces', initially fragmented, that should gradually evolve in a single unit structure (Papageorgiou et al. 2016). Although, these multiple spaces are increasingly remaining disconnected and understood as 'adult spaces' where children are assumed to be 'in the wrong place' (Jenks, 2005; Bourke, 2016).

Children are essentially pushed away and 'segregated' in specific spaces (e.g. structured playgrounds), limited in their interactions with other specific social categories (e.g. young people, adults), viewed with suspicion or concern, either a threat to the space or threatened by it (Valentine, 2004). As a consequence, they are namely limited in their whole environmental and social experience and development. Opportunities to engage in free play in open spaces (e.g. neighbourhood parks or town squares) and to experience the risk-taking and to test the limits of one's own abilities are consequently restricted.

As Malone (2007: 513) pointed out, while in the past children used to play in the streets or walk to school alone, and were used to socialize freely with other community members «the changing environment and climate of fear has meant that many parents are restricting children's movements to such an extent these children will not have the social, psychological, cultural or environmental knowledge and skills to be able to negotiate freely in the environment. That is, by bubble-wrapping their children, many parents are failing to allow children the



opportunities to build the resilience and skills critical to be competent and independent environmental users»

Walking (as biking) is a means through people (including children) relate their self to the landscape (Creswell and Merriman, 2011). When an adult bike to work, or a child walk to school, his/her pathway offers to him/her a sensory experience that shapes how he/she construct a sense of belonging to the contest (the neighbourhood, the village, the city) (Bourke, 2017).

Children, particularly, map the 'environment' with their bodies. 'Exploring' is a way of making the space their own.

### 3. Exploring democratic engagement in public spaces

#### 3.1. *An exploratory research*

There is a lack of research on these issues in Italy and a partial recognition of the quality of the outdoor educational experience for children, teachers and families (Farnè, 2014; Guerra et al., 2017).

In order to fill this gap of knowledge in the field of Early Childhood Education, our research focuses on the exploration of outdoor public spaces made by Italian toddlers and preschoolers. Particularly, our reflections refer to a critical reading of the BRIC project, a project funded by the EU (Comenius KA2 14-17), involving the democratic engagement of young children in public spaces in their communities (<http://www.bricproject.org/>). The project, led by Tim Waller, Patrizia Benedetti and Monica Hallborg, involved some educational institutions of three European countries (Barnpegagogiskt Forum from Sweden, Azienda Servizi Bassa Reggiana from Italy and Anglia Ruskin University from United Kingdom) on the topic of the relationship between childhood, urban public spaces and natural environment (Benedetti and Ferrari, 2019).

BRIC project aimed to achieve the following objectives: 1) an exchange of 'good practice' between preschool teachers; 2) systematic education and training around democratic engagement in public spaces; 3) the development of open educational resources and targeted activities to engage early childhood professionals, parents and key stakeholders (e.g. local politicians).

In brief, following participatory action research (Bitou and Waller, 2017) and polyvocal methods (Tobin, Hsueh and Karasawa, 2009) preschool teachers, young children (toddlers and preschoolers), parents, citizens, policy makers and researchers were involved in an investigation about meninges and practices concerning public spaces.

#### 3.2. *Parks, squares and courtyards*

Focus of our study was on how children participate to their social contest, that is make the urban environment their own through spatial exploration and creative changes.

The spatial contexts of the experience under examination were public parks (urban natural environment), squares and courtyards (urban artificial environment) settled in villages from the province of Reggio Emilia (Italy): Boretto, Brescello, Gualtieri, Guastalla, Novellara, Luzzara, Poviglio e Reggiolo.

The project involved children (N = 101) from infant toddler centers and preschools managed by ASBR (Azienda Servizi Bassa Reggiana).

Children were free to explore these urban public spaces during specific journeys organized by their teachers and educators. Their explorations were filmed by an atelierista (an educator with background in the arts that works in the infant toddler centers and preschools) trained to create documentation. Video-

documentations of the children's explorations (behaviors and interactions) were analyzed by two junior researchers supervised by two senior researchers from the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia.

### 3.2. Exploring the physical space, artifacts, natural materials and symbolic play

The study intended to compare public spaces with a greater or lesser presence of natural elements. Particular categories of behaviors implemented by children in the public spaces were analyzed: 'exploring the physical space' (e.g. walking, run, roll over, to flip, get in climb up), 'exploring the artifacts' (e.g. features, artworks, street furniture, benches), 'exploring natural materials' (e.g. leaves, stones, woods) and 'symbolic play' (e.g. pretend play).

Exploration behaviors were considered indicators of the way children map and make their own the environment, symbolic play behaviors an indicator of the way children symbolically create and change the environment.

The analysis of data collected permitted to highlight the peculiarities of the exploration made by children in the two types of environments (natural vs artificial) and therefore to define the characteristics of affordance in these contexts (Table 1).

**TABLE. 1.** Frequency recording per kind of public space

	Environment	
	Natural	Artificial
Exploring the physical space	126 31,50%	441 39,03%
Exploring artifacts	42 10,50%	510 45,13%
Exploring natural materials	213 53,25%	156 13,81%
Symbolic play	19 4,75%	23 2,04%
Total	400 100%	1130 100%

Even if in the natural environment (parks) there is a greater presence of interaction with natural materials (53%) and in the artificial environment (squares & courtyards) with natural materials (45%), parallelly, in both environments (natural and artificial) a significant amount of time is spent by children in the 'exploring the physical space' (31-39%).

'Symbolic play' is twofold present in 'natural' then in 'artificial' urban environment.

## Conclusions

There is general consensus amongst scholars from many disciplines, including geography, sociology, pedagogy, anthropology, and environmental studies, that the physical environment has an impact on children's learning and well-being (Clark, 2010). Therefore, the different 'places' lived by children could be considered as a useful conceptual lens in understanding their developmental experience.

Educational institutions need to reflect on how to live 'out of their doors' spaces, in particular, public spaces, so that the experiences in these spaces are

significant and consistent with their goals, among which we have promoting the capability to exercise full citizenship.

Our findings confirm international educational studies that highlight the greater complexity and richness of children behaviours and play in the natural environment (Niklasson, Sandberg, 2010). Play is an important but largely neglected aspect of people's experience of urban society and embraces a wide variety of activities which are spontaneous, irrational and risky (Stevens, 2007). In this sense, 'risk-taking' can be understood as exposure to failure without consequences.

The research offers interesting didactic insights concerning the potential of education in urban public spaces and indications for politicians and administrators about how to characterize these environments according to international studies (Luchs, 2016). Indeed, putting place at the centre of the reflection is also very important for educators as Mannion and Lynch (2016) suggest in their Manifesto for place-responsive teaching.

Nevertheless, the results point to a need for further research into the everyday practices of children's urban lives, to investigate the 'ordinary' (Yi' En, 2014, 212) and to explore children's perspectives on their engagement with the public domain.

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## How to Teach to Think Critically: the Teacher's Role in Promoting Dialogical Critical Skills.

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**Keywords:** *Teacher professional development research, Dialogical critical thinking, Citizenship education, Discussion, Dialogic teaching*

### Introduction

The aim of this study, part of a broader Erasmus+ project (STEP-Pedagogy of Citizenship and Teacher Training: an Alliance between School and Territory), was to identify different dialogue styles and explore the relationship between modes of teacher intervention and differential dialogical critical thinking skills in children. School as a democratic venue, where knowledge is also co-constructed via debate, offers opportunities for pupils to take on active and responsible roles in experiential contexts.

The teacher can play a key role in supporting the development of dialogical competence by encouraging classroom debates on socially acute questions. Dialogical practice is a vehicle for enhancing meaningful pupil engagement and increasing the quality of classroom interaction and pupils' reasoning abilities. However, even today, teachers tend to make greater use of monological practices than of dialogical ones.

There is also a marked gap between theorizing on the verbal and non-verbal language required to foster learning and empirical research tapping into the type of communication that teachers actually implement in the classroom. This background informed our exploratory study, in which we assessed selected classroom dialogues, with the additional goal of fostering the professional development of the participating teachers.

### 1. Citizenship education in primary school

The aim of citizenship education is to lay the foundations for civil coexistence in democratic societies. Citizenship is a polysemic term. In our own research, we take it to mean the conditions that allow individual to express themselves, and to exchange views and make joint decisions with others (Losito et al., 2001).

In light of key changes in European society over the past decade, the education ministers of the EU Member States have reaffirmed the crucial role of citizenship education in the construction of European society. They have even more strongly endorsed the guiding principles already formalized in Strategic Framework: Education and Training 2020 (OJ 119, 28.5.2009), which are based on the values of tolerance, freedom and non-discrimination, inclusiveness and the active exercise of one's rights (Eurydice, 2015). The EU has identified four areas of citizenship education viewed as strategic to attaining target democratic citizenship outcomes:

- Area1: Interacting effectively and constructively with others, including personal development (self-confidence, personal responsibility and empathy); communicating and listening; and cooperating with others.

- Area 2: Acting in a socially responsible manner, including respect for the principle of justice and human rights; respect for other human beings, for other cultures and other religions; developing a sense of belonging; and understanding issues relating to the environment and sustainability.

- Area 3: Acting democratically, including respect for democratic principles; knowledge and understanding of political processes, institutions, and organizations; and knowledge and understanding of fundamental social and political concepts.

- Area 4: Thinking critically, including reasoning and analysis, media literacy, knowledge and discovery, and use of sources.

Area 1 competences are most actively pursued at the lower levels of education. As children come up through the school system, the ability to interact is attributed progressively less importance. The ability to think critically is among the least developed aspects of citizenship education in Europe (Eurydice, 2017).

We understand the term 'dialogic Interactions' to mean exchanges in which students ask questions, explain their points of view and comment on other ideas. The Dialogic Teaching perspective is informed by the studies of Vygotsky and Bruner on the development of language as a social practice. Learning to speak entails more than acquiring a set of linguistic resources; it also involves discovering how to use them in conversation with a variety of people and for a variety of purposes. Dialogical teaching and inter-thinking are reciprocal, supportive, cumulative, and purposeful practices (Alexander, 2018).

The ability to interact effectively and constructively with others presupposes the ability to listen to others and to verbal express one's own ideas and emotions. Our understanding of the development of dialogical competence and our approach to teaching it in the classroom are based not only on the proven relationship between the development of thought and that of language – especially in relation to fostering the development of cognitive abilities – but also on the connection, also proven, between language and one's cultural values. Teaching children how to engage in dialogue is thus not to be solely understood as offering them a medium for self-expression and action, but as an end in itself, in terms of the construction of individual and social identities within democratic societies (Alexander, 2018, Daniel et al., 2015). The classroom (and the school more generally) is one of the key places where citizens are formed.

## 2. Participation and Dialogical Critical Thinking

Dialogical skills are the basis for effective participation. Learning to think critically is conceptualized as the acquisition of the competence to participate critically in the communities of which a person is a member and their social practices. If education is to further the critical competence of students, it must provide them with the opportunity, at the level of the classroom and the school, to observe, imitate and practice critical agency and to reflect upon it. Learning contexts that students can make sense of must be made available, so that students can develop a sense of responsibility for the quality of their dialogical practices (Ten Dam, Volman, 2004).

The existing scholarship on critical thinking is extremely broad and interdisciplinary. Its roots stretch back to ancient and modern philosophy, and it has spanned the Galilean revolution, Descartes, Kant and the Enlightenment movement. In education, Dewey's pragmatic philosophy and pragmatic linguistics formed the theoretical bases for an interdisciplinary construct that is hotly debated to this day (Abrami et al., 2015). Critical thinking implies logical and

creative thinking; it signifies reasonable and reflective thinking that enables one to decide what ought to be believed or done. Thinking critically entails the ability to reflect and analyse one's own statements or questions, justify them, and discuss them: all of these are cognitive operations that prevent prejudice and form a moral disposition to engage with other points of view. The habit of thinking critically is complementary to an empathic emotional attitude and to self-monitoring of prejudices and stereotypes. Here, we draw on the work of M.F. Daniel and colleagues (Daniel, Gagnon, 2011: 422-23), who for over a decade empirically analysed the development of critical thinking in children aged three to twelve years across different disciplinary domains. These authors found that the development of critical thinking requires drawing on four modes of thinking: logical, creative, responsible, and metacognitive. It goes through three distinct stages defined by distinct perspectives that we now define.

The self-centered perspective means that a student's representations are simple and centered on the self and beliefs and opinions are expressed as certain. Affirmations concern concrete facts from the pupil's specific personal experience, are focused on simple units (as opposed to interrelated ones), are typically not justified, lack nuance, and are formulated using the pronoun 'I'. Post-egocentric language may be observed when the facts referenced by the child are extended to his or her family and intimate social circle, and the pronoun 'we' begins to be used. Children make concrete statements with the beginnings of an underlying tendency to generalize that is grounded in their familiar environment (parents, friends). The only justifications observed are egocentric in form, i.e. predominantly self-referential. The pre-relativist and relativist perspective reflects a plurality of points of view and a certain reflexivity among students. Formulated using a generic 'we' (we must love everyone) or generalized 'they' (parents love their children), affirmations at this stage are justified explicitly and in detail, ideas tend to be independent units linked via simple relationships, and the preferred formulations are based on the 'you', 'we' or generalized 'they' pronoun forms. And finally, the intersubjective perspective enables students to produce representations that are complex, nuanced, aimed at furthering the common good, and marked by uncertainty and questioning; this entails an evaluative type of reflection. Utterances present concepts are justified, and take the form of questioning, doubting or constructive evaluating diverse points of view. There is an evident striving to identify or accept other points of view. Arguments are presented as the outcome of negotiation and can encompass self-correction, the expression of doubt, and the drawing of connections with the ideas of interlocutors.

### **3. Research questions and methodology**

Dialogical practice is a vehicle for enhancing pupil engagement at a deep level and raising the quality of classroom interaction and pupils' reasoning abilities. However, even today teachers tend to make greater use of monological practices than of dialogical ones.

Our aim in this study was to identify different dialogue styles and the link between teacher intervention and children's dialogical critical thinking skills. What kind of DCT (Dialogical Critical Thinking) process would be correlated with an analytical citizenship education approach? How would children's DCT develop in the course of an ongoing citizenship education project? What role would be played by the teacher? Is there a relationship between teachers' epistemological perspectives and their habitual modes of intervention?



The data we analyze in this study was collected in the context of case studies involving two Primary School classrooms (Clericetti 5th grade and Cornaredo 3th), respectively located in Milan and Cornaredo, a town on the outskirts of Milan. The Clericetti class was accustomed to dialogue and the teacher was expert in dialogic teaching, while the class in Cornaredo experienced classroom discourse in the form of dialogue for the first time in the context of the case study. The first two conversations analysed in Cornaredo were facilitated by a teacher with no specific expertise or background in moderating dialogue in the classroom, while the third conversation was facilitated by the researchers. We analyzed six typical debates (Table 1), two led by the classroom teacher and one led by the researchers, recorded at different stages of the research process and analyzed using a combined coding system that encompassed both DCT (Daniel, Gagnon, 2011) and Teacher/Child Interaction around SAQs (Socially Acute Questions) and was both data-driven and theory-driven (Krippendorf, 2012),

**TABLE 1.** *Data*

Conversation	Date	Time	Transcription length	Note
COR Mirò	10th October 2016	23'	11064	whole classroom
COR Corti	28th March 2017	21'	10944	whole classroom
COR History/Citizenship	16th October 2017	19'	9317	small group
CLE welcoming	11th November 2016	46'	21798	whole classroom
CLE migrants	8 February 2017	56'	28678	whole classroom
CLE final reflection	4 May 2017	17'	8636	whole classroom

#### 4. Results

The positive correlation between type of intervention by the adult and level of DCT attained in Cornaredo (third graders, age 8-9 years) (Table 2. Co-occurrences Cornaredo) suggests that when the teacher stimulated active participation and supported the dialogical process, the children produced a higher number of pre-relativist arguments that went beyond egocentric reasoning. The dialogues enabled the children to change their point of view; however, they were still largely unable to justify their ideas or make meaningful generalizations. It is interesting to note that all types of intervention had the same level of impact on post-egocentric forms of thinking. This may imply that monological and rhetorical recitative discourse elicits non-problematizing and non-complex responses from children.

**TABLE 2.** *Co-occurrences Cornaredo*

	Egocentricity Gr=2	Post-egocentricity Gr=55	Pre-relativism Gr=43	Relativism Gr=15	Pre-inter-subjectivity Gr=15	Inter-subjectivity Gr=2	CSC Gr=1	Transformative Dialogue Gr=4
I1 Teacher interventions Gr=15	6	11	3	2	2	0	0	0
I2 IRE Gr=15	0	11	2	0	1	0	1	0
I3 Interventions that stimulate participation Gr=20	6	10	19	9	9	2	0	4

Gr Groundedness of a Code (number of quotations coded by a code)

The outcomes of the Clericetti class (fifth graders, age 10-11 years) (Table 3. Co-occurrences Clericetti) also included a positive correlation between



intervention based on scaffolding and supporting authentic participation and the expression of relativist (18) and intersubjective (22) epistemological perspectives on the part of the children. In this class, all the levels of development of DCT were represented, reflecting both the individual characteristics of the students making up the class group, and the fact that some students were simultaneously engaging in different ways of thinking. This in turn prompts us to hypothesise that the development of higher-order thinking skills does not proceed in a linear fashion.

**TABLE 3. Co-occurrences Clericetti**

	Egocentricity Gr=20	Post-egocentricity Gr=5	Pre-relativism Gr=7	Relativism Gr=22	Pre-inter-subjectivity Gr=24	Inter-subjectivity Gr=51	CSC Gr=4	Transformative dialogue Gr=1
I1 Teacher Interventions Gr=25	10	2	3	3	11	20	2	0
I2 IRE Gr=0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
I3 Interventions that stimulate participation Gr=22	7	2	2	18	9	22	2	1

Gr Groundedness of a Code (number of quotations coded by a code)

The gradual increase in dialogical interventions on the part of the teachers in the Cornaredo class is also clearly reflected in the data (Table 4. DCT Development – Cornaredo). In the course of one year, there was a significant increase in the children’s pre-relativist statements, reflecting key gains in terms of their depth of reasoning and self-questioning abilities.

**TABLE 4. DCT Development – Cornaredo**

	Mirò	Corti	History Citizenship	Totals
I1 Teacher interventions	2	9	3	14
I2 IRE	4	3	1	8
I3 Interventions that stimulate participation	35	25	52	112
Egocentricity	0	0	6	6
Post- Egocentricity	38	17	6	61
Pre-relativism	21	22	34	77
Relativism	11	4	13	28
Pre-inter-subjectivity	1	14	10	25
Inter-subjectivity	0	8	2	10
DialogueBetweenChildren	7	7	16	30
DialogueTeacher/Child	4	4	10	18
CSC	0	2	1	3
TransformativeDialogue	0	3	4	7

Gr: Groundedness of Codes (number of quotations coded by a code) or Documents (quotations created for a document)  
GS: Number of documents in a document group or number of codes in a code group

In the case of Clericetti, no development in the children’s thinking skills were observed. This was likely because they were already accustomed to receiving dialogical teaching before the study began (Table 5 DCT Development - Clericetti). Forms of egocentric and inter-subjective thinking were present simultaneously although the latter appeared to dominate. It would appear that if children are used to discussing socially acute questions, reflecting on them and constructing a shared perspective on them via dialogical exchange, this mitigates the impact of directional and unidirectional intervention on the part of the

teachers. While individual teachers display a dominant communication style with specific characteristics, all teachers draw on a variety of modes of communication which do not necessarily appear to form a coherent whole.

**TABLE 5. DCT Development – Cornaredo**

CLERICETTI	Welcoming	Migrants	Final reflection	Totals	
I1 Teacher interventions	11	14	0	25	
I2 IRE	0	0	0	0	
I3 Interventions that stimulate participation	7	13	2	22	
Egocentricity	17	0	3	20	Gr=26
Post-egocentricity	2	2	1	5	Gr=21
Pre-relativism	2	4	1	7	Gr=41
Relativism	3	6	13	22	Gr=35
Pre-inter-subjectivity	7	14	3	24	Gr=34
Inter-subjectivity	22	21	8	51	Gr=53
DialogueBetweenChildren	7	6	1	14	Gr=30
DialogueTeacher/Child	6	8	0	14	Gr=24
CSC	1	2	1	4	Gr=5
TransformativeDialogue	0	0	1	1	Gr=5

Gr: Groundedness of Codes (number of quotations coded by a code) or Documents (quotations created for a document)  
GS: Number of documents in a document group or number of codes in a code group

## Conclusions

On the one hand, the results illustrate the effectiveness of our professional development-research methodology in helping the teachers to construct cross-disciplinary pathways and in enhancing their awareness of the educational topics addressed, and openness to taking the points raised by the children into account. On the other hand, the outcomes also point up resistance on the part of teachers to changing the way they manage classroom debates, even when their current approach risks inhibiting the children's self-confidence and negatively impacting on the quality of the children's interventions. We also identified a significant difference between the micro-structure of the dialogues led by the teachers and those led by the researchers, which corresponded to markedly different patterns of reactions on the part of the children, confirming the outcomes of studies conducted in English-speaking countries (Alexander, 2018; Lyle, 2008)

Contrary to what one might expect if we view teachers as experts in educational communication, teacher professional development focused on communication themes is virtually non-existent in Italy. The teachers we worked with on this project found themselves thinking about their own communication styles for the first time; in the course of their meetings with the researchers, communication skills emerged as a key factor in the teaching-learning process. However, it is crucial that the conceptual paradigms and values informing teachers' thinking should be socio-constructivist in nature and oriented towards fostering critical thinking. When teachers view critical thinking as a key educational objective, they are more likely to develop an impactful verbal communication style. Meanwhile, analysis of their own discursive practices is a powerful tool for accessing the most latent and implicit meanings in their complex vision of themselves as teachers.

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## ‘See it, Say it, Sorted’ The ‘Prevent Duty’ and its Impact on English Secondary Schools: in ‘An Age of Anger’.

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**Keywords:** *Dispositifs, Securitisation, Parrhesia, Populism, Citizenship Education*

### Introduction

In July 2015, a legal duty came into force requiring that ‘specified authorities’ in England, which included schools show ‘due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’. This is popularly referred to as the ‘Prevent Duty’ (Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015), Prevent, developed by the Home Office in 2003 out of full public scrutiny, and only fully operationalised following the 7 July 2005 London bombings, has consistently been the most controversial and contentious element of the UK Government counter terrorist strategy CONTEST.

The first responsibility of government is traditionally that of protector (Hobbes 1651) and hence in the UK, as in any other state, the desire is for national security. The Prevent duty is situated within this context where real and perceived threats of terrorism have brought this responsibility to the fore front. The context is complicated by the fact that we are also witnessing a period of time, when liberalism and neoliberalism economics are being strongly challenged: a period of economic and cultural insecurity when some argue that the liberal progressive consensus is breaking down and economics and politics are moving in a post-liberal direction (Pabst, 2017; Brender and Pisani, 2010; Mason, 2015). In essence there is a requirement to debate theories of neoliberalism which have become a normative and political construct. My work, in the spirit of critique and scholarship, wishes to think through the utility of the concept of neoliberalism around issues of education and education policy.

### 1. Foucault

I am using Foucault as a theoretical lens to explore how to think differently about how we problematise, research and make sense of education, in this case the ‘Prevent duty’ and its perceived impact on selected English secondary schools. What would Foucault, as a disruptive scholar, write about ‘the Prevent duty’ in this ‘Age of Anger’ (Mishra, 2017)? How can we use Foucault to think differently, how can we apply Foucault’s method to Education and to Education Policy, to the ‘Prevent duty’, and should we ask how and not why and examine practices not solutions?

Using Foucault it is now possible to describe a new populist *dispositif*. One in which economic populism is rejecting globalisation. Within this emerging populist *dispositif*, Foucault, in his lecture course in Paris (1981-84) and in Berkeley (1980-1983) provides modern scholars with a further very interesting tool, the ancient concept of *parrhesia*, truth telling or ‘free-spoken-ness’, and within it the possibility to identify both good and bad *parrhesia*. Can we detect bad forms *parrhesia* that appeal to base, xenophobic instincts in the prevailing global economic/cultural populist discourse, and specifically in the UK?

My research is examining if and how the 'Prevent duty' has been shaped by this emerging parrhesia.

My work draws on Stephen J. Ball and analyses policy enactment in this case of a contemporary statutory education policy and seeks to understand how it has been interpreted and enacted by school leaders.

My own context is that for over thirty years I worked as a secondary school teacher in London teaching history and citizenship and for twenty of those years I was a secondary school leader and head teacher working in a range of diverse schools.

### *1.1. Method*

Four years on from the introduction of the 'Prevent duty' my key research aim is to find out how the 'Prevent duty' has been enacted by school and college leaders in secondary schools and colleges in England; and additionally to discover to what extent, if any, the 'Prevent duty' has 'securitised' education and what effect, if any, it has had on free speech in schools and colleges.

I am applying a pragmatic mixed methods approach to my research combining qualitative and quantitative methods including in-depth, semi-structured interviews as well as questionnaires.

I have carried out my interview research in three different geographical locations, London, Manchester and Kent. I have identified these areas in order to interview school and college leaders in a range of schools with different student populations and serving different communities. Comparisons can be made between responses from London, with culturally diverse schools with a sizeable (over 30%) Muslim population, and the North of England some with a sizeable Muslim population others with a predominantly white population and in Kent, where the schools identified have different school populations some with high levels (70%) of white British children. I have identified Manchester because of the 2017 bombing. The schools identified include LEA schools, academies, schools with Post-16 provision, at least one faith school and one single sex school.

### *1.2. Foucault as Educator*

I am utilising Foucault's ideas and in particular his concept of *dispositif* - ideas, laws, activities, policies, speeches, actions (Ball, 2013). *Dispositif* is a word not easily translated, often the English word *apparatus* is used but for Foucault *dispositif* refers to the systems that support a discursive formation which can be administrative, institutional and material. In the case, for example, of the discourse of educational leadership a range of different objects and practices make up the *dispositif* which can include structures, qualifications, training, professional development, courses and events (Gillies, 2013).

When asked about his work he wrote «my objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects» (Foucault, 1982: 777). Prevent therefore needs to be viewed in the dynamics of social policy/educational policy and within its relation to the state and located within policy discourse. How are policies represented and disseminated, how do key speeches articulate the policy and how does the policy work at all levels? How indeed, as Foucault notes, are 'human beings made subjects'?

In this 'Age of Anger' (Mishra, 2017) that we are living through, an anger has been created by the practice of neoliberalism as a reaction to its failings and shortcomings. Using Foucault it is possible to identify a recent period of ruptures that have occurred including the economic crisis of 2007/2008, which has seen a 'crisis of capitalism' and linked to it a 'crisis of liberalism'. From these dynamics

the different responses and reactions have supported a global rise of populism and anti-democratic non-liberal forms of government. Neoliberalism whilst still dominant has and continues to be challenged as there has been a shift away from neoliberalism, both economically and culturally, with the rise of the concept of economic populism. This political discourse can be seen across the world including in China, India, Brazil, Russia, USA, Italy, Hungary, and the UK. (Mason, 2015, 2018; Pabst, 2017).

Foucault enables scholars to consider and describe a new populist dispositif. One in which economic populism is rejecting globalisation – this discourse is articulated by amongst others Steve Bannon and Donald Trump with his 63m twitter followers. Within this emerging populist dispositif Foucault in his lecture courses in Paris (1981-84) and in Berkeley (1980-1983) provides modern scholars with a further very interesting tool, the ancient concept of parrhesia, truth telling or ‘free-spoken-ness’, and within it the possibility to identify both good and bad parrhesia. I have argued that there is an emerging economic populist apparatus (dispositif) challenging and overlapping with the neoliberal apparatus and in my research evidence that we can detect forms of bad parrhesia that appeal to base, xenophobic instincts in the prevailing global economic/cultural populist discourse, and specifically in the UK.

Additionally it is possible to identify a primary discourse relating to the ‘Prevent duty’ specifically around the implementation of a statutory duty and the need for safety and security but beneath that to identify a secondary discourse of how schools deal with this duty, what it is like to be a school leader and how the spaces created are filled?

My work finds that there is a compliance culture because of the high stakes of implementing this statutory duty or not, failure to fully implement the duty can lead to a poor Ofsted report or indeed dismissal. On the other hand, I also find that there is disaffected consent, contestation and other responses. Analysing how schools have organised or re-arranged themselves, their systems and structures to deal with the duty is an illuminating strand of my research.

In outlining my theoretical context, I return to Stephen J. Ball and his influential ‘think piece’ «What is policy? Texts, Trajectories and Toolboxes (1993) in which he writes of ‘the complexity and scope of policy analysis» (Ball, 1993: 10) and in asking the question what is policy he finds that «policies are also processes and outcomes» (Ball, 1993: 11).

## 2. The Messiness of policy enactment

In order to analyse leadership, ‘policy work’ and ‘the paradox of enactment’ I utilise the policy actors or positions identified by Ball et al (2011) as a heuristic device and as a thinking tool. Actors in schools take up different positions in relation to policy including positions of indifference or avoidance or irrelevance.

The positions are:

- Narrators
- Entrepreneurs
- Outsiders
- Transactors
- Enthusiasts
- Translators
- Critics
- Receivers

I interviewed a secondary school leader (*JJ*) who led a mixed, large (1,700 students), local authority secondary school with a sizeable Muslim population

(30%). In the analysis of the interview I applied the different policy actor positions described by Ball et al (2011) to school leadership. Below is an extract:

JJ 'At Thorpeside we had overall very good relations with all of our communities. Prevent and the duty got in the way [...] well initially it did. The training I was on was pretty poor and so obviously biased against Muslims- you know lots of pictures of dark-skinned would-be terrorists but with one at the end white to make it not looked biased.'

'I had been at the school a long time so knew the families and communities and they knew and trusted me..... We didn't really ever use the term Prevent .....it was interesting that at the beginning some more Muslim parents came to school events, parents evenings maybe they were checking out what we were up to. I do remember one difficult meeting with a parent...but things did calm down and the hot issue turned to knife crime'.

It is possible to use the policy actor framework to place JJ as, 1) a narrator; 2) an entrepreneur; 6) a translator; 7) a critic, and possibly from the full interview, 8) a receiver.

I also place the 'Prevent duty' within the messy context of school policy and Ball's theory of enactment. I place the school at the centre in the complex web of discourses and institutions, as well as focus on two key elements of the 'delivery chain', Heads and Senior Leadership teams, passing on the pressures to perform.

### **3. Shadow Boxing**

Below are extracts from three of the semi-structured interviews I have undertaken.

From the 90s onwards with the introduction of OFSTED inspections, we went through a period which maybe we are now starting to come out of, but through most of my headship we went through a period where there was more ... there was a greater centralisation and more expectation of compliance by school leaders, Prevent perhaps fits into that, but it was by no means the only ... there seemed to be more and more things that we were told that we had to do, whether or not they were necessarily going to be in the best interests of our own schools and our own school communities. I think it varies from school leaders to school leaders depending perhaps on your own background and your own experience. ... I do think that the best most effective school leaders feel able to use a degree of judgement and autonomy and are resistant perhaps to those instructions from government agencies that they feel genuinely will not be in the interests of their school community. (GEOFF)

Some staff haven't liked Prevent, they think it will criminalise, but we've shadow boxed that, we know ... as a school I think with most things we kind of ... they're controversial, we shadow box – what will be the key concerns ...we are liberals, we know what it is, but we also know about safety. So when staff say 'Oh but if we do that we criminalise it' – because I have to have faith in the Prevent strategy, I have to have faith that it's not going to criminalise. I don't have faith in it to be honest – I wouldn't say that out there, because I have a duty, a legal duty, and also a duty to make them feel that I'm calm. Because they know me I think they have faith that I'm not going to criminalise the children. (MARIA)

I think there could be more in leadership training, there's a deficit model in leadership training currently compared to what it used to be, and that may come back to bite the system ultimately. Also, not enough leaders, good leaders at the right

stage to move up – some moving up too quickly. I think those in large multi academy trust chains, it's all kind of very regimented and corporate, and you know the feeling, the understanding of walking around a building, being able to feel things you know, not having to do things according to how the whole group does it but how you feel as an individual, and as a professional how you manage – so I do worry about all of that. Because it is about experience and it is about being able to hear those who have had the experiences and learn from them through really good quality training. (HELEN)

#### 4. Emerging themes

Key themes that have emerged from the analysis so far of my data include an over-arching finding that school leaders see the 'Prevent duty' as very much fitting in with their and their institution's Safeguarding responsibilities and rarely question or critique its place therein. Yet the responses of leaders to the 'duty' varies across a continuum from compliance to resistance and can depend on local circumstances, the prevailing school culture and the age and experience of the school leader.

- Other themes include
- Master/Policy /School discourse - populism
- Secondary discourse – how schools talk and deal with policy
- Policy acceptance – Policy contestation
- Safeguarding
- 'Responsibilisation'
- 'Securitisation'
- Professionalism

#### Conclusion

Omand (BBC July 2017), the creator of the original Prevent strategy, now expresses some doubts that Prevent, by joining together the need for counter-terrorism and the need for some form of community cohesion and agreed set of values, can succeed in its present form. He cites the lack of trust and perceived hostility and concludes 'that if it is not accepted then it is not going to work.' These new priorities require nuanced responses both within our communities and within our schools and colleges. The Prevent programme permeates the entire UK education system yet there is little evidence that the securitisation of education is contributing to the creation of more peaceful conditions within or outside the classroom (Novelli, 2017),

Much of the literature about Prevent in education thus far has focused on the criticisms and negative implications of the policy but my research is showing that the response and actions of School leaders is much more complex and nuanced. Indeed, for some school leaders the space that has been created in some institutions has stimulated debate amongst students and staff and within the space has created positive opportunities. For some the reaction has been to comply but for others there has been the opportunity to challenge, contest and even resist or as Maria says, 'shadow box'.

There are key questions raised about the training offered particularly at the outset of the 'duty' in 2015 but also since. My data raises questions about the need for both good quality local and national training. Many school leaders point out that the existence of far-right extremism has been missed or under-played.

So, what does the 'duty' mean for the professionalism of school leaders today how much are they compliant, 'responsibilised' participants or are or can they



operate using a professional degree of judgement and autonomy? Where and what is the balance between accountability and autonomy?

Finally I return to Foucault, to 'the how of power', to the concepts of *dispositif* and *parrhesia*, to 'how we are made subject', for we need to think differently about education and learning and we must continue to be disruptive scholars in this 'Age of Anger.

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# Learning to Learn. A Quali-Quantitative Comparative Analysis of Curricula and Education Systems for Mandatory Education in Italy, Spain and Latin America.

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## 1. The overall project

Over the last ten years, ‘learning to learn’ (L2L) has assumed a central importance in both European and in non-European policies (EC, 2006; EC, 2018), international organizations documents (OEI, 2010), education systems and national curricula. This importance comes also from the impetus to the debate provided by international studies (Kupiainen et al., 2008; Deakin Crick et al., 2014; Stringher, 2016). From this perspective, the research work presented here is part of the international research project ‘Learning to learn in Italy, Europe and Latin America’ coordinated by INVALSI across five countries: Brazil, Ecuador, Spain, Italy, and Uruguay. In a comparative international perspective, the project includes two interconnected phases. The first phase of the project aims to explore the L2L construct both through a systematic analysis of international literature, with particular reference to Latin America and partner countries, and through a comparative analysis of compulsory education systems and curricula currently in use in Italy, Spain and Latin America (Patera, 2018). Furthermore, in this first phase, a ‘qualitative’ descriptive exploratory research (through a semi-structured interview) is being carried out. The aim is to explore the local and contextualized school practices on L2L of each country involved from a cultural and situated perspective. Specifically, considering the meanings attributed to these daily practices by teachers of three student-age groups (5, 10, 15 years old), a definition of L2L will be identified for each country taking into account differences and common points among them (Denzin, Lincoln, 1994).

### 1.1. Research question and research objective

For the first research phase, consistently with the research objectives of the overall project, the article responds to the research question: How is L2L framed in the curricula and educational systems for compulsory education in Italy, Spain and Latin America?

Therefore, the research objective is: Carry out a comparative analysis of national educational systems and curricula for compulsory education currently in use in Italy, Spain and Latin America in order to explore L2L characterisation for each country.

## 2. Methodology

The research methodology used by our analysis of national educational systems and curricula for compulsory education is ‘descriptive’ and it is based on a qualitative-quantitative approach with two levels of research strategy:

Level 1:

The first level is based on an exploratory research strategy with a descriptive analysis strategy of quantitative data aimed at comparing across Italy, Spain and Latin America:

- 1.1) Educational systems for compulsory education with reference to:
- Articulation of compulsory education cycles for each country;
  - Total duration of compulsory education and duration per educational cycle for each country;
  - Compared education cycles by student-age according to a reinterpretation of Erikson life-cycle (Erikson, 1981) for each country (\*),

(\*) In order to compare different education systems, the eight stages of the psychosocial development life-cycle proposed by Erikson were differently merged. They were merged because of the analysed curricula for each country refer to different compulsory education systems that are often segmented into different cycles for student-age.

1.2) National curricula for compulsory education in Italy, Spain and Latin America for some relevant variables for our research purposes:

- Presence of at least one national curriculum;
- Presence of more than one national curriculum;
- Presence of the term 'competence' in the curriculum/a
- Changes and updates to the curriculum/a in the last 5 years;
- Changes and updates to the curriculum/a for the next 5 years;
- Presence of resources and tools for supporting Teacher Training Activities.

#### Level 2:

For this level of analysis, a double and complementary research strategy based on the use of 'mixed methods' has been adopted (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). In fact, the mixed methods, complements both qualitative/quantitative and automated/manual research in the analysis of the content of national curricula. More specifically, this level try to compare the presence and characterization of L2L in the analysed curricula through:

2.1) Explanatory research strategy (variable based) - top-down (deductive approach): research in national curricula about the presence / absence of L2L with its homologous forms and constitutive dimensions as defined in the main literature considered for the project (Stringher *et al.*, 2014; Stringher, 2016);

2.2) Explorative research strategy (case based) - bottom-up (inductive approach): research in national curricula the 'local' and 'cultural' characterization of L2L with reference to the context of use found in the curricula of the different partner countries.

From this point of view, the first deductive research strategy offers an overall and preliminary exploration across different countries so as to highlight similarities and differences.

The second inductive research strategy is useful to explore in depth each country by investigating aspects related to a contextualized and situated characterization of L2L. On the one hand, as Hyman (1967) points out, the nomothetic approach, related to a nomological-deductive scientific explanation and based on confirmatory and inferential procedures, seems more consistent with an explanatory research strategy aimed at identifying connections among phenomena able at leading to generalizations based on causal models or

inferences. This strategy, theory driven, uses a consolidated theory (explanans) for reading the phenomena (explanandum): it can be defined as ‘top-down’.

On the other hand, the idiographic approach, related to a statistical-inductive or interpretative perspective of scientific explanation, seems more coherent with an explorative research strategy aimed at reconstructing the sense of the phenomena for arriving at a detailed representation of it. This strategy, since it does not use a consolidated theory (explanans) for reading the phenomena (explanandum), can be defined as ‘bottom-up’.

According to Bailey (1991), the explanatory research is attributable to the ‘context of justification’, while the exploratory research strategy is attributable to the ‘context of discovery’. In the first case, the concepts are constitutive of the theory and then operationalized while, in the second case, they have an indicative value in order to later bring out the definitions and components (in our case of L2L) that can be contextualized with reference to the curricula of each country. Therefore, the objects of analysis in the first case are the variables (variable based) while, in the second case, they are the social phenomena (case based) in their uniqueness and complexity. The choice to use both strategies is based on considering the heuristic value inherent in their complementarity.

As Campelli (1996: 25) pointed out: «there is not a single act, neither a single research decision, which is not an inextricable mix of quality and quantity». In this meaning, the results of the first research strategy need to be studied in depth for each country by adopting the second research strategy. The reasons behind the methodological choice of using two research strategies lie in the heterogeneity of the underlying research context:

- A changing political scenario in Latin American countries;
- The growing proliferation of reforms of the general educational systems or of specific levels of the systems;
- A high production of policies related to the educational systems;
- Frequent changes in national Curricula with continuous amendments, modifications, step backwards, additions and withdrawals of the same changes already implemented;
- Different and simultaneous Curricula for the same school year and level related to the introduction of new changes to the curriculum/curricula, or parts thereof. These changes concern some sub-regions of the same countries, either segments of compulsory education or some years and cycles of education.

Taking into account this complexity, the research work needs to be considered ‘in progress’ as the available information gets continuously updated.

### 2.1. Sources

Because of this complexity in finding the specific characteristics of each educational system and national curricula, we have adopted a ‘triangulation of the sources’ (Greene and McClintock, 1985). This methodology has made possible to obtain reliable and complete data:

- Source: INSTITUTIONAL INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: Websites and database (IBE UNESCO – CURRICULAR RESOURCES; IBE UNESCO; UIS UNESCO; OREALC/UNESCO; OEI – PAIS);
- Source: INSTITUTIONAL NATIONAL: Websites and database (Government and Ministries of each country);
- Source: Non-INSTITUTIONAL NATIONAL: Websites and database (e-forum, websites and database, influence blogs),

In this regard, we adopt three criteria for selecting all sources useful for the analysis of educational systems and curricula: criterion of competence, hierarchy, opportunity and convenience.

Concerning the sources storing the documents useful for the analysis, we choose the criterion of 'competence' aimed at identifying the major International Organizations (I.I.O.) dealing with issues related to education and training. The documents (i.e. policies and curricula) found out in the I.I.O. storages have been selected according to the criterion of 'hierarchy'. Subsequently they have been compared with those available in the national official governmental and ministerial websites of each country. We use the criterion of 'opportunity and convenience' in order to compare different documents found out in different storages. The aim is to select them by showing significant differences both in the mentioned policies, in the articulation of educational systems of compulsory education as well as in the national curricula too.

## *2.2. Unit of analysis and cases*

The unit of analysis for the cases considered are:

Level 1: Official policies and documents adopted by education and training systems in the partner countries;

Level 2: National and official Curriculum/a currently in use in the partner countries (\*\*).

(\*\*)Taking into account the different meanings and practices of the term 'curriculum' used in each country of Latin America and Europe, we have adopted the main definitions of 'curriculum' proposed by UNESCO-IBE (2011) in the Glossary of Curriculum Terminology (2013) and by OECD (2003),

For the purpose of our analysis, we have considered all countries currently involved in the research project including policies and curricula for each of them:

Cases: Brazil, Ecuador, Spain, Italy, Uruguay.

Policies: 8 documents of national laws and policies taking into account that some countries have more than one official national policy for education.

Curricula: 12 national curricula taking into account that some countries have more than one official national curriculum.

This analysis shows the results of the six case studies of the countries involved in the research project. A more complete analysis has been carried out using the same criteria both for two European countries and for twenty Latin American countries included in the Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos's list and excluding all countries of the Caribbean area.

Thirty-six national official policies in force and fifty-two national curricula have been analysed for the twenty-two countries (Patera, 2018). This research has been carried out between January 2017 - February 2018 with two updates to the national curricula and the educational systems policies (December 2018 and May 2019),

## **3. Results**

The results for the first level of analysis (1.1) for the six countries show a high heterogeneity of the educational systems:

- overall duration of each cycle (pre-primary, primary, low-secondary, high-secondary);
- different naming of the cycles among the countries;
- different start-age / end-age referred to each cycle.

Moreover, we argue that these compulsory education systems are very heterogeneous for the intrinsic characteristics of their different cycles (Table 1).

**TABLE. 1.** Comparative diagram of compulsory education systems for level/age class

Age/Years	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Brasil	Infantil (Crèche)			Infantil (Pre-escolar)		Ensino Fundamental										Ensino Medio			
Ecuador				Educación Inicial			Educación General Básica										Bachillerato General Unificado		
España	Educación infantil						Educación primaria					Educación Secundaria					Bachillerato		
Italia	Nido			Infanzia			Primaria					Secondaria I° grado					Secondaria II° grado		
México	Educación inicial			Educación Preescolar			Educación primaria					Educación secundaria					Educación media superior		
Uruguay				Educación Inicial			Educación primaria					Educación Media Básica					Educación Diversificada		
Compulsory																			
LEGEND	Early childhood	Pre-primary	Primary	Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary														

Source: Author's own

The results for the first level of analysis (1.2) show that all countries have at least one national curriculum, but some countries do not have a properly detailed curriculum for all education cycles. In fact, all countries have a curriculum even if they assign different denominations to 'what a curriculum is' that is not attributable to the definitions of 'curriculum' provided here. Furthermore, all analysed countries carried out changes and updates to the curriculum/curricula in the last 5 years and they are planning changes and updates to the curriculum/curricula for the next 5 years. Additionally, all countries manage resources and tools for supporting teacher-training activities. Almost all countries give attention to the construct of 'competence' even if we found out some specific and local characterization due to the influence of western policies (Patera, 2019) (TABLE 2),

**TABLE. 2.** Comparative table of the curricula for selected variables

Country name	Presence of at least 1 national curriculum	Presence of more national curricula	Presence of the term competence	Presence of the term learning to learn	Presence of one/more components of "learning to learn"	Changes and updates to the curriculum in the last 5 years	Changes to the curriculum for the next 5 years	Presence of resources for supporting TTA
Brazil	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI
Ecuador	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	NO	NO
España	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	NO	SI
Italy	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	NO	SI
México	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	NO	SI	SI
Uruguay	SI	NO	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	NO

Source: Author's own

Moving on to the second level of analysis (2.1), we now illustrate the results obtained from the application of the first deductive research strategy (variable based) are illustrated. These show the occurrence of L2L and its constituent components as adopted by the literature used in our research project. L2L has been found in the declarations of all curricula, while, in some cases, L2L occurs only in the curricula of specific cycles of education. In effect, it is increasingly present from childhood to secondary school and for particular components. In fact, consistently with the definition of L2L provided by the literature, L2L is mostly present in secondary educational cycles. This can also be observed taking into account the predominant presence of some constituent components of L2L compared to other components not clearly found out in the curricula of the different countries. This is in accordance with the different cycles of education compared through a re-elaboration of the life-cycle stages proposed by Erikson.

Moreover, the presence of L2L components have to be understood by the cultural connotations (axiological and epistemological) informing the curricula. This due to the fact that L2L components have different meanings for each country making hard to agree on a shared definition of L2L among partners countries (TABLE 3),

Therefore, with respect to the literature on L2L, some definitions and dimensions can be traced back to this literature, At the same time, different cultural and contextual characterizations of L2L emerged in the analysed curricula seem to go beyond these definitions. In addition, 'competence' and L2L are available in all curricula maybe due to western policies' influences.

More deeply, curricula (and L2L too) depend on cultural and political balances in each country. L2L has been found in the curricula mainly as institutional discourse (declaratoria) but often is not properly operationalized neither in didactic activities nor in assessment tools.

**TABLE. 3.** Comparative table of the curricula for L2L components and homologous forms (Erikson life-cycle)

	Early childhood (0-2 years)	Childhood (3-5 years)	School age (6-12 years)	Preadolescence and adolescence (13-20 years)
Learning to Learn and Components				
Presence of 1 curriculum	URY; ES;	BRA; MEX; ECU; URY; ES; ITA* ITA**	BRA; MEX; ECU; URY; ES; ITA* ITA**	BRA; MEX; ECU; ES;
aprender a aprender - aprender cómo aprender - aprendiendo a aprender		BRA; MEX; URY; ITA* ITA**	BRA; MEX; ECU; ES; ITA* ITA**	BRA; MEX; ECU; ES; (ITA*; ITA** = Sec I*)
aprendizaje reflexivo		URY;	ECU; ITA* ITA**	ECU; ES****; (ITA*; ITA** = Sec I*)
aprendizaje autónomo		MEX; ECU; URY; ITA*	MEX; ECU; ES; ITA*	MEX; ECU; ES; (ITA* = Sec I*)
aprendizaje autorregulado		MEX; URY; ITA*	MEX; ITA*; ITA**	MEX; ES****; (ITA*; ITA**= Sec I*)
aprendizaje estratégico				
aprendizaje sobre el aprendizaje				
capacidad de aprender		BRA;	BRA;	BRA; ES;
competencia de aprendizaje				
comprensión del aprendizaje				
estrategias de aprendizaje		MEX;	MEX; ECU; ES; ITA* ITA**	MEX; ECU; ES; (ITA* = Sec I*) ITA***
estrategias de aprendizaje metacognitivas				
habilidades para aprender		BRA;	BRA;	BRA;
mejora de su propio aprendizaje			ECU;	ECU; ES;
meta-aprendizaje				
motivación para aprender	URY;	MEX; ECU; URY;	MEX; ECU; ES;	MEX; ECU; ES;
planteamiento al aprendizaje				ES****;
poder de aprender				
técnicas de estudio		BRA;	BRA; ECU; ITA*;	BRA; ECU; (ITA*; ITA**= Sec I*) ITA****

Source: Author's own (L2L components by Stringher et al., 2014; Stringher, 2016)

'Learning to Learn and Components' Source: Deakin Crick, Stringher, Ren: 2014; Stringher: 2016  
ITA\*= Indicazioni Nazionali per il curricolo della scuola dell'infanzia e del primo ciclo di istruzione – D.M. 254/2012 (2012)

ITA\*\*= Indicazioni Nazionali e Nuovi Scenari (2018)

ITA\*\*\*= Indicazioni nazionali per i licei (DECRETO INTERMINISTERIALE MIUR-MEF 7 ottobre 2010, n. 211 (2010)

ES\*\*\*\*= Orden ECD/65/2015, de 21 de enero, por la que se describen las relaciones entre las competencias, los contenidos y los criterios de evaluación de la educación primaria, la educación secundaria obligatoria y el bachillerato (BOE n.º 25, de 29 de enero)



## 2.2. Upcoming developments

Upcoming developments of this work (2.2 case based) can be referred to the second explorative research strategy (case based). It aims to compare in depth the textual 'corpora' of the curricula with the purpose of find out cultural connotations of L2L. These cultural connotations refer to the local theories inductively derived by the analysis of the curricula of each country.

Therefore, the following research question is posed: Under what condition is it possible to compare cultural and situated definitions of L2L found in the curricula of the twenty-two countries (six countries for the scope of this paper) taking into account their explicit or implicit local theories characterizing L2L?

This next development (2.2), instead of five countries and twelve curricula will consider twenty-two countries and fifty-two curricula with nine million occurrences found out in all curricula.

The use of Content Analysis may be based on complementary research and analysis strategies oriented to the content of the curricula and on the extraction of meaning from them (Losito, 1966) both through interpretative (hermeneutical) and statistical-descriptive (lexicometric) analysis.

## Conclusions

Furthermore, results and future developments of this work can be useful for those who deal with both L2L curriculum development and practices in different cultural contexts. At this stage, this work addresses not only to policy makers and socio-psycho-pedagogical researchers but also to teachers. Indeed, it is synthetic and synoptic tool for comparing educational systems and curricula for compulsory education across Italy, Spain and Latin America with a preliminary exploration of L2L concept and its components.

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# Building a Semi-Structured Interview Aimed to Approach Teacher Representations on Learning to Learn in Different Cultural Contexts

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**Keywords:** *Learning to learn, Qualitative interview, Cultural representation, Latin America, Cultural connotation.*

## 1. Introduction

'Learning to learn' (L2L) has been the focus of a political and scientific international debate during the last decades (OECD, 2008; Hautamäki et al., 2014; Deakin Crick et al., 2014; Stringher, 2014). It is among the eight key competences for lifelong learning according to European Union framework (2006; 2018) and has been considered as a fundamental component also regarding life-wide learning, which support full access to citizenship rights.

L2L represents a transversal competence which promotion is necessary from childhood both for encouraging a regular schooling and for preventing school dropouts. Moreover, it is useful both for promoting the updating of work skills, for providing an integral development and for reducing social inequalities.

This contribution is part of a larger project titled 'Learning to learn in Italy, Europe and Latin America' coordinated by *INVALSI*. The project is currently in progress and is being carried out by an international research group. In order to understand the possibilities and potential of integration between different discourses and educational realities, the project includes the participation of Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, Italy, Spain and Uruguay. The research objective consists on approaching its cultural connotations in contexts that have not been considered by the Western scientific debate. These countries, at the same time, share both socio-economic and cultural characteristics with regard to the educational context in Italy.

The project involves six research groups according to the participant countries, reason why it has taking into account a socio-cultural research approach. The project has been organized in sub-projects stand-alone by means of a multi-method research design, which has considered as quali as quantitative research instruments.

Based on three fundamental pillars related to Learning to learn (identifying of definitions or theories; identifying of assessment tools and identifying of intervention strategies to promote this competence), the general aim of the project is to understand; 1) the characteristics of this competence across different cultures and 2) the impact of these characteristics respect on the measurement of L2L in different contexts.

After two preliminary research phases, based on systematic review of international review and a comparative analysis of compulsory education systems and curricula currently in use in Italy, Spain and Latin America (Patera, 2018) we considered useful to promote this competence from childhood to all levels of education, in universities and working environments. We also consider necessary to explore the local and contextualized school practices on L2L from a socio-cultural perspective. For this reason, *INVALSI* has carrying on a

qualitative exploratory project aimed at understanding how L2L is understood and carried out in different cultural contexts.

The aim during such qualitative and exploratory phase is to explore how L2L is performed in daily practices from different cultures, particularly in Italian and Latin American school contexts.

In order to reach this goal a semi-structured interview methodology was chosen and developed to explore L2L representations with teachers from the participant countries. Developing the interview guide represented a critical methodological process in which the intercultural research group aimed at overcoming a 'comparative' conception on the use of research instruments.

By using a participatory evaluation approach, the semi-structured interview guide was built with the support of experienced Italian teachers (high school level), who contributed to define the interview guide. Subsequently it was developed with researchers from the participant countries in the research project. During the preliminary phase the research focus shifted its general perspective from scientific and institutional aspects to cultural ones.

## **2. Question and objective**

In this contribution is described a process of construction of a semi-structured interview guide with the aim to understanding L2L representations with teachers of 5-10-15 year old students.

The general objectives of the interview are to identify the presence and nature of L2L and its components in teachers' representations, the daily practices performed by teachers into their classrooms, through their daily practices in the classrooms. From this point of view, the focus is on how they conceive L2L through their idea of 'learning' and explore both representations, reflections and school practices about L2L. The semi-structured interview is conducted on the basis of a set of questions addressed to the teacher. In the specific case of our research, the questions focus the daily teaching practices, with the final goal of getting 'authentic' responses and avoiding as social desirability as the activation of professional labels in teachers' answers.

### **2.1. Theoretical bases.**

The theoretical references supporting the construction of interview guide are based on theories of Deakin Crick (2004), Hautamäki and colleagues (2014) and Stringher (2014). After a careful theoretical analysis, three macro-categories concerning L2L were identified: coping with uncertainty, self-confidence and sense making (Deakin Crick, 2004; Hautamäki et al, 2014; Stringher, 2014),

The interview guide was divided into nine sub-categories concerning teacher's viewpoints:

1. Difference between current students and those of past years;
2. School activities involving students;
3. Views on student's learning difficulties;
4. Views on student characteristics able to anticipate success or failure in future;
5. Evaluation methods used in classroom;
6. Differences between classrooms/groups of the same level;
7. Views on how to promote learning throughout life;
8. Views on L2L indirect concept;
9. Views on L2L direct concept.

### 3. Methodology

The construction of the interview guide represented an articulated process organized in the following steps:

1. Discussion of theoretical references (Deakin Crick, 2004; Hautamäki et al, 2014; Stringher, 2014) in order to identify the above mentioned macro-categories;
2. Construction of the interview guide with the help of an Italian expert teacher in order to use a daily language;
3. Pre-piloting of eight interviews, taking into account two different methodological strategies with a direct and an indirect interview, in Italy with teachers of pre-primary, primary, secondary schools;
4. Changes and additions to the guide in consideration of the results obtained from pre-piloting study;
5. Translation of the guide from Italian into Spanish and Portuguese and adaptation to local contexts to guarantee semantic equivalence;
6. Calibration of researchers in Latin America in order to share a common methodological framework;
7. Pilot test of the interview guide by local researchers;
8. Preliminary analysis of data and collection of observations / revisions proposed by local researchers in order to adapt the guide according to different contexts;
9. Start of the Main study with the interview guide result of adaptations suggested by the local research groups;

The choice of the questions to be included in the final interview version was made based on the analysis of the results of a pre-pilot study conducted in Italy and Mexico, and the results of subsequent pilot study in the countries involved in the project (Brazil, Ecuador, Italy, Spain and Uruguay). All the questions that produced answers based on teachers' «professional competence», professional labels or did not refer to classroom and school context (including L2L connotations) were removed from the interview guide. The research project represents a cultural research in diverse aspects. By one hand it highlights the international background of the research group, integrated by researchers from different countries and scholar fields. In addition, there has been a meaningful process of negotiation with research partners, which has implied as collective discussion about theoretical framework as comprehension about different research practices, including the translation and adaptation process of the interview guide.

### 4. Results and future steps

A second interview guide version was structured taking into account the results obtained from pre-pilot and pilot study (22 direct questions and 11 indirect prompts). Therefore, a 'hybrid' mode between direct and indirect interview was chosen in order to get the research objectives. The data collection for the main study in all participating countries is in process.

An analysis of the results obtained will be continued in order to understand how teachers conceive L2L according to their statements about learning and L2L representations. It is expected to grasp components linked to L2L in order to understand the relationship between culture and L2L in the participant

countries, continuing subsequently with the quantitative research phase of the project.

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## Do the CPIA's Educational Programs and Teaching Reproduce Social Inequality?

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**Keywords:** *Social inequalities, Adult migrant learners, Illiterate students, Teachers, CPIA*

### Introduction

Over the last ten years the development of new and intensive migration flows has had an impact on western European societies including Italian society. Consisting of a wide variety of people moving into Europe— «refugees and asylum seekers, migration in the context of family reunification, marriage migration, exchange students and high-skilled workers» (Pulix and Van Avermaet, 2017: 59) – these uncontrollable migration processes have changed the European idea of reception and acceptance of migration. In particular, it is the so-called refugee crisis, which consists of a considerable number of refugees originating from the Middle East and Africa, that has exerted great pressure on western European societies. Therefore, the traditional processes of acculturation as well as the school system seem to have been strongly affected by it.

Focusing on everyday Italian school life it is easy to see this. It is possible to identify the absence of valid, continual and consistent political actions aimed at guiding schools (and in particular teachers) in order to facilitate the social and linguistic integration of these new members of society. Despite this, the Italian school system and the people who work every day in and for schools try to provide an important contribution to this process of integration.

This paper focuses on the courses of Italian as a foreign language as conducted by the CPIA (*Centro Provinciale per l'Istruzione degli Adulti*) called *Percorsi di alfabetizzazione e apprendimento della lingua italiana*. In fact, language classes have a central role in the lives of migrants. Not only do they offer the occasion to improve language fluency, but they also help migrants to develop social and intercultural skills that will make them feel better in the hosting society. Likewise, speaking the language of the host country is not only important for everyday life, but is often a skill required by governments. In Italy (as in many European countries) people have to demonstrate and/or certify their language knowledge to obtain a long-term residence permit and citizenship. For this reason, since the CPIA has a key role in the migrants' development of linguistic, social and intercultural skills, it is indeed compelling to investigate the CPIA's teaching and didactic practices.

My reflections are based on my experience as a teacher at CPIA No.3 in Nuoro, Sardinia, during the school year 2017/2018, and on data collected by a survey given to 131 CPIAs during the school year 2018/2019. Conducted by a self-administered online questionnaire from February to April 2019, it involved 83 A023 teachers, teachers thus identified per the February 2016 Decree of the President of the Italian Republic. Specialised in teaching Italian as a second language, A023 teachers offer an insight into the CPIA's teaching and educational practices. Entitled *A023: Chi? Come? Dove? Quando? Perché*, the survey was aimed at observing and describing the role and professionalism of A023 teachers in the CPIAs.

The paper therefore investigates the role of the CPIA in social reproduction. In order to critically evaluate it, the paper describes the CPIA, its students and

its teachers. Focusing on its language courses and educational offer, the paper investigates the assessment made for the placement tests and the final exams. With these observations and reflections, it is possible to see whether the CPIA's educational program is able to integrate migrant adult learners or place them, especially those who are illiterate, at a disadvantage.

## 1. The CPIA

The CPIA (*Centro Provinciale per l'Istruzione degli Adulti*) is the Italian language school for foreigners and the public institution responsible for adult education. It began to work regularly in the school year 2015/2016. Its predecessor was the CTP (*Centro Territoriale Permanente*), which was established in July 1997 by Ministerial Order No. 455. According to Orazio Colosio (2015), however, it was immediately clear that the CTPs had many weak points, and so it was decided to reform and reorganise them. Begun in 2006, this reorganisation took many years, but eventually resulted in the creation of the CPIA. With the Decree of the President of the Italian Republic No. 263, the CPIA was officially established on 29 October 2012.

Today the CPIA offers the following:

- lower secondary school exam courses (*Percorsi di istruzione di primo livello*);
- upper secondary school exam courses (*Percorsi di istruzione di secondo livello*);
- Italian language courses for foreigners (*Percorsi di alfabetizzazione e apprendimento della lingua italiana*).

This paper focuses on the Italian language courses organised at the CPIA.

## 2. Students

The significant increase in the number of people seeking refuge in Europe in the past few years has dramatically changed the composition of CPIA learners. In addition to the sizeable increase in the number of students, the diversity of learners is notable. The arrival of people from Middle East countries such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, or from various African countries, mainly from Nigeria, Eritrea, Somalia and Gambia, has had a marked impact on the CPIAs. Compared to the past, the variety in the profiles of students has become more pronounced and complex than what it used to be. Within this framework, it is clear how teachers have had to face new types of learners that in the past were not even conceivable.

For this reason, teachers have had to take into consideration this notable variety of learners when rethinking and reconsidering their educational projects. Diversity can be encountered in many criteria that can influence teaching and the choice of a particular pedagogical approach. With regards to CPIA students, it is essential to focus on and consider two of them: personal history, and literacy and educational background.

Firstly, it must be remembered that a large number of students were subject to experiences causing trauma. Teachers have to be very careful when approaching them. Students, many of whom are women or unaccompanied foreign minors, are often contending with stressful experiences without the support of their family and friends, support which could be vital for learning and overcoming obstacles. All of these problems make it difficult for them to learn and should not be ignored. In fact, these kinds of situations «not only constitute a



problem for learning but also result in depressive moods if not outright depression» (Fritz, Donat, 2017: 166). Quoting a social worker at *Volkshochschule* Vienna interviewed by Thomas Fritz and Dilek Donat during their research, it is easy to understand what teachers observe and confront in their classes on a daily basis: «If only their minds were free» (Fritz, Donat, 2017: 163). This quotation very much represents how migrant learners are often highly motivated but at times find it hard to concentrate. They can be distracted by all the problems related to their history and their life.

Literacy and schooling background are the second main point to be considered. In terms of their level of education there is a noticeable diversity among learners. Some have more than five years of schooling, others more than eight, but a considerable number are illiterate (in some cases completely illiterate). In addition, many are vulnerable students. If for years it was thought that foreign languages had to be learnt by literate students, the recent migration flows have eradicated this belief. The fact that a large number of students had a level of proficiency lower than those described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe 2001) forced researchers and teachers to develop and implement course planning and language assessment tools for teaching both literacy and L2. Annalisa Bricchese (2019) has recently highlighted the difficulties faced by non-literate adults or adults who are beginner readers and writers. It is known that adults «with little or no formal education or home language literacy take up to eight times longer than educated adults to reach the A1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages» (Naeb, Young-Scholten, 2017: 420). Illiterate students have specific needs and in order to achieve their goals they need appropriate support. As researchers contend (Borri, *et al.*, 2014), illiteracy is a very complex and articulated phenomenon to study. In addition, it has been shown that literacy development in L2 is strongly connected to many other factors.

Thus, the complexity of both learning a language for illiterate people and providing language support for teachers is clear.

### 3. Teachers

Most teachers are primary school teachers who do not have to be specialised in teaching Italian as a foreign language. Because of their ability to teach Italian to young native speakers, it has been wrongly taken for granted that they can teach adult foreigners. Since the school year 2017/2018, A023 teachers have also been working at the CPIA. Although specialised in teaching Italian as an L2, they comprise only a small part of the school staff (1 or 2 in each CPIA).

### 4. Teaching and the didactic practices

Having focused on CPIA students and teachers, it is now the turn of CPIA courses of Italian as a foreign language and related activities.

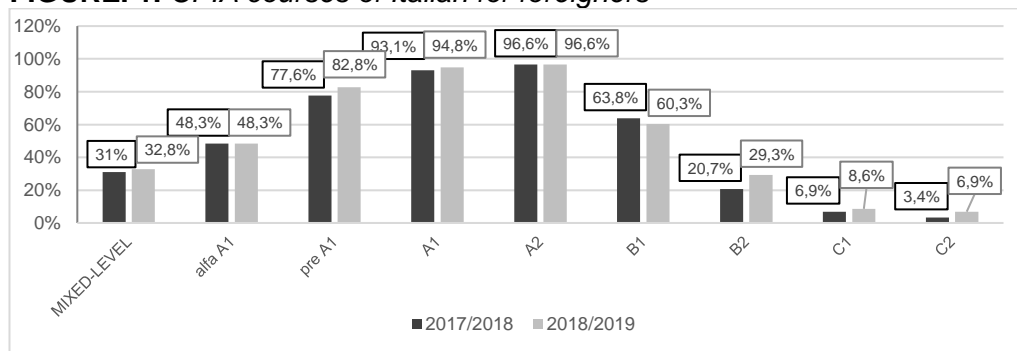
#### 4.1. CPIA courses of Italian for foreigners

Fig. 1 shows the level of Italian language courses held at the CPIA. The majority are beginner and elementary classes; only in a few CPIAs it is possible to attend upper-intermediate or advanced classes. It seems that the CPIAs do not take into consideration and respond to the needs of people who want to develop their language skills above an elementary level. Clearly, the large number of



elementary classes is strongly linked to Italian residence policies. «Non-EU citizens who apply for a permanent residence permit are asked to take an official language test in order to demonstrate that they have reached CEFR level A2 (Law no. 94/2009; MD 4 June 2010)» (Masillo, 2017: 258).

FIGURE. 1. CPIA courses of Italian for foreigners



Source: A023: Chi? Come? Dove? Quando? Perché?

#### 4.2. The assessment: the placement.

An important feature of CPIA activity is the assessment done at the beginning of each course. The CPIA language course regulation establishes that the first 20 hours of each language course (10% of the total amount) have to be used for *accoglienza*. In addition to welcoming students and explaining the learning objectives of the course to them, teachers have to profile students during this first part of the course. Especially for illiterate students, this is the key moment in which teachers can understand their students' level of schooling and test their abilities in reading and writing.

In order to ascertain how the *accoglienza* works in the CPIA, our sample of A023 teachers were questioned about the way classes are made up. Focusing on placement tests, it was possible to point out some weak points in the placement assessment.

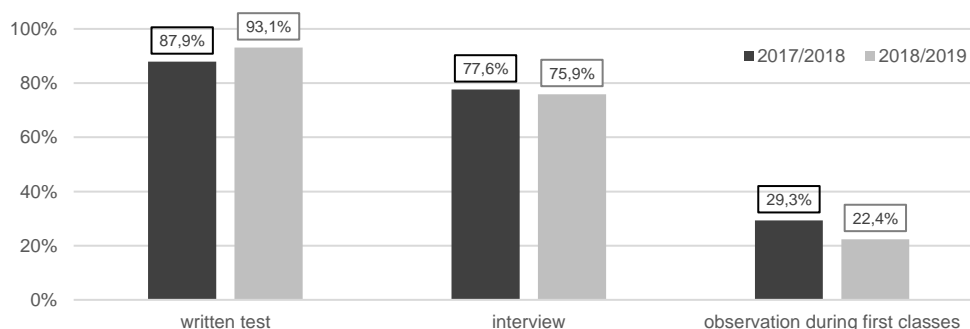
It was found that in the majority of the Italian language classes there is a considerable percentage of students (32.8% for the school year 2017/2018 and 39.7% for the school year 2018/2019) who are not able to follow and understand the class: activities often are too difficult for them. This can be seen as a consequence of the placement assessment not working as it should. The inability to place students in a class corresponding to their level is often the result of a placement done hastily and superficially or it can also be due to a lack of the teachers' skills in language testing and assessment.

This is a point where the CPIA's regulation appears to be better than its practice. In fact, with the *Patto Formativo* CPIA should not have any problem in the placement assessment of students. The *Patto Formativo*, which was originally created during the CTP system period and later improved during its reform and reorganisation, is a valid tool for placement assessment. Though the *Patto Formativo* does not set out how to perform the assessment or investigate a student's profile – it is up to the teachers to decide how to do it – it does enable teachers to focus on the most important aspect of a student's background and experiences. Likewise, teachers are enabled to observe and take into consideration all the previous skills, knowledge and experiences of their students to better understand and define their learning objectives and in particular their language needs.

In spite of the validity of the *Patto Formativo*, it appears that due to a lack of appropriate and suitable training of teachers the placement assessment fails to meet quality standards. Many of the A023 interviewed claimed that the placement assessment does not work because of the poor-quality training of the primary school teachers. Not only do many primary school teachers apparently ignore knowing how the *Patto Formativo* should be used. It seems that some of them do not even have the knowledge and insight to understand the key role and the benefits of a well-executed placement.

About 30% of the teachers interviewed claim that often procedures for the placement are not shared and that teachers rely instead on their own experiences.

**FIGURE. 2.** *CPIA's placement assessment*



Source: A023: Chi? Come? Dove? Quando? Perché?

Concerning placement activities, Fig. 2 shows that writing tests are the most used tool in the majority of the CPIAs. An interview is used by about 76% of the CPIAs, while class observation has the lowest percentage.

As Lorenzo Rocca (2019) recently stressed, placement assessment is not easy. The placement, as with every kind of assessment, should be done following set procedures and by skilled teachers. In turn, teachers should have the ability to create and use tools in which aspects such as age, gender, countries of origin, ethnicity, religion, literacy and educational background and motivation for learning the language are all taken into consideration. A structured interview, whereby all of the above-mentioned aspects needed to define the student's profile are considered, is a useful tool for the placement assessment. Furthermore, it must be remembered that in recent years the number of tools for placement assessment has increased significantly. Even if a standard model of placement does not exist, being up to date can greatly help teachers. A valid example is the recent contribution offered by the Council of Europe Toolkit. With its 57 tools, it should be a point of reference for teachers who want to improve their placement assessment.

#### 4.3. *The assessment: the final exam.*

The final exam is another key point. Paola Masillo (2017) pointed out that there is currently no national standard test in Italy. Thanks to the agreement signed in November 2010 between the Italian Ministry for Home Affairs and the Ministry of Education, University and Research, the CPIAs are simply provided with some test specifications and guidelines. It is up to CPIA teachers to design and administer the tests (Machetti, Rocca, 2017).

Our survey showed that the CPIAs create and use different tests, and a considerable diversity in test design was found. It is interesting to see that the tests evaluate language skills in various ways. Whereas some consist of three

sections, others consist of six. Writing, reading and listening seem to constitute most of the final tests administered in the CPIAs while exercises aimed at evaluating speaking, vocabulary and grammar are found in just a few. It is clear that the lack of a national standard test raises questions of validity and reliability. There is no comparability among the exams organised by all 131 Italian CPIAs.

Regarding the Italian language test for the issuance of a permit for EU long-term residents organised by the CIA in agreement with the local prefecture, Paola Masillo (2017) voiced many criticisms. As this exam is very similar to the one administered at the end of CIA courses, it is worthwhile to concentrate on Masillo's findings. It is immediately possible to see many similarities to our data. The Italian researcher found a lack of fairness and transparency. She underlined the low validity and low reliability of the tests. Her claims are confirmed by the answers and the statements given by our A023 teachers. In fact, almost 30% of them judge the final exam of their CIA as unreliable and not valid. In addition to these findings, on 23 February 2016 the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* published a very interesting article on Italian language tests conducted by the CPIAs.

**TABLE. 1. CIA Italian language test (February 2016)**

	students who passed the exam	students who failed the exam	students who failed the exam %
Bolzano	3.826	1.562	28,7%
Brescia	15.973	7.889	27,3%
Milan	47.172	12.879	21,4%
Padova	7.536	23.148	29,5%
Modena	7.769	2.705	25%
Roma	34.316	5.130	13%
Naples	10.956	1.317	10,7%
Reggio Calabria	4.700	838	15%
Palermo	4.017	599	12,9%
Enna	206	0	0%

Source: *Corriere della Sera* 23/02/2016

According to Table 1, it is possible to see the uneven score distribution of test results. It is undeniable that there is no comparability between the 10 exams taken into consideration in the article. These data highlight the lack of a language testing and assessment culture in Italy. These findings are most certainly connected to the involvement of test developers who lack appropriate and suitable training. «The total lack of a culture of evaluation and assessment in Italy is an incontrovertible fact, and very influential considering the impact that the (...) test could have» (Machetti, Rocca, 2017: 217).

## Conclusions

Based on our data it can be said that current CIA courses of Italian for foreigners sometimes reproduce social inequality. In fact, all of the weak points described in the paper do affect and have negative consequences on the learning and life of the more vulnerable learners. In spite of the hard work and dedication of many people who work daily at the CPIAs, it is clear that there are too many aspects which do not work. On the one hand, it appears that many of the negative points highlighted in this paper, such as the placement assessment or the final exam, are linked to the lack of suitable teacher training. It is undeniable

that CIA regulations are in need of reform and reorganisation. The requirements for being a teacher of Italian for foreigners are some of the most important aspects to be rethought. In fact, all teachers working on courses of Italian for foreigners should be required to have a degree and be appropriately qualified. On the other hand, as has been claimed on many occasions during our survey, many deficiencies in the system are linked to the lack of coherent national CIA regulations and practices. In recent years, various projects aimed at sharing good practices among the CIAs have been organised. An example of the attempts at improvement is the so-called *Piano PAIDEIA*. In any case, strong and effective action is needed. What has been done up to now is surely not enough.

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## Observing and Acting on Inequality in an After-School Service

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**Keywords:** *Educational inequality, Educational Anthropology, After-school, Educators, Critical Theory.*

### Introduction: some considerations as an anthropologist working in education

The contribution aims to share some considerations on educational inequality potentially expressed in the relationship between teachers, educators and children, observed from the context of a local public after-school service for primary school in the North East of Italy where the author has been working as an educator for more than three years. Educational settings like these can be a privileged observatory on two main aspects: what happens inside the school world, in terms of inequalities and their power dynamics involved, and what happens outside of it, in the relationship with the families and the «civil society» (Simonicca, 2011). The after-school lays in a sort 'middle land' between formal and informal educational contexts, that can be a key place for educators to try to fill up the 'gaps' left by school in terms of communication with children and families, as well as in terms of time and opportunities offered especially to the more needed kids. In this specific case, the after-school service itself has been carrying on a strategy based on educative alliance with both, implementing a network work based on a strong communication. Taking it as an example of good practice, it can be discussed the utility of this approach in similar cases, to enhance the possibility for all children to get equal opportunities to empower their abilities and to express themselves.

Coming from Anthropology and having special interest in Anthropology of Education, I'd like to contribute to the debate by sharing this highly reflexive experience with a double identity, of educator and of anthropologist, as a confirmation of the validity of the anthropological tools in the educative work.

### 1. State of the art: educational anthropology, language and inequalities

A long way has been walked since the first anthropological studies on education, schooling and language started in the Sixties in the United States, as a response to the problem of scholastic failure of minorities, when the main explanation given by Pedagogy and Education was based on the cultural deprivation of the materially deprived contexts, bringing to «linguistic deprivation» (Gumperz, Gumperz, 1996: 127). When the anthropological and linguistic studies on the human linguistic variability, showed a similar complexity for all linguistic systems and evidenced that the same cognitive capacities were required to all human groups, the sociolinguists, first of all Dell Hymes (1974), started move the interest from the grammatical and cognitive skills, to the idea of the 'communicative competence' as a whole, defined as «the ability to talk in a proper way in conformity to the norms of the context» (Gumperz, Gumperz, 1996), applying this to the scholastic context and making evident

through the decades that the linguistic choices in urban contexts were related to the cultural values and power relations.

The micro ethnography of communication in the classroom, was integrated during the Eighties and Nineties by the studies of the Nigerian anthropologist John Ogbu (1981), whose work was brought to Italy by Francesca Gobbo (1996, 2000), and by the Critical Ethnography School that systematize the attention to the broader social context where interactions take place. Ogbu's ecologic-cultural model and multilevel ethnographic approach lay on the idea of adaptation as a way of interaction between the people and their environment, observing as the relationship between school and community affects learning through the «cultural discontinuities» (1981, 1996) between the different contexts, with a differentiation of the possible trajectories for minorities depending on their voluntary or involuntary presence in the hegemonic society and by the power position of the minority group. This, matched micro and macrolevel, placing the communicative interactions to the social and institutional context where the school is collocated. Retaking the legacy of the cultural reproduction model, based on the work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and of Paul Willis (1977), the Critical Ethnography School assumes Ogbu's work but criticizes its excess of cultural determination and giving additional attention to the agency aspect, with the deep epistemological work of Peter McLaren (1993), Phil Carspecken (1996), and Bradley Levinson, Douglas Foley and Dorothy Holland (1996). Based on the pragmatist tradition of Jurgen Habermas (1981, 1987) and on the work of George Herbert Mead (1934), this approach analyses the power negotiations through the social meanings of communication with a special attention on the validity categories of the assumptions.

In evidencing the importance of agency, the Critical School assumes also the proposal of the interpretative reproduction theory of William Corsaro (1997), based on the concept of the interpretation of culture of Clifford Geertz (1973), applied it to the peer group of children toward the idea of real «children cultures» (Corsaro 1997). The importance of the acquisition of the cultural practices that gradually introduce the person to the cultural routines of its community, is also the core idea in the work of the neovygotskian researchers Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger that, in 1991, proposed their concept of «community of practice» and «legitimate peripheral participation» as ways to enter to the cultural community.

The synthesis between interpretivism, universalism of the communicative structures and the action research, that tries to conjugate the critics of power and reflexive anthropology, as explained in one of the last ethnographic works of Alessandro Simonicca (2011) in Italy, is the key aspect of the Critical Ethnography School, that we assumed as a base for our observations.

## **2. The context: an after-school service in the North East of Italy**

Our experience has been taking place during three years of work in an after-school service for primary school (children from 6 to 10 years old), in a small village in the North East of Italy. Being not a designed research, we cannot give a detailed chart of data about the composition of the group, but a general description of the context can be done.

The afterschool is a public service provided by the municipality for all families by paying a monthly fee, affordable for almost everyone. The aims of the service are both to provide a safe place to leave children for all the families that couldn't take care of them in the afternoon, and a setting for peer socialization and for doing the homework. The village is settled in a rural area of small towns, where

the ancient agricultural main activity has been integrated during the last century by small industry and, especially, services linked to the touristic sites in the coast (IRES, 2010). The population is mostly middle class and lower middleclass, but the families of the service were quite mixed. The average number of children using the service during the week was from 13 to 23, even if the subscriptions were much more. During the three years, the group has been involving several children with at least one foreign parent (from 1,5 to 2% of total subscriptions), and some Italian children coming from families in a lower socio-economical position, with an intersection in many cases of foreign origin of the family and socio-economical fragility.

### *2.1. The educational setting*

As Anthropology and Pedagogy know, we distinguish two main kinds of educational contexts: the formal contexts and the informal ones. While the school is the most important formal educational agency of the State, the family constitutes the main agency of informal education. In this sense, our after-school service appears as laying in a sort of 'midland' between the two, being it not as formal as school is, but neither a real informal educational setting, and having it the possibility of communicate in a peculiar way with both.

Our after-school takes place in the school building, which is the 'social site' of school (for the definition of sites and settings, see Carspecken 1996: 35), but has a different 'setting', since the cultural routines about movement and interactions with adults are less strict, even if a level of respect of formal rules in addressing to educators is expected. The daily routine is organized in three moments: the lunch with the surveillance of the two educators, then a time for free play, and after that the homework moment. At 4.15 pm, the families come to pick up their children, and this is usually a moment for the educators to update them about homework and about child behaviour. Since not all families have regular contacts with the educators, since some children use the school bus service and the parents do not come to school to pick them up, there's also the possibility for educators to use the children's diary to communicate with parents in written form.

## **3. Observing and acting on inequalities through communication**

### *3.1. Which type of inequalities*

In this context it is possible to observe how the relationships take place and are structured along their balances of power, and to see the effects of the structural social inequalities which have the tendency to reproduce in school and to be reinterpreted by the children. There appear to be three main aspects where some 'gaps' make evident.

1. Time. In many cases the afterschool is the only opportunity for children with some difficult to get extra time they need in order to improve their scholastic skills.

2. Communication. Many times, the two agencies, school and family, do not communicate successfully, or directly do not have a frequent communication, as the educators of our afterschool usually do.

3. Power balances in the peer group and social inclusion. About point three, many times, the social practices of children, including linguistic and communicative ones, can reaffirm the social exclusion due to economic or ethnic factors, also giving place to practices of stigmatization.

Let's focus on the second aspect.



The communication way of the teachers with parents and children appears to have a key role here. For example, even if many teachers seem to distinguish their attitude toward families only on the base of their collaborative disposition, in several cases it can be detected a discourse that operates more by 'tagging' people and situations, rather than giving a complex definition of them. Examples of this practice are the most known sentences like «He/she's not motivated, he/she doesn't want to do nothing», «He/she went to vacation to Cuba (for eg.) with the family and he came back totally....Because they live *like this*, down there». Or, the definition of the Islamic families on the base of the gender relationships that differently affects the scholastic achievement of boys and girls. It happened during our work to listen statements like «He's the little prince at home. He does anything he wants, and the sisters and mother can't say nothing». This is often linked to a sense of frustration by the teachers in the intents to have a successful communication with the family, that not always are fine. Sometimes there also can be situation that involve social services, which helps somehow the school, but the impression from the after-school service can be sometimes that of a bit aggressive attitude of the school and of an unequal attitude toward the families and parents that come from specific foreign countries (especially North African and generally Islamic countries) or that are in a very fragile socio-economical position and not cooperate. This seems to make difficult the mutual understanding or give place to a direct closing of communication from the families, as a sort of resistance to the scholastic discourse (Willis 1977, Gumperz, 1982).

It is not unusual for the educators to listen to the families complaining with about the teachers, the communication with them, or about the homework, even if the families in more fragile positions, are the less used to complain openly. It is a matter of fact that many children find right in the after-school the place to receive the educational care they need to overcome school difficulties and, especially in case of fragile conditions due to ethnicity and class position, have the same opportunities of other children to achieve in school.

### 3.2. *Acting on inequalities*

As educators, we focused especially on the communication with parents and children. First, it must be said that after-school service carried on a strategy based on a kind of educative alliance with school and families, implementing a network work based on a strong communication organized in formal and informal moments. During the interactions with kids and parents.

For children whose families had foreign origins or socioeconomical difficult positions (or both), where we witnessed to a difficulty of interaction by the school, we tried to give attention to recognize to these children the respect and role of their parents in the same way it is recognized to the others, such in the case of a second grade child (the 'little prince' we have talked about) whose parents were from a Balkan country, that was very participative but that in a period was getting many disciplinary notices in school. This is an example of linguistic choices that, as educator, I made to reinforce at the same time the positive image of the teacher and the role of the parents: «You worked hard this year, [...] it is a damage to spoil everything. Your teacher cares of you and I confide in you, so it is important that you make an effort [...] and that mom and dad read your diary, so they can help you if you need and they now what you do». In this case, even if of course there can be many reasons for what a kid does not involve the parents in the school events, taking in consideration the family context and trying to model the communication on these needs, the child's behaviour had some positive change.



An important indicator of a good result of this network methodology, was the general positive evaluation of the service by teachers and families at the end of the school year.

## Conclusions

In this empiric experience, it appeared quite effective as changes in attitude and in communication ways of educators, can help to change the behaviours of children and the relationship with the families, working on inequalities, power and on opportunities to access school abilities for everyone. The strategy based on educative alliances between educational agencies and on network work, seems to be a good way to pursue for the future. Taking it as an example of good practice, it can be valued the utility of this approach in similar cases, to enhance the possibility for all children to get equal opportunities and to express themselves.

We also point out the importance of self-consciousness of our own bias, prejudices and tendencies as educators, in interacting with the children, inviting continuing and to deepen the dialogue and cooperation between the pedagogical disciplines and Anthropology, as a tool to improve the educative work.

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## School guidance and school choice of students aged 11 to 14. Research Design

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**Keywords:** *School guidance, Scholastic choices, School inequalities.*

### Introduction

The study aims to analyse the phenomenon of school guidance and scholastic choices of students between the first and second grade of secondary school according to guidance strategies implemented by the various subjects involved in the choice of training paths. At a European level, the emphasis on educational guidance is set by the Lisbon 2000 Strategy which, with the purpose of lowering the school dropout rate, aims at the general improvement of education systems. In Italy, by contrast, the law introduced compulsory scholastic orientation as early as *Riforma della scuola media unica* in 1962, making the board of guidance effective<sup>1</sup> with the D.P.R. n. 362 of May 14, 1966 which in art. 2, paragraph 2 states « the class council expresses, for those admitted to the exam, a guidance suggestion on the subsequent choices of each candidate, motivating it with a non-binding opinion». This was followed by numerous legislative and institutional initiatives aimed at affirming the importance of scholastic orientation as a long-term strategy for preventing and combating school dropout. The paper starts with some theoretical considerations and subsequently explains the methodological decisions adopted for the study of scholastic orientation to assess how the phenomenon is linked to the reproduction of scholastic inequality.

### 1. Reference literature

In developed countries the participation in second and third grade education has gradually increased, but this does not mean that school inequalities have disappeared. The increase in participation and the expansion of education systems can be attributed to a constellation of economic, social and cultural factors that have facilitated this development. At the macro level, governments have implemented increasingly complex and universalistic education systems with the aim of increasing the workforce and economic growth; while at the micro level families and individuals, assisted by a thriving economy, have invested more time and financial resources in education. These factors have certainly allowed access to education for a large number of people. But, despite the opening of the school system and the increase in participation, which have favoured the social promotion of all groups — even of young people with a low social background —, the occupational destinies and scholastic trajectories of students are still affected by the influence of social origins. Some studies (Barone,

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<sup>1</sup> The orientation council is an administrative act taking place between the months of November and December with teachers expressing a non-binding opinion on the most appropriate high school for the student. This judgment must be provided in time to enrol in high school, is formulated through the compilation of some indicative assessment forms and communicated to the families through a letter or through the individual interviews that are held every year on the occasion of the delivery of the report card of the votes.

2005, 2006; Ballarino and Schadee, 2006; Checchi, 2010) demonstrate a decrease in the primary effect of family origins (especially from socio-cultural capital) on educational outcomes; while other researchers (Panichella and Triventi, 2014; Parziale and Vatrella, 2018) confirm the secondary effect that the class of origin has on the choice of the school, especially the secondary school of second grade, and more generally on the scholastic path of scholars with different social origins.

Within the limited frame of this article it is not possible to reconstruct the vast literature about scholastic inequalities<sup>2</sup>. Taking into account successful attempts to integrate the different theoretical coordinates (Parziale, 2016), we chose bourdieusian and boudonian theoretical perspectives for our study.

Bourdieu's structural and conflictual approach has been taken up by authors such as Andersen (2010) and, more recently, Romito (2014) and particularly emphasize the weight of social origins on success and scholastic choices. School reproduces inequalities through processes of self-exclusion and selection by teachers that lower educational aspirations and constrain pupils' choices to 'less prestigious' paths based on class belonging (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970). Others (Breen, 1999; Morgan, 2005; Breen, Yaish, 2006; Barone et al., 2018) bind to the rational choice model of Boudon that underlines the link between 1) the socio-economic and cultural conditions connected to the family background and 2) the school choice conditioned by class aspirations.

## 2. Hypothesis and research questions

The study focuses on the scholastic choice that takes place between the lower secondary and upper secondary school. Different motivations led to this decision. First of all, the scholastic transition is subject to little research; many authors consider the choice from upper secondary school to the university more interesting to define social destiny. Few authors, on the other hand, emphasize the fact that the choice is made before: precisely during the transition from lower secondary school to upper secondary school, children decide between high school and professional school, which greatly impacts their opportunities regarding an academic career and the highest qualified job. It presents a crucial choice because of the multiple factors (individual, relational and contextual) that define the social and professional destinies of young people aged 11 to 14 years. Even before enrolling at university, it is the transition from middle school to secondary school that defines the chances of continuing the studies (Bratti *et al.*, 2007; Checchi, 2010). The scholastic orientation, although addressed by good intentions on the part of the teaching staff, responds most often to logics that reinforce the reproduction of inequalities (Boone, Van Houtte, 2013).

Overall, the reference literature on school inequalities calls into play several factors, mostly extra-scholastic (economic, cultural, social), which influence the orientation counsellor and the choice of a high school and proposes a reading of the scholastic choice through mechanisms of social reproduction that are linked to ascribed characteristics of individuals. The present study instead focuses on the role of the school and of the orientation activities in the choices of direction towards high school, conceiving the orientation both in its function of self-empowerment and social promotion.

The study is guided mainly by two hypotheses: 1) Socio-cultural capital influences orientation and school choice paths; 2) The scholastic orientation is able, even if in a small part, to modify the expectations and the decisions of the

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<sup>2</sup> Eg. we have not mentioned the genetic and structuralist perspective of Parsons and many others.

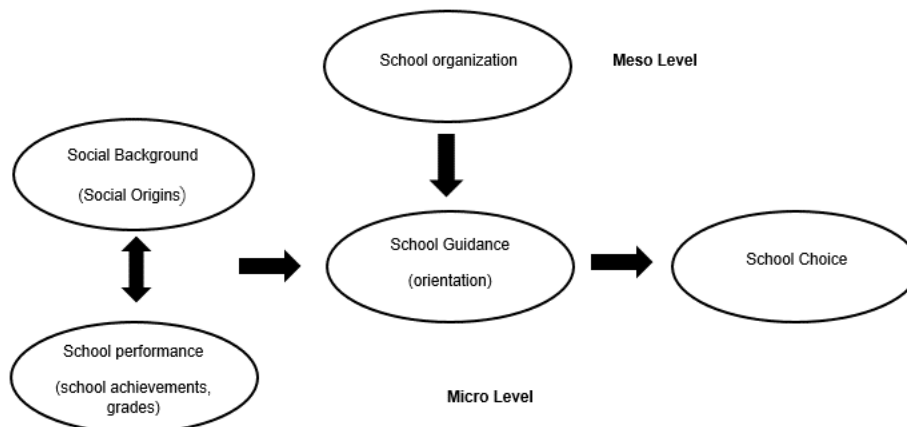
educational path. Ultimately, some of the questions the study aims to answer are: 1) Does school reproduce inequalities? 2) Are educational guidance practices contributing to differentiation in school choices and are they able to explain the low social mobility of the most disadvantaged classes? 3) Does the school fulfil its function of social promotion encouraging students' social mobility? If yes, for whom, in what contexts and under what conditions?

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Analysis model

According to many studies and classical theoretical frameworks, the analysis model predicts that social background and school performance are related: the highest background is linked to high achievements in school. Both social background and school performance influence the school guidance (or rather the school council) that student receive and that then determines the school choice. But this model, as visible below, also assumes that the kind of school organization is able to modulate different school guidance practices creating inequalities.

FIGURE. 1. Research model



#### 3.2. Research steps

In order to analyse the model previously explained, the research design involves the collection of information through a mixed strategy able to integrate data collected through quantitative tools (survey through structured questionnaire) and qualitative tools (semi-structured interviews and document analysis).

The first step of the research is to analyse the school documents (*Piano offerta formativa, Rapporto autovalutazione etc.*). The second consists of interview with teachers and counsellors in order to understand the mechanisms of formulating the school advice if children should go to high school or professional school; then, two student surveys will be conducted. The surveys will be held both before the choice has been made and after the advice by school counsels has been received, but before enrolment in the upper secondary school system. Lastly, it is also planned to interview some parents of children who have not followed the advice they received in order to understand the class aspirations these parents have for their children.

### 3.3. Sampling procedure

The case selection strategy has posed quite a few issues since the beginning of the research. First, the choice of the survey context (local, national and international) has raised doubts about the feasibility of a research design that foresees numerous, spatially distant points of detection. Previous studies show that the size of the area of residence is among the characteristics that influence schooling (Checchi, 2010)<sup>3</sup>. In addition, the use of dialect language is also associated with the area of residence, which inevitably affects the vote in Italian language<sup>4</sup>. The area of residence and its size therefore involve the possibility of activating different routes based on the territorial context to which they belong.

Given limited resources (human, economic, logistical) it was decided to limit the scope of study to the Municipality of Rome. Right from the start, however, this caused difficulties imposed by this area's enormous territorial dimension (128.00 hectares), but above all by its complex and articulated socio-demographic reality. The data provided by the Statistical Office of the Municipality of Rome for the year 2016 show the image of a densely populated area (2,235.78 inhabitants per square kilometre) where the population varies according to the area, higher where economic and cultural activities are concentrated while lower towards the periphery<sup>5</sup>. It is also a municipality with a high internal differentiation, both in terms of economic and social well-being, including areas with a high concentration of poverty and foreign population where forms of social segregation are evident.

Taking into consideration only the data of secondary schools of the first degree surveyed by the Regional Scholastic Office of Lazio and geo-referenced on *Scuola in Chiaro*, 186 schools, heterogeneous for socio-structural characteristics (number of enrolled students, classes and complex dimensions but also social background etc.), are distributed in a non-uniform manner throughout the Roman territory. The context of study is therefore highly differentiated both territorially and internally of the schools.

In light of these reflections, various hypotheses were therefore examined for a sampling strategy able to give an account of the complexity of the Roman territory and of educational institutions, as well as of some characteristics considered relevant in the literature about scholastic orientation. We proceeded to think about a possible cluster sampling which allows us to select first the schools then the third classes of the institutes. However, for the study it was then decided to use a factorial typological sampling that allows to combine the territorial and social diversity of schools.

Escs (an index of economic, social and cultural capital of the family of children elaborated by INVALSI) has been selected as the first criterion. INVALSI provided the average ESCS for each municipality of Rome, so each municipality was divided into five clusters depending on the change in ESCS value (Table 1).

As second criterion, an organizational capacity index was built from financial capacity and technological equipment variables derived from the *Rav-rapporto autovalutazione*.

<sup>3</sup> Larger municipalities offer more training and more opportunities for socio-work placement.

<sup>4</sup> The vote in Italian language as shown by some research on scholastic orientation (Checchi, 2010a; Romito, 2016) influences the orientation opinion to the extent that a high school recommendation is associated with good grades.

<sup>5</sup> For example, the XV Municipality is the least populous with 854.14 inhabitants per kmq, second to the IX with 993.00 inhabitants.

**TABLE. 1. Escs ranking classes**

Municipality	Escs	
II	0,83	High score
I	0,77	
VIII	0,56	Medium-High score
IX	0,49	
XII	0,44	Medium score
III	0,37	
XV	0,34	
VII	0,30	Medium-Low score
X	0,23	
XIV	0,17	
XIII	0,17	
IV	0,12	Low score
XI	0,04	
V	0,00	
VI	-0,2	

Sources: re-elaboration on data from Invalsi

Despite these considerations, the sampling procedure was changed flexibly in order to respond optimally to the various research questions that have arisen from the literature analysis. Taking into account resilient students, who choose alternative routes despite their family background, suggested a different sampling procedure. Information on the rate of children who choose to follow the advice the school gives them has been extracted from the Rav reports. In this way, a typological index was created to reduce the space of attributes that allowed us to choose schools based on the socio-territorial conditions they belong to, but also to characterize the schools themselves in terms of the correspondence of the formative judgment offered to their own students. In particular, it seems promising to select schools that have a greater number of students deviating from the suggestions to understand the underlying reasons.

#### **4. Expected outcomes and limits**

The study is still ongoing. The expected (and desired) outcomes should highlight 1) the influence of socio-cultural capital on the paths of orientation and scholastic choice as well as 2) the effect of school guidance practices on expectations and decisions, to understand interacting mechanisms and encourage young people of different social groups to enroll in institutions aligned with their needs and interests, taking into account the received counselling.

Regarding the limits and future developments, the project examines the orientation phenomenon exclusively at the time of the choice, or in the time span between the end of the upper secondary school and enrolment in high school, without following the school path before the third year and after the first year of high school. It is not possible to know if a student was already leaning towards a choice before the third year of school. But it is possible to introduce retrospective questions in the questionnaire to detect a possible change of choice compared to the years preceding the third. The decision of the scholastic path — according to the previous literature and the informed judgments of the teachers — is determined by few persons. Since it is generally postponed to the last year

of middle school, in which the push of parents, teachers and the open day activities of the higher institutes lead to a reflection on the possibilities of choice, it is unlikely that students form clear ideas of their scholastic path already in the previous years.

What appears far more problematic, however, is not knowing what happens during and after the first year of high school, since children can decide to change schools with respect to the orientation received in the eighth grade. They can continue with difficulty or with success and, in the worst case, after completing the obligatory education, may decide to abandon the studies. Therefore, follow-up surveys are needed to follow the students' career even during and after the first year of enrolment in high school.

Further developments of this investigation are in the direction of strengthening the number of case studies and, therefore, towards the possibility of generalizing research results to a broader context. The objectives and analyses are limited to the Roman territory and, given their validity and relevance, the results lack the necessary strength to be generalized to other contexts and to other schools uninvolved in the sample. In a perspective of continuation and expansion of the investigation, therefore, a comparison at a European and transnational level is desirable, where the various educational institutions respond to logics that are distant from the Italian context. For example, the adoption of formal criteria (Checchi, Flabbi, 2007) or particularly innovative orientation strategies (Batini, Giusti, 2008) may give rise to terms of comparisons based on the territorial contexts to which they belong.

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## Divided We Stand? Immigrants' and Natives' Decision-Making Processes at First Tracking in Italy

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**Keywords:** *Children of immigrants, Educational choices, Tracking, School context, Aspirations*

### Introduction and state of the art

Students from similar social backgrounds tend to attend similar schools. While this pattern is common to many industrialized countries, the degree of school segregation is positively associated with the institutional practice of tracking (Blossfeld et al., 2016). Tracking consists of sorting students into different types of education according to their purported aptitudes and interests. It is especially when tracking takes place between different school buildings, as it is commonly the case in Europe, that school social segregation is higher (Chmielewski, 2014).

Indeed, the influence of socio-economic status (SES) on track placement is an established finding of educational research (Brunello and Checchi, 2007; Blossfeld et al., 2016). Following Boudon (1974), SES effects on educational transitions, including track placement, are often understood as partly mediated by school performance (primary effects) and partly operating independently of it (secondary effects). The latter are intuitively more disturbing because they concern students with a similar record of school performance (hence, presumably, a similar academic potential) who are either held back or pushed forward by their family origin. Secondary effects are stronger in educational systems where tracking allocation allows more room for free choice (Contini, Scagni, 2011; Dollmann, 2016). This is in line with the theoretical argument that, *ceteris paribus*, low-SES students and their families tend to make less ambitious choices than their high-SES counterparts because of relative risk aversion and imperfect information on the costs and the difficulty of prolonged schooling (Breen, Goldthorpe, 1997).

When it comes to migration background, the implications of tracking are less straightforward. On the one hand, research has shown important «ethnic penalties» in educational achievement all over Europe (Heath, 2008; Borgna, 2017), Immigrant students generally perform quite poorly in school compared to native students; this is partly due to their less favorable socio-economic conditions, but not completely, as they also face an additional disadvantage specific to their migration status.

At the same time, however, several studies have found that children of immigrants tend to have higher educational aspirations and to make more ambitious track choices than comparable natives (e.g. Brinbaum, Cebolla Boado, 2007; Van de Werfhorst, Van Tubergen, 2007). In other words, once accounting for compositional differences in terms of SES and previous achievement, secondary effects seem to work to the advantage, and not to the disadvantage, of immigrants (Jackson et al., 2012; Dollmann, 2016). The higher educational aspirations of second-generation immigrants could reflect the upward social mobility ambitions of their parents (Kao and Tienda, 1995) or be due to a poor

knowledge of the destination country's educational system (Kao and Tienda, 1998).

In Italy, the role of migratory background for track placement has been investigated by a few studies: immigrant students appear generally overrepresented in technical and vocational tracks, even net of SES and school performance differentials (Barban, White, 2011; Contini, Azzolini, 2015). The Italian case might therefore be an exception to the pattern of positive secondary effects documented in other European countries with a longer history of immigration. However, these studies are based on data from the 2000s: since then, the immigrant student population has undergone major changes: in 20 years, students with foreign nationality went from 0.7% to 9.4% of the student population and today more than 60% of them are second-generation immigrants (MIUR, 2018). Against this background, the current paper addresses two related research questions: firstly, we ask whether secondary effects are (still) negative for immigrant students in Italy. Secondly, we explore the role of school guidance in the educational decision-making of immigrant and native students. Previous research has indeed shown that in Italy teacher recommendations, although not binding, suffer from a significant social bias and contribute to reinforce SES secondary effects (Argentin et al., 2017).

## 1. Data and methods

To address our research questions, we focus on a case study of relatively 'mature' settlement: our empirical analyses are based on a rich administrative dataset on the population of eight-graders of Turin during the school year 2017/18 (N=7,180). Data access was made possible thanks to a cooperation agreement with the City of Turin and its school-guidance service (*COSP*). This service involves the vast majority (60/61) of public and private lower-secondary schools. Students take the test in the spring of seventh grade or in the fall of eighth grade, during school hours. Shortly after, they receive a track recommendation jointly elaborated by the school guidance professionals and teachers. The dataset is collected as part of this process and contains students' expressed track intention and track recommendation. It also contains information on students' background (including gender, nationality, parental education and occupation), school performance (grade repetition and self-assessed school grades), occupational aspirations, and test scores on five areas of cognition and motivational aspects.

By merging this dataset with school administrative records, we linked the track intention that students express before the test to the recommendation they receive after it and to the actual choice they make in the winter of eighth grade.

Unfortunately, the data does not contain the place of birth of students or their parents, so we cannot directly distinguish first- and second-generation immigrants. As a second best, we classify foreign-national students who score below the tenth percentile in the linguistic test as newly arrived first-generation immigrants. We consider those who score above the tenth percentile as second-generation immigrants or first-generation immigrants who arrived during childhood (generation 1.75)<sup>6</sup>.

Our main independent variable combines migratory status and cultural capital: we define categories based on nationality and generational status and on whether at least one parent attained a tertiary degree. In our main analyses, we

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that students self-assess their nationality, so some second-generation immigrants – possibly the ones who feel more integrated – could assess themselves as Italian.

retain only the categories with sufficient sample sizes: high-cultural-capital natives (ITA-Hi), low-cultural-capital natives (ITA-Low), low-cultural-capital second-generation immigrants (G2-Low), and low-cultural-capital first-generation immigrants (G1-Low).

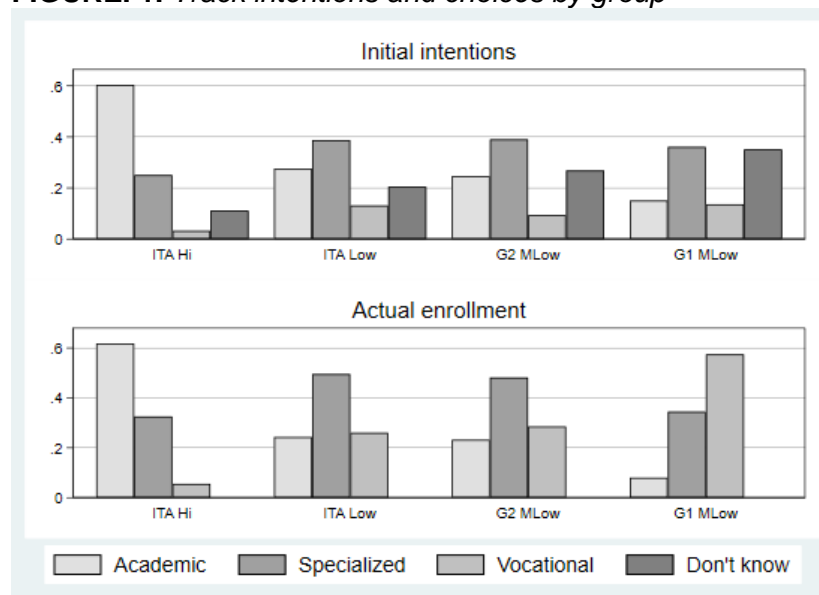
Our main dependent variable is track choice, which we operationalize as an ordinal variable with four categories: academic (traditional lyceums), specialized (other lyceums and technical schools), vocational schools, and vocational training programs. This categorization is based on the prestige generally assigned to the different tracks and the chances they open in terms of access to university and labor-market integration. After some basic descriptive analyses, we run logistic models on the probability to choose a non-vocational track for the four main groups. Our models control for gender, parental occupation, cognitive test scores, grade repetition, grade point average (GPA), and lower-secondary-school-fixed-effects. We present results as predicted probabilities for reasonable student profiles.

A second step of analyses delves deeper into the educational decision-making process: firstly, we model track intentions, operationalized following the same logic of track choice. Secondly, we model the probability of receiving a downward recommendation with respect to the expressed track intention. Thirdly, we model the probability to comply with such (non-binding) downward recommendation.

### 3. Results

Our first descriptive analyses (Figure 1) compare initial track intentions with the eventual track choices by group: at the moment of the test, a significant proportion of students still do not know where to enrol: indecision is quite high among non-privileged Italian natives, and even higher among second- and first-generation immigrants.

**FIGURE 1.** *Track intentions and choices by group*



Source: authors' elaboration from COSP and school-record data.

By comparing the two distributions, we notice a cooling down of aspirations for all groups except for the ITA-Hi, especially marked for first-generation

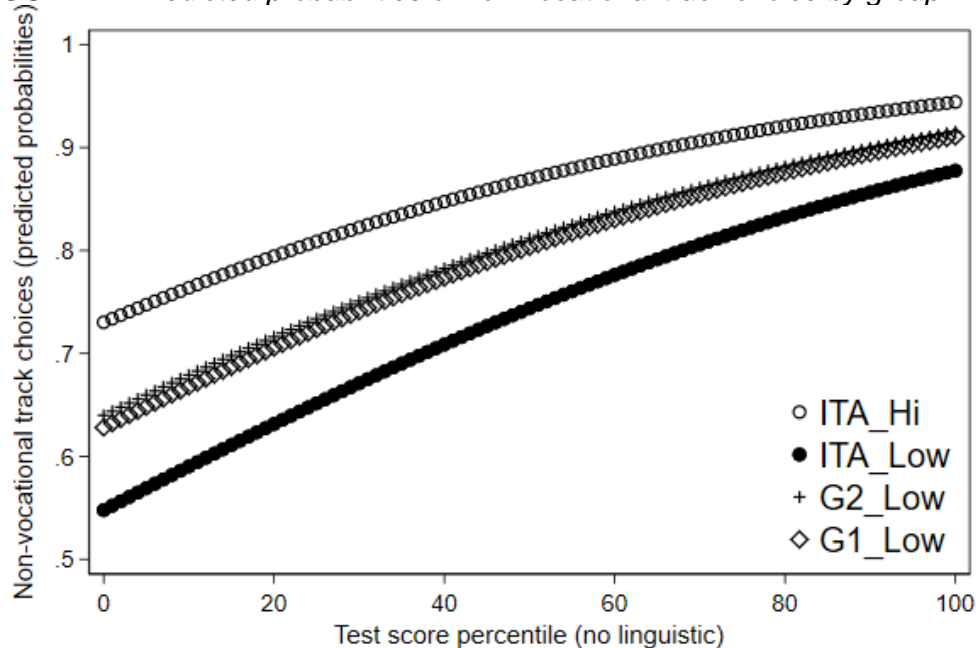
students. The pattern of intentions and choices of natives and second-generation immigrants with an equally low level of cultural capital is remarkably similar.

Additional descriptive analyses reveal that first- and second-generation immigrants with high cultural capital are somehow more ambitious than those with low cultural capital. However, in line with previous research (e.g. Leopold and Shavit, 2013; Borgna and Contini, 2014) parental education seems to make less of a difference for immigrant students than it does for natives. In terms of test scores (excluding the linguistic component), the G2, irrespective of their cultural capital level, perform similarly to the ITA-Low, while the G1 score extremely low.

### 2.1. Are secondary effects still negative for immigrant students?

To address our first research question, of whether immigrant students (still) make less ambitious track choices than similar natives, we move to a multivariate framework. Figure 2 displays the predicted probabilities of enrolling in a non-vocational track (either academic or specialized) for our four groups by different test score levels. The probabilities refer to male<sup>7</sup> students who come from low-SES families and have an average school performance record (GPA=7/10, no grade repetition). The model includes lower-secondary-school-fixed-effects, because we found evidence for very large school effects.

FIGURE. 2. Predicted probabilities of non-vocational track choice by group



Source: authors' elaboration from COSP and school-record data.

Our analyses show that immigrants make *more* ambitious track choices than comparable natives. More precisely, net of compositional differences (in terms of social class and prior achievement) both G1-low and G2-low are less prone than ITA-High, but more than ITA-Low to opt for a non-vocational track. The differential with ITA-Low is not statistically significant for first-generation immigrants, possibly due to the small sample size of this group (N=205).

In contrast to what found by previous studies on Italy, but in line with the international literature, we therefore find evidence for *positive* secondary effects for immigrant students, at least of second generation.

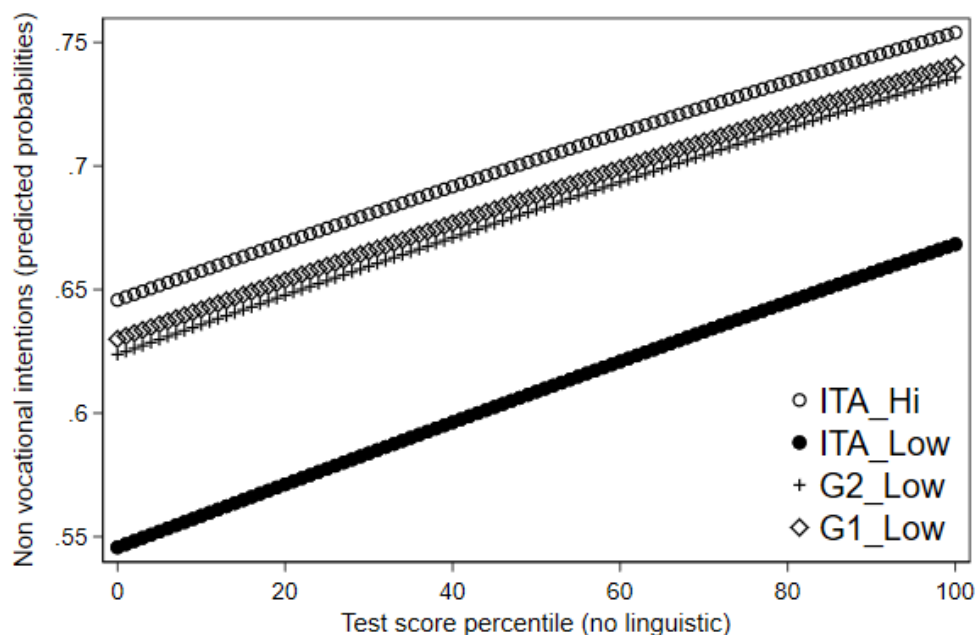
<sup>7</sup> The pattern is the same for female students.

## 2.2. What role for school guidance?

Our second research question concerns the role of school guidance and in particular how track recommendations intervene in the transformation of the initial intention into the actual track choice, which – as seen above – appears to be a cooling-down process for all groups except for the ITA-High.

As a first step, we analyze initial intentions to seize between-group differentials net of confounding factors. Figure 3 displays the predicted probabilities to state a preference for an academic or specialized track, as opposed to a vocational track or stating no preference.

**FIGURE 3.** Predicted probabilities of non-vocational track intention by group



Source: authors' elaboration from COSP data.

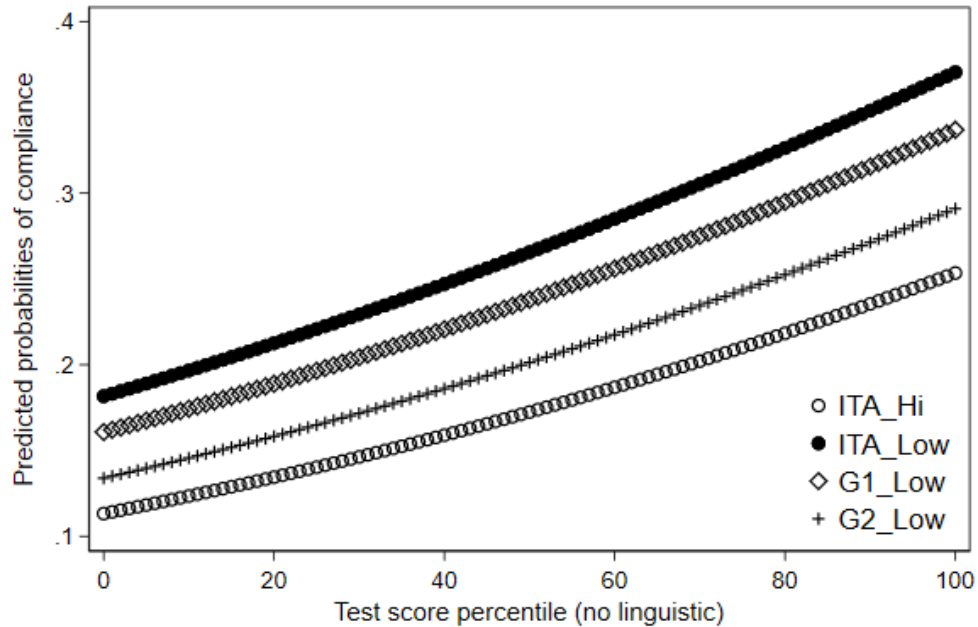
It is evident that immigrant students start off as far more ambitious than natives: net of compositional differences, both G1-Low and G2-Low do not differ significantly from ITA-High. This pattern could reflect higher educational and occupational aspirations, but also a lack of information on the Italian school system (Kao, Tienda, 1995, 1998). Either way, the divide between immigrant and native students of low cultural capital is higher in the initial intentions than in the actual choices. It is therefore sensible to investigate whether school guidance might divert immigrant students away from their initially higher aspirations.

Based on our analyses on track recommendations (not shown here), we are able to characterize Turin school guidance system as overall restraining, but subject to little or inexistent bias. G2n students are slightly more likely to receive a recommendation lower than the initial intentions but, given that the latter are very ambitious, for this group there is clearly more room for downward guidance.

The relatively unbiased nature of school guidance does not rule out the possibility that some groups are diverted away from their initial intentions. Our last set of analyses investigates this possibility by modelling the compliance with a downward recommendation. ITA-High have a very low likelihood to follow a downward recommendation, while ITA-Low are much more likely to comply; G2 display an intermediate pattern (Figure 4). This lower compliance could be a

sign of resilient ambitions but could also reflect a lack of trust in the school institution.

**FIGURE 4.** Predicted probabilities to follow a downward recommendation



Source: authors' elaboration from COSP and school-record data.

## Conclusions and outlook

To sum up, we find large gaps between high- and low-cultural-capital natives in terms of initial intentions and actual choices. In contrast, among low-cultural-capital students, natives and second-generation immigrants are descriptively very similar. Once accounting for compositional differences, especially in terms of previous achievement, secondary effects to the disadvantage of lower-cultural capital natives persist, while second-generation immigrants stand out as highly ambitious, in line with the international literature (e.g. Brinbaum and Cebolla Boado, 2007; Jackson et al., 2012). Our next step of analysis will explore the role of occupational aspirations to explain these differentials. Interestingly, between-group differences do not seem to result from biased school guidance, but rather from different compliance behaviors with respect to the (non-binding) recommendations. This is in contrast with previous findings on teacher-assigned recommendations (Argentin et al., 2017) and warrants future research on the role of professional guidance to reduce inequality.

Finally, future research should investigate whether the ambitious choices taken by immigrant students place them in a more precarious situation in terms of school failure and dropout, or whether, in contrast, their higher aspirations are able to protect them from such risks.

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## Territorial Differences: What Role Does School Play?

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**Keywords:** *Ibji, School, Inequality, Policy Making, Gis*

### Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to present certain thoughts prompted by a research project on youth policy in the Pianura Est social services-health district of the Bologna metropolitan area which is still under way. In particular, from the starting point of the then Bologna province school observatory, we consider the impact of the area's structural conditions on delayed study progression and school commuting. The underlying hypothesis is that territorial differences impact on the effects of school socio-cultural segregation – by amplifying or tempering them – and consequently the opportunities of students from various contexts to break free of these in an educational demand mechanism generated by supply.

### 1. The territorial bases of school malaise

School study progression delays and repeat years are indicators of difficulties which frequently lead onto students dropping out of school early. Analyses of this phenomenon have identified various conditions, both exogenous and endogenous to school, which can make the difference. Studies on the school dropout phenomenon have highlighted that a combination of pupils' social and territorial origins can generate apparently similar malaise which requires diverse solutions, however (MIUR, 2000). In fact, whilst it is true that low educational levels in students' families of origin are the primary element to be taken into account, it is also true that it is not always specific to marginal economic contexts, especially in Northern Italy. In territorial terms the effects of school commuting are especially significant, too, leading to socio-cultural segregation dynamics in towns, on one hand (Rangvid, 2007; Santangelo *et al.*, 2019), and, on the other and above all in the large cities, reducing the effectiveness of support action requiring action across areas cutting across individual local body and individual school jurisdictions. These, so to speak, exogenous factors are supplemented by endogenous elements linked to individual cases.

Lastly, it is important to bear specific educational context features and diverse study specialisms in mind, together with the influence these can have on success at school (Giullari and Rossi, 2015). What has been briefly outlined here is the framework in which the analysis put forward here relating to school progression delays and commuting is to be contextualised from the starting point of the specific characteristics of the territorial origins of Distretto Socio Sanitario di Pianura Est (DSS) students.

## 2. The Pianura Est social services-health district

The area is made up of 15 towns and has a population of 159,000, less than 16% of the Bologna metropolitan area. The district is demographically dynamic with a growth in population of 9.5% since 2007 and a lower average age than the city as a whole. There are, however, signs of negative demographic trends characterised by an ageing population (the dependent elderly rose from 32% to 35.5% of the population from 2011 to 2016) and a declining birth rate (-24.2% since 2007).

Two characteristic features of the area of enquiry must be taken into account for the purposes of this analysis: on one hand, its size, and on the other, its marked internal differentiation. It is, in fact, made up of 15 towns stretching from the first Bologna city area ring to the northern-most margin of the metropolitan area. These towns are linked to the provincial capital and each other primarily via the north-south Bologna-Ferrara railway line, to the west, and Bologna Porto Maggiore to the east with the Bologna Padua motorway to the centre, parallel to the Bologna-Ferrara section of the Porrettana road (SS 64). Lastly, and in extreme synthesis, it is on the north-south axis that the main differentiation between towns is to be found. Demographically speaking, the northernmost towns are the least densely populated, have higher immigrant population levels and markedly lower incomes. The southernmost towns, on the other hand, are better served with educational institutions.

## 3. Methods

The data used for this study are those supplied by the Bologna province school observatory directly to the schools from the last 2007-8 school term to the first 2012-2013 school term (see Giullari and Rossi's report of 2014; and 2015 for further analyses performed on the same data). Every school year was reconstructed from the starting point of quarterly surveys. As regards territory, analysis relates to the pupils of schools present in the area and/or resident in one of the district's towns. From the 1,493,309 records available, the school progression of 27,541 pupils were reconstructed from when they entered the IT system's 'visual field' (T<sub>0</sub>) to the moment they left (T<sub>n</sub>). The school population is made up of 50.8% boys and 84.8% Italian citizens. Pupils with non-European citizenship constitute 12.7% of the population.

## 4. Study regularity

As we mentioned in our methodology note, the data available to us enabled us to identify coherence between pupil age and school year at the moment of entry (T<sub>0</sub>) and exit (T<sub>n</sub>) from what we have called the IT system's 'visual field'. Conditions at T<sub>0</sub> and at T<sub>n</sub> determine four kind of trajectories. The coherent trajectory represents constant coherence in entry and exit (64%). At the opposite extreme is constant incoherent trajectories in which pupil age corresponds to school year at neither T<sub>0</sub> nor T<sub>n</sub> (23.8%). This condition is more common amongst pupils of non-Italian European (57.1%) and non-European origin (48%), while it accounts for 19.5% of Italian pupils. Incoherent entry and coherent exit represent trajectories which were modified during schooling, perhaps via remedial courses (0.4%). Lastly, coherent entry and incoherent exit represent the onset of difficulty en route (11.3%). This affects Italian pupils, primarily (11.9%) while it accounts for less than 10% of students of European

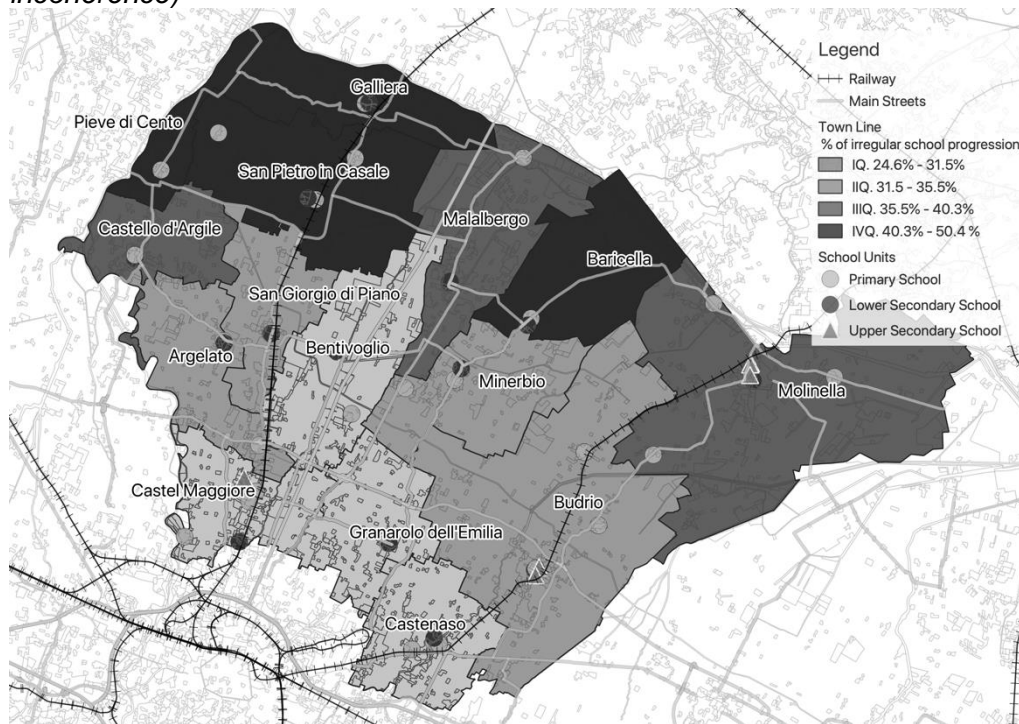
(4.8%) and non-European (9%) origin. The map in figure 1 shows forms of constant and progressive irregularity with marked territorial connotations.

The highest irregularity levels are, in fact, to be found in the suburban towns in the III and IV quartiles. Whilst constant irregularity and that developing en route are different and can be prompted by diverse conditions, the towns considered show a greater incidence of irregularity of both types. In the towns in the II quartile, on the other hand, the irregularity developed en route is visible on the lower levels or those not much higher than the entire area's average. In the I quartile, lastly, irregularity is lower than average in both cases. The only exception is Castel Maggiore, where the incidence of irregularity is slightly higher than the area's average (24.4% as against 23.8%). The higher incidence of non-Italian pupils in this quartile, amongst whom late entry is more frequent, must be taken into account, however.

The development of difficulties during schooling is a risk characteristic of certain specific stages such as that between one educational cycle and the next. For this reason, the incidence of irregularity en route is less frequent among primary school pupils (Figure 2). It then increases amongst secondary school pupils, above all in middle school, where difficulties for those who entered late prevail, and the professional schools.

From the type of school attended perspective, it should be borne in mind that, in the towns closest to Bologna, post middle school secondary school percentages are up to 49% and high schools are the most commonly chosen. By contrast, in the towns furthest from the provincial capital, the secondary school population is less than 20% of the total and professional and technical schools are the most common choice.

**Figure 1:** Territorial distribution of irregular trajectories (constant and en route incoherence)

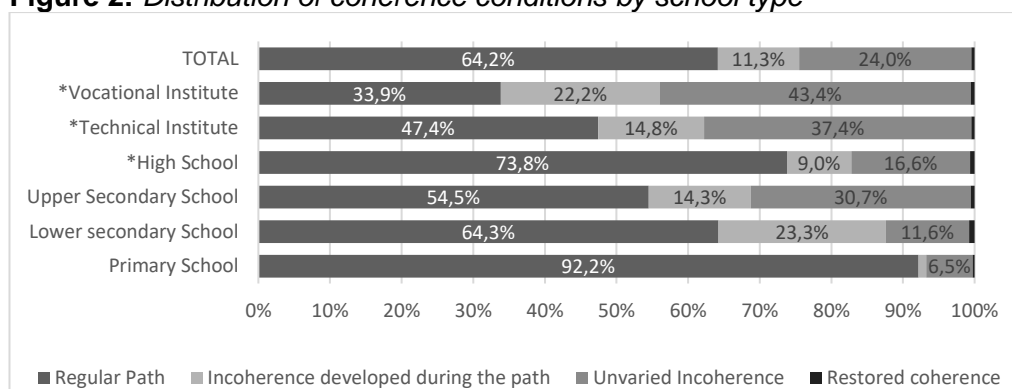


source: our elaboration from Osservatorio Provinciale sulla Scolarità data.

The data available to us highlights that, whilst it is true that the two types of irregularity are different, very high levels tend to be mutually reinforcing and risk generating a climate of cultural segregation which, in the case of this district,

accompanies economic marginalisation. The towns in the northern part of the DSS, in fact, are those in which percentages of pupils of non-Italian origin are higher but they are also those with the lowest schooling and income levels and the highest percentages of inactive under-24 year-olds both in employment and educational terms.

**Figure 2: Distribution of coherence conditions by school type**



\* It's part of Upper Secondary School

source: our elaboration from Osservatorio Provinciale sulla Scolarità data.

## 5. School commuting

In the period considered by the school observatory, school commuting in the DSS towns grew more rapidly than the school population. When the first 2008-09 school year records were taken, 4,689 pupils were commuting while the first records for 2012-13 showed 6,780 commuters. This is a 44.6% increase while the overall school population increased by 11.4%. This phenomenon increased more for foreign than for Italian pupils. In the face of an increase in the non-Italian school population of 29%, the number of commuting foreign students rose 78.6%. The corresponding figures for Italian school pupils were 8.9% and 42.1%. Net of variations, then, observing the distribution of the phenomenon as a whole, it is more frequent among Italians than foreigners, higher amongst students attending the higher school years and higher amongst foreigners attending the higher school years than amongst Italians in these same school years (Table 1).

In the absence of specific data on the reasons for pupils' school choices and limiting our analysis to state school pupils only, the specific characteristics of school commuting in the DSS area are markedly affected by towns' structural and demographic features. On one hand, in fact, such movements are prompted by structural weaknesses and non-homogeneous distribution of school buildings (Grossi *et al.*, 2005). On the other hand, whilst Bologna has no ghettos (Bergamaschi, 2012), it is in the towns furthest from Bologna that the district's greatest poverty is to be found.

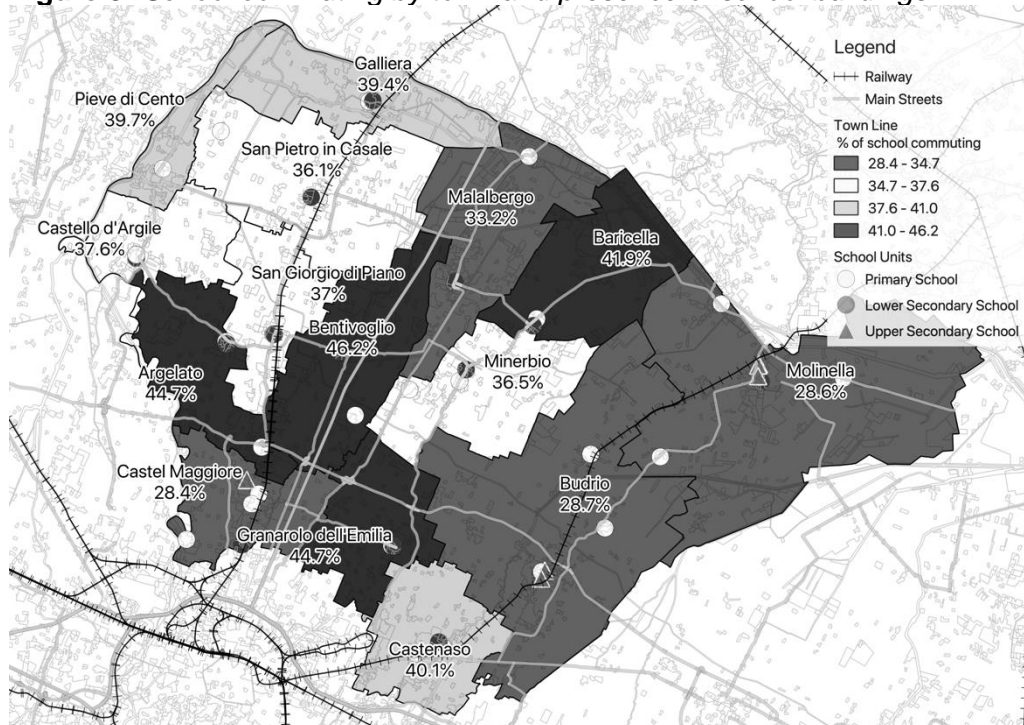
The map in figure 3 shows that the towns with fewer commuting students are those with more schools, above all if secondary schools are considered. Towns with fewer commuting pupils are Castel Maggiore (28.4%), Molinella (28.6%) and Budrio (28.7%) which are also the only towns with their own secondary schools. With 33.2% of students commuting, Malalbergo is the only town in the first quartile (identified relative to the presence of commuting students) without a secondary school and it is also the town with the lowest number of students attending secondary school.

**Table 1: School commuting by type of school and school year (first quarter each year)**

School Year	Citizenship	Not Com-muter	Commuter	Kind of commuter school		
				Primary school	Lower Sec-ondary School	Secondary school
2008-2009	Italian	95.0%	5%	12.2%	10.2%	77.5%
	EU	97.7%	2.3%	11.1%	13.3%	75.6%
	Non-EU	97.3%	2.7%	8.0%	6.2%	85.9%
	Total	95.3%	4.7%	12%	10%	78.0%
2009-2010	Italian	93.5%	6.5%	9.6%	7.9%	82.6%
	EU	97.0%	3.0%	7.8%	9.4%	82.8%
	Non-EU	96.6%	3.4%	7.5%	5.4%	87.1%
	Total	93.9%	6.1%	9.4%	7.7%	82.8%
2010-2011	Italian	93.9%	6.1%	9.9%	8.0%	82.0%
	EU	96.5%	3.5%	8.5%	7.3%	84.1%
	Non-EU	96.5%	3.5%	7.6%	4.7%	87.6%
	Total	94.2%	5.8%	9.7%	7.8%	82.5%
2011-2012	Italian	94.1%	5.9%	9.6%	8.3%	82.1%
	EU	96.6%	3.4%	11.9%	10.7%	77.4%
	Non-EU	96.8%	3.2%	8.1%	5.6%	86.4%
	Total	94.5%	5.5%	9.5%	8.1%	82.3%
2012-2013	Italian	93.4%	6.6%	8.9%	8.2%	82.9%
	EU	96.0%	4.0%	6.7%	6.7%	86.7%
	Non-EU	96.5%	3.5%	10.2%	5.0%	84.8%
	Total	93.8%	6.2%	8.9%	7.9%	83.1%

source: our elaboration from Osservatorio Provinciale sulla Scolarità data.

**Figure 3: School commuting by town and presence of school buildings**



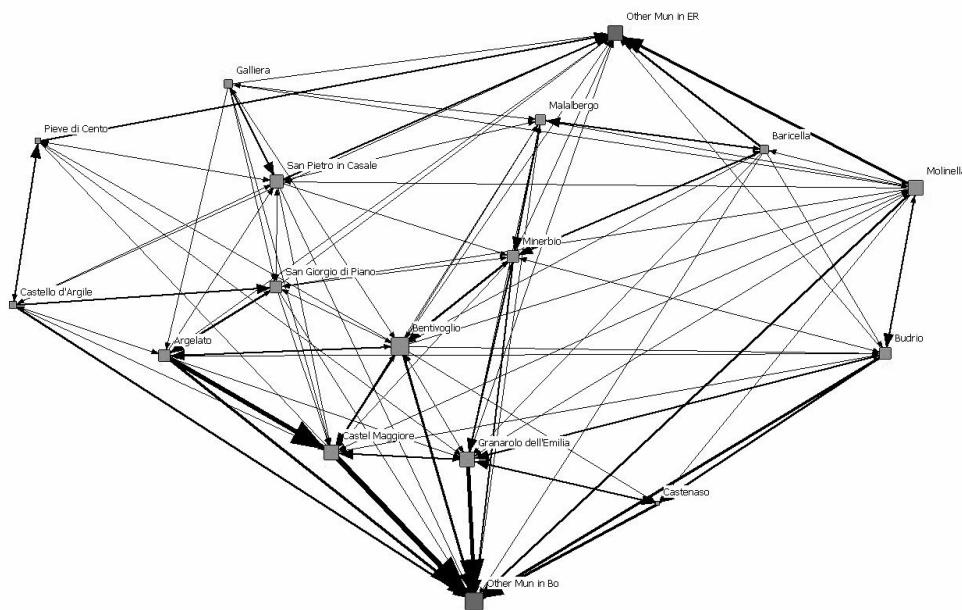
source: our elaboration from Osservatorio Provinciale sulla Scolarità data.

Examining where pupils commute to, overall, only 19.8% of the district's school population commutes to towns in the same area. Incidence is higher for primary and lower secondary schools (49.3% and 48.7%) and lower for higher secondary schools (14.1%). With reference to elementary and lower secondary

schools, the most attractive schools are those in Castel Maggiore (12.1%), Granarolo (6.1%) and Minerbio and Castenaso with 4.5 and 4.3% each. In the majority of remaining cases the preference is for schools in other towns of the Bologna metropolitan district (40%) or towns in different provinces (11%).

The graph in figure 4 illustrates the intensity of relationships between the area's various towns. It can be observed that the strongest bonds are those linking the district's outer towns to towns outside the DSS Pianura Est and the intensity of bonds intensifies on the north-south axes constituting the main communication routes, both roads and railways.

**Figure 4:** *Commuting direction in primary and lower secondary school age children*



source: our elaboration from Osservatorio Provinciale sulla Scolarità data.

## Conclusions

Using the data and space available to us we sought to consider certain specific features characterising the schooling choices of the residents of the towns in DSS Pianura Est. In particular, we have highlighted how the area's structural and infrastructural factors, the concentration of economically more vulnerable communities and the concentration of school buildings are useful starting points with which to observe two significant elements regarding the theme of school dropout rates and difficulties at school: school progression problems and commuting.

With reference to the former, the towns of the northernmost belt constitute a socio-economic environment which exacerbates school difficulties and pushes young residents in the direction of professional, shorter term studies. In the towns of the first Bologna city ring, by contrast, school attendance is higher, above all, where high schools are concerned and also relates to the availability of schools in one's own hometown or, at least, easy to get to. On one hand differentiation dynamics in school progression on a territorial basis make commuting less significant in defining school difficulties; whilst, on the other, in the light of the correlation between choice of school and cultural environment, it is possible, we believe, that the lack of infrastructure, above all in school terms,



in certain areas may exacerbate the dynamics typical of them in a supply creates demand logic.

Such considerations highlight the importance of networking and strategic co-operation between different local authorities to reduce the problems which impact on pupils' school experiences. We are still working with the local authorities to this effect.

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## Like with Like or Take a Hike? Friendship Networks in Italian Schools

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**Keywords:** *Homophily, School tracking, Italy, Friendship networks, High school*

### Introduction

In sociological literature, homophily is defined as «the principle that a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people» (McPherson et al. 2001: 416). Homophily informs, consciously or unconsciously, much of our social relations and, by its very nature, tends to generate social segregation and reinforcement. By grouping 'like with like', the tendency towards social homophily means that network flows tend to be relatively localised, whilst the experiences and behaviours of social actors are amplified due to the similarities between individuals who interact with each other most intensely.

A field where the study of homophily which is particularly consequential is education: once classes are formed, students get to know each other, and friendship networks take shape. This process evolves over time, with students shaping the school environment and getting shaped in return. The influence of peers can hit back by amplifying or reducing the impact of family resources on school outcomes. The micro-structuring of social relationships at a very fine level of the social order could therefore be viewed as a significant element of the macro-level reproduction of social inequalities.

This paper contributes to the literature by exploring the composition of friendship networks amongst school students in a sample of Italian high-school seniors, in relation to gender, parental education, migratory background and school proficiency.

Italian secondary schools are an interesting area of research for homophily, as students select themselves at the age of 14 into different school streams, characterized by different degrees of academic orientation. As a result, schools and classes tend to be relatively homogeneous in socio-economic terms, particularly at the extremes. However, we know few about the relationships occurring within the classes and whether these reinforce or alleviate social segregation. The purpose of this paper is to take a step further in the comprehension of these dynamics.

### 1. Literature review

Social scientists have been interested in homophily since the late 1920s (Bott, 1928), building on the theoretical work of Simmel (1971) and Park and Burgess (1921). In line with the theoretical preferences of many American researchers in the 1950s and 1960s, homophily is studied following a methodological individualist approach. However, this concept also incorporates a sensitivity to social structures which are not reducible to individual-level processes.

Early studies of homophily introduced the distinction between baseline homophily, inbreeding homophily and heterophily. Baseline homophily is created

by the demography of the potential «tie pool» (McPherson et al., 2001), whereby (for example) upper-class students in an élite school naturally find themselves choosing peers with similar background. Inbreeding homophily involves the active expression of preference towards similarity on top of the baseline, while heterophily indicates the preference for difference.

Another useful concept discussed in the early sociological literature refers to the way in which homophily on one characteristic (i.e. race) can generate secondary homophily in relation to other characteristics (i.e. social class, being black families on average poorer than white families). This creates considerable potential for drawing misleading conclusions from descriptive data.

To return to our case study, the selective distribution of students across schools and classes, due to their socio-economic background, age and (in some cases), ability and gender, leads to baseline homophily. This notion thus registers the influence of social structures on individual action, as individuals form ties within a relational context that is not of their choosing. It is not obvious, though, if and to what extent inbreeding homophily processes are also at play. Studies of homophily amongst school students in the US context have tended to focus either on race, academic achievement or deviant behavior, finding substantial levels of inbreeding homophily (Cohen, 1977; Kandel, 1978), but few studies have been conducted abroad, where school systems are structured differently.

## 2. Data

This paper uses the data from the project *Family background, beliefs about education and participation in Higher Education: An experiment integrated with a longitudinal survey*. The study, articulated in four waves, aims to test the effectiveness of information and guidance sessions on the choices made by a sample of upper secondary school students via a randomized control trial (see Abbiati et al., 2017). Overall, 62 schools in the Provinces of Bologna, Milan, Salerno and Vicenza were randomly sampled and invited to participate in the project. 9,058 senior year students were enrolled in participating school and sorted into 474 classes.

For the purpose of this article, we will use the first wave of data collection (October 2013). The questionnaire assesses the cultural, economic and social resources of the family, attitudes and beliefs towards school and friendship networks. Each student was asked to name his/her three best friends in the classroom, that were later coded using a combination of automatic routines and manual work (leading to a 99% of definite matches). In each class students (who are about 19, on average) send on average 40 friendship ties.

## 3. Methods and variables

To take into account the dependence of homophily on the baseline group distribution (which structures and constraints the opportunity for interaction), we will employ the normalized version of the homophily index for discrete variables proposed by Coleman (1958).

The index measures how far the observed distribution of friendships in a group tends towards the formation of sub-groups of 'similar people' as compared to a random probability constrained only by group size. In mathematical terms:  $IH_i = \frac{H_i - w_i}{1 - w_i}$ . Values are bounded between -1 and 1. Inbreeding

homophily is detected for type  $i$  if  $IH_i > 0$ , and heterophily if  $IH_i < 0$ ; values around 0 signal that the characteristics under scrutiny do not guide preferences (baseline homophily). The index is potentially asymmetrical between groups of the same class (e.g. boys and girls), because ties are treated as unidirectional.

Our analysis is limited to three variables related to the socio-economic conditions of the students (gender, parental education and migratory background), and on academic proficiency, which for the purposes of the analysis needed to be dichotomized: parental education distinguishes among sons of graduates (at least one parent) from the rest; migratory background between sons of both native parents from the rest; proficiency between those having an average mark in math and language higher than 7/10 from the others (lacking a standardized measure of proficiency, we rely on professors' marks: this measures, hence, capture mostly the relative position of a student within her class).

Finally, some remarks on the constraints posed by our data. First, we must analyze classes separately, given that friendship was asked within the students' class. According to literature (Shrum *et al.*, 1988), this simplification of reality comes at little cost, since most of friendship networks are bounded within school classes. Secondly, the number of possible friendship ties is constrained between 0 to 3. Once again, international research indicates that only a small share of students indicates more than three names, even when they are given the possibility.

#### 4. Results

Table 1 shows the distribution, by school type, of the variables considered in the analysis, and the number of units involved. Schools types are presented in a descending social prestige order, so it is easier to appreciate the level of sorting that takes place in the Italian secondary schools.

This table clearly illustrates how upper secondary enrolment is patterned according to students' social background, thus constraining the opportunities for interactions: the higher the school prestige, the higher the proportion of sons of graduates and of proficient students. Conversely, the lower the quota of 'foreigners'. The quota of females varies depending mainly on the subject matters of the curriculum (lower in technical, higher in linguistic sub-streams). Despite the considerable level of baseline homophily, though, there is sufficient variability to perform homophily estimates in most classes (at least two subjects per group).

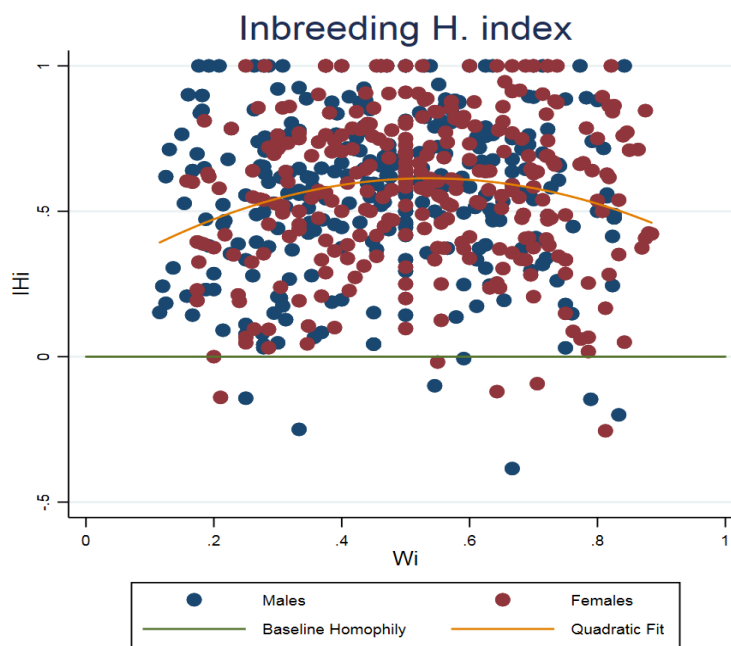
**TABLE. 1.** *Number of units and distribution of the variables of interest, by school type*

School type <sup>a</sup>	N students	N classes	N school buildings	Female	High par. education	Foreign	Proficient
Classical <i>liceo</i>	575	23	5	64	60	6	43
Scientific <i>liceo</i>	2,01	94	16	51	50	11	32
Mixed <i>liceo</i> <sup>b</sup>	608	29	3	65	38	11	36
Other <i>licei</i> <sup>c</sup>	877	42	9	83	28	14	40
Technical / <i>liceo</i> <sup>d</sup>	645	29	5	40	15	16	21
Technical	2,705	147	28	43	10	16	22
Professional	1,638	95	31	49	12	23	22

Notes. <sup>a</sup> Prevalent stream in the single school buildings (some schools recently had to merge previous institutes of very different nature). For this reason, the total number of buildings amounts to 97 and not to 62. <sup>b</sup> *Licei* without a prevailing sub-stream. <sup>c</sup> Nontraditional *licei*, i.e. human sciences. <sup>d</sup> Buildings with mixed technical and *liceo* streams.

Let us start by gender. The average level for inbreeding homophily in our sample is 0.57 for males and 0.57 for females, indicating a strong level of inbreeding homophily. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the scores of each class grouping, being each class represented with two dots, one representing the value for males and one for females. The y axis represents Coleman Homophily Index (IHi), while the x axis represents the proportion of students with a given characteristic within their class ( $W_i$ ). Baseline homophily is represented by the horizontal green line, and any values situated above the line coincide with positive values for inbreeding homophily. As the figure shows, friendship networks in most classes are characterized by strong inbreeding homophily. Although we notice some exceptions to this general trend, most by-class groups are situated well above the line. This suggests that students - both boys and girls - tend to choose their friends based on gender homophily. As mentioned earlier, this empirical pattern may be an epiphenomenon of preferences that are correlated with gender. The figure shows a degree of variation in homophily indices across school classes, which indicates that, in general, friendship networks are not fully segregated. The relationship between IHi and  $W_i$  appears to be curvilinear with higher levels of inbreeding homophily (i.e. due to student preferences) in classes that are more mixed in terms of gender and lower levels at the extremes, in line with theoretical expectations (Currarini *et al.* 2016).

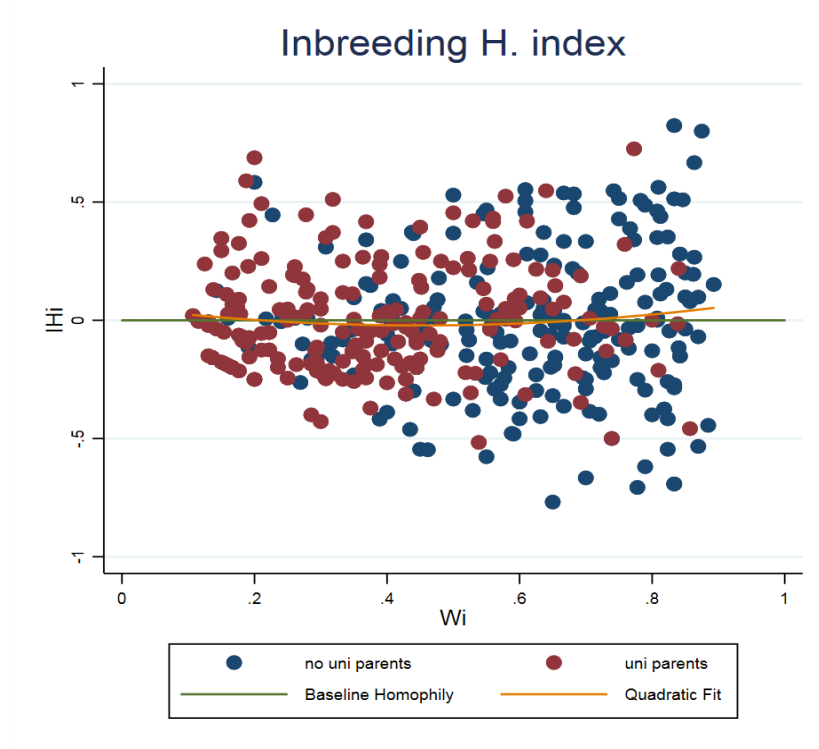
**FIGURE. 1.** Scatterplot of normalized homophily index (IHi) against within-class group proportion ( $W_i$ ) by gender



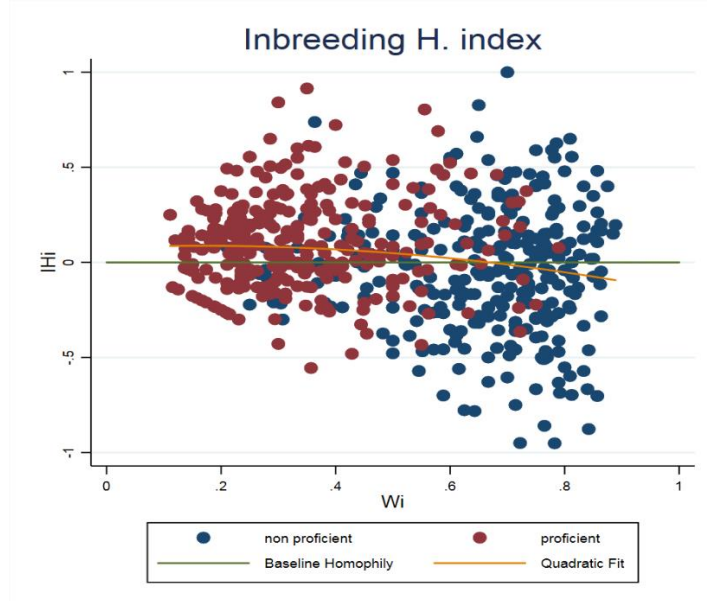
Moving on now to parental education, which we treat as a proxy for social class background, we observe a rather different pattern. Classes exhibit considerable level of baseline homophily (Table 1), especially in the case of traditional *licei* and (at the opposite side of the spectrum) professional schools. Figure 2 shows however that scores for both offspring of educated and uneducated families are quite evenly distributed around the reference line. In such an already structured environment we do not find evidence that students group like-with-like on the basis of parental background. The average value of inbreeding homophily is -0.01 for sons of graduates and 0.01 for sons of non-

graduates, and these values differs little across school types characterised by different levels of mixing opportunities for interactions. Some outliers in the lower right part of the graph, suggesting heterophily on the part of students from more disadvantaged backgrounds. As expected, this interesting asymmetry is only evident towards the extremes. In general, there is little evidence of systematic bias in friendship choices based on family background in Italian high schools, given the opportunity structure provided by the school system.

**FIGURE. 2.** Scatterplot of  $IHi$  against  $Wi$  by parental education



**FIGURE. 3.** Scatterplot of  $IHi$  against  $Wi$  by proficiency



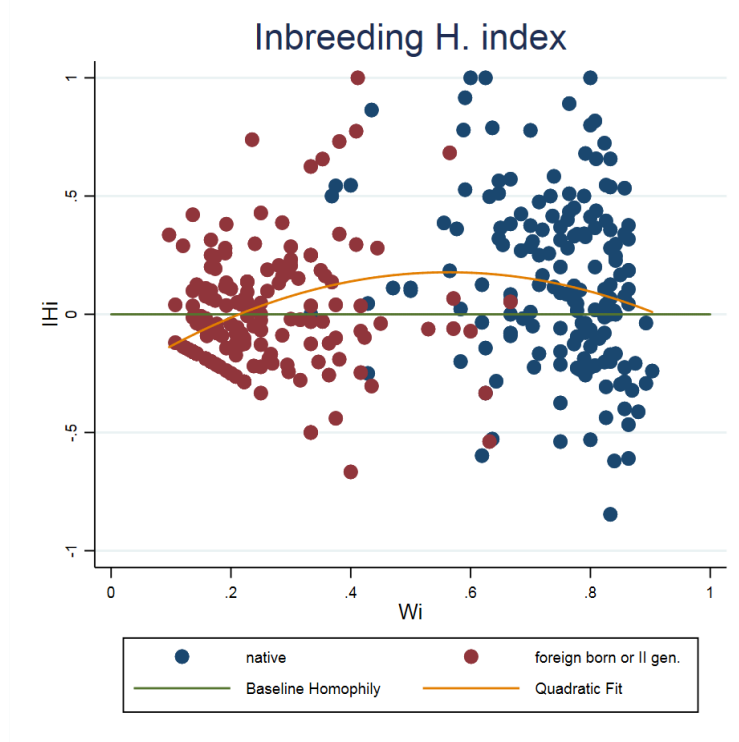
We will now explore the nature of friendship preferences in relation to academic proficiency. The average level of inbreeding homophily is 0.1 for

proficient and  $-0.03$  for non-proficient students, indicating a slight asymmetry between the preferences of the two groups, with proficient students showing greater preference for similarity.

Figure 3 shows some evidence of inbreeding homophily in relation to this variable, as there are various groups scoring very high in the homophily index, whilst the scores denoting heterophily tend to be nearer to the line. A majority of heterophilous groups of non-proficient students is found in technical and professional schools, while proficient students tend to be slightly homophilous in every school type. In other words, proficient students seem to be seen as attractive peers both by proficient and non-proficient peers. Similar results are observed when we analyse attitudinal variables such as school enjoyment and study orientation (results not reported here).

Figure 4 shows that most of the scores fall near to the reference line, although some peculiarities of the distribution can be detected. First, natives exhibit a higher degree of inbreeding homophily than their peers ( $0.14$  vs  $0.0$ ). This asymmetry coexists with a considerable number of outliers, mainly heterophilous groups, that can be found all along the  $W_i$  distribution. When quantified separately by school type, the mean inbreeding homophily index is equal to  $0.20$  in professional schools and  $0.14$  in technical schools, but only for students whose parents were born in Italy. In other words, native students in the more mixed vocationally oriented schools tend to have a friendship bias towards native-born students like themselves.

**FIGURE. 4.** Scatterplot of  $IHi$  against  $W_i$  by migration background



## Conclusions

The picture that emerges from this descriptive analysis of friendship networks in Italian schools is relatively clear. Final-year students choose their friends within the context of a relatively segregated gender order, while the other variables considered seem to be less important. There is weak evidence that more academically proficient students are more desirable as friends and in



classes with a larger proportion of students with at least one foreign-born parent, there is some evidence of inbreeding homophily on the part of students with both native-born parents. As concern parental education, the extent to which that friendship networks exhibit homophily in overall terms seem to be due to tracking rather than individual friendship preferences.

The results raise a number of interesting questions, starting with the determinants of friendship preferences. On what basis do young people form close friendships? Is this due to random processes, leisure/interests not measured in the survey or is it shaped by the interaction of individual characteristics? Classes variability poses questions that remain unanswered, namely the reason for which students in different class environments manifest different kinds of preferences. Other than those mentioned in the 'Methods' section there are a number of limitations to this preliminary study which should be noted. Firstly, it is not a representative survey of the entire Italian final-year school population, which means that the findings may not generalise beyond the four provinces included. Secondly, we use univariate measures of baseline and inbreeding homophily which do not take into account more complex mechanisms. The results observed in our case, though, do not appear to be particularly vulnerable to this challenge, as the only case of strong inbreeding homophily that we found relates to gender.

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## Home-School Proximity, School Appeal, Immigrant-Origin Youths: a Case Study in Bologna

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**Keywords:** *Lower secondary education, Home-school proximity, School appeal, Immigrant-origin students, Italy*

### Introduction

The geographically uneven distribution of foreign-origin populations in a receiving society is considered a crucial factor responsible for school segregation on ethnic bases. Although residential segregation is a multidimensional phenomenon, it might be generally defined as «the degree to which two or more groups live separately from one another, in different parts of the urban environment» (Massey, Denton, 1988: 282) and may arise from an array of different mechanisms. Residential segregation is often associated with school segregation – the «uneven distribution of pupils in schools, according to their social origin, ethnic group, sex or any other ascriptive characteristic» (Bonal, Bellei, 2018a: 1) – typically via ‘white flight’ strategies undertaken by the ‘native’ population. Nevertheless, the positive relationship between residential and school segregation is not entrenched; a high concentration of immigrant-origin students may also occur in absence of residential segregation. This is especially true in many European countries, where: residential segregation is comparatively moderate; residential proximity to school is irrelevant, since assignment to educational institutions is not strictly residence-based; many urban settlements are small, and schools are relatively close to one another. Globalization, massive migratory flows and increasing social inequality in urban contexts have led to a ‘renaissance’ in school segregation studies, reflecting the dynamism and the complexity characterizing the topic (Bonal, Bellei, 2018a; 2018b).

Studies on the relationship between residential and school segregation are still comparatively rare in European countries; the dearth of research is still more marked with regards to the Italian case, mainly due to the fact that immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon. Since the early 1990s migratory inflows towards Italy have grown steadily, especially after the turn of the century. On the whole, studies point to a lack of potentially worrisome ethnic concentrations, perhaps thanks to social housing policies aimed at favouring a social mix. Italian urban centres and peripheries have been traditionally characterized by a general socio-economic *mixité* (based on the coexistence of homeowners and renters, affluent and poor households in the same area) and, more recently, by a greater dispersal of immigrants in urban and suburban areas. If residential concentration of ethnic – and, more generally, disadvantaged – groups is relatively marginal in Italy, school segregation can also be expected to be a correspondingly minor occurrence. Yet foreign-origin students are not equally distributed along the peninsula nor among schools. Firstly, a higher concentration of foreign populations in the Northern regions – offering more job opportunities – leads to a higher concentration of pupils with migratory backgrounds in that area’s schools. Secondly, foreign-origin students are more numerous in primary

and lower secondary schools, since these institutions comprise the compulsory and comprehensive levels of the Italian education system. Thirdly, the Italian upper secondary level of education is split into three major tracks: academic, technical and vocational. Tracking highlights social inequalities, and indeed the profile of such tracks is traditionally linked to student's social background: native and upper class children are more likely to attend an academic track (leading to higher education), whereas individuals from disadvantaged families and/or with a migratory background are more likely to opt for the vocational or, to a lesser extent, technical tracks (Azzolini *et al.*, 2019).

These forms of school segregation are determined by exogenous features, including the distribution and the socio-demographic characteristics of foreign-origin families and the organization of the education system. An additional type of school segregation, strictly connected to families' school choice, can also be identified: although school catchment basins are no longer binding, they continue to exist, and municipal authorities are still responsible for identifying sub-territorial units in order to attain a uniform distribution of students among schools. Each basin is still formally defined via the association of a set of home addresses with a specific public school, with *home-school proximity* being the primary factor underlying the association. These basins provide the parents of prospective pupils with guidance in selecting a school.

The first effort aimed at exploring the relationship between residential and school segregation in Italy was Pacchi and Ranci's study (2017) focusing on primary and lower secondary schools in a major Italian city (Milan; see also Cordini *et al.*, 2019). Their findings show that school segregation is more pronounced than residential segregation. Native families are more likely to adopt two distinct 'school flight' strategies in order to avoid schools with a high concentration of disadvantaged and/or ethnic-minority students: preference of non-state over state schools; preference for more distant, non-catchment schools when the school closest to home features a high concentration of immigrant-origin students. Santangelo and colleagues (2018) explore home-school proximity among youths attending lower secondary schools in a Northern medium-size town (Bologna). Despite a general tendency among students to attend the closest school to home, regardless of socio-economic and ethnic background, this propensity towards immobility is stronger among immigrant-origin pupils. Also, parents' level of education plays a crucial role: medium-high educated families, settled in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, are more likely – regardless of their ethnic background – to enrol their children in less segregated schools.

## 1. Goals, data, variables

This work is part of a project titled 'Social Exclusion and Selection in Lower Secondary Education: School Segregation Dynamics and Criteria Concerning Immigrant-Origin Students', undertaken at the University of Bologna's Department of Political and Social Science. The project (Santangelo *et al.*, 2018) addresses questions such as: Is home-school distance greater for immigrant-origin students with respect to Italians? Is home-school distance greater in areas with a higher degree of resident foreigners? Do immigrant-origin students and families tend to opt for the school closest to home to a greater degree than Italians do?

Within this framework, this work has a precise purpose involving the classification of individual schools as 'appealing' or 'repulsive' towards certain socially characterized subgroups of students. More specifically, do 'appealing' schools (i.e., institutions attracting culturally advantaged families) tend to coincide with

those having a lower incidence of immigrant-origin students, and – conversely – do ‘repulsive’ schools tend to cater to their needs?

Data were provided by the Italian National Institute for the Evaluation of the Educational System for Schooling and Training (INVALSI), the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR), and the 2011 ISTAT (Italian Statistical Bureau) population census.

The INVALSI database includes information about students enrolled in the final year of lower secondary education, in state and officially recognized schools, in Bologna (in the 2014/15 school year) and provides information on gender, migratory status and parents’ level of education. The second database (MIUR) provides students’ home address and schools’ addresses. All these addresses were geo-referenced through the QGIS program and the MMQGIS plug-in. Home-school distance for *every possible* student-school combination was subsequently calculated.

The INVALSI database consists of over 1,900 students attending 28 schools in Bologna. The population features a predictably balanced gender make-up, a prevalence of university-educated parents (42%) over less-educated ones (22%), and a significant incidence of immigrant-origin students (16%) – comprising individuals born abroad to two parents also born abroad, born in Italy with both parents born abroad, or born abroad with one Italian parent and the other born abroad.

For each school an *appeal* index ( $A$ ) was developed in the following way. Firstly, a set of students was identified comprising all students in the dataset for whom the school is one of the three closest to home (subset 1) and all students actually enrolled in the school but not belonging to subset 1 (subset 2).

$A$  was calculated in the following way:

$$A = ACAF - ACDF$$

where  $ACAF$  is the appeal exerted by the school in question on culturally advantaged families (i.e., in which at least one parent has completed a higher education) and  $ACDF$  the appeal exerted by the school on culturally disadvantaged families (in which *no* parent has completed upper secondary education), defined as follows:

$ACAF = (\text{no. of enrolled students from culturally advantaged families in subset 2} - \text{no. of students enrolled elsewhere but from culturally advantaged families in subset 1}) / \text{no. of students from culturally advantaged families in subsets 1 and 2}$

$ACDF = (\text{no. of enrolled students from culturally disadvantaged families in subset 2} - \text{no. of students enrolled elsewhere but from culturally disadvantaged families in subset 1}) / \text{no. of students from culturally disadvantaged families in subsets 1 and 2}$

The numerators of both  $ACAF$  and  $ACDF$  do not take into account enrolled students for whom the school is one of the three closest to home, whereas the denominators do include these students; also, the index does not consider families in which parents have an intermediate educational status.  $ACAF$  varies between the values of  $-1$  (when all culturally advantaged families in subset 1 opt to enrol their children elsewhere and subset 2 contains no students from culturally advantaged families) and  $+1$  (when all enrolled students from culturally advantaged families come from subset 2 and subset 1 contains no students from culturally advantaged families). The same applies for  $ACDF$  once one replaces culturally advantaged families with disadvantaged ones. Thus,  $A$  may vary between the (unrealistic) extreme values of  $-2$  (when the school draws *all* of its students from non-local culturally deprived families and there are no local culturally deprived families) and  $+2$  (when the school draws *all* of its students from

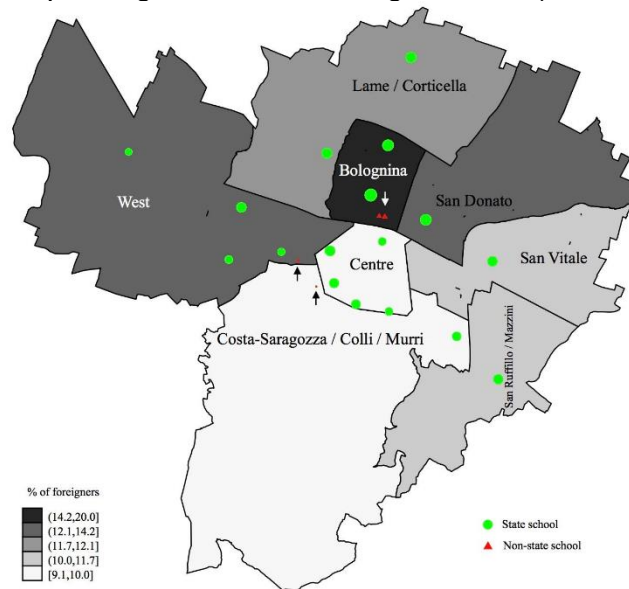
non-local culturally advantaged families and there are no local culturally advantaged families).

Thirdly, in order to classify each school into one of three groups, two threshold values were identified: the lower threshold is equal to the mean value of  $A$  for the given city's schools minus one-half the value of  $A$ 's standard deviation; the higher threshold is equal to the mean value of  $A$  plus one-half the value of its standard deviation. Schools with an  $A$  greater than the second threshold were classified as 'appealing'; those with an  $A$  lower than the first threshold were classified as 'repulsive'; remaining schools were labelled 'neutral'. Schools with less than 50 enrolled students in the dataset were not considered in the analysis, which thus refers to 21 schools.

Parental education levels reflect cultural resources available to students. INVALSI also provides a more encompassing socio-economic status index, but it was discarded for two reasons. Use of the socio-economic index would have drastically decreased the number of valid cases due to a high incidence of missing data on this variable. From a more substantive standpoint, families' educational and cultural resources may affect school selection more than financial ones do. Educated parents are more familiar with schooling and more likely to assess teachers' expertise regardless of their occupational status. This is particularly relevant as regards immigrant parents, who are more likely to suffer from a mismatch between their level of education and their occupational and financial situation.

The general population census (ISTAT) was used to associate socio-economic characteristics of basic census territorial units with the geo-referenced addresses, in order to identify and characterize sub-municipal territorial units. The eight areas displayed in Figure 1 derive from an aggregation of contiguous census units on the basis of similarities with respect to the following characteristics: number of residents; number of residents aged 10-14; incidence of university graduates; unemployment rate; incidence of foreigners. The aggregation also takes into account the territorial distribution of lower secondary schools and highlights their state or non-state nature. The figure also displays the share of immigrant-origin students (in the dataset) for each territorial unit and for each school, highlighting the lower incidence of such pupils in the city's historic centre and in its southern 'hillside' and south-eastern neighbourhoods and, more markedly, in non-state schools.

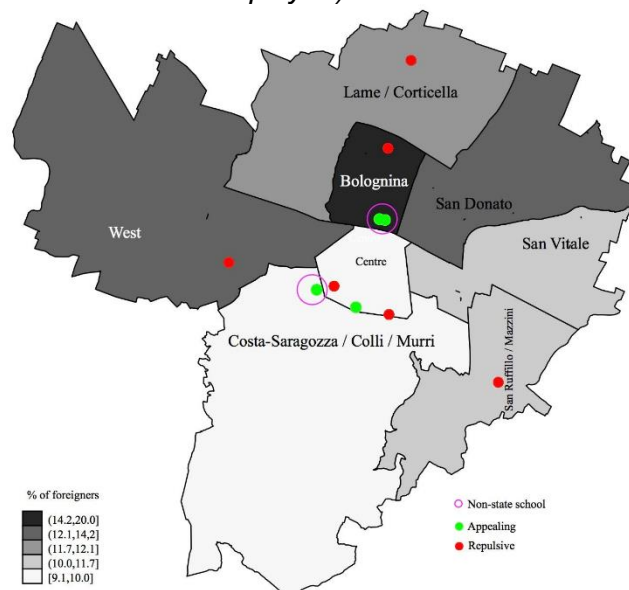
**FIGURE 1.** Sub-municipal areas and incidence of immigrant-origin students in schools (size of location symbols proportional to incidence in immigrant-origin students in corresponding schools, according to dataset)



## 2. Findings

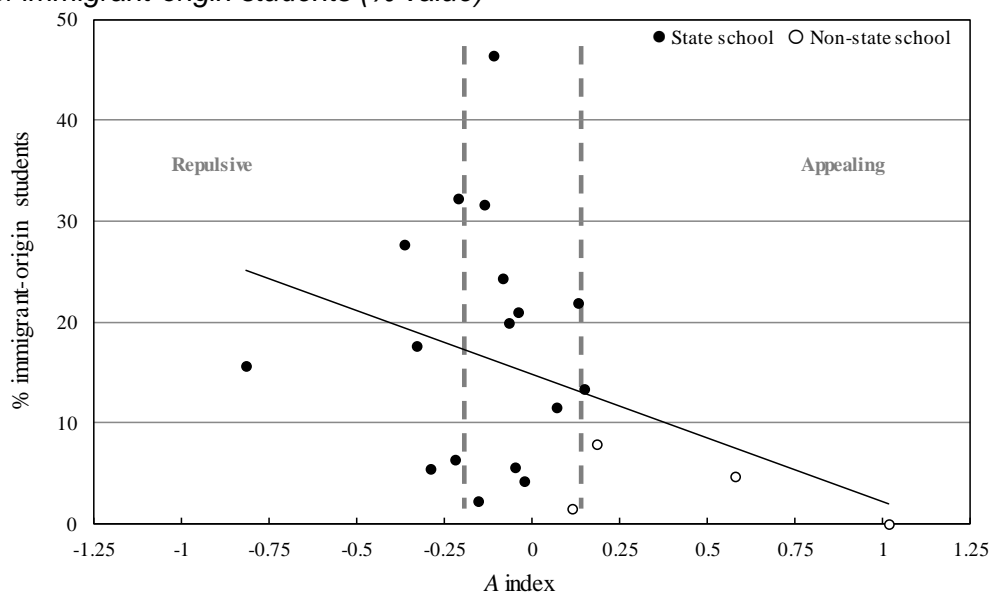
Figure 2 displays the location of appealing and repulsive schools (and omits neutral ones) in Bologna. One observes a relatively high incidence of neutral schools (11), 6 repulsive institutions and only 4 appealing ones. Appealing schools are concentrated at the edges of the city's centre; although two appealing schools are located in the Bolognina area, on the whole the map highlights the link between appealing schools and 'immigrant-free' neighbourhoods. Another obvious, albeit unsurprising, finding is the strong convergence between appealing schools and non-state schools.

**FIGURE 2.** Location of appealing and repulsive schools, and their type: state or non-state (neutral schools not displayed)



Does schools' characterization as appealing or repulsive have a link with their being attended by immigrant-origin students? Figure 3 displays the association between schools' values on the A index (where higher values reflect greater appeal) and the incidence of immigration-origin students. At first glance, there appears to be a negative relationship between the two variables: a school's appeal tends to rise as the share of immigrant-origin pupils decreases; non-state schools tend to be both appealing and relatively immigrant-free. If non-state schools are not taken into account, however, the relationship totally disappears.

**FIGURE 3.** Relationship between school's appeal (A index value) and incidence of immigrant-origin students (% value)



## Conclusions

The role of families' stock of cultural capital is highlighted by the characterization of individual lower secondary schools in Bologna as (culturally) appealing or repulsive. Educational institutions exerting 'pull' towards students from culturally advantaged families (and/or warding off students from disadvantaged households) tend to have a very low share of immigrant-origin enrollees, thus offering a sort of refuge to upper class natives wishing to 'flee' from negatively perceived schools. Moreover, non-state schools and appealing schools tend to coincide. Bologna also features an additional, potential obstacle to integration, via the geographic concentration of appealing schools near the city centre and its 'whiter' neighbourhoods. One can optimistically acknowledge the fact that about half of schools are 'neutral' – i.e., they neither repel nor attract culturally advantaged students to a strong degree and thus promote a social and ethnic mix.

Of course, specific school choice may be shaped by other variables which are difficult to operationalize or unavailable – such as school proximity to parents' workplaces or grandparents' homes; mode of travel to school; school strategies to attract or deter immigrant-origin students – and the findings reported here cannot account for their potential effects. In any case, research needs to be extended towards other urban contexts and, within each school, on

differences between school classes in order to better grasp the scope of ethnically based school segregation.

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## Segregated by Choice. Special Schools and Students with Disabilities

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### Introduction

The Italian legislation, widely considered among the most advanced ones both in Europe and in the world, has abandoned from the late Seventies its original assistance-based approach to embrace the concepts of inclusion and social participation (Carnovali, 2017). In 1974, the Minister of Education Franco Maria Malfatti asked Franca Falcucci – at that time senator and then first woman in Italy to become Minister of Education from 1982 to 1987 – to chair a team in charge of researching the problems of disabled students. The *Falcucci Document*, issued in 1975, was one of the most advanced studies of disability issues at both European and international level, promoting a new way of thinking about this issue. The document stated that: «school brings educational action and potential of each student and looks as the most appropriate structure to overcome the conditions of marginalization that would otherwise be condemned children with disabilities».

The *Falcucci Document* has been developed in a period of the Italian history particularly active in the construction of a democratic culture, of social rights and anti-segregationist, which produced the deinstitutionalisation movement. This movement has generated a substantial legislative production in this area: Law n. 898 of 1970 on the right to divorce; Law n. 517 of 1977, promulgated precisely on the basis of the *Falcucci Document*, which abolished differentiated classes for students with disabilities, learning and socialization difficulties (here we refer, essentially, to all those students coming from poor social classes and working classes); Law n. 180 of 1978, with which the system of mental asylums is overcome; the Abortion Law n. 194 of 1978.

It should be emphasized that the Law n. 517 of 1977 also resulted in the progressive overcoming of special schools, but not their abolition. In fact, there is no article of this law, or of the subsequent ones, which explicitly prescribe its abolition. Although the majority of special schools will close, mainly due to the loss of enrolments of students with disabilities oriented towards common schools, some institutes specialized in sensory disabilities will continue to survive (Canevaro, Goussot, 2000).

Generally, the Italian legislation focus on both human rights enucleated from the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, ratified by Italy under Law n. 18 of 2009), and fundamental principles of participation and full respect of the person enshrined in the Italian Constitution (D'Alessio, 2013). As Anastasiou et al. (2015: 430) pointed out, «Italy is likely the nation in which inclusion is closest to 'full' or 'fully'», referring here to Article 24 of UNCRPD where, indeed, they speak of the 'goal of full inclusion'. Embracing a full inclusive perspective means that a general education system is optimal for all students, including those with disabilities, the latter being placed in a general education system with their age peers who have no identified disabilities, and that a special education outside the general education, is illegitimate.

## **1. The current situation**

However, this legal framework does not correspond to the reality that students with disabilities face every day. The data emerging from the most recent studies conducted by the various organisations that deal with the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities reveal a problematic picture, which consists of inadequate teaching aids, delays and inefficiencies in the area of inclusive education services.

According to last data on school elaborated by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT, 2018), the most serious structural problem of the Italian system concerns the relation student-learning support teacher. During the last years, more than 8% of the families of students with disabilities enrolled in primary schools and more than 5% of those students with disabilities enrolled in lower secondary schools lodged an appeal to the civil or the administrative court to obtain an increase in the number of hours with learning support teachers.

There is an issue concerning the educational continuity: according to the available data, 42% of the primary school students changed their learning support teachers with respect to the previous academic year, while in the secondary school this situation arises in 36% of the cases (ISTAT, 2018).

Another issue concerns the quality of the training of learning support teachers: training for all active teachers (including those newly recruited), school heads, and school assistants on the themes of disabilities and integration, is nonetheless inadequate to create a situation where students with disabilities are supported by the whole teaching staff, and not only by the learning support teachers. Finally, there is also a significant problem concerning architectural and visual-tactical barriers. Technology as a mean to educational inclusion is still limited. The alarming fact concerns mostly the computer workstations used for educational inclusion, which are mainly located in dedicated labs (56% of primary schools and 55% of lower secondary schools) and in classrooms devoted to educational support (36.3% of primary schools and 49.6% of lower secondary schools). This situation leads to a necessary removal of the students with disabilities from their classrooms to conduct educational activities, having as a result potential dynamic of exclusion from the class as a group (ISTAT, 2018).

The recent report of the Court of Audit (2018) on the management of actions and resources of the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research on the educational inclusion of persons with disabilities points out various forms of inefficiencies, which considerably limit the effectiveness of the educational system. The Court of Audit, even if it recognises a form of compliance to the international and European regulatory directions, points out the overall fragmentary nature of the interventions, caused by the coexistence of several bodies and parties (schools, local bodies, health services, etc). This regulatory framework creates inefficiency in the actual management between the different levels of jurisdiction. Furthermore, the Court of Audit points out the lack of surveys and evaluation activities on the efficacy and efficiency of the practice of inclusion and integration.

All that we just described fits into a framework of deep progressive cuts in public spending on education by the Ministry of Education (due to the financial package of this year, the spending decreased to 44 million euros, with a disinvestment in particular on primary school and on the use of support teachers).

## 2. Returning to special schools?

The various problems just described show a significant gap between the principles present in the Italian legislation, which are largely consistent with the most inclusive views on the protection and promotion of the right to education for persons with disabilities, and their actual implementation in the process of scholastic and educational inclusion (ANED, 2018). This gap is triggering forms of nostalgia towards the practice of special schools – intended especially for the education of students with intellectual disabilities – that progressively disappeared in consequence of the promulgation of the Law n. 51 of 1977.

As previously mentioned, this law did not abolish special schools. In the Italian legal system this kind of institution remains in a strange legislative limbo: while on the one hand no law has explicitly abolished them, on the other hand there is no regulation that declares their existence and defines their characteristics and operating methods. To this, we have to add that some ministerial decrees prescribed that the child with disabilities who requires intensive rehabilitation therapy should also be educated at the same centre that provides the care. But, as shown by a research published in 2015 by Giovanni Merlo, director of LEDHA – League for the rights of disabled people, on the phenomenon of special education in the Lombardy region, what really happens is the opposite. Families are pushed to enrol their child with severe disability, in particular intellectual, cognitive, psychic, relational disabilities, in the special schools, with the expectation that they can also benefit from the intensive rehabilitation cycles, more appropriate than those to which they would have access in an outpatient manner.

Special institutes for blind or deaf people, special classes of all kinds and levels organized in residential and semi-residential rehabilitation facilities and day care centres, are a reality in many Italian regions. In Lombardy alone, according to 2015 data reported by Merlo, which is the only up-to-date survey on the subject, there are 16 active complexes, within which there are 24 special schools, 5 of which are nursery schools, 17 are primary schools and 2 are lower secondary schools. They are attended, in total, by almost 900 children and young people. But there are many examples: the centre *La Nostra famiglia* can be found in different Italian regions, as well as Casa Serena of Trento, Istituto Vaccari of Rome, and many others.

How is it possible for parents to choose a separate education for their children, far from common contexts? The most obvious and immediate reason is that the Italian school system is proving to be inadequate in terms of inclusion and in facing the educational needs of children with complex disabilities, as shown by the above data. Parents who choose to enrol their child in a special school, after a period of first socialization that generally takes place in nursery school, complain about problems mostly related to the precariousness of resources allocated to the support teacher and about the time spent at school. They don't perceive the implementation of an individualized work, useful to develop the autonomy and growth of their child. In other cases, doctors advise enrolment in a special school due to the severity of the disability. In others, teachers and directors of ordinary schools themselves discourage the enrolment of children with disabilities, because of the lack of available resources to recruit support teachers for all the hours necessary to ensure full school attendance. On this point, the Constitutional Court and the Regional Administrative Courts (TAR) of different regions have expressed their views in several sentences about the illegitimacy of the economic and budgetary reasons before the right to study of persons with disabilities. The advantages of

special schools, according to the parents who make this choice, are the educational offer, the adequacy of the spaces, a more qualified staff than the one that can be found in ordinary schools, the possibility of having rehabilitation and school activity all in one place. Some of these realities are able to provide highly specialized training tools and, in some cases, they are real excellences in the field of teaching, as reported in the newspaper *Superabile* (the National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work newspaper) in a 2015 inquiry. In an article published in the newspaper *La Repubblica* in October 2018, entitled *Disabled in classroom? An illusion. It's better to reopen special schools*, a mother complains about the inadequacy of the school attended by her child with disabilities in taking charge of his real needs and concludes that it would be better to 'go back', meaning going back to a system of special schools organized by competences.

However, the associations of persons with disabilities are extremely critical of this return. Salvatore Nocera, historical activist for the defence of the rights of persons with disabilities in Italy, has outlined reasons for the crisis of inclusion in the Italian school system in some points (2015). First, a total delegation to the specialized teacher and therefore not really inclusive teaching methods; secondly, a lack of training for curricular teachers on inclusion issues: today, it happens very often that teachers follow online training courses that do not provide adequate preparation. But, according to Nocera, special schools are not the solution, because the confinement of persons with disabilities, maybe even divided by deficits (as happens in schools for blinds only), in places where they don't have contacts with peer groups without disabilities is a form of marginalization. The Italian federation *Pro ciechi* (2016) has publicly declared that special schools are a dangerous return to the past and above all a false solution. According to the federation, what is lacking are not the supports to the school to face the specific problems of blind students, but a lack of an overall vision among the various organizations present in the territory, as well as an inadequate preparation of the support teachers. In short, it's not the principle of inclusion that is wrong, but the way Italy is putting it into practice.

## Conclusions

It might seem excessive to call the complex phenomenon that I tried to describe 'segregation' in the literal sense of the word. However, it still exists a culture of separation that provokes the exclusion of persons with severe disabilities from common life contexts. It suffices to say that the directors of some Italian high schools didn't have any ethical problem in declaring with pride that among their students there were no poor, disabled or foreigners. These details, which are in the presentation sheets of some schools, available on the website of Italian Ministry of Education last year, worked to attract the families of the Italian upper-middle class to convince them to enrol their children in these self-defined centres of 'excellence'. Thus, excellence is defined with the elimination of diversity. It is recent news the opening of a highly specialized school for students with the Asperger's syndrome only, commonly known as the 'intelligent disabled', often with an above-average IQ.

So, if it can be inappropriate to talk about real segregation, it doesn't seem excessive to declare, as Carlo Francescutti did (2019), that in Italy there are still logics of segregation. Those people, that Western societies have defined holders of the same rights as others, are exposed to a greater risk of exclusion, isolation, invisibility and non-involvement in the life of their own community. The mere fact of conceiving special schools, as a separate place, in order to give

the persons with disabilities (especially intellectual and psychic disability) the tools to enjoy a future inclusion, appears an oxymoron. As Francescutti wrote, it's as if Franco Basaglia, instead of opening the doors of the asylum in Gorizia, had engaged himself in a process of transformation within the asylum, that is, adopting an institutional and segregation logic.

This growing success of separate education programs is putting at risk some fundamental rights of children and young people with disabilities and attests a gradual regression of the capacity of our community and our social system to guarantee to all persons with disabilities their full inclusion and participation in society. What we are witnessing is an infringement of that principle of progressivity, typical of the human rights doctrine, which binds us to ensure that in our social and professional environment we can only move forward, respecting and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities.

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## ***Hostis - Hospes, Connecting People for a Europe of Diversity: a Multiple Case Study Approach on School Leaders' and Teachers' Perceptions of Intercultural Education***

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### **Introduction**

One of the key effects of globalisation is the extraordinary increase in migratory movements. After a long period as a country of emigration, the Italian peninsula has gradually developed into a country of immigration, reaching levels like countries with a much older history of immigration. In this sense, the arrival of immigrant populations has brought about a greater awareness of the issue of difference, both socially and in the education sphere (Sirignano, 2019), which entails the commitment to incorporate and educationally cater for immigrant pupils. In particular, the school as the principal agent of socialisation and acculturation has become an ideal setting to educate pupils to accept and celebrate diversity. For this reason, the acknowledgement and evaluation of intercultural practices in educational institutions plays a crucial role in providing guidance for effective educational interventions (Fiorucci et al., 2017; Santerini, 2010).

Intercultural dynamics are central aspects of daily life in school. Teachers and school leaders working in diverse cultural landscapes need sophisticated understandings of the concept of culture as a learned and adaptive response to contextual needs. In addition, the roles of school leaders and teachers in multicultural contexts are pivotal in determining educational processes and practices based on the principles of an open and inclusive school. If we add the renewed interest in intercultural education research to the significant increase and subsequent stabilisation in the immigrant population in schools, it seems reasonable to turn our attention to how Italian schools, and teachers and leaders, in particular, perceive and manage cultural diversity. Given these premises, in this paper we present the preliminary findings of one study which was carried out under the broader research project *Hostis-Hospes. Connecting People for a Europe of diversities* (Programme. Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme 2014-2020), coordinated by the University of Enna in collaboration with the University of Palermo, University of Catania, University of Barcelona as well as the two municipalities of Palermo and Syracuse and the Italian NGO CISS (Cooperazione Internazionale Sud Sud). The ongoing research project will be briefly described in the following section.



## 1. *Hostis Hospes*, connecting people for a Europe of diversity

The project *Hostis Hospes, Connecting People for a Europe of Diversity*, was designed with the aim of identifying and documenting the intercultural practices of multicultural schools in the region of Sicily. In fact, Sicily holds a particular position as a transit migration area and as a place of coexistence, the challenges for creating an intercultural society are difficult and ambitious (D'Aprile, 2017). The project aims at promoting successful models of intercultural society for a United in diversity European Union by identifying and disseminating a 'Sicilian model' for intercultural dialogue and inclusion. Specifically, the project strategy has been designed to produce the following inter-connected results:

1) The establishment of a permanent 'Observatory for the Intercultural Inclusion of migrant minors' to map the multicultural challenges faced by the school system in Sicily and to investigate the resilience capacity of the local educational community to positively respond to the migration crisis.

2) The formulation of a 'Model for Intercultural Inclusion' based on the systematization of the good practices and lessons learnt from the Sicilian experience in the education sector.

3) The dissemination and the promotion of a 'Sicilian model' for intercultural dialogue and inclusion at a local, regional and EU level in order to contribute to spread the motto of the European Union 'United in Diversity'.

The project looks at the access and quality of education for unaccompanied minors and migrant, minority minors in three locations of Sicily: Syracuse, Catania and Palermo. These urban areas are all interested in the landing operations following the rescue of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. In these project areas, the schools in contact with migrant minors are of different types: primary, secondary and the CPIA schools (*Centro per l'Istruzione degli Adulti*, responsible for unaccompanied minors over 16 years).

In this geographical context, the project aims to produce a wider and paradigmatic cultural change, as the title of the project suggests. In fact, the project wants to invert the linguistic process that many centuries ago led the Roman society to adduce a negative meaning to the archaic Latin/Indo-European word 'Hostis', transforming its meaning in 'enemy', 'hostility'. Indeed, the Indo-European linguistic root 'ghostis' of this word did not originally have a negative connotation. The hostis, at that time, was simply a foreign citizen with the same rights of Roman citizens. However, the concept of 'exclusion' gradually prevailed on the value of 'inclusion' and an attitude of closure, distrust, hostility and conflict were affirmed. It is mainly for this reason that the Latin language introduced the new term 'Hospes' (with the same semantic root of 'Hostis'), with the positive meaning of 'hosting' and 'host'.

The project addresses the need to reaffirm a cultural model in the European society where the hostis is not an individual who should be excluded from the majoritarian 'civilization', but its opposite, the hospes, the stranger to whom we recognize equal rights. And the double meaning of the term hospes, 'guest', stands as a warning to remind us that those who now hosts tomorrow may need to be hosted, that the alien is simply one who, far from his homeland and its security, has the natural need to be accepted and understood, because everyone needs to live as a foreigner.

With the aim of documenting the intercultural practices of multicultural schools, the research adopts a multimethod methodology and targets 21 schools in the provinces of Catania, Palermo e Enna, and 21 in Barcelona (Spain). Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focus groups are the means of gathering the data for this research. To complement the obtained information, an analysis of official school documents (curriculum and policy



documents) is carried out. Based on the systematization of the good practices and lessons learnt from the Sicilian experience (the 'Sicilian Model'), the Italian NGO will start the experimental part by putting the approaches and methodologies identified by the analysis of the results into practice. An 'Intercultural Toolkit' will be developed for this purpose containing both theoretical frame and practical exercises to be done by teachers during the lessons. The experimentation of the model will be implemented through different actions: training for teachers and operators; a specific non-formal education program for the schools (inter-active exhibition and laboratories for the students); a twinning program between schools and hosting centres as well as workshops and seminars.

Within this broader research project, the purpose of the study reported here and carried out by the research group of the University of Catania was to explore the mindset and attitudes that school leaders and teachers have towards cultural diversity and intercultural education, as well as the actions they take in this area. In addition, in relation to the teacher's role, this study discusses different pedagogical strategies in multicultural classrooms.

## **2. Research methodology**

The general purpose of this study was to contribute to the knowledge and the understanding of the narratives and perceptions of the school leaders and teachers about cultural diversity, intercultural education and the main actions taken in this area. For this reason, a multiple case study design was chosen as it provides a holistic understanding of complex situations (Yin, 2017) by obtaining data in a natural environment and describing practical experiences of the participants. This qualitative research used a naturalistic approach and sought to understand facts in specific settings. This study was carried out in 8 state schools (primary, secondary and CPIAs), which have been selected based on the highest enrolment of non -Italian students within the province of Catania (Sicily). This study used multiple data collection methods, including a total of 80 semi-structured interviews with school leaders (n= 8) and teachers (n= 72). In fact, Bryman (2004) argues that semi-structured interviews permit flexibility and enable respondents to project their own ways of defining the world (Cohen *et al.*, 2003: 146-47).

Also, observations and analysis of official school documents were carried out. The basic interview questions were wide-ranging in order to allow school leaders and teachers to feel free to express their views. Interviews started with general introductory questions about cultural diversity and intercultural education and how the issue was given consideration in the school. They also covered the leadership and teaching experience with immigrant pupils as well as the implemented educational practices to address intercultural education issues.

To analyse the qualitative data, a thematic analytic procedure was adopted. This is a widely used qualitative data analysis method for identifying, evaluating, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun, Clarke, 2006). More specifically, a grounded method approach (Mortari, 2007; Tarozzi, 2008) was used to identify themes and to synthesise the information gathered. Finally, a cross-case thematic analysis of the qualitative data was undertaken to explore differences within and between cases.

### 3. Findings

For the purpose of this paper, the following three preliminary themes are being explored, namely intercultural education, the chameleon teacher and ethics of hospitality.

#### 3.1. *Intercultural education? A blurred photography*

«It's a liquid concept... which is not attributable to a 'standard education'». It could be metaphorically represented as the image of a blurred photograph, which struggles to stop that moment that cannot be captured. In fact, the intercultural phenomenon encompasses a plurality of heterogeneous situations which may vary across time and space, even within the same institution.

According to the teachers, the conception of intercultural education is closely linked to cultural diversity and to a sort of intercultural '*couscous*' (Santarone, 2012), in other words, a kind of melting pot of different cultures. In other cases, intercultural education is conceived from the standpoint of compensation (compensatory education, i.e., programmes for the acquisition of basic communication and language skills). However, the majority of teachers and school leaders express in their definition the pedagogical and universal contents of an inclusive approach

If we talk about interculturality, we have to refer to it in a broader sense ... that is ... my culture is different from yours ... so we don't have to talk about interculturality in terms of other ethnicities or other countries, but in terms of other people, even within the districts of Catania, or in our classroom» (School leader, CPIA).

#### 3.2. *The Chameleon Teacher*

The attitude of teachers towards intercultural teaching seems positive. The greatest challenge is given by what could be called a 'chameleon teaching strategy'. Teachers need to adapt their practices and continuously revise their strategies to respond to the dynamic presence of migrant students.

Cultural diversity seems to be included in the contents, integrated in the subject matter and is not treated as an isolated issue and separated from class activities. However, this issue has been loaded onto teachers' shoulders alone. In fact, because of the lack of resources, there is no presence of specialist educational professionals or cultural mediators, both from inside and outside the school to work with immigrant students and families. In this sense, teachers in the selected schools are doing their job without a professional knowledge base concerning multicultural education. Also, they have not received specific training in intercultural education issues, although some teachers acknowledge the need to develop a knowledge base on multicultural education issues.

Some teachers have carried out different activities to educate themselves in this sense on their own, through their own resources, occasional seminars with outside specialists in intercultural education, but these are isolated cases and not representative of the teaching body as a whole. Also, they would like to see more support from the education authorities in this sense.

According to the teachers' opinion, the most problems associated with immigrant students are related to communication issues (absent Italian language skills) or low academic level (knowledge) of immigrant pupils upon arrival. In addition, the schools have limited funds and lack resources (i.e., specialists working with migrants, educators or cultural mediators).

### 3.3. *Ethics of hospitality*

If you have 25 students in your classroom, how can you do it? I also have some children with special needs. Teachers should personalize the student's education...absolutely right...but how hard is it that? We do not have classes with six students ... and it is even more difficult when they do not speak the same language. Plus, Italian children have the same right» (Teacher, primary school).

The quote seems to indicate an actual pedagogical dilemma that is posed to teachers: to choose whether they should educate one-to-one or everyone? The quote is distant from the latest contributions concerning the *Universal Design for Learning* approach, which provides a blueprint for designing a curriculum that addresses the diverse needs of all learners.

Also, according to an interviewed teacher, there are two kinds of educators:

those who believe that their role is to welcome the student where he/she is and lead him/her to educational success, and those who go to work to transfer their notions and the subject alone. In other words, if the students follow me well, otherwise... doesn't matter (Teacher, secondary school).

Some interviewed teachers buy cakes and fruit juices for immigrant pupils who cannot afford it. In another school, they pay for bus tickets, donate clothing, showing such a strong 'ethic of hospitality' (Derrida, Dufourmantelle, 2000) that a school leader refers to them as «social missionaries».

## Conclusions

The analysis of this preliminary gathered data showed the heterogeneity and the dynamism which characterize the selected schools. In this sense, it is really complex to identify a common model or systematic intercultural practices. Some schools developed positive and innovative strategies; in other schools, teachers decided to train themselves in order to identify creative didactical solutions to address a changing environment. Some schools don't apply any change in their administrative and didactical policies. Also, there is a lack of resources to be allocated for intercultural issues and no incentive for intercultural teacher training.

Teachers and school leaders need to re-reconsider their role and have the right skills to be able to foster and sustain inclusive practices. In many cases, they were responsible for ensuring not only the schooling of immigrant pupils but also, and especially, the process of their social and academic integration from intercultural standpoints. In fact, the reality is characterized by a difficult social integration of migrants. In this sense, the school becomes one of the most meaningful educational agencies through which immigrant pupils experience welcoming and cooperation as well as dynamics of inclusion. Finally, it is necessary to overcome the emergency approach applied so far in the reception of migrant minors and their inclusion processes.

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## Teaching Gender: A Challenge for Educational Contexts?

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### Premise

The theme of gender education and pedagogy is grafted onto a broader ground, which is that of identity definitions, of the socialisation processes and implications for future life opportunities in which a significant weight is to be attributed to wider gender equality from training to employment and beyond. Public education policies aren't adequately concerned with gender equality issues, a topic that should be included in education pathways as part of the epistemological approach of the teachers and educators and not only as an accessory to the school curriculum (Gamberi et al., 2010) or to the aims of educational services. There are two good reasons for doing so. One of a formal nature, the other substantial: in the first place because the EU has indicated gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting issue for policies, including educational ones, and therefore at least formally requires the declination of the gender dimension within the actions and reforms addressed to the school. Secondly because gender equality is a cultural theme that must be tackled with cultural tools; both school and others educational contexts are environments in which it can be developed, declined and translated into good practices and concrete actions, supported by a gender sensitive pedagogical stance.

### 1. Gender education: beyond intentional interventions

A focus on the gender dimension should be part of the education referred to new generations and to the professionals that work in the educational field, in schools as well as in the wider not-formal educational system (Ghigi, 2019; Ostrouch-Kamińska, Vieira, 2016).

Unfortunately, the degree of activation and involvement of teachers and educators with respect to these issues is very low, and the institutional initiatives aimed at training for these professionals are modest and non-systematic.

The misalignment between the recommendations coming from gender studies and the educational practices relates to the fact that professionals in education at university aren't sufficiently trained in the relationship between gender and education (Antonelli et al., 2014). Moreover, around gender there are representations, stereotypes and prejudices that are deeply rooted, and which are difficult to tackle.

In this sense, gender cannot be considered as an obvious professional educational tool. The first step is therefore to clarify the difference between gender (intentional) education (Leonelli, 2011) and gender as the outcome of a socialisation process. From a pedagogical point of view this process can be assumed as a kind of informal education (Brambilla, 2016) or social education (Cavaletto, 2017; Tramma, 2019) and, consequently, a formative experience which mainly

has a social nature that contributes to the definition of different and unequal living conditions.

This clarification allows us to have a better understanding of what gender represents in the educational fields. As informal education, gender passes through intentional educational interventions influencing them and acting with or without the practitioner's awareness. In most cases, educational models and practices – in their theoretical and applied dimensions – remain characterised by gender cultures the matrixes of which mainly are invisible, informal and not declared (Brambilla et al., 2017). The educational practices are conditioned by the stereotype of the dominant genre and their effects occurring far beyond the perimeter of the school and the years of training.

School and educational services dedicated to pupils remain places where gender problematic expectations and gender stereotypes are still present (Crivellaro *et. al.*, 2013) in the hidden curriculum. On one side attitudes and expectations of teachers are differentiated according to the sex of pupils. This is the classical example of 'Pygmalion effect' or 'Self-fulfilling prophecy': adult assumptions (and, a fortiori, those of teachers) towards boys and girls and differentiated expectations towards them end up becoming somehow prescriptive and prophetic because they contribute to the formation of students' personal expectations (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968; Euridyce, 2010). On the other side the scholastic culture conveys a knowledge that is passed off as 'neutral' but that is strongly characterised by the masculine both in the contents and in the modes of transmission.

At the same time, gender as a multidimensional social structure which affects identity, work, power and sexuality (Connell, 2002) contributes to shape, in a different manner, women and men' life experiences, producing different kinds of educational needs, problems and questions. Despite this, in the educational services low attention is paid to the intersection between gender and other multiple dimensions (e.g. class, race, religion) and condition (e.g. disability, addictions, mental health, detention) to which educational services are dedicated. Here gender remains in the most cases a simple variable and not an interpretative tool for a better design of educative interventions.

All these considerations remind us that gender educational interventions don't exist in an educational vacuum – which only needs to be filled – but coexists (in a potentially problematic manner) with other forms of informal education that are more widespread and stronger, since they aren't declared even though systematically present in daily lives. Indeed, unfortunately, this kind of education is affected by sexist, misogynous and homophobic contents (Dello Preite, 2019).

This motivates research that focuses on the contemporary gender complex educative scenario looking at the same time at intentional and not intentional gender education that persists in schools and in educational services; trying to explore obstacles and impediments that the use of a critical gender approach (or a formative proposal aimed to its acquisition) could face in these contexts.

## **2. Challenge for intentional gender education: data from the field**

In this frame the authors present examples drawn from different experiences (academic research project, workshop and intervention on the gender issue in educational contexts with public financing) to explore which kind of obstacles an intentional gender education could encounter (in school and in not formal services).

In particular, these examples borrowed from 1) the preliminary results of a pedagogical research dedicated to the exploration of gender culture that are

implicitly present in thirty informal educational services of Milan and Hinterland (this research – entitled *Gender culture and intervention perspectives in educational services* – is part of a research grant assigned from the Department of Educational Human Sciences of the University of Milan-Bicocca, under the Prof. S. Tramma scientific supervision); 2) a workshop that the authors conducted during the *Festival dell'Educazione* (held in Turin November 22 - December 2, 2019), that involved students and their teachers in a reflection on the theme of gender in the school context; 3) four educational projects: a) two of these fielded by the Councillor for Equality of the Piedmont Region and addressed to high school students on the issues of gender differences and inequalities in education and employment; b) two designed by the Piedmont Region Councillor for Equality on gender equality issues, involving high school students and teachers. In detail, this is the Project *Rights at School 70.0*, aimed at high schools in Piedmont with the objective to counteract gender stereotypes in the family, in the labour market, in careers and in institutions. The second project, named *Stem by Women*, is built on the challenges of the new digital and technological economy and the underuse of women in it, and is proposed as a coordinated action within a public-private partnership. Both projects involve teachers in a training course on these topics.

All these different experiences, aimed at different targets and carried out by different professionals but sharing the gender theme, transformative aims and (without forgetting the specificities of every single context) being situated in the complex and complicated Italian contemporary «gender order» (Connell, 2002: 136) were shown to have common outcomes.

The data collected and the analysis conducted document the presence of different kind of limits and obstacles that a gender intentional education and the practitioners' acquisition of a gender lens encounter at different levels: cultural but also institutional, political, and economic. The first obstacle is the lack of theoretical references to this theme for most of the educational practitioners involved. In the educational contexts explored, we observed poor attention to the topic, (often considered not prominent, sometimes important but always dispensable) an absolute lack of specific training for teachers and educators and a widespread lack of awareness on the part of students and other educational users. These weaknesses are problematically linked to other different aspects that has been found, primarily the presence and the maintenance of stereotypical narratives based on gender, that regards users' (children, adolescents, adult or elderly) and practitioners' (educators and teachers, that in most cases are women) roles and models; stereotypes that are very common among professionals and users. Specular to these aspects is the problematic continuity between the users' and practitioners'/teachers' informal gender culture. This continuity produces an informal and problematic gender pedagogy that in some cases conflicts and/or contradicts the educational intentional mandates declared and that (without professionals' awareness), making them (implicitly) complicit of the social reproduction of gender disadvantage.

However, a gender sensitiveness wasn't completely missing. In *Rights at school 70.0* we highlight the strong interest of teachers in the subject of gender and their agreement on the importance of introducing the gender lens within the various disciplinary fields. In *Stem by Women* there was a strong educational need for teachers regarding tertiary occupational and training scenarios. Not only do teachers highlight a lack of updating on the most recent developments in the post-diploma training offer but also an unrealistic representation of the world of work and of the inequalities that persist in it especially that linked to gender that precludes careers and professions. However, this awareness isn't



automatically supported by an alliance with families, users or (more problematically) political and institutional actors.

Another problematic element has been pointed out by educators interviewed in the research *Gender culture and intervention perspectives in educational services*. As they declared, educational intervention dedicated to the development of a more equitable gender order are constantly contradicted by the current widespread gender culture that doesn't offer a symbolic and material support to gender intentional educational aims. That in consequence risks not appearing credible and feasible for users and removed from reality. Educators reported that, in some cases, they found opposition (explicit or implicit) to funding public bodies to promote proposals that try to introduce a new gender perspective in educational services. It should be noted that in Italy there isn't a public system of incentives planned for ensuring and promoting gender sensitive approach in educational services. These elements confirm that public contracting authorities, as some social policies, don't have enough sensitivity to support this theme and to contrast the attacks against it deriving from the problematic political speech on gender that transformed, in the common sense, the gender studies in an 'ideology' that has to be removed (Pontificio Consiglio per la Famiglia, 2003) and from the gender disadvantages coming from the patriarchal dividend (Volpato, 2013).

All these elements must be seen in conjunction with the scarcity and discontinuity of the economic resources that relate to the Italian educational system and that limit the possibility of recognising and transforming experiments in gender issue in knowledge, competences and shared good practices. In this sense, gender remains an emergency, a supplementary attention but not an interpretative and operational tool which can be applied at every point in the educational pathway.

## Conclusions

The acquisition of a gender lens in school and in socio-educational services could support practitioners at different levels. However, teachers and educators remain rarely oriented towards providing education or introducing the gender dimension into their disciplinary paths and still don't practice an explicit gender education (Bellafronte, 2003; Biemmi, 2010).

A pedagogical attention to the field allows us to explore the *necessity* but also the *fragility* of the interventions towards gender education. Although indispensable, the teachers' and educators' sensitivity to gender questions and their academic training to gender studies aren't enough. Gender is – at the same time – a category of analysis (Scott, 1986), something that we «do» in everyday interaction (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 130) and a social structure (Risman, 2004). In this sense, it seems naïve to consider gender training the solution and the only way to give new generations a gender-intentional education with new, critical and democratically oriented contents. Inside and outside educational services and schools lives another kind of gender education: an informal education – very common but not declared – whose contents often contradict and conflict with the current intentional gender education and whose didactics remain implicit and hidden.

Ignoring the strength of this informal education means ignoring the dimensions linked to it (such as power and pleasure), minimising their role and their problematic relapses and consequences on the intentional interventions on gender and the efficacy of their aims. Instead, taking into consideration this social education offers stimuli and useful indications to a better exploration of

problems, needs and questions of users on gender dimension, helping practitioners to develop more coherent and significant educational methods, strategies and interventions.

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## Violence against Women in the Age of Digital Reproduction

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**Keywords:** *Violence Against Women; Education; Revenge Porn; Real/Virtual; ICTs*

### Foreword

The new phenomena of violence against women – made possible by new technologies and social media and committed and/or disseminated online (cyber harassment, revenge-porn, doxing, sextortion, etc.) – not only constitute a new piece of the already multifaceted puzzle of Violence Against Women (VAW), but also a challenge in an effort to more accurately understanding these phenomena and pursuing more effective policies and actions (legal, social and educational) in post-democratic societies.

In contexts characterised by a strong reduction in the gender gap and by a high technological advancement, VAW takes on such unprecedented and original manifestations that it makes legislation and action policies inadequate to give a satisfying response. One of the reasons for this difficulty lies in the fact that the theoretical models developed by scholars (sociologists, criminologists, psychologists) often find it difficult to conceptualise ‘new’ phenomena within the context of hypothetically solving ‘old’ problems (such as VAW) which are believed to be in the process of being solved in post-traditional societies.

This contribution aims to offer a concise analysis of online VAW, including the one perpetrated against girls through new forms of technology-based violence, with a view to singling out the elements of continuity and discontinuity with traditional forms, in an attempt to understand the phenomenology and its fallout on socialisation and on education.

### 1. Definitions and phenomenology

Digital media and social networks specifically, in addition to being instruments of communication, learning and socialisation, are also new spaces within which to exercise gender violence. Indeed, on the one hand, they are a means through which to facilitate and spread its classical forms (harassment, stalking, rape etc.) which, online, become cyberstalking, cyber harassment etc. On the other hand, they form a new *habitat* capable of *enabling* unprecedented forms

of VAW, such as revenge porn<sup>8</sup>, upskirting<sup>9</sup>, deepfakes<sup>10</sup>, fapping<sup>11</sup>, sextortion<sup>12</sup>, cyber-rape<sup>13</sup> and grooming online<sup>14</sup>.

Also other types of gender violence have their spawning ground in the Web: hate speech (hatred expressed online), doxing (the search and publication of private information), and online trafficking. All these, when targeted on women, take on gender-based connotations that heighten their manifestations and consequences.

There is great ferment online around the definition of VAW. None of the definitions conceived up to now has the capacity to cover the whole range of phenomena and to contain the wealth of meanings of such a complex, elusive and changing subject matter. The most debated issue is that of revenge porn, which is «typically understood as the non-consensual distribution of private, sexual images by a malicious ex-partner» (McGlynn et al., 2017: 26). It has revealed to be misleading because similar images are routinely posted online also by strangers, albeit for a different purpose (exploitation, extortion, humiliation, ridicule). For example, on the Web it is possible to find an indefinite (but large) number of closed sites and groups in which men of all ages and social backgrounds exchange pictures and videos of generally unsuspecting women (friends, fiancées, lovers, relatives or even strangers), who are used as the targets of specific misogynous violence (*ibidem*). These are communities in which *normal* men, who often hide behind anonymity, share images of women found on the Internet or leaked from private or public situations (at home, at the beach, on a train), who are portrayed both in normal or in sexually explicit poses. At times, even a smile becomes a pretext for giving free rein to censorable comments. Phenomena like these are also recorded in Italy<sup>15</sup>. The sites detected up to now have freakish names and hordes of subscribers (from 18,000 to 100,000). Moreover, it was recently discovered that all (or almost all) the materials (photos and videos) circulated on the Web, are scrupulously stored in an archive called Bibbia 3.0. It is an enormous inventory of pedopornographic images and amateur porn videos easily accessible to anybody, accompanied by private and intimate information and documents made available to the general public. This is an entirely Made-in-Italy product, as its developers boast (De Lorenzo, Vassallo, 2016).

In addition to revenge porn, more comprehensive expressions have been coined to define these phenomena such as «cybersexism» (Poland, 2016), «technology-facilitated sexual violence» (Powell, Henry, 2017), «image-based

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<sup>8</sup> Literally «pornography used as a form of revenge», it indicates the distribution of sexually explicit private images of former partners or strangers without their consent for the purpose of revenge, blackmail or other reasons.

<sup>9</sup> Indicates photographic shots of the female body taken from below, aimed at showing lingerie or naked parts of the body.

<sup>10</sup> Videos manipulated through Artificial Intelligence and used to create fake porn movies of celebrities. They not only aim to ridicule celebrities but also activists and controversial female figures, as in the case of Indian journalist Rana Ayubb. Following the radical statements she made against the acquiescence of the Indian Government and culture on the rape of an 8-year-old girl, fake tweets were circulated in which she said she 'hated India and Indians' and a fake porn was circulated in which her face was superimposed on that of the actress.

<sup>11</sup> The release and distribution of private pictures hacked from stars and influencers and fed to millions of users.

<sup>12</sup> Extortion based on the distribution of sexually explicit images, either stolen or consensually obtained (sexting), used for the purpose of blackmailing, retaliating or ridiculing.

<sup>13</sup> This includes virtually raping someone and circulating the video of the rape offline.

<sup>14</sup> Soliciting for the purpose of making a real or virtual sexual contact with children or adolescents.

<sup>15</sup> Journalistic investigations portray a disconcerting picture. A few years ago, a French-language group called Babylone 2.0 was discovered in which thousands of men shared photos of their alleged conquests, accompanied by sexist and misogynist comments. In Italy, several such groups can be found in social network sites (Di Fazio, 2017).

sexual abuse» (McGlynn et al., 2017), However, these too, even if they have the merit of picking out the essential elements of the phenomenon, such as the different continuums that characterise it, inevitably leave something out. The issue deserves an in-depth analysis that is impossible here. So, let's take a look at the figures.

## 2. The figures

Unlike in Italy, international literature is already vast and very well sectorised<sup>16</sup> even if the empirical base is relatively scarce. The limits in detecting it compound to the difficulty of classifying a phenomenon that is actually hybrid, complex and partially opaque. Research, especially surveys, shows a growing incidence of all forms of online VAW<sup>17</sup>, with a considerable impact on the life and health of the victims (FRA, 2014; EIGE, 2017; PRC 2014 and 2017). They reveal that, even if women and girls use the Internet as much as men, they are much more exposed to violence and harassment, especially of the more serious sort. In Europe, at least one woman out of ten has suffered some type of online harassment since the age of 15 (FRA, 2014: 104). Furthermore, 77% of these have also suffered some form of sexual and/or physical violence from an intimate partner (EIGE, 2017: 2). In addition, 5% of European women have undergone some form of cyberstalking from the age of 15 (FRA, 2014: 87), and 70% of these have suffered at least one form of sexual/physical violence by a partner (EIGE, 2017: 2). These figures corroborate the now established *continuum* between offline and online violence. In the United States, the situation appears even worse: in 2014, one young woman out of four was subjected to stalking or sexual harassment. In 2017, «among adults ages 18 to 29, women are more than twice as likely as men to report experiencing sexual harassment online (21% vs. 9%). And among the youngest adults – those ages 18 to 24 – women are more than three times as likely to be sexually harassed online (20% vs. 6% of men)» (PRC, 2017: 14-15).

This type of violence is mainly perpetrated on social media and operators are considered insufficiently active in combating the phenomenon, analogously to police forces. The consequences of this 'virtual' violence are very 'real' and provoke stress, panic attacks, depression and self-isolation<sup>18</sup>. In some cases, they lead to suicide. The most famous case in Italy is that of Tiziana Cantone, although several similar cases have been reported in different parts of the world (Dodge, 2016; Shariff, 2016),

Adolescents, especially girls, are particularly exposed to online violence although there is a slight increase in the number of victims among boys. Abusers are almost always males (Livingstone, Haddon, 2014), Reports of sexual violence are greater among boys than girls although they claim they did not suffer consequences while girls say they suffered more. Another significant datum is

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<sup>16</sup> This literature intertwines with that on cyber-violence and spans from cyber-psychology to digital sociology and techno-feminist criminology. (See *inter alia*: Citron, 2014; Whitmarsh, 2015; Sherlock, 2016; DeKeseredy, Schwartz, 2016; Vera-Gray, 2017; Wittes et al., 2016; Welsh, 2012; Wick, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> The prevention campaigns against bullying have given significant results. Cyberbullying, even if it has a lower incidence, is in line with all the other forms of violence online. This also applies to Italy (ISTAT, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> This is the outcome of a survey by Amnesty International involving approximately 4,000 women between 18 and 55 years of age in eight Countries (Denmark, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, United Kingdom, Spain, Sweden and USA), In these countries, a quarter (23%) of the women interviewed were harassed or threatened at least once, ranging from 16% in Italy to 33% in the US (Amnesty, 2017).

that Northern Countries (in this case England and Norway) are where girls more often report having been abused by their partners (*ibidem*). In this case too, there is an analogy with what happens offline, namely the phenomenon known as the Nordic Paradox (Gracia, Merlo, 2016).

Surveys on minors mainly focus on cyberbullying and grooming and sometimes also on sexting, which is very common among youths and, even if it is not deemed to be a form of violence, it can provide material for *revenge porn* or *sextortion*<sup>19</sup>. Recent surveys have shown an increase in the number of cases in which the offenders are themselves adolescents (Shannon, 2012; McAlinden, 2012).

### 3. Risk factors

Virtually all women and girls can become the (even unsuspecting) victims of some form of online VAW, for example by being 'listed' on a misogynous site. However, specific risk factors (much more evident to adolescents than to their parents) appear to be associated with the general level of education (Livingstone, Haddon, 2009). It is only in the most serious forms of VAW (those that translate into physical abuse) that the risk breakdown (and also the probability of turning into an abuser) follows – at least in part – the inequalities in the level of psychosocial malaise (Shariff, 2008). Another factor of vulnerability can be found in the failure to develop social skills, remaining trapped in the solitude and malaise typical of adolescents, which often pushes 'well-born' white girls into taking collusive behaviours. The incidence of voluntarily produced pornographic material accounts for a third of the total intercepted and removed by authorities (IWF, 2019).

Exposure to pornography deserves to be addressed separately. Even if it depends on environmental factors of which we cannot estimate the effects, we know that half of the youngsters between 11 and 16 years of age see pornography online (Martellozzo et al., 2017); that unrequested exposure to pornography has risen and that the extent to which children and adolescents result to be disturbed by such exposure is influenced by the gender, age, social norms and the degree of control that they have against viewing these sites (*ibidem*). There are millions of images of abuses on minors circulating on the Internet, portraying tens of thousands of children (UNICEF, 2013; IWF, 2019). Different surveys show the current trend of portraying ever-younger minors in increasingly explicit and violent situations and of sharing these images in forums, closed groups and peer-to-peer networks (UNICEF, 2013). Pornography affects the sexual behaviour of youngsters: «44% of males, compared to 29% of females, reported that the online pornography [...] gave them ideas about the types of sex they wanted to try out» (Martellozzo et al., 2017: 42).

### Conclusions

What differentiates online VAW from classical forms of violence is the reproducibility, ubiquity and uncontrollability of its dissemination. It can be repeated

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<sup>19</sup> Sexting (the crasis between sex and texting) consists in exchanging sexually explicit texts and images. Adolescents use it in their intimate relationships and sometimes also to obtain personal advantages or gifts in exchange for their images. When these contents are disseminated and exploited by peers or possible abusers, they turn into an instrument of blackmail, producing anxiety and humiliation, which are experienced in solitude, also because of the feelings of guilt for having actively taken part in the interaction.



for ever-more and has repercussions anywhere, anytime. Its victims are virally exposed and degraded before an audience of strangers, with uncontrollable effects (invisible audiences). The humiliation and the feeling of receiving an irreparable life sentence, compounded with the effects of secondary victimisation, turn it into a devastating experience, especially for young girls.

The role of educators (parents and teachers) is obviously crucial but also delicate and complex. The generation gap not always only concerns the use of ICTs, which undoubtedly bear a certain weight, but also fast-changing relational and value systems. Even if children and adolescents are deemed to be more skilled in the use of ICTs, they are not capable of discerning the contents that are best suited for them nor how they should behave in order to protect themselves. Social skills in this case count more than technical skills: the influencing models linked to gender and power, as well as the role that peer groups and social media play in the new ecology of socialisation. The influence of educators in guiding youngsters to use the media affords protection only if it focuses on the complexity of human relations and sexuality without however turning into useless bans (easily bypassed by adolescents), but leaving room for empowerment and resilience.

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## Gender (In)Equality and Migration: The New Paradigm of Civic Integration

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**Keywords:** *Gender equality, Migration, Integration, Education*

### Introduction

Civic integration translates the Dutch term *inburgering* and expresses the idea that «successful integration into a host society rests not only on employment (economic integration) and civic engagement (political integration), but also on individual commitments to characteristics typifying national citizenship, specifically country knowledge, language proficiency and liberal and social values» (Goodman, 2010: 754). This model of integration, first introduced in the Netherlands and subsequently adopted by other European countries, includes practices and tools which Goodman (2010) calls «citizenship hardware», which includes courses, tests, interviews, ceremonies, oaths and contracts. Language courses and courses focused in social, cultural and civic orientation aim to introduce newcomers to the values and customs of the host society; they are mandatory and passing the tests is a condition for obtaining citizenship or even a long-term residence permit. More recently, in some countries, tests of civic integration have been introduced abroad for women from non-European countries who want to be reunited with their partners or husbands.

The paradigm of civic integration has drawn criticisms in relation to its conceptual coherence, its effectiveness and its correspondence with the stated objectives (Goodman, Wright, 2015), as well as its legitimacy from a liberal point of view. I have dealt elsewhere with the debate on the legitimacy of civic integration and its practices from a liberal point of view (Taraborrelli, 2019). Here I would like to analyse this model from the point of view of gender, highlighting the advantages and disadvantages that it entails for migrant women. I will make use above all of the results of studies carried out in the Netherlands, because not only was it there that the model of civic integration was first introduced, but the Netherlands has also promoted specific civic integration policies and programs for women belonging to ethnic minorities (Kirk, Suvarierol, 2014).

### 1. Some effects of civic integration on women

Civic integration has been criticized because, beyond its stated objectives, it could constitute just a mechanism for regulating migratory flows and selecting migrants. In the literature dedicated to this model of integration, it has often been pointed out that although migration policies in general and civic integration in particular are in principle gender-neutral, they nevertheless affect men and women in different ways – often intentionally. Men continue to be seen as useful migrants and are perceived of as breadwinners. Despite the growing phenomenon of the feminization of migration, that is the increase in the number of women migrating independently in search of jobs, rather than as family dependants traveling with their husbands or joining them abroad (INSTRAW, 2007: 1), and although they are increasingly becoming breadwinners and making an indispensable contribution to host societies in the care sectors (Kofman et al., 2000; Ehrenreich, Hochschild, 2003; Anthias *et al.*, 2013), women are still perceived rightly or wrongly as dependent on men and thus relegated to the

category of undesirables. The tests of civic integration abroad in fact limit family reunification and the entry of women with limited skills and low literacy levels. Such women, mostly from the third countries or from rural areas, are deemed unfit to live in European societies.

It should, however, also be borne in mind that these tests not only aim to select migrant women on the basis of their socio-economic status and level of education, but also to contain the phenomenon of forced marriages involving women who are usually very young and illiterate. Furthermore, attendance at courses is an opportunity for many women to become aware of their rights, or as some say, of their dignity, given that the programs address – see the case of the Netherlands – issues such as sexuality, the relationship between the sexes and the history of feminism.

The tests of civic integration in the host countries can slow down or prevent the acquisition of the permanent residence permit or citizenship, leaving the migrants in a condition of juridical indeterminacy that marginalizes them and exposes them to exploitation. For migrant women, such tests represent a greater impediment than for men because the courses are not gender sensitive. Language courses could undoubtedly be a means of encouraging participation in life in the receiving society, if they did not address men and women as if they were a homogeneous group but instead considered the specific needs of migrant women who, fulfilling the role of carers and often the dual role of carers and workers, have limited access to them due to lack of time and lack of flexibility of the courses on offer.

The scarce attention paid to the structural difficulties that prevent women from attending courses, such as the lack of reliable and flexible childcare facilities is a paradoxical effect of 'civic turn' in migration policies. In fact, in recent decades integration policies have shifted their focus and in explaining what might prevent migrants from performing like most of the population (Roggeband, Verloo, 2007) they single out cultural instead of structural socio-economic barriers. The process of culturalization of integration has had a negative effect on the lives of migrant women to the extent that it has made integration policies less attentive to structural obstacles to their integration (Kirk and Suvarierol, 2014: 14) often conditioned, more pragmatically, by the lack of nursery schools or by the costs of language courses with childcare facilities. Where these supports exist, the courses allow women to create networks and escape social isolation (Anthias et al., 2008).

The frequency of these courses should not only be useful to promote social integration and inclusion in the labour market, but also to contribute to achieving the other objective of civic integration policies, namely the emancipation of migrant women, an objective that explains and justifies the broad consensus they have achieved in the Netherlands (Entzinger et al., 2011). As mentioned above, in civic integration courses information is given on state institutions and the rule of law, on the job market and on the values of receiving societies, as well as on sexuality and the relationship between genders. In the Netherlands, migrant men and women learn that Article 1 of the Constitution states that women have the same rights as men and that men and women are equal; women can make their own choices, express their opinions and choose the partner they want. Migrants are also informed about the laws and regulations that apply to abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, sexuality; as well as on the fact that all forms of violence are punishable. Some studies show that as a result of course attendance, women become more aware of their rights and become more assertive at home, often disorienting and displeasing their husbands (Kirk, Suvarierol, 2014). The participation in these courses by women and men can be a tool to contain and combat invisible phenomena, such as domestic violence, gender inequality,

genital mutilation, polygamy, forced marriages, the subjection of women to their spouse, still widespread in some communities in European states: even though migrants do not share the same values, they learn about the customs and values of the receiving country what is allowed and what is punished, and above all what is expected of them.

Even with regards to this objective, the model of civic integration exhibits limitations because it leads to downplaying or ignoring the role that structural obstacles play in the emancipation of migrant women, such as the fact the migration policies themselves in some countries have increased dependence of women on their husbands. Migrant women who come to the Netherlands for family reunification or to form new families are legally dependent on their partners until they receive a permanent residence permit; if their relationship ceases, they risk losing their legal permanence. This condition of dependence is exacerbated by civic integration policies because the fees for civic courses must be paid by the partners, since women rarely have their own income. Where the partner is unwilling to make this financial investment, women cannot participate in the courses, and those women who do not pass civic integration exams are not eligible for residency permits and thus remain dependent on their relationships for their legal status (Kirk, Suvarierol, 2014).

## 2. Women as key for integration

As already mentioned, in recent decades integration policies have undergone a process of culturalization: as a consequence, cultural differences are deemed to be the key to explaining the failure of the integration of some ethnic groups. Within this context, women have acquired a key role both from a symbolic and functional point of view.

In the model of civic integration, knowledge of the host country's language, culture, values and institutions is a condition for the acquisition of citizenship, long-term residence permit, and in some cases, also for entry from non-European countries. European societies increasingly attach importance to the liberal secular values of gender equality and sexual freedom in shaping citizenship (Kofman et al., 2013: 3); consequently, the acceptance of these values becomes a way to mark the boundaries between civilized Westerners and uncivilized, illiberal, oppressive, sexist foreigners (Anthias, 2014, Scheibelhofer, 2014), a dividing line between who deserves or does not deserve to be accepted, and a criterion of belonging. For example, one of the central values defended in the Netherlands as 'Dutch' is gender equality; remarkable in this process, as some scholars observed, «is how some political actors, who have never been strong advocates of gender equality before, now use the argument of gender equality to reassert national identity and place more restrictive demands upon immigrants and resident minorities» (Roggeband, Verloo, 2007: 272). Sara Farris (2012) has defined this attitude as «femonationalism», that is, the exploitation of gender and the mobilization of feminist discourse to create a dichotomy between migrant women (victims) and men (the other threatening), between 'Us' and 'Others'. In short, with this expression she refers to the exploitation of feminist themes by nationalists and neoliberals in an anti-Islam (or anti-immigration) function, under the banner of gender equality. Her arguments must undoubtedly be taken into consideration, but the battle for gender equality and for the rights of migrant women must be carried out with determination and cannot be jettisoned to prevent these themes from potentially being exploited against immigration by sovereigntists and nationalists.

In their role as mothers, women have progressively acquired a significant position: in the Netherlands, for example, migrant women are not only represented as victims of a misogynistic culture (usually Islamic), but also as the main key to solving integration and emancipation problems (Roggeband, Verloo 2007: 272). In 2003 the government commission for the Participation of Women of Ethnic Minority Groups was established with the aim of producing changes in their integration, participation in the labour market and seeking to reach migrant communities through them. The emancipation of migrating women was seen as a crucial step towards the emancipation of the migrant community in general (Roggeband, Verloo, 2007). Significantly, the Commission used as its motto «If you educate a mother, you educate a family»: not only the woman, but also her family would benefit from the effects of civic integration, thus breaking the circle of reproduction of socio-economic inequalities generation after generation (Joppke, 2007; Kofman et al., 2013).

Among the topics covered in the civic integration courses there is also «education, health, and upbringing», aimed at preparing a parent «to guide his or her own child in Dutch education, institutions and the health system» and to be «a part of activities that are important to the rearing of children». It is mainly focused on the tasks of the mother even if, in fact, they are not defined as exclusively pertaining to women. This approach, from a gender point of view, has some questionable aspects. First of all, the courses in civic integration risk becoming a means of solving the problems of society, rather than satisfying the specific needs of migrant women or emancipating them (Kirk, Suvarierol, 2014: 15-16). Furthermore, even though integration policies seek to promote the agency of migrant women they, nevertheless, focus on their role as mothers at home; moreover, they are also told what it means to be mothers and how they must perform this task in accordance with Dutch cultural and social standards.

Addressing women in their function as mothers, Dutch civic integration policies risk contradicting their emancipatory purpose because their paternalistic approach and because they confine the citizenship of many women within the home (Van den Berg, Duyvendak, 2012).

## **Conclusions**

Taking advantage of this experience, in Italy where the model of civic integration has been adopted since 2012, a general program capable of offering the basic skills to survive and flourish in our country and addressed at all migrants as potential workers and carers (Kirk and Suvarierol, 2014: 19) should be offered. It would be a way to overcome the division of labour and a gender division between the public space of work and the private one of housing and care giving. Civic integration courses should also offer a greater level of language proficiency and better preparation for the labour market. In fact, emancipation implies not only sharing work and responsibilities for care giving but also financial and legal independence. Women show themselves to be highly motivated (Kirk and Suvarierol, 2014), they often continue to take courses even if they are ready to take the exam, which means that the full potential of women would not be realized if they were assigned only the role of mothers. The identity of migrant women is dynamic: language and civic courses should help them redefine themselves in a way that detaches them from the exclusively family-domestic environment to reinforce the value of the role of working wife-mother (Cognigni, 2014).

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## The Gender Issue in Migrant Representation: a Case Study on Italian School Textbooks and Online Newspapers

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**Keywords:** *Migrants, Gender, Media, Textbooks, Italy*

### Introduction

This study was conducted within the project *Imago migrantis: representation of migrants in Italian textbooks and European online newspapers* (Tudisca et al., 2019), started at CNR-IRPPS in 2016. The project was developed based on previous experience on textbooks analysis, started at CNR-IRPPS since early 2000 (Valente et al. 2014; Valente et al. 2016; Quessada et al. 2008). This paper is aimed at fostering understanding of how and to what extent stereotypes and implicit values are embedded in migrant women representation in Italy.

### 1. Theoretical background

This research can be considered part of feminist studies on female representation in media. The research field concerns several kinds of 'media', even video games, and focuses on female representation from two main points of view: media contents, with reference to how and to what extent women are represented; employment, with reference to women low weight in the working environments producing these media, a factor that clearly has an impact on the contents themselves. We follow the first approach.

At the same time the study we present can be considered as part of the 'difference feminism', a feminist school of thought aiming to give value to women specificities – social, ethnic – up to considering even the multiplicity within every single woman. In our case the specificity is referred to the 'migrant' condition. According to literature, migrant women risk to undergo a double discrimination, because women and migrants; however, some scholars also make reference to 'multiple' discriminations, related to belonging to disadvantaged social classes, minority ethnic groups, or having a lower education level compared to men (Campani, 2003; Martinez Lirola, Zammit, 2017; Czepek, Hellwig, 2009).

The way women are represented in influential and authoritative media – such as textbooks and newspapers - can contribute to fight or reinforce stereotypes and implicit values, converting to common sense patriarchal and hierarchical relationships resulting from a historical background; at the same time, «fair media portrayal is an important dimension of migrants' participation in mainstream society and is regarded as a key resource of identity formation» and of the development of civic belonging (Lünenborg, 2014: 960). Moreover, addressing the topic of migrant representation in Italy - one of the first countries of arrival in



Europe - is essential, considering that the Italian perceptions of migrants are basically strongly distorted and negative (European Commission, 2018).

## 2. Methods

The research was focused on the analysis held in 2016 of two peculiar categories of media: Italian secondary school textbooks and European online newspapers. In the following subsections we describe the essential methodological aspects related to the results presented in this paper, referring to previous publications for further details (Caruso *et al.*, 2019; Tudisca *et al.*, 2017; Valente *et al.*, 2017; Valente *et al.*, 2019). The first step was to define the sample of analysis; the second to develop grids to analyse the selected materials, including images representing migrants.

In Italian secondary school, migrations are not a curricular subject 'per se', but the topic is transversally included in the History and Geography educational curriculum. While selecting a sample of the most adopted History and Geography textbooks, being official data about the sales not available in Italy due to commercial reasons, we used an integrated methodology: considering the most ordered books on Amazon, the lists of those adopted in some of the main schools of Naples, Rome and Milan, also comparing to the lists of major school bookshops of Rome and Naples. This process led to identify 38 volumes (attachments included).

While selecting the online newspapers to be analysed, the main criterium was choosing the most read; as secondary criterium, respecting political variety and balance; as tertiary, the availability of a freely consultable online archive. For Italy we selected *la Repubblica*, *il Corriere della Sera*, *la Stampa*, *il Giornale*, *il Fatto Quotidiano*. Moreover, we focused on the analysis of the publication days covering eight 'key-events' with reference to the migration issue which occurred in 2016: the refugee agreement between Europe and Turkey; the Hungarian referendum related to European Union's migrant relocation plans; the evacuations of Calais and of Idomeni camps; conflicts at the Ventimiglia border; the celebration of the *Day of Memory and Welcome* in Lampedusa; the visit of Pope Francis at the Lesbos hotspot; the assignment of the Berlin Film Festival Golden Bear to the documentary *Fuocoammare*.

We developed ad hoc analysis grids for textbooks and newspapers, including specific grids for images representing migrants, aimed at registering variables such as sex, age, individual or group representation.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Underrepresentation of migrant women

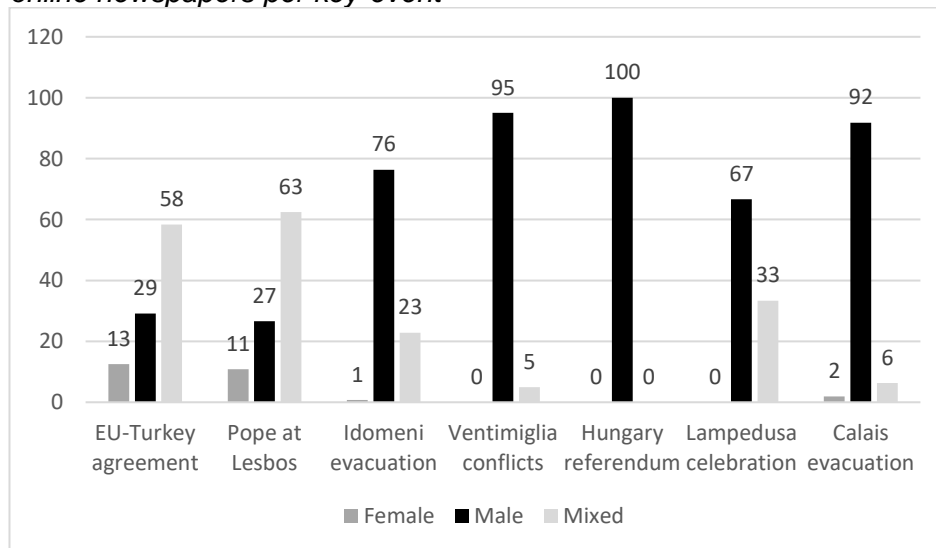
The analysis of the pictures shows that migrant women tend to be underrepresented in both Italian school textbooks and online newspapers. In the 89 pictures with migrants from school textbooks, the percentage of images representing only women is 13%, compared to 38% representing only men, with 40% of pictures including both men and women. This way of representing migrants does not correctly reflect reality, considering that for several years – including 2016 - immigrant women have been constituting more than 50% of foreign presences in Italy (Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS, 2016). This result is in line with previous studies on textbooks conducted in Italy (Valente *et al.*,

2014). At international level, underrepresentation of women was highlighted in specific contexts different from migration, as human evolution (Quessada *et al.*, 2008).

The underrepresentation issue of migrant women also emerges from the analysis of the 553 pictures representing migrants published on the Italian online newspapers analysed. Here just 4% of the images analysed represent only women, compared to 57% of pictures representing only men, with 21% of pictures representing men and women together (in both textbooks and newspapers, the total becomes 100 considering the images where gender is unrecognisable). These results are also confirmed if looking at the whole of data, including the other three European countries considered in the project *Imago migrantis* (Greece, France, United Kingdom) (Caruso *et al.*, 2019), and are in line with other international studies on representation of migrant women in media (Martinez Lirola, 2014; Martinez Lirola, Zammit, 2017).

However, in this case the data interpretation is more complex, due to the selection of specific key-events (Figure 1). For example, in the case of Calais evacuation, the prevalence of pictures with male migrants reflects reality, the percentage of women being actually very low in that camp. On the contrary, the bigger percentages of men appear anomalous referred to the Idomeni evacuation, characterized by a high presence of families; in this case there seems to be a distortion of reality, but this might also be due to 'cultural' reasons, i.e. a tendency of women not to show themselves in public.

**FIGURE 1.** Percentage distribution of gender in migrants represented in Italian online newspapers per key-event



Source: CNR-IRPPS, *Imago migrantis* database (2019)

### 3.2. Ways of representing migrant women

We observe that in Italian school textbooks migrant women are often represented together with children: in most of the images with both adults and children, the latter are usually close to women, while men are in the background, in line with a traditional way of representation.

However, migrant women do not only appear just confined in private space. Indeed, we register a relevant new element compared to the analysis we carried out five years before (Valente, 2014), namely the presence of pictures of women at work, including not only stereotypical jobs related to care, but a variety of jobs, some implying high social recognition. While some years ago migrant women

were portrayed at work only together with their husband and in poor contexts, here we find writers, musicians, politicians, scientists (Figure 2). A result that opens new perspectives compared to previous studies showing that Italian primary school manuals still portray Italian women mainly as housewives, or primary school teachers (Biemmi, 2017).

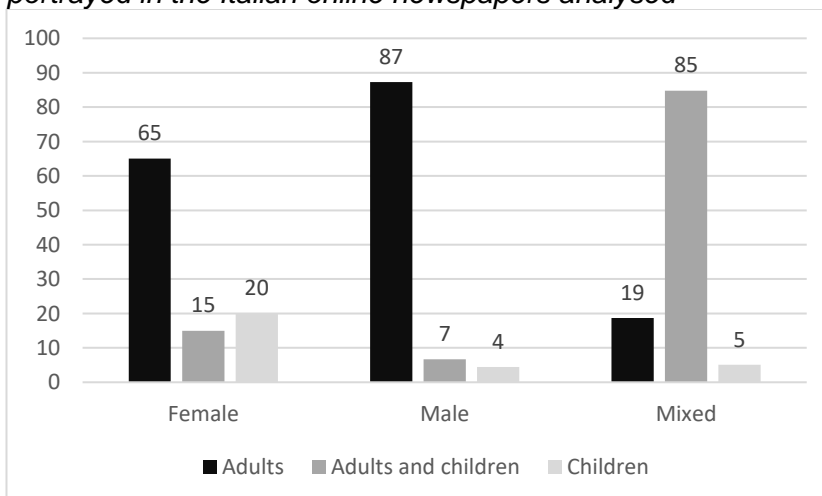
**FIGURE. 2** *An immigrant woman in one of the textbooks analysed*



Source: Textbook *Open Geo*, (3) (2016: 78)

Coming to online newspapers, the traditional way of representing refugee women together with children persists. If we cross the data related to gender and age (Figure 3), in the images where both genders appear the percentage of adults and children is higher, what would suggest that children are showed together with both women and men; however, if we look more deeply at the pictures, we notice that children are usually next to women.

**FIGURE. 3.** *Percentage distribution of children and adults by gender in migrants portrayed in the Italian online newspapers analysed*



Source: CNR-IRPPS, *Imago migrantis* database (2019)

Anyway, also analysing the (few) pictures representing migrant women in online newspapers, we find signals that may be considered innovative compared to previous literature. First, migrant women are often represented as individuals, not just part of groups. On the one hand, this may give value to women identity and foster a high emotional connection of the public with the portrayed subject, in contrast with the typical media images showing anonymous groups of migrants, so overcoming the 'de-humanization frame' (Martinez Lirola, Zammit, 2017; Esses *et al.*, 2013). On the other hand, this 'segregation' in the woman iconography could reflect a stereotypical role of women out of public sphere and collective action. Anyway, a second issue is that migrant women happen to be portrayed not only as passive victims, but also as active players and, even, asking for rights, no longer confined in private space. While scanning the pictures, we find women who demonstrate, protest, welcome the Pope, smile; this means giving value not only to their individuality, but also to their dignity. This insight contrasts with the 'victimization frame', another typical media frame based on representing migrants and particularly women as passive and needing help (Martinez Lirola, 2014; Martinez Lirola, Zammit, 2017; Rajaram, 2002).

## Conclusions and perspectives

We registered a problem of underrepresentation of migrant women in both Italian school textbooks and online newspapers, often not consistent with reality; this tendency to 'veil' the female presence in the media discourse (Valente *et al.*, 2014) risks to build a distorted picture of the migratory phenomenon, marginalizing migrant women, impeding to recognize their social weight (Martinez Lirola, Zammit, 2017).

At the same time, the way of representing migrant women seems being evolving compared to previous studies, including – side by side with more stereotypical representations together with children and needing help - working dimension in various contexts - in textbooks - and giving value also to their active role - in online newspaper. With reference to the representation of migrant women as workers, we remind that the 'participatory parity' - concept developed by the feminist Nancy Fraser – would require that all society components can interact as peers, which implies not only comparable economic conditions, but also social recognition.

Moreover, the study suggests the need of monitoring the representation of migrant women, also considering that it has been argued - starting from the feminist Bell hooks - that sexism and racism are two systems of domination that support each other. To this aim, the development of guidelines for school textbooks and newspapers joining gender/migrant perspectives would be necessary. Currently, in Italy, guidelines for the press have been separately developed addressing both immigration and gender equality (in the *Rome Charter* and the *Venice Manifesto* respectively), but an integration of the two aspects is still missing, as well as a focus on the peculiarities of visual communication. As for school textbooks, only guidelines related to gender have been developed by researchers (Biemmi, 2015) – usually ignored by publishing houses - and nothing specific about representation of migrants; so, the current guidelines available would need to be updated to embrace a more diversified view including e.g. women of various ethnic groups, social classes, sexual orientation (Czepek, Hellwig, 2009).

To further develop this study, our intention is to widen the analysis to the current political period, characterized by an exacerbation towards migrants in

the Italian political discourse. It would be particularly interesting to look for different trajectories of newspapers and textbooks, considering that, if newspapers focus on the 'extemporaneous', textbooks, needing a longer assimilation time, are characterized by the 'didactic transposition delay' (Clément and Hovart, 2000); this delay, far from being 'neutral', is determined not only by the 'technical' time needed in order to consolidate and spread knowledge, but also by how society supports the values embedded in that knowledge (Valente et al., 2019).

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## Education on the Fringe of Society

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**Keywords:** *Education, Marginality, Social Change, Society, Politics*

### Introduction

Its undeniable the presence of many modernities and how the neoliberal and capitalist model is imposing itself as the only true model of living. The Eurocentric civilization project reduces the communities to folkloric residuals that need to follow the reach the 'western' democratic and modern development. However, in some cases, marginalised groups slip out of the co-opting social structure and provoke a rupture, a change. Their status provides freedom to think and act outside the structure, but also restrictions on their rights and opportunities.

### 1. Education and social exclusion

The discrepancy between the lower strata and the rest of civil society, in modern democracies, delegitimizes the nature of those who live on the fringes of communities, invalidating their thinking, their knowledge and understanding of the essence of a democracy, i.e., to be a space open to all, without distinction. According to the sociologist de Sousa Santos (de Sousa Santos, 2003), non-hegemonic democracies, represent precisely the otherness that coincides with the excluded, the marginalized, and the oppressed. Therefore, it is clear that democracy, as we mostly experience it, does not pay sufficient attention to the needs of those who, for mere economic reasons, fail to develop cultural relationships and to occupy a political space. Marginality and exclusion are constituent elements of indifference and of a form of paternalistic ethics that is an end in itself and that promotes a deeper sense of victimhood, triggered by a socio-economic verticality. In history, the subordinate classes have always been relegated to a role of social melting pot, the link instrumental to legitimizing the power and abuses of those who have greater economic weight. Freire recognizes the oppressed, those who live on the margins of society, as the class, the community that should take on the task of transformation, by virtue of a strength derived from understanding one's own condition as a unique element of deprivation of individual and collective freedom. Marginality, understood in its broader and more complex sense, is a useful notion to restructure a system that increasingly tends to limit the individual in his/her opportunities and capacity to grow. These are the bases on which an individual can leverage and manage his/her freedom. In this way, marginality is an element that distinguishes and stigmatizes an individual before he or she can attempt to express him/herself and to act within the social and political system. Therefore, at present, a new conception of marginality and social exclusion is taking shape. While, in the past, the composition of society and the very conscience of the subordinate classes had not met with the interest of scholars, today, more than ever before, the emergency that we are called to face does not allow us to shrink back with respect not only to an understanding of the phenomenon in its historical



aspects, but also to reinterpret that same phenomenon in the light of the transformations that have affected Western societies in particular. The excluded, those experiencing discrimination emerge both as the genesis and nemesis of that same economic and social structure that generated them, thus becoming a constituent element as well as the object of policies aimed at eradicating them both from an economic point of view and as a phenomenon intrinsic in society. Therefore, it comes to be seen as a fundamental element of Western society itself which, as already said above, leaves these subjects to live in a constant limbo, in a dimension of eternal liquidity; on the one hand, it prevents the awareness of their condition and class identity and, on the other, it cannot do without them since they are a central pillar on which the ethics of the liberal state lies. In this regard, all individuals should be empowered with education: a transforming driving force, the main element of change and awareness. Education within marginality, in the realization of belonging to a so-called subculture that has nothing to envy to the dominant Western culture. Thus, as described by de Sousa Santos in his dialogue with Boff, modern society claims a liberation (Boff, de Sousa Santos, 2012). This freedom can be accomplished only by those who have been deprived of individual and collective freedoms. This change is rooted in a re-interpretation of the condition of marginality and poverty. First, it must be said that in the course of history, from the most remote to the most recent times, the upper echelons of Western societies have developed a sort of phobia, a fear of poverty. We are not referring to feelings of physical repulsion for those who live in this condition, but to a real phobia of what poverty and social exclusion represent. What we have described as the genesis and nemesis of social exclusion now becomes a reinforcing element of this condition. Democracies, though attentive and providing social initiatives aimed at overcoming this condition, have somehow promoted the reproduction of this condition as an essential element for the survival of its very governmental model. While on the one hand democracy sees its dawn as a unique governmental structure, capable of giving voice to minorities, on the other hand, these very minorities, defended in democratic constitutions, are the least represented in political terms. Moreover, they are the most ignored and the least able to raise their voices within the legislative and governmental system. It is therefore of particular interest to explore what resources and what strategies can be implemented to overturn this internal dualism of democracy. In the analysis carried out by Sen and Naussbaum (Sen 2018; Naussbaum 2013) poverty (as a condition generating situations of marginality and social exclusion) cannot be considered and interpreted using economic factors alone. The economic aspect, in the common and current interpretation, is the only factor that, in turn, has the greatest influence on the use of various services. In the highly developed contemporary society, economic powerlessness coincides with the personal, social and political inability to satisfy one's own needs and to access specific services. This capacitive difficulty, which we could define consequential to the economic aspect, is however independent from income per se, since people are endowed with personal and social resources that transcend income limitations. Attention should be paid to the real skills and capacities of the individual. These abilities are inside each individual, and they can be increased and reinforced by new educational processes, by new interactions.

Moreover, marginalized individuals live in a condition of cultural inferiority since they are deprived of the space provided by democracy and accessible to all. This space, either not existing or not being usable, actually undermines the exercise and possession of rights, whether individual, social or political. The limitation of freedom is a significant obstacle within democratic communities. On the contrary, attention to the development of capacities can give greater

individual freedoms that are then transformed into political tools because they generate resources useful for the development of a critical social fabric. In this context, education is the strategic action to direct growth in the complexity of contexts that institutional bodies cannot often perceive and appreciate. Fostering spaces of freedom is fundamental since it contributes both to the experimentation of, and the search for, one's own welfare and emancipation and to the sustainability of political resolutions.

## 2. Decolonial pedagogy in the MOLACNATS

In this second part we give a glance in an educational process that emerges from a political need of recognition and points to social change. The Movement of Working Children and Adolescents of Latin America and Caribbean (MOLACNATS) started in Peru 43 years ago, when a group of workers felt the necessity to give their younger siblings, also working and contributing to their families livelihoods, the opportunity to organize and educate themselves in order to face their difficult living conditions. Today it's a network of local groups spread through the continent and connected to Asian and African similar movements.

### 2.1. *Work allows us to resist with dignity to the oppressive political and economic system that criminalize and exclude us*<sup>20</sup>

In the Movement, children are motivated to talk about their everyday experience and to reflect collectively with the adults collaborators on the valuable and the harmful aspects of it. Work is at the center of a tension between being a 'duty' to support their families that could become a source of exploitation, and a 'right' as potential means of emancipation. The Movement claims the children's right to work in dignified conditions referring to a broader freedom of action and to the recognition of their status of 'being', and not 'becoming', political subject which contribute economically, socially and culturally to society (Uprichard, 2008). The movement systematize its approach in what they called 'the critical valorization' (Schibotto, 1997), for which work can be 'digno' when it has not only an instrumental value, but becomes part of the child's identity formation, a tool to affirm her role within society and a modality of active participation in the community. This last aspect concerns the possibility to transform society through one's work and more than that, through the way children experience and give meaning to it. From these premises arises a project of critical reconstruction of what means to be a child and therefore a different perspective on society and the human relations within it.

### 2.2 *Coming out of problems alone is greed, together is politics*<sup>21</sup>

Among the members of the movement, relationships are built on the principle of solidarity which entails sharing, encouraging and supporting each other. «Solidarity is about what you build with the other, it doesn't mean giving somebody what you don't need, the leftover, that's not solidarity» explains a collaborator. In the productive area of one of the groups, the earnings are redistributed according to the need of each child and money are also collected to bring the grocery to families that cannot afford it. Solidarity goes beyond monetary matters and sometimes children move meetings at the house of who cannot move for sickness. These actions may clash with the outside world, but, not without controversies, manage to give children the perspective on a possible way of

<sup>20</sup> Declaration of Berlin, 2006

<sup>21</sup> Milani (2017)

living. In this way children start, not only to question the situations they suffer outside the groups, but also to stand up for their peers.

### *2.3. When you say a person, you mean an adult<sup>22</sup>: breaking the adult-centric paradigm and building interdependence*

«The only possible solidarity is among equals» (de Sousa Santos, 1999) and indeed adults, who are often former working children, even though they have an important collaborative role in the Movement, are not the ones running it. Children elect their delegates, take decisions and enact strategies that they plan. The pivotal principle of the movement is the Protagonism of children that take inspiration from popular protagonism that, in contrast with the theory of modernization that sees in the *campesinos*, the indigenous or in other marginalized groups people who are culturally backward, exalts the knowledge coming from experience, self-awareness and liberating will, and transform it into a mobilization force. The adult-children relationships result fundamental because the acknowledgment of childhood subjectivity challenge the adult culture through the reconstruction on different terms of those (Ennew, 1995). This process implies the recognition of the differences between adults and children, who claim a «special ability that can overcome the classical concept of civic incapacity» (Declaration of Huampani, 1997). However, this step can generate tolerance but doesn't solve the hierarchy between the two groups. A long process of peer review is therefore required for the adults to redistribute their power and face the shock of losing control and the feeling of being 'needed'. Emotional involvement and empathy, built on the sharing of personal stories, is also a pillar in the relationships between adults and children and it is crucial in the creation of a safe space of trust, friendship and interdependence. The most important evidence of the horizontal relationships among adults and children are the conflict moments, when children consider the adults as trustworthy friends, but still firmly speak their dissent and autonomously carry out strategies to change the situations they find unjust. Through this practice of coexistence that sets the goal, not exhaustible, to break with the subordinated relationships between adults and children, and to achieve their interdependence, the Movement gives a strong shock to the adult-centred paradigm and proposes an alternative that opens up many innovative scenarios.

### *2.4. The truth is the face we have in front<sup>23</sup>: starting with the historical subject*

The approach of the Movement focuses on the subjects, the working children. Every learning experience starts from their reality in order to acknowledge their existence as valuable beings and understanding their educational needs. Working children have been considered culturally incompetent and desperate, children «without childhood» (Liebel, 2017) and had to live the incongruence of a model which policies mostly discriminate them in the very name of the protection of an ideal model of childhood in which they don't fit. Territory and memory becomes important tools to reconstruct their historical subjectivities which have been unrecognized and therefore excluded from the formal education system. Their roots must not be thought as a static set of traditions and local models but rather as the «routes» (Gilroy, 1993) through which children have encountered local and imported modernity schemes which contribute to the way they see and stand in the world. The aim indeed, is not 'to go back' as if modernity wasn't

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<sup>22</sup> Nicole 17 y.o. at the Foro Internacional 'Políticas Públicas con infancias y adolescencias trabajadoras.

<sup>23</sup> Salcedo (2009),

occurred, but rather to comprehend these routes and the intrinsic power relations, in order to open up to collective transmodern and intercultural alternatives (Liebel, 2017). Children can finally explore, through their protagonic role, «what the unspoken might offer, what the previously unthought might generate» (Cannella, Viruru, 2003) becoming an important decolonial subject that can raise questions and «be part of the solution» Declaration of Berlin, 2004). This pedagogical approach called Pedagogy of Tenderness (Cussianovich, 2007), opposes itself to the standardized, bare pedagogy (Giroux, 2010) that claims to be neutral and universal while is representing particular (Eurocentric) interests and a specific commitment to the future.

## Conclusion

What emerges from the research presented is a different perspective on social categories traditionally recipients of compensation and aid-policies. The article proposes a redefinition of the social category of the marginalised and the phenomenon of poverty in order to understand them not only as limitations, but also as cultural and political creative sources of alternatives. Through an educational process is possible to move the focus on the subjects and their historical experiences, so to overcome any western socio-cultural pseudo normalization and activate new human interactions.

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## Being-other-together: Notes for a Critical Pedagogy of the Present

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**Keywords:** *Apparatus, Neoliberal Society, Deterritorialization, Reterritorialization*

### Premise

«The old dies and the new cannot be born» said Gramsci (Gramsci, 2014), almost a hundred years ago. Pedagogy, in all its various forms, is experiencing a phase of similar uncertainty and doubt: the passage along what has been called the 'contemporary' age (Barraclough, 1964), which today lives the peculiar neoliberal declination, imposes a revision of the categories of micrological and macrological analyzes. An epistemological and semantic enlargement is necessary, in the light of the non-neutral processes that invest Italy, Europe and increasingly the whole world: the transnationalization and globalization of the markets, the new migratory cycles on the South-North axis, the polycentricity of global institutions and a redefinition of the mechanisms of production-reproduction that is profoundly changing the corporate structure, overcoming industrial capitalism in favor of a capitalism of networks and knowledge (Castells, 2004). On the other hand, the processes in place carry with them a constitutive ambivalence, which needs to be understood starting from the network of relationships and the contemporary and potential lines of flight that always act in the social and therefore formative field (Deleuze, Guattari, 2001; Massa, 1989): cultural intertwining and homogenization, cognitivisation of work and precariousness (Hard, Negri, 2000), crisis of top-down mechanisms and neo-authoritarianism, multiplication of word spaces and reduction of democratic power (Crouch, 2007).

### 1. Our time and its ambivalence

All these ambivalent elements constitute the material whole which, through our 'daily life', determines the formative structure of the present time. Neoliberalism indicates a historical phase of an unprecedented formative complexity, which includes both the physical and the virtual element of social networks or new media: the educational no longer concerns only the specific heterotopia of the space-time dedicated to it (family, school, work), but new flexible and punctual space-times, dedicated to the consumption of goods or to the continuous revision of experiences in a meritocratic key. These quick hints can help to understand that the theoretical path that must be followed to understand complexity is that of a specific study of apparatus (Foucault, 1977; Agamben, 2000), cultured as that «educational materiality in action» (Massa, 2007) that acts and forms singular and collective subjectivities.

The apparatus is a strategic composition, the result of modulations, restructuring, specific sedimentations, reification of practices. The apparatus, as a 'reseau' of codes, norms, languages, structures, crosses the entire social field, determining itself by following specific productive and reproductive forces. Processes of individualization, mutation from the typical disciplinary regime of the society of internment to a regime of control of the flows of production and

reproduction, de-hierarchization of social contexts: in this horizon we try to identify the network of the apparatus that inhabits neoliberalism, at least to starting from the highlighted contradictions and identifying some main connections. A critical theory of apparatus, therefore, that allows us to imagine and practice another possible education (Mantegazza, 1995).

In particular, there are two apparatus in operation in the contemporaneity that I consider fundamental to address the educational issue, and therefore the constitution of subjectivities, at the height of the present time: the performance apparatus and the consumption apparatus. If the first, individualized and competitive, faithful to the task of self-enhancement, allows the mobilization of the subjects for the purpose of self-investment (Chicchi, De Simone, 2017), that of consumption allows a bulimic enjoyment (Lipovetsky, 1999), point-like and reiterated, aimed at declining the constituted desire of the self in the commodity (Lacan, 2010; Recalcati, 2011). Borrowing speeches from management, pedagogy incorporates and integrates to itself the perspective of competences and self-empowerment, disrupting any discourse on the community in the name of individual emancipation (reduced to economic). The individualization and flexibility, motivated by the ideological meritocratic perspective (Boarelli, 2019), are two structural pivots of neoliberalism for almost forty years now: «Society does not exist», said Margareth Thatcher, «there are only individuals». That compete with each other to gain access to citizenship social rights. What is of interest here, from the formative point of view, is the mechanics of the Self implicit in reasoning: the subject must put himself in question, constantly update himself, be up to the height of the context he inhabits, become capable of imposing himself and winning over neighbors who are they first of all configure as enemies and competitors. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari make this forward movement forward and called into question with the term «de-territorialization». The subject goes to make himself 'other than himself', to rethink himself continually, to measure the achievement of the objectives and to re-launch himself, self-disciplining himself to the formation in view of a social recognition completely hege- monized by the regime of unique truth of neoliberalism: the market, the only true place of general verification.

## **2. De-territorialize and Re-territorialize**

The de-territorialization movement, which assumes here a coherent but deeper meaning of its anthropological-cultural declination, captures in this respect the strength of the thrust determined by the movement of '68 and by the criticisms of the industrial society that are derived from it. But that push of self-determination and destructuring of the arborescent-vertical structures of hierarchical society (Deleuze, Guattari, 2001; Godani, 2014) is reabsorbed and declined precisely with a form of capitalist de-territorialization centered precisely on the individual effort to self-affirmation in the market.

Reappropriating de-territorialization as a critical and conscious movement, capable of thinking freedom in the pedagogical form of becoming something other than what we are and the subjecting relationships that we inhabit, is the first fundamental step for a pedagogy of current events that we know to live the ambivalence of our time without asking for regressive changes or useless returns to the origins. Valuing de-territorialization as an existential gesture, as a practice of freedom of self and transformation: it means abandoning any place of subjectivity, be it geographical, experiential, or identity. The second apparatus in action today is the consumerist one, which becomes fully operational in the neoliberal context that promotes hyperconsumption (Lypovetsky, 2007) and



the continuous variation of desire in the commodified object to be purchased (Bauman, 2010). This is a movement that we can define as 're-territorialization', because it allows the liberated desire to take an object as its pivot, which declines and circumscribes it. Consumption, however, gives desire the form of punctual and repeatable enjoyment: the dynamic is that of the disposable dependence (Ehrenberg, 1998), of the desiring gut which declines once the material need is satisfied. De-territorialize and re-territorialize, two simultaneous processes in the constitution of subjectivity, must be taken as concepts of educational action, nurtured and made aware; they represent specific declinations of a movement between a self and a territory, between a subject of desire and the 'What', Lacan would say. Short-circuit these two concepts with that of transculturality (Devereux, 1999), imagining the latter as a place of recognition of difference but also as a constitutive element of a relationship 'still to come' with the other. Transculturality as a meta-historical, 'evenemential' position, capable of imagining difference as an individual and intersubjective constitutive value. Assuming the difference as a dynamic movement not only of confrontation between different people, but also of confrontation between what one is and what one can be, between the present of oneself and the future self. Not only 'difference in space' but above all a 'difference in time': I am different from what I will be and from what I was as from what you are, what you were and what you will be. Recognizing this point of view means making the fundamental educational apparatus, the space-time apparatus, one's own, opening up to the possibility of a being-other together.

Flexibility and neoliberal deterritorialization then become a possibility: to imagine transculturalism as a field yet to be built, a place of recognition to come and co-construction of a different future. Enhancing the 'de-territorialization' as an existential gesture, as a practice of freedom of self and transformation, within any age; a partial negation of what one is in the name of the construction of the future Self, therefore overcoming: this is the dialectical depth of the singular and collective care. Transcultural will then not be the universal common to us, but the horizon of co-formation, of the community to come (also from an ethical and political point of view). It will become the place that recognizes the line of flight and resistance to the apparatus as an educational event, a political turning point and a place for reconnecting a 'common' declined in the future that can only be the result of practices. On this horizon it becomes possible to decline a model of global awareness based on fraternity, an ontology of living in common that becomes a new educational proposal of social recomposition and community relational reconstruction, which knows how to feed on a non-instrumental relationship coming out of the unitary Moloch of the market (Freire, 2018). A movement that can only be practical, concrete, however dialogical and narrative. But this is a new history, all to write.

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## Challenging Intercultural Dia-Logue

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### Premise

The concepts of de-colonizing, de-territorializing and creolizing open up a broad problematic that need to be critically analyzed and reflected upon. The semantic boundaries of the concepts need to be delimited at least for the promotion of pedagogical reflections and educational strategies. The authors of the paper feel that these concepts hide much more than they reveal. The goal to construct educational school models 'to facilitate the awareness of the process of trans-nationalization of cultures as well as to promote cognitive decentralization actions', is a desirable goal that requires a critical deconstruction of the received concepts and categories within the delimited field. We will examine the issues involved, toward a delineation of pedagogical paths conducive to a post-democratic scenario characterized by new cultural challenges.

A critical analysis of the concepts of de-colonizing, de-territorializing reveals how they operate in the conventional framework of identity/difference: two tautologies that precisely by virtue of their desire to sculpt alterity, do nothing but crystallize it, order it and, therefore, ultimately, suffocate it. Hence, how to deal with cultural differences, relationships among distant traditions and mentalities that are sometimes so apparently antithetical? How to succeed in embracing, and even before, in conceiving, a de-ontologized 'other' and a 'self' that is not a whole sufficient to itself? (Benhabib, 2002).

The problem lies in the fact that the formal recognition of diversity and otherness is often associated with the preconception of superiority of the developed cultures and with consequent dynamics of incommensurability. It is equally true that, in many cases, these processes of fragmentation and emphasis of the differences are caused not only by aggressive processes of assimilation or segregation but also by defensive encapsulations of resistance implemented by the same minorities to protect their traditions.

### 1. Dia-Logue of Cultures: Reading the In-Between

In the last twenty-five years, part of the European philosophical debate has been stimulated and provoked by the essays of the French thinker François Jullien, who has woven philosophical practice to the study of Chinese culture building an intense dialogue between European and Chinese traditions in view of a radical search for a de-centralized vision of reality. The French philosopher exploits the heuristic value of an indirect, oblique reading of the Western philosophical tradition, passing through the deviation, the *détour* offered by the encounter with the externality of China. The practice of thinking differences in a static way should be replaced with a research approach that considers differences in a continuous and sinuous movement, that integrates them into the

historical dynamics accrued in the social fabrics. An interaction that produces a fertile dilation of one's own vital horizon, proceeding in an unusual manner, shifting away from what is expected and conventional.

The new theoretical paradigm, provided by Francois Jullien explores the concept of *écart*/discrepancy, distance/deviation, pointing out how the notion 'difference' establishes a distinction and remains on the level of description, whereas 'deviation'/*écart* proceeds from a distance and is productive. Unlike the traditional philosophical couple identity/difference, this distance/deviation arises as a disturbing and non-ordering figure, which does not make identity appear as fruitfulness but as generating a productive tension. The *écart*, unlike the difference, does not ascertain a distinction, which always presupposes an imaginary originality, but by proceeding from a distance produces action, puts in tension the parts of a given encounter (Jullien, 2012).

The capacity to recognize difference does not create other than itself, while the notion of *écart* generates 'the in-between', which has nothing of its own but always refers to another from itself. It is precisely this 'in-between' which brings out the Other, who is not only an imaginary projection of ourselves, but is really the Other with whom to dwell the space for dia-logue, by virtue of the two elements: *dia*, which can be translated as the *écart*, and *logos* which is the intelligible. While in the scope of difference, once the distinction is acknowledged, each of the two terms neglects the other one and remains closed in its own specificity, in the *écart* the distance keeps the two terms in tension leaving open the richness of the comparison. The *écart* is an adventurous figure, it disturbs and gives new impetus to the thought, it allows to explore and to bring out glimpses of unexpected possibilities; this is because it makes visible a space that allows to the two terms to remain turned towards each other. The understanding of this notion, on the methodological level, promotes a cultural sharing of contents, methods, forms of knowledge, which can favor inter and multi-disciplinary conjectures to guide praxis on issues of contemporary relevance.

The otherness should not be assimilated, precisely because the common is not the similar, the repetitive, the uniform, nor the overcoming of differences, but rather is an opening of *écarts*, a fruitful stress, precisely because it is always declined in the plural. The *écart* operates within the distance and so it makes human beings exit from strict typologies, from secured enclosures. It liberates from cultural constraints and helps in transcending social boundaries. This conceptual paradigm applied to the research level may favor to grasp the essence of diverse cultures, rather than fixing them in forms of specific identity. The task is to explore and preserve, rather than systematize, what is alive: the amazing variety of languages, streams of human thought, behaviors and faiths. Since long time there is a diffuse concern about the depletion of natural resources and the extinction of biodiversity, but now another extinction crisis is unfolding: the loss of ethno-diversity in globalized societies.

## **2. Challenging interculturality: from the decolonization to the creolization of differences**

The promotion of cross cultural understanding and appreciation on the part of educators and policy makers requires critical intercultural thinking. To prevent the risk of homologation or closure in one's own localisms, we must consider the multitude of cultural phenomena that transmigrate, interface and mix. From an educational perspective, this requires the de-construction of the monolithic concept of culture which can take place through the development of intersubjective experiences. In this sense, it is important to give voice to the plurality of

authenticities that coexist and describe trajectories of interdependence among the subjects that redefine the cultures through interaction. It is essential to understand how in the encounter among different identities, knowledge and traditions that belong to hybrid roots can be discovered and enhanced by promoting new ways of thinking and creative reinterpretations (Hannerz, 1996; Geertz, 1999).

The construction of relationships in which to discover oneself as otherness requires a decentralization capable of widening the hybridization of spaces. This is the first step in learning to inhabit frontier spaces and to experience coexistence based on unstable margins, crossings and fluid boundary lines (Giordana, 2018). In this sense, the same identity becomes 'borderline', porous, unstable, migrant, wandering, especially when it intercepts barriers. When we encounter the limit (physical-relational), we become extraneous subjects, not placed in familiar and recognizable contexts. In these transits we can question ourselves at the identity level, deconstructing rigid architectures, running the risk of making room for unstable elements of redefining our own selves.

A further stimulus comes from the paradigm of creolization (Cohen, 2010) from which we can draw interesting educational outcomes.

«Creolization is cultural creativity in process. When cultures come into contact, expressive forms and performances emerge from their encounter, embodying the sources that shape them yet constituting new and different entities. Fluid in their adaptation to changing circumstances and open to multiple meanings, Creole forms are expressions of culture in transition and transformation. Even as these emergent forms persist and become institutionalized after initial culture contact, they continue to embody multiplicity, render multivocality, and negotiate contestation while also serving as means of national identity and creative expression» (Baron, Cara, 2011: 7).

Focusing on cultural creativity means to enhance the use of different languages through which initiate processes of mutual appreciation of the hybrid cultures to which we refer. This process requires a theoretical framework and post-colonial educational strategies (Aman, 2018; Andreotti, 2011) oriented towards the recognition of oneself and of the other as active subjects, locally contextualized and, at the same time, globally 'contaminated'.

Designing and sharing educational experiences allows social actors to negotiate different ideas and overcome individual cultural models. From this overcoming originate the paradigm of bottom-up democracy and participatory planning (Mayo, 2013). In both cases, awareness is redefined in the encounter and sharing of times and places of experience. It is important that the interlocutors identify their boundaries and margins to understand which border spaces are willing to inhabit.

This process of learning/consciousness takes a long time and it is important to be ready to face misunderstandings and conflicts, avoiding to generate rapid top down processes that do not favor an effective participation of the parties. The temptation to impose one's point of view, in a sort of ethnocentric spiral, more or less conscious, can lead to a further distancing of the interlocutors through the assimilation or the rejection of other perspectives.

Ethnocentrism reinforces groupthink by amplifying the communicative distances of indifferences and the gaps between two or more interlocutors. This approach generates in-group and out-group in which the members try to protect their own boundaries and ways of thinking, feeling and responding (Ting-Toomey, 2012).

«Enclosing oneself in rigid and static boundaries impoverishes us all. Dialogues are mono-cultural and self-referential, pockets of exclusion are generated by opposition and inequalities are determined on cultural basis. All are

locked out, even those who think they are 'inside': this gives rise to decadent and inhospitable living conditions» (Cadei, Deluigi, 2019).

De-colonization is a mutual process between colonizers/colonized and oppressed/oppressors (Freire, 1987; 1997) that weakens conditioning and representations that undermine a unique vision of authenticity. Overcoming such stereotypes allows creatively to promote creolization processes with unexpected outcomes.

Creolization, in fact, preserves the traces of cultural distances through a dynamic which is the result of a continuous process of strategic interaction. Diversity inter-connects generating significant interactions and innovations in the context of global center-periphery relations (Hannerz, 1996).

The attitude to decentralization requires an identity reformulation (Chambers, 2018) which can be facilitated by an intercultural approach aiming at capturing the dynamics and the effects generated by very distant codes yet non un-translatable and incomparable (Fabietti *et al.*, 2012).

As educators, to operate according to this perspective means necessarily to compare fragments of personal and professional history with the narratives of others. The different 'face to face' biographies are intertwined with the 'distance' mutual interpretations, causing a cultural short circuit and starting a generative displacement. The challenge is to become part of a new context (geographical, social, political, cultural) without invading it, aiming at promoting well-being and quality of life, in relation to the specificities in which one operates.

Taking the assumption of being all foreigners, we can experience difference by searching a new placement of ourselves within forms of community relationship and education.

## Conclusion

The theoretical and also epistemological instance of interculturality is coherently connected with a critical-radical model of political philosophy that questions the classical paradigm of cultural identity as a difference of ontological flavor, by opposing to it an idea of contingency and accidentality that brings into play the oppressed and hidden diversity. Intercultural philosophy, therefore, presents itself as a mode of thought and action that produces a *Krasis* of cultures, a *métissage* which in turn is the challenge of what it further engenders. The possible advent of a syncretic and mixed neo-culture might be disturbing for someone, but it could be the face of our cultural future.

Therefore, collective identity is the essential context in which any personal identity has to be expressed. In the light of the above discussion we can infer that all social formations are the result of a multitude of intertwining and interactive elements that give rise to complexity, that needs a methodological intervention for in-depth comprehension.

This framework can be used as educational paradigm, activating participatory processes based on mutual interest for otherness. The desire to dwell diversity, beyond the logic of colonization and assimilation, makes it possible to initiate action-research paths in which to promote beneficial intersections. Social spaces, in localized and globalized everyday life, may become platforms for educational innovation.

Designing inter-cultural actions requires the implementation of dialogic contexts along with care for relationships through which orienting community logics and shared objectives. In so forth it is possible to regenerate critical thinking on several levels, questioning the specificities of personal, professional and

community identities, in view of significant and impactful actions on targeted social fabrics.

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## The Educational Action of Transculturality to Decolonize Minds, Deterritorialize Culture and Democracy, Creolize the World.

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**Keywords:** *Anthropology, Educational practices, Intercultural pedagogy, Pedagogy of narration, Transculturality.*

### Premise

The crucial step to choose in inclusion practices is to accept the substantial multicultural and mixed building of our identities. By referring to transactional anthropology and migratory ethnography, transcultural psychiatry and postcolonial studies, this paper aims at drawing attention to the need to abandon a monocultural model in the direction of a transcultural one, conceiving the culture as deeply permeated by intertwining and hybridization (Ortiz, 2007; Welsch, 2000, 2003; Goussot, 2014). We have to accept the transcultural challenge that conceives identity as a 'migrant identity', generating discursive and relational inclusion practices that allow the creation of new and shared social spaces. De-colonizing the mind; de-territorializing culture and democracy; dis-westernize our vision of the world: it is a difficult educational challenge but necessary to offer a constructive response to the 'homogenization' and to the growing 'diasporas' produced by liberal economic globalization.

### 1. To mix identities.

Maalouf (2005) writes: «In every man and woman we meet multiple belongings [...] If each of these elements, so-called identities, can be found in a large number of individuals, we never find the same combination in two different people. And this is precisely what makes every being unique and irreplaceable». This testimony is by an immigrant and tells us that we are all composite identities, especially today, in a society increasingly characterized by hybridization. Also, for the philosopher Bodei (1992) the nature of identity is not that one of a single thread, but rather of a rope slowly and patiently intertwined.

We can talk about a cross-fertilization, therefore, as the coexistence of different cultural identities, not only on the 'external' side, but also on the 'internal' one, that is to say as a work of listening and integration of the different selves. Listening to internal alterity represents a training process that helps the building of a richer and more articulated identity, capable of integration, and not of exclusion, of the different visions of humanity elaborated by the various cultures. In this sense, the educational value of 'transculturality' lies in challenging each monolithic tendency of identity by inviting it to accept the other, performing an equal job of welcoming the other interiors. For Lévinas (1980), it is necessary to start from the Other, conceived as never appropriated or reducible to the self. It is the Other who «speaks to me and so invites me to a relationship», it is not me who invites the Other. The attitude to take towards the other is therefore that one of hospitality, of hospitality. This requires finding the space to listen to and welcome the presence of the other.

But to what extent are we willing to recognize the other, especially the non-Western (the migrant, the asylum seeker, the refugee, the foreigner), and his fundamental rights in the practice of our democracy? Are we really willing to renegotiate our Western view on 'culture', 'rights', 'citizenship', 'democracy'? Can we hope for a new Universal Declaration of Human Rights including and recognizing the 'foreigner' that we identify with the migrant, the refugee, the asylum seeker (Benhabib, 2004; 2006)?

## **2. The inadequacy of the model of inclusion in the intercultural paradigm.**

If we pay attention to the new behaviors the adaptation to globalization requires and education is asked to acquire, we can get the impression that the needs of the Western world prevail, and that it is foreign to the values founding the originality of other regions and other world cultures.

Marcien A Towa, to whom we owe valuable studies on European administrative immigration practices in which he points out that the only possibility granted to other cultures to survive the encounter with the Western Pantagruel is through the self-denial: «denying oneself, questioning the very being of the self, profoundly Europeanising [...], denying our inner being to become the Other [...], expressly aiming to become like the Other, similar to the Other, and that cannot be colonized by the Other» (Towa, 2007).

The experimentation carried out by European countries in search of the best possible form of coexistence with 'diversity' seems to highlight the limits of solutions considered desirable and encouraged in the past. Once the models of assimilation and integration have fallen (Demetrio, Favaro, 1992) revealing the arduous multicultural melting pot (Sleeter, Grant, 1987; Banks, 1993), the intercultural way remains the one to follow to face the new cosmopolitanism documented by migrations and contacts and by the cultural exchanges they activate. But after almost thirty years from the formulation of interculturality in the programs of the European Community (Rey, 1986), the many experiments carried out show us that the phenomena of hardship and exclusion are still present among immigrants. To these ones we can add the difficulties of adaptation of the successive generations which are faced with the contradiction of changing to adapt to the contingent reality and, at the same time, to preserve the traditional values so as not to lose the language and customs binding them to the family (Tarozzi, 2015).

Demetrio wonders about this: «How many thousands and thousands of immigrant citizens are in fact unaware of traditions, art forms, philosophies of their native country as a national entity? [...], How many times [...], did immigrant children, boys and girls learn about their country of origin things they would not have learned in their schools?» (Demetrio, 2003). This does not happen and will not happen until our curricula are centered on the Judeo-Hellenic-Christian tradition (philosophical, cultural, aesthetic). This poses the difficult, but not impossible, task of the 'translation' and the 'translatability' of other visions of the world.

The weakness of interculturality consists in the fact that it has not succeeded in dissolving a Gordian knot: what is the image of 'culture' supporting an idea, a research, a project, a proposal that is defined as intercultural? It is not pleonastic to remember that the roots of 'intercultural pedagogy' are rooted in Europe and the image of 'culture' (and its transmission) is that one of the West. Its range of action, Demorgon (2003) points out sharply, is still western, local; relations involve the interpersonal rather than social responsibility, they direct themselves

towards cooperating pragmatism rather than towards the redefinition of relationships.

From different fronts, again, the deterministic and strongly identifying matrix of the concept of culture underlying interculturality has been detected. The traditional concept of culture, characterized by social homogenization, ethnic consolidation and cross-cultural delimitation (Hannerz, 1996; 1997; Welsch, 1999) is inadequate in the face of the multiplicity of cultural interconnections always denser and more complex than the globalization and transnationalization process. In a multicultural context that involves the entire ecumenism, loans, meetings, conflicts and contaminations between people, peoples and cultures are multiplying and today more than ever the closed conception of cultural systems, which have always been fed on hybrids and exchanges.

Is it possible today to offer a solution to intercultural conflicts by tools that are congruent with the multiple treatment needs advanced in the name of cultural difference? In which apparatuses (normative-political-institutional) can these solutions be traced? And again: what educational / training devices can be put in place in order to recognize that cultural riches do not derive from purity but from mixture (Le Goff, 2000)? This wealth is then the 'source' of democracy.

Before formulating our hypothetical solutions, we want to give an adequate historical collocation of transculturality. It was first used as a transculturation in the 1940s by the Cuban sociologist Ortiz, in his sociological study *Contrapunteo Cubano del Tabaco y el Azúcar* to describe the process of selection and inventive reworking of a dominant culture by a subordinate or marginal group, including in this way the creolization processes that are studied in the comparative studies of contemporary literatures (Ortiz, 2007). Subsequently the term reappears in various academic disciplines in the nineties, mainly in the German and Francophone areas.

### **3. Transculturality: definition and educational implications.**

Welsch puts the emphasis in cultural fertilization at multiple levels from the micro-level to the macro-level of societies - whose cultural forms are characterized today increasingly by internal differentiation, complexity and hybridization - where personal and cultural identity almost never corresponds or almost no longer to the civic and national one and is instead increasingly evidently marked by multiple cultural connections. Transculturality aims at an intersected and inclusive view of culture: «It intends to culture and society whose pragmatic feats exist not only in delimitation, but in the ability to link and undergo transition» (Welsch, 1999). Transculturality is therefore to be understood not only as a model of analysis of modern reality, but also as an ideal to tend towards the daily practice of cultural interaction: «It is a matter of readjusting our inner compass: away from the concentration on the polarity of the own and the foreign to an attentiveness to what might be common and connective wherever we encounter things foreign» (Welsch, 1999).

The idea of dense interconnection and continuous transformation generated by the concepts of transculturality and transculturalism open new avenues of research, facilitating our effort to overcome the limits of pedagogies still conceived in 'national' terms. A new theoretical framework based on transculturality allows us to better frame phenomena such as migration cultures and to better understand the cultural identities they contain.

Another no less important aspect, related to this condition of transculturality, is Welsch's proposal of a homeland that can be chosen individually. In Welsch's definition of transculturality, the 'homeland' must support individual decisions

concerning multiple membership; therefore, the notion of homeland in the traditional sense of a nation linked to space is obsolete. It is becoming the case that more and more people are choosing their membership. People can find their true homeland far from where they were born. In the words of Horkheimer and Adorno: «The homeland is a state of escape [...] Therefore homeland is not a naturally innate or immutable categorization, but rather a cultural and human choice» (Welsch, 2002). Regarding the freedom of belonging to a homeland, we find an affinity that recalls the legal thought of Ferrajoli (2001); for him the goal to strive for is that one of the «definitive de-nationalization of fundamental rights and the correlative de-statalisation of nationalities».

Transculturality acquires a particular political, and therefore educational, relevance. In fact, the need for a reconstruction of democracy from the bottom is felt in Benhabib (2006). The scholar, not at all fasting in the literature of cultural studies, very close to the positions of transculturalism, introduces the concept of 'democratic iterations': «complex public processes of argumentation, deliberation and exchange' that allow to identify a possible point of equilibrium between the universalistic principles of law and particularistic claims that aim at 'just belonging' in order to find an ethical-political compromise in the norms that allow access to citizenship and the political community» (Benhabib, 2006). In this perspective, the invitation to make the transition, never completely completed, on the other general to the concrete one (Benhabib, 2004), acquires a particular relevance (especially for the educator). Because the other from us, remember, has a body, a history, a culture, a name. Instead, of the millions of «migrants, refugees, asylum seekers» (Benhabib, 2004) we are not even aware of the names. Nevertheless, they claim their right to exist, the right to a better life, to be persons.

Transculturality rejects the homogeneity, rigidity and coherence of cultures and genres, highlighting the process of hybridization between cultures, in turn generating new Creole and unpredictable forms. The varied lifestyle of individuals, their daily routine, their behavior as architects of their biographies, their self-invention and their methods of social interaction constitute the embodiment of a new understanding of cultures. A natural hermeneutic capable of revealing the conditionings, but also the possibility of reappropriation of personal history. It is no coincidence that transculturality has its roots in anthropology, in ethno-psychiatry and in cross-cultural psychiatry, or those sciences centered on the nexus between culture, personality and psychological development (Devereux, 1975; Inghilleri, 1994; Moro, De La Noe, 2009; Beneduce, 1998; 2007; Mazzetti, 2003).

It is necessary to abandon a univocal idea of identity by embracing a pedagogical paradigm centered on narration and emerged with sufficient clarity from the migrant and post-colonial literature. The space of the story is the only one, the most true and affective educational place of acceptance and recognition. There are three requisites that make any occasion to meet women and men who are lost, with and for their children, a significant place: 1. the possibility of telling or writing about oneself in absolute freedom and spontaneity; 2. the possibility of being able to develop, expand and enrich the story; 3. the possibility of leaving a message to yourself and others known or unknown that can be collected and disseminated.

In this way, an ideal triangularity is established, an inhabited place of words invented or found to describe the world and describe itself, in the hope of being later re-described by those who have listened or read. Thus, we build what Demetrio calls an «autobiographical space» (Demetrio, 1996) reassuring, restructuring. Speaking and speaking to each other alone or with others, in fact, encourages us not to fear the judgment of others and allows everyone, regardless

of origin and language, to reweave the envelope of his wounded, offended, dispersed identity, from migration, disorientation, renunciation of story in places where one's language is not understood. The story, in the form of a diary, autobiography, life stories (Demetrio, 2008), the literature of migration, with which I began, the aesthetic dimension, in the infinite forms of representation of the self and of the others, of the relationships between the self and others (from literature to music, to the cinema), can offer the possibility of better understanding the cultural hybridization that weaves the existential plots of all the individualities and define each time our practices of inclusion (Santerini, 2008; Cuconato, 2017; Wulf, 2018; Tumino, 2016).

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## Promoting Communication, Cultural Diversity and Solidarity inside Organizations. The Educational European Project Codes

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**Keywords:** *Intercultural communication; Cultural diversity; Communication for organizations; Educational policies; Citizenship*

### Introduction: the case study. The European project Codes.

This essay intends to bring to the attention of the scientific community the outcome of an international project for the promotion of diversity and inclusiveness inside European societies and organizations. In this first section we will introduce the case study and the reasons why we consider it so relevant; on the following pages we will explain the goals, the method and the first evidence of our inquiry.

Codes is the acronym for 'Communication, Diversity, Solidarity'. It is a scientific-educational project aimed at promoting communication, cultural diversity and solidarity inside organizations. The leader project is the University of Lyon 2 Lumière (France); the other members of the partnership are: the 'Sapienza' University of Rome (Italy), the University of Bucharest (Romanian), the University of Coimbra (Portugal), the 'Europe' University of Flensburg (Germany) and the 'Panteion' University of Social and Political Sciences (Greece),

Codes is a project funded by the European Union. It started in November 2017 and it is scheduled to be completed by October 2020. Its goal is to design a course focused on intercultural competencies. Such course is intended to train future experts in this field that will be working as '*attachés* of the communication for cultural diversity' in several types of public and private organizations: enterprises, public administrations, non-governmental and voluntary organizations, and media corporate.

Codes is based on the idea that the professional organizations living in contemporary multicultural societies need to develop specific sets of competences to answer to complex situations and to communicate with their crew, that is becoming day by day more heterogeneous (Benadusi, Molina, 2018; Emmerling, Boyatzis, 2012). Indeed, like all the other spheres of societies, also the internal populations of the corporates and institutions are today more differentiated than in the past. Individuals and groups working inside organizations can be often characterized by many identity differences: differences of origins and ethnicity, of gender and sexual orientations, of religious beliefs and of any kind of behaviours (Zanfrini, 2011; Kymlicka, 1995). As diversity implies the risk of inequalities, people featured by a difference commonly perceived as 'a strangeness' or 'a problem' can be easier victims of injustices and discriminations (Peruzzi, Antonutti, Lombardi, Ruggiero, 2018) These asymmetries not only create vulnerabilities and barriers to full citizenship of individuals, but also compromise the efficiency and productivity of the companies (Romanenko, 2012).

There are various reasons why we consider Codes an attractive case-study.

First, it is an innovative experiment in Europe. All the partners are public universities (with one exception: a French private tech company, included for the



fast supply of the digital services) determined to open a dialogue with many different social actors and to recover centrality to public education and academic world. Then, these institutions come from different areas of Europe, so that they 'cover' the point of view of many regions and cultures: the 'Old Europe', the 'Mediterranean Europe', the 'East Europe'. But, above all, the overriding goal to involve many participants make Codes a unique occasion to compare different conceptions on diversity, and especially different ways to manage it in the European societies. This duty is made by cross-checking the voices and the needs of many stakeholders: students and scholars, enterprises, public administrations, non-governmental organizations, voluntary associations and media.

## **1. The goals and the method. A participatory inquiry on the concept of diversity.**

Even the case-study would lend itself to be analyzed at different levels, this paper will inquire the development of Codes by focusing on two aspects. The main goal is to understand the meanings given by various social actors to the polysemous concept of 'diversity'. That is, trying to answer to the following questions: in nowadays societies, what is meant by 'diversity'? Which social categories are perceived as 'a problem', especially inside organizations? Which differences are really 'diversity'? And in which European nations and cultures it occurs? Which are the harshest identity features to be managed and promoted in the working environment? Which are the strategies that are known and used by public and private organizations to internally manage diversity? These are very relevant issues, both on the theoretical than on the social level; in fact, diversity is a keyword in European cultural and educational policies (Banks, 2015).

The second objective is to bring to light the factors that can foster or hinder the construction of a common training path shared by many European universities. That is, to understand which are the practical difficulties that public institutions may encounter when they attempt to build a common action in the field of high education.

The empirical study will be conducted by using different qualitative technique: interviews to some privileged witnesses (including the project coordinator, a few teachers and students, experts and representatives of selected organizations, practitioners in the field of communication and media); analysis of original project documents, communication materials and evaluation reports made by teachers and students; ethnographic research on the ground (it is important to note that the authors of this essay, in quality of the members of the Sapienza team, could count on the availability of the entire network and on the access to all the stuff.)

Due to the limits of length, the present essays will focus on two major research actions: the workshops and focus groups held in Rome in 2018, aimed at involving and hearing stakeholders; and the pilot mid-process course held in Flensburg in 2019, aimed at experimenting the first design of the final product.

## **2. The results research - part I. On the concept of diversity**

In February and in November 2018 the Department of 'Communication and social research' of Sapienza hosted two one-day workshops and a few focus groups within the activities of Codes, involving a large number of companies,

institutions and media<sup>24</sup>, in order to detect and discuss with Italian and foreign scholars the interpretations of the concept of diversity diffused in professional organizations in Italy. The main topics submitted to the attention of the participants included: the conceptualization of diversity, the role and skills of the communicators and journalists in telling diversity; the internal practices carried out in each organization to manage diversity (Cox, 2001; Clark, Hinxman, 1999).

Many elements of interest emerged during these research actions. It is not possible to deepen all the issues, so we will present only the most significant evidence.

Surely, the first subject is the difficulty to summarize different meanings of diversity on the part of the practitioners of all the fields of working. As the concept of diversity can have many different meanings and fields of application (gender diversity, disability, generational diversity, cultural and ethnic diversity), people denounce that it is hard to identify the object of inequalities and discrimination behind a so broad label (King, Gulick, Avery, 2010). Operationally, they prefer to distinguish 'single' problematic features. If the ambiguity of the concept has already been pointed out in the scientific literature (Mattelart, 2017), in the everyday life of the organizations diversity appears a concept too vague to be of any use (Ahmed, Swan 2006; Monaci, 2012).

Moreover, all the participants appeared conscious of the political nature of the concept. They agreed collectively on the definition proposed by an interviewee: 'Diversity is a continually shifting frontier', depending also on the social and political priorities.

A second important evidence is the shared conviction of the 'social and moral role' of the communicators – first of all, of the journalists – in building the social meanings and perceptions of diversity. Both in the seminars than in the focus groups, all the participants recognized that it is the media the first makers of the just mentioned 'frontiers' (Hollowell, 2007).

Finally, about the strategies adopted from the organizations to internally manage diversity, our witnesses underlined first of all the low visibility of this issue in the Italian managerial culture, implying a lack of consciousness, knowledge and data on best practices. Secondly, people pointed out that the attention to diversity inclusiveness inside organizations meant like an important choice of value, not only a set of practical decisions, requiring serious efforts to the governance (Kreitz, 2008). A third, really interesting point is the unexpected, good role of multinational companies and, instead, the lack of preparation of the Third Sector. Obligated by internal protocol imposed by foreign governances, big corporates appear the only organizations committed in this regard in Italy. It was a surprising find for the participants, overturning the popular opinion that multinationals are non-ethical subjects and the Third Sector the leader in morality.

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<sup>24</sup> The list of the participants included: *private enterprises* - Excellence & Diversity by GLBT Executives, Gnoti Lab, Ithec, Mycroworking, P&C Avvocati e Commercialisti; *governemental institutions* - Agenzia delle Entrate, Regione Umbria; *non-governemental institutions* - Acli – Associazioni Cristiane Lavoratori Italiani, Anmic –Associazione Nazionale Mutilati e Invalidi Civili, Archivio Immigrazione Roma, Arci Nazionale, Avis – Associazione Volontari Italiani Sangue, Cospe Onlus - Cooperazione per lo sviluppo dei Paesi Emergenti, CSVnet – Coordinamento Nazionale dei Centri di Servizio per il Volontariato, Forum Nazionale del Terzo Settore, Lega Arcobaleno, Legambiente, Piuiculture, Uisp –Unione Italiana Sport per tutti; *media corporates* - Campus.it, Comunicare il Sociale – Corriere della Sera, Radio Articolo 1, Rai – Radio Televisione Italiana, Roma Sette – Avvenire; *Italian and foreign universities* - Pontificia Università Salesiana, Sapienza Università di Roma, Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata and Collegium Civitas – Varsavia, Newcastle University, Université de Lille2.

### 3. The results research - part II. On the construction of a common training in managing diversity

The second objective of this paper is to bring to light the factors that can foster or hinder the construction of a training path shared by the six European universities who are partners of Codes. The aim is to understand the practical difficulties public institutions may encounter in attempting to build a common action in the field of high education. The first beneficiaries of the project are the students. Listening to their opinions returned an overall positive judgment on the lived experience. The most appreciated element refers to the *participatory and innovative learning methods*: indeed, the lessons were organized to provide students with different visions of the social processes, in order to stimulate the debate and the critical thinking. The use of some audiovisual technologies designed specifically for this training was a success, too.

However, our inquiry highlighted also some problems in building a course of this kind. As we have already seen in the comparison with the world of work, also in the academic setting the main difficulty was to create a common scientific language concerning diversity and its management. As explained by a coordinator of the project, «There are those who prefer to talk about mediation between different cultures rather than management, to point out the humanistic approach to the diversity issues». These linguistic discussions are obviously symptom of some deeper disagreement, rooted in different cultural and ideological visions.

Another big difficulty emerged in combining the administrative rules of different countries. The university regulation can become an obstacle to the construction of an international training course. In this regard, the project coordinator denounced that 'One of the negative aspects of the project is the different technical and administrative background of the various universities, each of which has a different way of functioning [...] One thing is to give directions on paper, another to have coherent answers from all partners in line with what is required'.

As a consequence, the constraint imposed by the administrations risk to create many limits to the involvement of teachers and national research teams, in terms of participation to the sessions in the presence, first of all of the young scholars, and in terms of the time and resources dedicated to the project.

### 4. Promoting diversity in public organizations: some conclusions

Experiences such as Codes allow us to 'test' the soundness of the concepts and the feasibility of intervention strategies proposed. With reference to the first two years of activity of the project, the most interesting evidence emerged to the attention of the researchers can be summarized in the points that follow.

First of all, developing a training course aimed at the transmission of skills on diversity management is an opportunity for a lively confrontation of academic people with corporates, associations and institutions (Peruzzi, Lombardi, 2018). All the organizations recognized that with unwavering conviction. At the same time, it is necessary a permanent and deeper process of dialogue to promote the construction of shared methods of action and processes (Kalev, Dobbin, Kelly, 2006). Focusing on the academic world, the collaboration among universities of different countries have to tackle with some problems linked to the ideological, informal resistances of scholars and to the different national administrative regulation.

On the other side, this approach is a new opportunity of interactions between universities and professionals for networking and job placement for students,

encouraging the dialogue between different kinds of organizations. Not by chance, an agreed outcome is the positive feedback constantly registered to the proposal from all the stakeholders: students, media, corporates, public and no profit institutions.

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## Intercultural for Life, Antiracism for Safety

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**Keywords:** *Intercultural education, Antiracism, Belonging, Recognition*

### Introduction

People of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who experienced the Holocaust or the Gulag, believed that Europe was thereafter ‘vaccinated’ against nationalism and racism. Those who tried to speak of racism in an Italian school, which began to welcome immigrant students from the 1990s onwards, were often accused of alarmism and exaggeration. Interculturality became instead a pedagogical and didactic container to thematize differences, to understand and eradicate the fear of ‘the other’ (Aluffi, Pentini, 2018b). Today, however, even the most ardent supporters of multicultural pedagogy realize that ‘differences’ are not only occasions for negotiations and celebration, but also of pain and exclusion. The ‘others’ are other not only because of the colour of their skin or the language they speak but because of the meaning attributed to these differences by those who have the power on account of their colour and of possessing the ‘right’ terms. An analysis of the testimony of literary figures dealing with the theme of differences can evidence the exclusion mechanisms linked to racism and trace the constants of racism in its changing versions. The texts selected here reflect historically and geographically transversal exclusion mechanisms and can help educators to enrich their fund of knowledge in this area and enable them to hone their skills in how to identify forms of racism and exclusion and in how to listen to victims.

### 1. Security and belonging in multicultural contexts

The need for safety concerns everybody, because of its link to our survival instinct and this in turn is linked to the sense of integrity of the person also in terms of recognition. Winnicott (1971) identified the fear of falling apart in the new-born and traced it back to a lack of being held. At the social level we perceive the place where we live as an environment that holds us and supports us, or as a potentially risky environment that threatens to make us fall apart. What holds us together metaphorically on a social level is not very different; it affects the sense of integrity in a way similar to the physical perceptions that sustain the new-born. In order to feel safe, we need a secure space and recognition, particularly in a multicultural environment (Aluffi Pentini, 2018a). We need a social space that provides us with protection, a space that gives us the opportunity to express ourselves. Recognition means the right to be there and feeling confirmed. Appropriate space and recognition constitute the foundation of the sense of belonging. Shame and oppression however make us perceive the environment as threatening and lead us to hide our personal identities. In education, racism is a destabilizing phenomenon that undermines security, recognition and belonging. The educator in multicultural contexts must therefore adopt anti-racist competences.

## 2. Diversity between opportunity and threat: from intercultural to anti-racist approaches

In multicultural contexts reflecting on the intercultural dimension helps to thematize diversity and belonging (MIUR, 2007), while focusing on the anti-racist one is necessary to confront discrimination and exclusion (Aluffi Pentini and Lorenz, 1996). Differences are almost always constructed hierarchically by those who hold power. The social majority sees itself as presumed homogeneity while defining identity affiliations and power differentials of 'the others'. These differences can be of various types: a single characteristic of distinction, physical or not, is enough to arbitrarily create groups differences and to allocate belonging to one or the other accordingly. Multiculturalism offers opportunities to experiment with encounter and positive reciprocity, to use different cultural elements creatively and to develop intercultural skills as examples from a handbook on intercultural competence illustrate: A Japanese professor working at the University of Hawaii writes: «I really am not concerned whether others take me as a Japanese or an American; I can accept myself as I am» (Kim, 2009: 59). Or cellist Yo-Yo-Ma states: «In my musical journey I have had the opportunity to learn from a wealth of different musical voices, from the immense compassion and grace of Bach's cello suites to the ancient Celtic fiddle traditions alive in Appalachia, to the soulful strains of the bandoneon of Argentina's tango cafes» (Kim, 2009: 60).

Patchwork identities represent a potential source of enrichment for the person, but always threatened by racism. On the birth of a Royal baby in London in May 2019 no official photograph was issued. This gave rise to a journalist publicising a parody of two parents holding a classily dressed monkey between them<sup>25</sup>.

Given that the mother, Meghan, wife of Prince Harry, is of partly black descent the parody led to the BBC journalist being instantly dismissed. On the level of rights against racism, the question was resolved: on the educational level, the challenge only begins: all the more so when it is not a matter of royals. Which repercussions can such episodes have for people when they occur repeatedly from birth onwards on account of (the colour of) skin (but more generally on account of the identity) of an individual? We know that «the identity of a person is not a juxtaposition of separate belongings; it is not a patchwork; it constitutes a drawing on a taut skin. If a single element of belonging is touched the whole person vibrates<sup>26</sup>» (Malouf, 2001: 34).

Consequently, when the whole person 'vibrates', belonging is re-hierarchized, depending on the situation. If the part touched is always the same (for example the colour of the skin), the identity is reduced to a single element by tearing the skin always in the same point.

Anti-racist education assumes an empowerment function against this type of tearing as it helps to capture, thematize and, possibly, neutralize, the use of diversity as a weapon to strike the identity of the person and make it fragile. The educator must therefore become familiar with those identity elements that expose individuals to possible lacerations.

Education has the task to highlight the interaction of links that support and nurture racism: macroscopic structural links of political and economic powers, and implicit and subtle links that affect the lives of discriminated people on a daily basis (Eckmann, Davolio, 2002). I suggest that entering into intercultural

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/9033570/danny-baker-bbc-boss-fired-rant-racist-royal-baby-tweet-apology>

<sup>26</sup> All quotations originally in French and Italian were translated by the author.



narratives and analyzing them can be a pedagogical means of facilitating this process.

### 3. Literature to learn about racism

Racism often takes on forms and ways that bystanders and victims fail to grasp in specific contexts. In novels, the 'distance' of the protagonists can help educators to acquire skills in identifying the dynamics of racism and the damage it causes. Fictitious situations can illustrate real problems and stimulate intercultural competences (Santerini, 2008; Cuconato, 2017). As texts to illustrate this I have chosen *The abandonment* (L'abbandono, Dall'Oro, 1991) and *The marriage of pleasure* (Le mariage de Plaisir, Ben Jelloun, 2014),

#### 3.1. *The abandonment*

The novel, set during the Italian occupation of Eritrea, tells of two Eritrean women, Sellas and Elsa: they both had children with Italian men and for both their Eritrean identity has become a source of suffering, both in motherhood and as a couple. The stories, though different, show the variety of painful personal effects of institutional racism in Eritrea (racial laws and prohibition of mixed marriages) on the two women and their children.

##### 3.1.1. *Sellas*

She becomes the 'almost official' wife of Carlo, learns to pronounce his Italian name and address him in his language. They live a family life, accepted by close friends. This leads Sellas to feel safe «I am not the servant of whites; my children are the children of a good Italian man who provides for me and them. We live in a beautiful house, he is generous and loves our people» (Dall'Oro, 1991: 59), Sellas believes that Carlo, having returned to Italy, after having sent her back to her village, will return to her and her children. But her fellow villagers immediately warn her «You will not see that man again, you are a poor naive child, whom a white man used for some time. With the excuse of war, he sent you back to your place with your children and he will return to his country and marry a white woman» (*ibidem*).

##### 3.1.2. *Elsa*

She is the maid of an Italian engineer who has sex with her. When she becomes pregnant, he sends her away and tells her to notify him of the birth. «A beautiful girl was born [...] Elsa almost didn't dare touch her for fear of contaminating her» (*ibidem*:101). Her colour is different from that of Elsa, and the engineer is happy seeing the child. So, when he decides to return to Italy, he proposes to Elsa to take his daughter with him. This has a high price for Elsa who accepts not to see her anymore and the child will never know who her mother is. «Elsa cried a lot in making that decision [...] but she understood that the child so fair, so beautiful and resembling her father would have had a future in that far away white country that neither the village nor Asmara could offer her. Remaining with her mother she would have ended up being just a servant, a child so fair and delicate that she seemed sent from heaven with [...] the destiny to become a great lady» (*ibidem*:102). Destiny is hence the colour of the skin, as dictated by racism, Elsa out of love accepts her 'unworthiness' to aspire to such a daughter.

##### 3.1.3. *Similarly victimised, resilient in different ways*



The suffering of the two women is heart-breaking. Sellas, who has the illusion of being accepted as a woman and as a mother by the father of her children, does not stand up to the disappointment of abandonment and becomes embittered in the face of the villagers who say to her «keep your bastards at home» (*ibidem*: 91) She begins to repeat like a sad automaton: «but how could be?» (*ibidem*: 268); she often feels the desire to beat her daughter. «A wild force exploded like a hurricane in her head» (*ibidem*: 111), the hurricane of abandonment and racism. Her little girl, looking very similar to her father, picks up this rage and will soon run away from her mother who lives with pain in her chest. She will go to Italy and try to let Carlo know that he should contact a poor desperate woman who is still waiting for him.

Elsa, for her part, did not experience abandonment. The power relations resulting from institutional racism in her country Eritrea have always been clear to her. As a pregnant waitress who had the 'undeserved honour' of giving birth to a white and beautiful daughter, she decided to her give up saving her. By accident she meets the children of Sellas in the same village, mestizos and discriminated, she feels a profound compassion for them, takes care of them and thanks God for bringing her daughter away from that misery. A part of her is saved with her daughter who has left for Italy, who has crossed the threshold between blacks and whites, who enjoys respect, who lives in leisure and can graduate.

The racism that violently enters the lives of the two women touches them differently. She who accepts her inferiority and sacrifices herself for her daughter's well-being manages to find meaning in her super-human renunciation and continues to love. The one who fails to accept such injustice goes mad and ends up being alone and misunderstood even by her fellow country people. On the other hand, the two men who afflict Sellas and Elsa confirm what Cesaire (2003: 21) says: «the colonial conquest, founded on the contempt of the indigenous and justified by this contempt, inevitably tends to change those who engage in it». Neither of the two Italians appear wicked, but the contempt that underlies the colonial conquest causes each of the two to find their *de facto* evil behaviour natural and quite obvious: for the man of Sellas, the abandonment of the family, for the engineer the definitive separation between mother and daughter. They confirm that colonization dehumanizes even the most civilized colonizer, makes him stupid, a 'beast' (*ibidem*).

### 3.2. *The marriage of pleasure*

Ben Jalloun's text tells the story of a family where the father Amir contracted a first marriage with a white woman and a 'pleasure marriage' (temporary formalization of a bond between a man, living away from home and his wife for long periods, and a lover) with a black woman. Problems arise the moment the man, in love with the woman, takes her home with their children as a second wife. The whole novel is useful to understand some characteristics of Moroccan society, but it is intended here to highlight the racism 'of colour' among Moroccans. The black skin colour of the second wife and of the twins she gave birth to, one white and one black, triggers violent racism. In the family the colour of the skin strengthens and 'justifies' the hatred shown by the first wife and her children towards the new arrivals; in Moroccan society racism is latent and in the novel it becomes manifest.

In Morocco social amnesia denied even the presence of black people in the royal dynasties but «racism present from the dawn of time in all social strata [...] had exploded in the 2000s with the arrival of migrants who wanted to cross the Strait of Gibraltar» (Ben Jalloun, 2014: 200). Black Moroccans are sometimes unexpectedly confronted with racism by fellow Moroccans. The black of a good

family «knew all this but he never imagined he would find himself one day in that situation» (*ibidem*: 201). In the story Salim, black grandchild of Amir, one day, finds himself being mistaken for a clandestine, insulted and imprisoned: «Dirty nigger, you Moroccan, you Muslim, you of a big family, you are not ashamed to lie and let yourself pass for what you are not and you will never be. Have you ever seen an illegal immigrant with a camera? I have never seen one» (*ibidem*: 202). A black person will never be anything but an outsider who cannot even own a film camera. A situation like that of Salim makes him lose any kind of security, identity and belonging. «All the other Africans looked at him as a traitor, someone who denied his ethnicity and wanted to pass himself off as White, for Arabic, for Moroccan, coming [...] or from the Arab Andalusian civilization. And suddenly he was ashamed. His African identity was visibly there, and he could not deny it or condemn it. His fate was sealed. Salim understood that the colour of his skin had already damned him and that no word could change anything' (*ibidem*). The word as an expression of thought, of a claim to law, is dramatically immaterial compared to the overwhelmingly immutable materiality of his skin, which will always be black, and of the negative connotation attributed to this colour. One like him is a Bidoun in Arabic, a «without: without identity without a name without a surname without money without ties without family without memory» (*ibidem*). The colour of the skin as a pervasive element of identity capable of destroying the person is masterly described.

## Conclusions

Such texts confront educators with an otherwise unimaginable reality of oppression and suffering of people who like Sellas, Elsa or Salim frequently encounter disempowering situations in which they have to renounce their rights, their dignity and the continuity of their identities because of racism. Subjected to racist pressure the person implodes and is reduced to silence. In educational work, literature presents various manifestations of racism and how people experience it. Literary texts have hence three important functions for educators: to become more aware of the various forms of racism, particularly those related to visible diversity; to develop an understanding of the experience of victims of racism; to offer opportunities for reading and commenting on texts with which young people in multicultural situations can identify in order to give space and voice where otherwise there would be silence.

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## When Adoption Becomes a Complication: First Evidence Regarding the Discrimination Suffered by Young Adoptees in Italy Due to Phenotypic Differences and/or because of their Adoptive Identity

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**Keywords:** *Adoption, Discrimination, Phenotypic differences, Adoptive identity*

### Introduction

This work describes how young adoptees manage their hybrid identity when facing episodes of open racism or more latent, but equally pervasive, episodes of micro-discrimination. It also traces how adoptive families change their perception of racist and discriminatory risk, when their children grow into adulthood.

Between 2001 (ratification of the Hague Convention, L.149/2001) and 2017, 49,460 children were adopted in Italy by international adoption (IA). Their countries of origin are many. For instance, in 2014-15, as published by the Italian Central Authority (CAI), 4.422 children were adopted internationally of which 12,44% from Africa, 20% from Asia, 18,55% from Center and South America and 48,92% from Eastern Europe. The average age of children at adoption was 5,9 years, 44% of them between 5 and 9 years and 11,9% of them over 10. The next two years showed similar percentages. In 2018, 1394 children were adopted internationally of which 8,7% from Africa, 20,9% from Asia, 23,7% from Center and South America and 46,7% from Eastern Europe. The average age at adoption instead increased to 6,4 years with 47% of them between 5 and 9 and 15% over 10. These numbers represent clearly the broad ethnical background of adoptees in Italy. Adoption is widespread in Italy and, as a matter of fact, for many years until now our country has been the first European country in terms of numbers of IA, and the second in the world, after the US.

In the years 2001-2016, also 13,628 national adoptions (NA) were completed. Children adopted nationally were resident in Italy, but quite often they belonged to minorities (once again from Africa, Asia, Central and South America, Eastern Europe and also from the Rom and Sinti groups).

Adoption is clearly changing Italian society especially in terms of multicultural variety. Adoptive families face many challenges, indeed they spring from an encounter of biographies and they must take into account the displacement and losses undergone by the children along with their necessity of building an identity where the past experiences should have the room to be well integrated with the new life.

Very often Italian adoptive families find help in grass-root networks of family associations, sharing their experiences, feeling recognized, getting self and professional help. It is not by chance, therefore, that the Italian family associations have been particular active in identifying the needs of adoptive families and very successful in attaining important results in favor of the same. In 2014 Coordinamento CARE, network of adoptive and foster family associations, obtained the first set of national rules dedicated to the well-being of adoptees in school, unique case in Europe.

The most important and unique network of Italian family associations (Coordinamento CARE) has recognized the necessity to investigate the effect of micro and macro discriminations undergone by adoptees and their families; a field still studied very little in Italy.

## **1. Why and how.**

Italian society is rapidly changing culturally and in terms of ethnical configuration. However too little is still done to understand the ways in which racism impacts on individuals with repeated macro and micro events (specifically on individuals with hybrid identities as adoptees, children of mixed couples, etc.). In particular, it is still missing an awareness about the morphing of racism from «overt» to «covert» forms (Garber, 2014). Covert racism is indeed widespread and very often misrecognized. «Color blindness», for instance, is not yet perceived as a form of racism in the Italian society and, sometimes, 'being neutral' with respect to the somatic features of children in a sort of blind normalization is felt (more too often in schools) as a form of good inclusion ('all children are equal'). Young Italian people with different ethnic background still miss good role models to follow and identify with (teachers, journalists, politicians, anchor-man or anchor-women, actors and actresses, scientists, etc.). Families in school textbooks are still represented in stereotypical ways.

Racism is studied even less when it regards adoptees, even though more and more often the literature speaks about their «negated mixed identities» (Edelstein, 2007) and about the 'quiet migration' they underwent, especially by IA (Di Silvio, 2008). Even though «the adoptive family is a multicultural family that lives in an intercultural context» (Edelstein, 2008), and it is necessary to «enter into a perspective of pluralist integration» in order to understand it, this ecological approach is seldom used.

Research data on racism episodes have been collected by Lorenzini (2012; 2013, 2018) in the years 1999/2000, in 2011, in 2015 until 2018. What emerges from the experiences collected in individual interviews of young Italian adoptees of different non-European origins is emblematic. Most of the interviewed, between 18 and 34 with more or less dark skin, reported episodes in which they were appealed with deeply derogatory words.

Nowadays, news about racist incidents in Italy fill more and more the media and they, of course, happen to involve also adoptive families; families that, in their pre-adoptive preparation, were trained very little to face this possibility. Perspective adoptive parents seldom receive any preparation about the multicultural aspects of the family they are going to build by national or international adoption, even though there are many critical issues to be considered. For instance, society is still unable to think of 'somatically different' people as Italians, consequently adoptees of different ethnic origins are often considered 'foreigners', especially when they grow up in their teens or adulthood. All these reasons prompted our study in the attempt to photograph, on one side the parents' perception of racism impact on their sons and daughters and, on the other the actual experiences reported by the adoptees, distinguishing between macro or microaggressions.

Very seldom microaggressions were analyzed in the experiences of adoptees and certainly not in the Italian context. Some literature can be found abroad and we refer the reader to Garber (2014), just to quote one.

First of all, we had to specify to our public what is intended as microaggressions (e.g., micro-assaults, micro-insults, and micro-invalidations) in order to understand their awareness about the matter. As examples, one may list

constant questions like 'Where are you from', misrecognition of origins (all Asians are automatically Chinese), derogatory hypotheses (South Asians are housekeepers, Nigerian girls are sex workers, Rom are thieves, Latinos are good at dancing or at sex, etc.).

In our work we found this type of microaggressions pervasive and we consider fundamental to further investigate this specific area so that anybody involved in adoption may become more aware of (and act more efficiently against) prejudice.

### *1.1. Methodology and panel*

The research proceeded in a qualitative way, targeted at adoptive parents and adoptees by two different tools.

Adoptive parents, who adopted between 2001 and 2019 in NA or IA, were involved via an avalanche sampling, randomly distributed, without statistical significance. Questionnaires were distributed with closed and open CAWI questions. The variables were: age, education and geographical distribution. The explanatory questions regarded: description of character and personality of the child, detection of discrimination and racism occurrences against their children (description of the episodes), managing of those episodes, perception of the social climate about racism. Of the 2550 completed questionnaires, 2418 were valid (95%), 91.7% of the form compilers were between 40 and 59 years old, 78.8% of times they were mothers and 57.7% of them had an undergraduate or higher degree.

87% of the parents adopted in IA, 63.1% of the children are male and 36.7% of them is attending primary school. Geographically, 42.1% of the sample lives in the North West (Piemonte, Val d'Aosta, Lombardia, Liguria), 52.4% in a city with more than 30.000 inhabitants. Finally, 68.3% of the families have or had contact with a family association,

The research instead involved adoptees via interviews. The questionnaires were with closed and open questions CAPI. The variables were: age, education, geographical distribution. The explanatory questions regarded: undergone discrimination and/or racism (description of the episodes), perception of the social climate related to racism. The panel involved 20 individuals adopted, aged between 16 and 24 (10 males, 10 females), of which 6 were nationally adopted and 14 internationally. The average age of the adoptees was 18.75 years. Girls' birth countries: 3 Italy, 2 Russian Fed., 3 India, 1 Thailand, 1 Brazil. Boys' birth countries: 3 Italy, 1 Brazil, 2 Colombia, 1 Ethiopia, 1 Nepal, 1, Philippines, 1 Cambodia. Boys' average age at time of adoption: 4.5 years, girls' average age at time of adoption: 2.8 years.

### *1.2. Results*

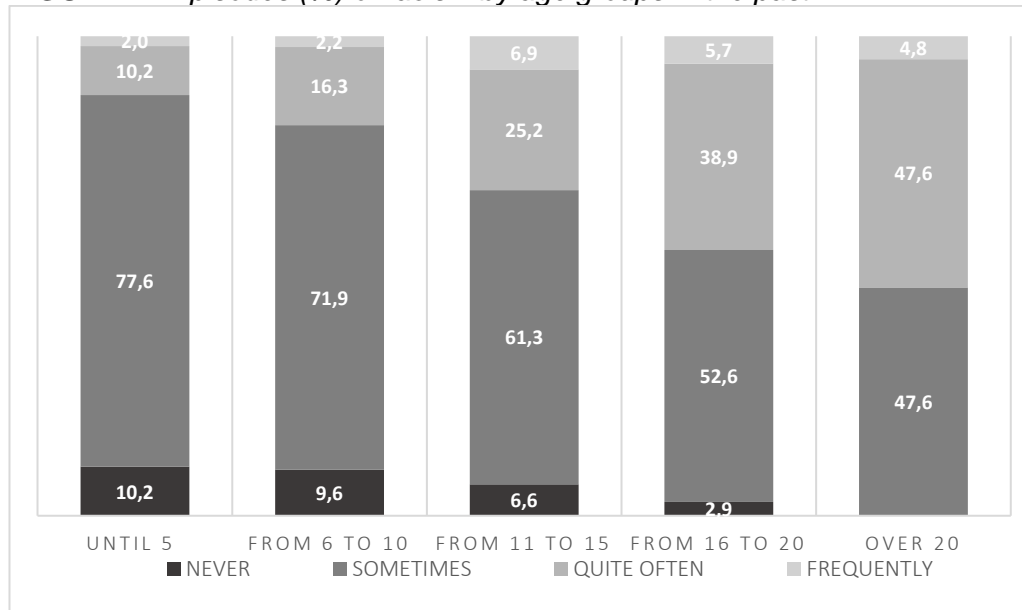
The research dealt with two types of discrimination: discrimination against the adoptive identity and racism.

In our research we addressed fundamentally three main questions: What is the perception of adoptive families and the experience of young adoptees about discrimination and racism? Is racism in Italy against adopted people? Are adoptive families prepared to face discrimination and racism against their children? In this work we present the initial results regarding the analysis of the racist episodes.

The collected data actually confirm what has been felt by adoptive parents since a long time: in Italy, if you are phenotypically different, you can be victim of racist episodes (even when you have Italian citizenship). By the collected data, 70% of the adoptive parents with children of different ethnical backgrounds declares that their children suffered at least one episode of racism. Furthermore,

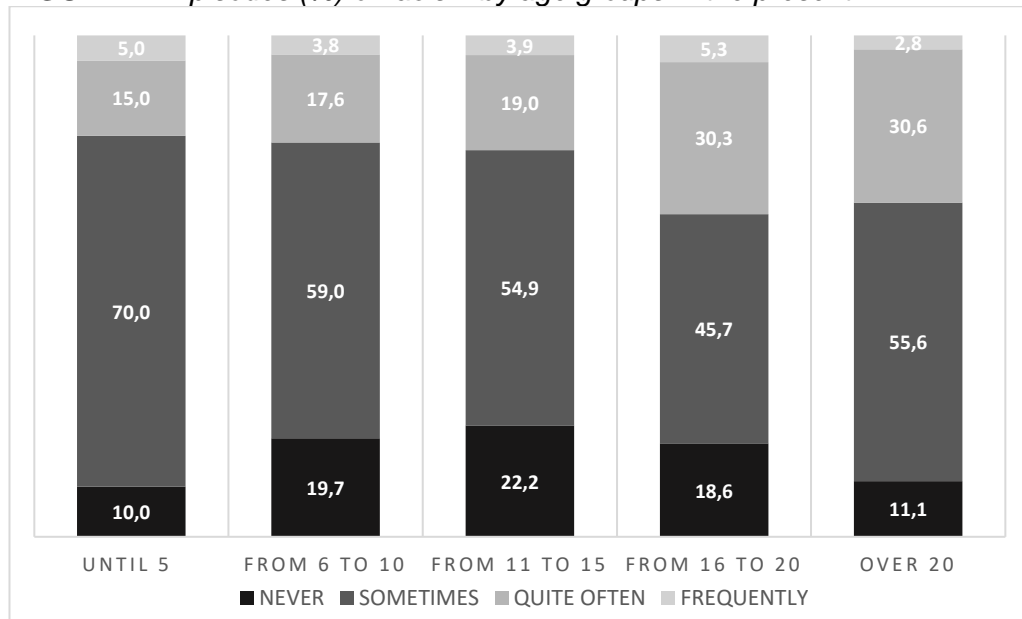
those who most denounced episodes of racism (almost 61%), are the parents of children of African origin.

**FIGURE. 1. Episodes (%) of racism by age groups in the past**



Source: Coordinamento CARE (2019)

**FIGURE. 2. Episodes (%) of racism by age groups in the present**



Source: Coordinamento CARE (2019)

Parents were also asked to estimate the frequency of racist incidents, comparing present and past. Counterintuitively, the episodes seem to have occurred more in the past than in the present, also in terms of intensity. Indeed, speaking of the present, 19.8% of the respondents stated that the children had never suffered racist incidents, 54.4% sometimes, 21.7% quite often and 4.2% frequently. When speaking of the past, the percentages worsened with 6.8% of respondents saying that their children had never suffered racism, 63.6% sometimes, 24.8% quite often and 4.7% frequently. Fig.1 and Fig. 2 represent a finer description by age groups.

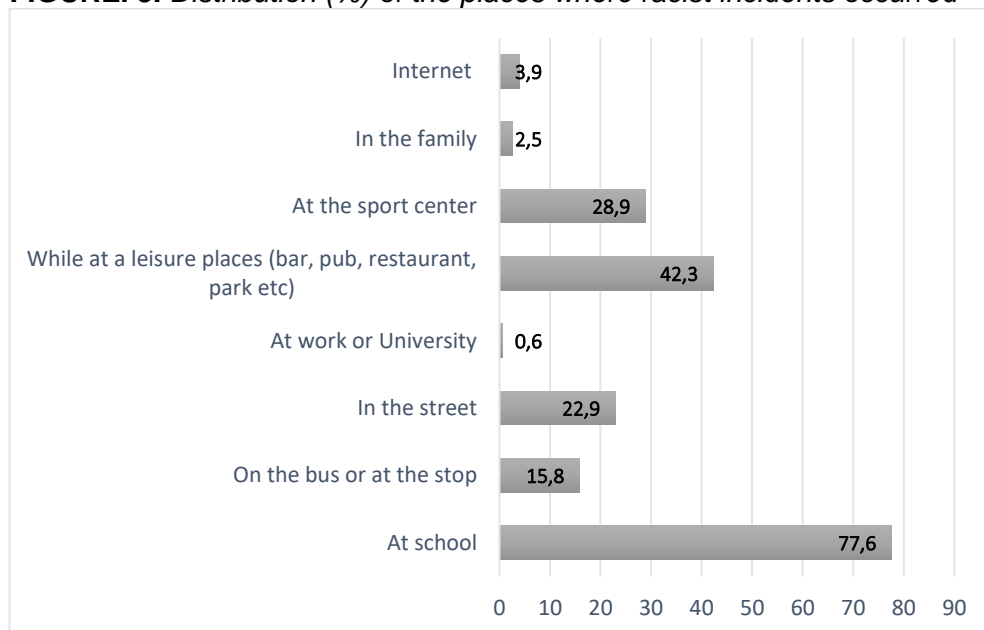


To understand these differences, one might consider three possible reasons, that may coexist. First, adoptive families get formed by an encounter among people stranger to each other and the sense of mutual extraneousness might even last for some time. Thus, it can happen that, when the family ties are still fragile, parents may be very sensitive to the signals from society that point out differences.

The physical diversity reported from others resonates internally amplifying the perception of distance from the children. Secondly, in the early years of adoption, most children were attending kinder-garden or the first years of primary school, when class relationships are little filtered. Italian society is yet not sufficiently multicultural and young children are little aware of differences and poorly educated about inclusiveness, so it can happen they act in a racist way. This could be a reason why parents perceive a higher incidence rate of discriminatory acts in the past. Thirdly, parents may come to know about the past episodes when children grow up, since at the time of the events, those dealt with them by themselves.

Another important point emerging from our inquiry is that the most frequent place where the racist episodes occur (40%) is school, as clearly shown in Figures 3 and 4.

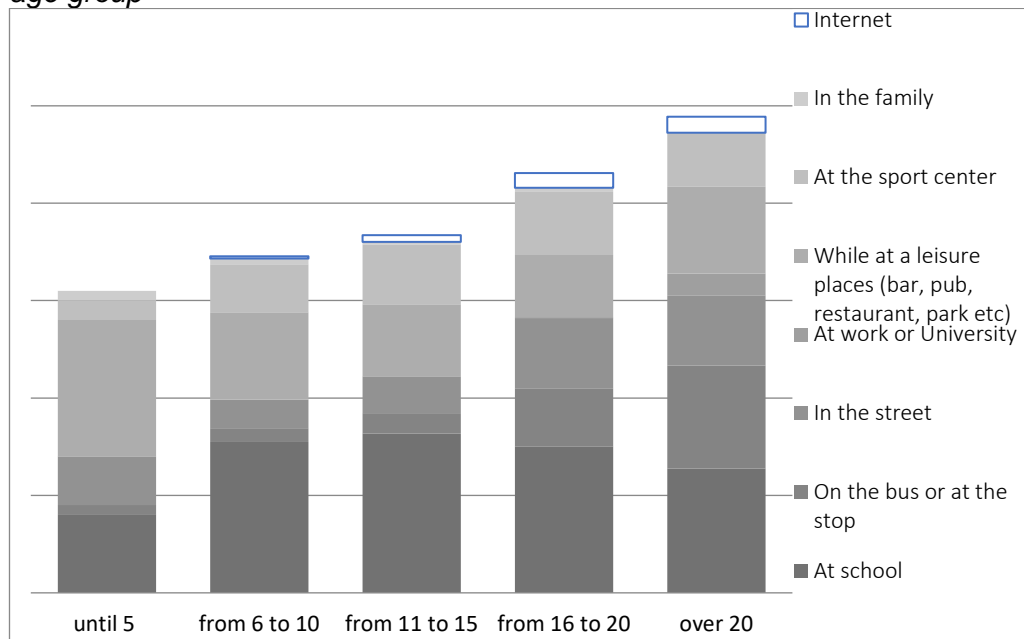
**FIGURE 3.** *Distribution (%) of the places where racist incidents occurred*



source: Coordinamento CARE (2019)

The research recorded also the adoptive parents' reactions to the racism episodes: around 6% of them reported the incidents to the authorities, while about 38% talked directly to the person responsible of the episode. The vast majority of the parents talked with their children about the possibility of future incidents. It is notable that, when seeking for an appropriate course of action, about 40% of parents asked their adoption agency for help, around 30% asked the social service or a family association, while 70% of them collected information from independent sources (such as social media),

**FIGURE. 4.** *Distribution (%) of the places where racist incidents occurred by age group*



Source: Coordinamento CARE (2019)

It is crucial to better analyze why this happens and to elaborate on what can be done to prevent the phenomenon in the Italian classes.

## 2. The interviews

The individual interviews confirmed the frequency of racist episodes and the perception about their timing (14 out of 20 underwent racist incidents mostly in the past and often in school). The interviews reveal racial slurs, some very important.

We were at the beach and there was a man who was loudly praising Mussolini and then started shouting that we had no place in Italy.' 'The first day in high-school I was sitting near a black student. Another guy arrived and threw a piece of paper on the floor telling me to pick it up since I was black like him.' 'In the locker room of the gym other boys started pointing and sneering at me.' 'I was at a beach and I went to a bar with friends. As I entered, a group of guys started laughing and saying I looked like a chimp. My friends stood up for me very strongly.' 'In junior school somebody organized a WhatsApp chat against me.' 'I was very little, in a playground, and this grandpa says to his niece: Don't play with gypsies.' 'I was in my scout group. It was after Charlie Hebdo and this guy blurted: I would burn the face to all the colored people! The worst was that I was unable to make the scout leaders to understand the gravity.' 'When they see me with my daughter in playgrounds they always ask if I'm the baby-sitter.'

These are just few examples. Most of the interviewed reported also being often questioned about their origins. 'Where are you from?' is a constant, but also questions about the language they speak (being clearly Italian speakers) are frequent. Some report of being denied a hiring possibility, because 'customers would not like a black person'.

Most of the interviewed told, what happened, to parents, relatives and friends finding help, solace and sometimes (but not always) a solution. Almost all of them said that parents had never spoken to them about the possibility of a racist

incident before it happened. The interviewed were asked what they suggested to tackle the matter proactively and all of them answered it was necessary to build a correct culture giving more voice to the protagonists, pointing out that Italian society still knows little about adoption and they underlined the central role of school.

## Conclusions

The first results of our research already suggest some paths of work for the adoption system in Italy: to actively introduce, in the preparation of couples by social services or international adoption agencies, concepts on strengths and weaknesses of the multi-ethnic family; to create post adoption services, on this specific topic, dedicated to families and young people with adoptive backgrounds; to strengthen further the school awareness on the meaning and the impact of episodes of micro-racism.

It is actually very urgent to be proactive on the matter in order to prevent situations of discomfort and crisis in the more and more multi-ethnic Italian adoptive families.

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## Femicide: a Cultural Heritage

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**Keywords:** *Femicide, Gender Inequality, Scapegoat, Education*

### Introduction

Sociological research has attempted to explain the how, the when, and the how many, by exploring the world of femicide victims and that of aggressors. However, the question why femicide occurs is inescapable, and sociological research cannot avoid addressing it, but at the same time it is the most difficult question and it certainly doesn't have an unambiguous and simple answer. A good number of years have gone by – it was 1976 – since the term femicide was coined by Diana Russell (Radford, Russell, 1992), causing a true change in perception of the phenomenon. The creation of the word femicide corresponded, in fact, to a reality that had not yet been coded. It was an important intuition and a cultural operation that allowed us to define the borders of a social issue. Femicide is a social issue. It is a misogynous homicide whose resentment, hate, and scorn components play a key role (Russell, Harmes, 2001) Years after the invention of the term, we surely cannot say that its use is shared and unanimous, so much that the latest report published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime highlights – in a note, and certainly by way of scientific rigour – that the term femicide is used in quotation marks (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Global studies on homicide, 2018) when referring to a concept that is not clearly defined and is subject to interpretation, but is used without quotation marks when referring to Latin American countries, where the word is included in national legislation. Regardless of such specification of the first sentence of this introduction, though, it is no coincidence that the words homicide of women and not femicide are of common use: a choice that reflects the worldwide reception of the word. Nonetheless, much work has been done since Russell's studies, and we shall consider such effort and activity and understand its implications and its potential to create collective consciousness, critical knowledge, and especially cultural mutation. The intent of numerous activities and researches concerning is a strong investment to build an awareness founded on a different idea of relationship between genders. Nevertheless, the real cultural crux is not based upon general knowledge, but on the mutations knowledge causes in mentalities, ways of being, collective experiences and – perhaps above all – on the ability to empathize with the women victims of the present and past in a non-superficial and temporary way. Researches, initiatives, and media attention create and promote symbolic meanings, and are arenas for discussion and debate: they are a public sphere and knowledge activators in themselves. Therefore, their role consists in re-enacting and in some cases forging social representations. Given the above, the answer to the initial question of this introduction must be sought in the long-term culture, in symbolic systems, and in the social construction of the image of the woman.

### 1. Femicide and cultural history

In Italy, we shan't look very far behind in time to unveil the cultural history and symbolic universe of domination over women: the legal and cultural

institutionalization of violence against women has existed in our criminal code up until 1981, the year it was finally abrogated. Article 587 outlined the terms of 'honour killing'. Social condemnation of such homicides did not exist, or even worse: those who did not defend their honour were possibly subject to blame from society or the communities they belonged to. The article was abrogated, but the violence remained (Iezzi, 2010). Today, statistics tell us that a woman is killed every three days – although in Italy, despite a high perception of gender violence, there is a lower percentage of such crimes compared to northern European countries.

Pre-set models of experience and action still hark back to that symbolic universe (Berger, Luckman, 2010), circulate, and spread confirming male power over women. We may thus reply to the initial question just as a part of the related international literature has done – namely by attempting to understand the dynamics and methods of femicide – but we may also search among the long-term cultural and symbolic history. One of the methodologies adopted is to search for the motivations behind acts of femicide by means of reconstructing the role of men, (Ventimiglia, 2002) who impose their dominion and power upon women. Usually the said researches highlight an androgynous male role that imposes domination and power of the female. Mainstream sociology, instead, often refers to social conflict theories in general, and much less to interpersonal violence (Hearn, 2013).

The different types of abuse create conceptual conflict and violence frameworks in which the man's hegemony is considered legitimate, which confirms a gender inequality exists. The woman symbolically represents the emblem of such domination: she is the place of advancement and perpetuation of the 'symbolic capital' held by men through their habitus and practices (Bourdieu, 2001). Such cultural tradition of dominion is the most difficult aspect to transform, in that it causes an introjection of the model by women themselves, who thus take part in the vicious cycle of obedience and symbolic violence. The knowledge of symbolic violence is thus not enough, as the unconscious inclination in some measure lies under the universe of senses in the form of mental structure and habitus (Bourdieu, 2001: 9). In other words, the fight is not only against what is external but to a certain extent we may consider it an intrapsychic fight against the injunctions of the social world, that act upon and sediment in the long-term culture. The first experience of domination – thus in a broad sense *politics* of the social world – is lived within the micro-social family reality, in that the latter already portrays sexual differentiations, a sexed division of work, and relationships featuring symbolic dominion or domination; but this system is overlapped by the equally political sphere of work and school. In Bourdieu's opinion, school is the *par excellence* location of symbolic violence

Displays of honour and virility are the symbols of manhood that males adopt. They are the keys to understand the universe of male violence as well as conflict in post-democratic societies. Power relationships in conflict are based upon the principles of inferiority, exclusion, domination, and control, and social conflict is – within inter-gender relationship vs a clash of roles. Such cultural mechanism makes violence appear as something natural in the eyes of victims.

Bourdieu (2001) claims that social world order and male supremacy – which is respected by means of prohibitions and obligations – is rather easily perpetrated in a relationship of domination, abuse, and injustice. Most unacceptable living circumstances often appear tolerable and even natural; male domination is the example of such paradoxical subjugation caused by symbolic, soft, and insensitive violence, which is invisible to the eyes of the victims themselves (Bourdieu, 2001). It is also hidden from the eyes of the dominators; it is buried and is assimilated as natural, while it is essentially a social and cultural

construction. According to Bourdieu, (2001) symbolic violence against women is exerted with the complicity of cognitive structures that are unconscious; they are deeply enrooted structures that – as in the case of male domination – are acknowledged through behaviour, education, and models presented. Concurrently, language structures are corporal structures that instil themselves in perception, appreciation, and assessment categories, and at the same time in the principles which actions and symbolic injunctions are based upon the injunctions of the teaching system and of the male gender. (Bourdieu, 2001). It is thus quite difficult to set free from and transform the domination mechanisms that are an integral part of our subjectivity and mental structures.

## **2. Femicide and scapegoat theory**

In the sociology field, two main currents interpret data concerning femicide: symmetrical violence and asymmetrical violence – which underlines gender-based violence extremely clearly. The conceptual reference framework that emerges – and to which theorists of both symmetrical and asymmetrical violence belong to – is conflict theory. The arguments, which the analysis by such researchers is based upon, are: power, domination, and inequality leading to conflict. We may refer to the conceptual framework of asymmetrical violence and list different types of abuse and mistreatment used to affirm power over women. These may include sexual, verbal, psychological, nutritional, and temporal abuse, which create conceptual mechanisms of conflict and violence (Hearn, 2013: 158). Within such framework, male hegemony is «taken for granted», and this for granted hegemony justifies gender-based domination as well as the roles of the dominator and the dominated. Every microsocial and macrosocial study confirms such inequality – in the first case domestic inequality, and in the second case political-social inequality. Therefore, structural inequality is recorded at the micro level both in the private sphere and in larger social structures.

The experience of sexual violation of the female body is strictly related to a history of inviolability established by the male gender as a whole, with the male body historically and anthropologically not violated and inviolable by the opposite sex (Ventimiglia, 2002). Sexual violence configures itself as a specific form of invisible violence by men against women (Weil, 2016). It occurs in close and intimate relationships: the woman knows her murderer, who may be an ex-husband, an ex-boyfriend, or a family member.

Different approaches exist in contemporary femicide theories (Corradi et al. 2016). Corradi has identified five: a feminist approach; (Cameron, Frazer, 1987) a sociological approach; a criminological approach that leverages on human rights; and an approach that analyses femicide in the colonial domination contexts. The feminist approach sees male power as a tool of domination over women; it is a philosophy which has brought great stimulus to research, and has identified specific traits of the phenomenon, but which has ended up excessively generalizing the latter. The sociological approach (Hernández, 2015), instead, has reconstructed the contexts, situations, and interpersonal relationships between the abuser and the victim (Bell, Naugle, 2008).

In addition to such approaches, I would dare to propose an anthropological interpretation of femicide, within the context of mimetic theory and resentment (Girard, 1986), As Girard underlines, resentment is that which the imitator feels towards his model, in that the latter hinders the former's efforts to take possession of the object they both desires. When expressed universally, this desire to imitate the chosen model leads to a chronic and impure violence. In order to



purify from such 'infection', society avails itself of an act of brutal and pure violence. It selects a random victim – a scapegoat – and conveys the collective violence away from the group and towards it. The choice of such victim is purely arbitrary. This is not the case in femicide, where the victim or victimized subject is someone close, intimate, and with whom the abuser has a connection. But just like the surrogate victim, the woman is not destroyed psychologically even before being annihilated physically because she has done something wrong, but because she is the living witness of the real cause of men's internal crisis. The man thus re-enacts the scapegoat mechanism. Girard's analysis confirms how the community – and in particular the conflict between the internal and external – materializes in an attempt to stem the fear of the unknown. The commitment of femicide is a flight from the unknown and from change. It would be reassuring for us to think that the assassins of wives and fiancées are all mentally instable or completely insane. Instead, the number and frequency of femicides tells us it is a phenomenon to list among the 'normal' category of everyday events, and its causes shall also be searched at the long-term cultural history level. The figure of the scapegoat was indeed born to funnel every dividing force in a single direction or towards a single target (Hassan, 2018). It is so that all the internal violence is directed towards the woman. The destructive force of violence strikes its victim and does not deal with a potentially self-destructive internal crisis. It claims property of the life of a woman. Just as in ancient sacrifices, the principle of guilt is disregarded, thus the choice to victimize a woman implies a chimerical hypothesis of guilt. Men's internal crisis thus causes general disarray, and the confusion produces and seeks an action: femicide.

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## Intercultural Teachers Training: Process, Product and Impact Assessments of the Master *Organizzazione e gestione delle istituzioni scolastiche in contesti multiculturali* at the University of Catania

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**Keywords:** *Interculturalism, Inclusion, Teachers training, School management, Formative assessment*

### 1. State of the art and context of the research

Since about ten years, in Italy, there has been intense debate on issues related to the cultural diversity in school contexts, with three methodological focuses at least: qualitative and quantitative studies (Santerini, 2010; Ongini, 2011; Santagati, Ongini, 2016); theoretical models and policies (Catarci, Fiorucci, 2013; Fiorucci, 2015; D'Aprile, 2017); proposals for educational pathways (Zoletto, 2007; Catarci, Fiorucci, 2015; Tobagi, 2016),

The interest in multiculturalism is growing as the impact of immigration in Italian society increases (Fiorucci et al., 2017). Actually, despite the noisy silence of the last Italian school reform (L. n.107/2015) about the 850,000 foreign students (10% of the total), national educational policies did not neglected the problem of an inclusive multicultural coexistence, as proved by two recent ministerial directives: Ministero della PI (2007) and MIUR (2014). The first one still represents, according to Fiorucci (2015: 283), «a comprehensive proposal to rethink the school», because it is aimed at all students and school levels (curricula, disciplines, teaching, relational aspects), taking charge of all differences (not only ethnic-linguistic ones) and identifying the possible misunderstandings or distortions of intercultural education (culturalism, trivialization, folklorization, homologation, eradication of differences),

On this point, both the cited policies and scientific literature underline the importance of training the teachers, especially on psycho-pedagogical, socio-anthropological and linguistic topics. The Master *Organizzazione e gestione delle istituzioni scolastiche in contesti multiculturali* (Schools organization and management in multicultural contexts) – funded by the EU AMIF (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund) and carried out at 23 Italian universities in collaboration with MIUR (Ministry of Instruction, University and Research) – was conceived directly referring to the above-mentioned knowledge fields. Addressed to teachers and headmasters, it was based conceiving intercultural education as equal opportunities, i.e., «predisposition of the conditions to ensure that all subjects (indigenous and immigrants) obtain the same academic success rates» (Fiorucci, 2015: 280),

Furthermore, the Master was endowed with strong experimental imprint, dedicating almost half of the scheduled hours to laboratory (80) and to internship inside schools (110): both were addressed to design, implement and assess intercultural educational interventions. The remaining time was spent in lectures (132) and e-learning (84),

## 2. Research questions and methodologies.

This paper focuses on the Master recently closed at the University of Catania (academic years 2016-17 and 2017-18), with the aim of assessing its main results through the answers to the following research questions (RQ), which are interpretable as assessment of process (a, b, c, d), product (d) and impact (d, e),

- a) Who are they and where do the Master students come from? What were the attendance and the drop-out rate?
- b) What was the satisfaction towards the Master activities? What problems were perceived?
- c) Which of the factors investigated mainly influence overall satisfaction? in other words, does the questionnaire capture the most important reasons for satisfaction?
- d) What were the main broached topics and used methodologies in the internship?
- e) What was the short-term impact in the involved schools?

We adopted different methodologies for each RQ, as detailed below.

- a) Report on the main data about students and their attendance.
- b) Analysis of the satisfaction survey results.
- c) Correlation analysis to identify satisfaction-stimulating elements.
- d) Basic qualitative and quantitative analysis of participants' papers that describe the internship carried out.
- e) Report on dissemination and follow-up actions.

## 3. Outcomes and discussion

### 3.1. RQ a: Master students and their attendance

In Catania the Master has reached the maximum number of enrolled persons, amounting to 100. Of these, 6 have given up ex-ante and one ongoing. The 93 graduates, which present a fairly high average age (50.4; min.: 30; max.: 64), are 72 females (77%) and 21 males (23%), largely from the provinces of Catania (63) and, secondly, Siracusa (22).

Despite the consistent group of headmasters (16), the majority of graduates is teacher staff (77), mostly on curriculum subjects (58), but there are also a substantial group of support teachers (13) and 6 teachers seconded. Furthermore, 14 teachers are persons in charge of interculturalism and 2 of inclusion and special needs (referents). Among the teachers, 34 work in the upper secondary school, 24 in the middle secondary, 16 in the primary and only 3 in the nursery school.

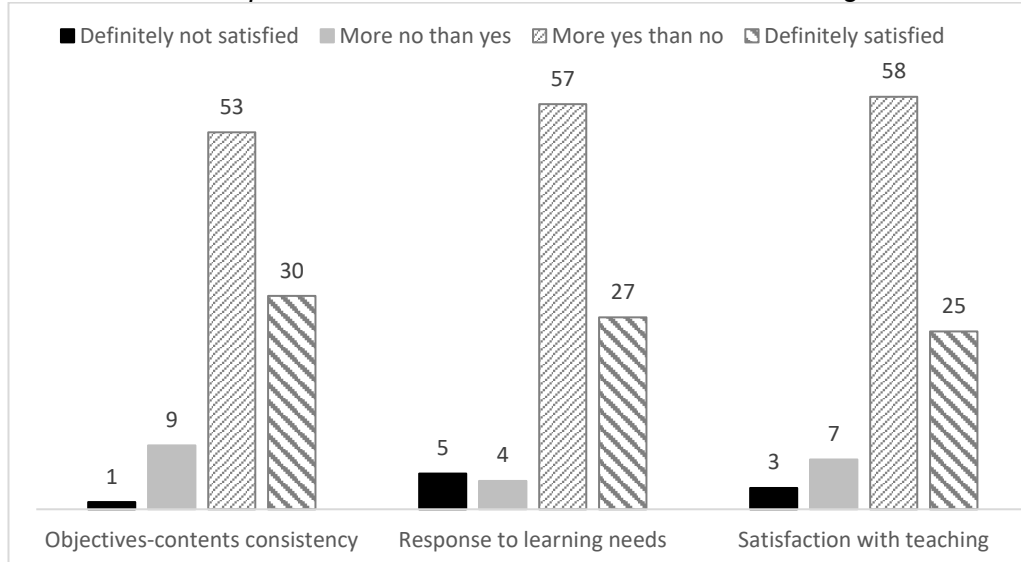
The average attendance at lectures and laboratorial meetings remains rather high throughout the course (78.3 people), flexing a little more consistently only during the third and final module (72.5),

### 3.2. RQ b: participants' satisfaction, perceived problems and suggestions

The questionnaire – completed anonymously at the end of the training (October-November 2018) by 100% of graduates – is the same as that circulated by MIUR and AMIF at the other Master locations. It consists of 27 items with 4-steps Likert scale responses, another 6 closed-ended items and 2 open questions. Its dimensions can be summarized in three categories: contents and teaching; internship experience; organization.

About the first dimension (Figure 1), all three considered items show a substantial satisfaction, however the objectives-contents consistency presents the wider range of definitely satisfied and the smaller one of definitely not satisfied.

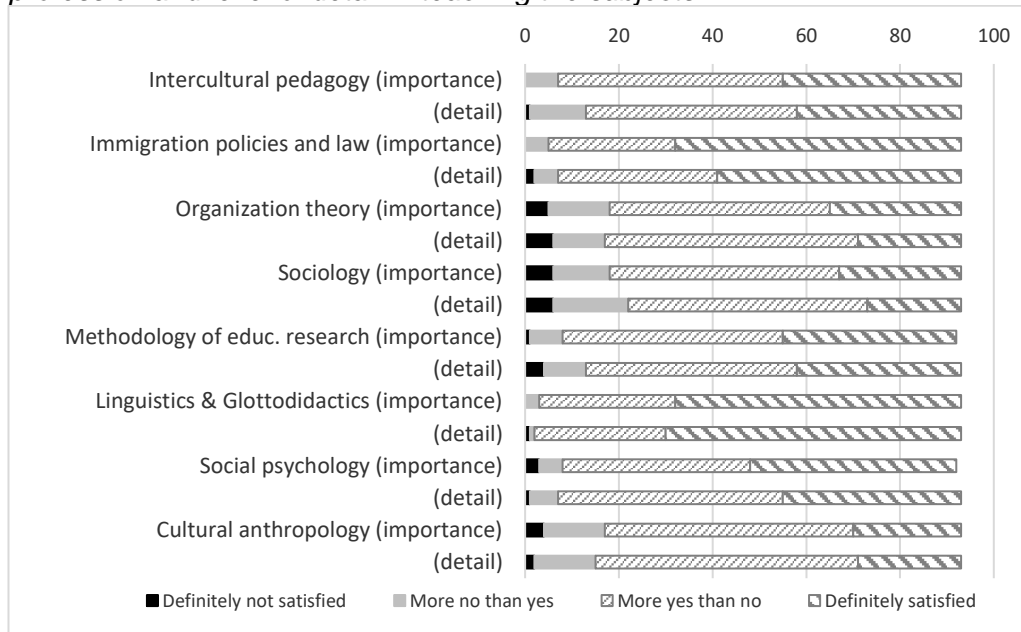
**FIGURE. 1.** *Participants' satisfaction about contents and teaching.*



Source: our elaboration on original data.

The most appreciated subjects were primarily the more technical ones (Linguistics & Glottodidactics and Immigration policies and law), secondarily the psycho-pedagogical ones (Figure 2).

**FIGURE. 2.** *Participants' evaluation about importance of the subjects for the profession and level of detail in teaching the subjects.*



Source: our elaboration on original data.

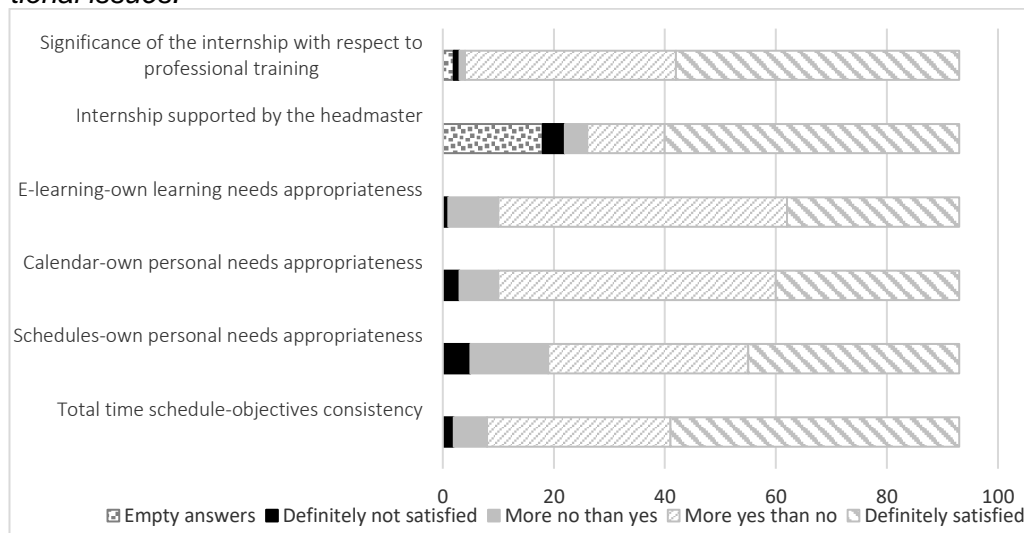
The categorization of the 41 answers to the first open question (topics to explore further in future) confirms the participants' interest in Glottodidactics, Methodology of research and assessment, but also in Sociology and Geography; in addition, it suggests that education to the citizenship, emotions and relationships

could be developed. However, it highlights firstly a need of learning about practical aspects involved in an innovative and intercultural idea of the classroom and school management: e.g., the role of the environment and that one of ICT (Information and Communication Technology); pioneering teaching methods; the sharing of good practices and protocols.

The second dimension explored by survey refers to the internship, carried out mainly inside the same school where the participants work (69 cases over 93). The two main related questions (first two bars in Figure. 3) reveal its high significance with respect to professional training and a good degree of headmasters' collaboration. Nevertheless, this last question (addressed only to teachers), highlights some fairly or totally negative experiences, suggesting the need to pay close attention to the internship and to strengthen its organizational aspects, including a better care of collaborative relationships with the involved schools, especially when the headmaster is not a Master student.

Finally, regarding the organization (last four items in Figure 3), a significant slice of critical opinions emerges only in the question concerning the compatibility between one's own needs and the schedules of the activities.

**FIGURE 3.** *Participants' satisfaction about internship experience and organizational issues.*

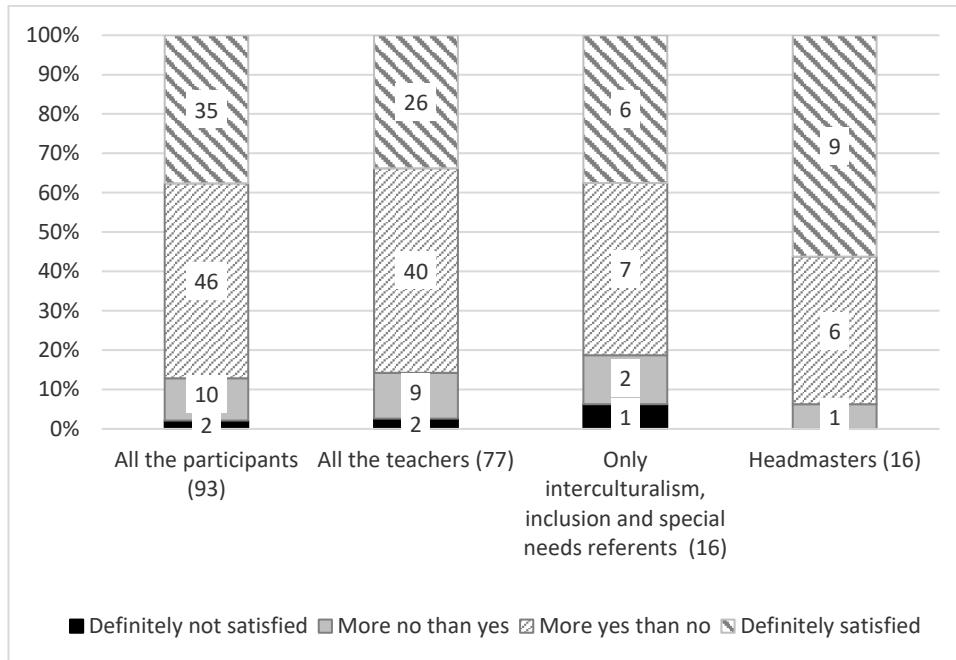


Source: our elaboration on original data.

Summarizing, the analysis shows very good satisfaction, with particularly positive evaluations in the internship related items. We point out, however, a not large but rather constant slice of moderate (4-9 respondents) or heavy (1-5) dissatisfaction, particularly in some items and about some subjects. The critical attitude is widespread mainly among the teachers and especially among the referents, probably already skilled with respect to some or all the training objectives.

The item about the general degree of satisfaction, confirms the observations done so far, also about slight differences depending on the professional role: in principle, the referents a little more critical, the headmasters a little more enthusiastic (Figure 4),

**FIGURE 4.** *Participants' overall satisfaction (charts in percentual and frequencies as numbers),*



Source: our elaboration on original data.

Finally, also referring to the second open question (free comments), two main issues emerge: an organizational one (greater coordination, networking stimulation, sharing of practices, attention to the internship) and a methodological one (more technical subjects, applicative-illustrative focus, debate and interaction),

### 3.3. RQ-c: Relationships between overall satisfaction and other variables

To answer the third RQ, we have explored the correlations between overall satisfaction (assumed as dependent variable) and the other variables (considered as independent and, in some cases, manipulated by calculating the median value or dichotomizing both the dependent and the independent),

As illustrated in tab. 1, we used Somers' coefficient ( $D_{yx}$ ), specifically designed for exploring unidirectional relations between dichotomic variables, and a comparison among Kendall's tau b ( $t_b$ ), Spearman's rank correlation ( $r_s$ ) and Pearson's ( $r$ ) coefficients for the ordinal variables.

The results lead to the conclusions that: *i*) the overall satisfaction is mainly influenced by the teaching and the response to learning needs; *ii*) the objectives-contents consistency, the importance of the subjects for the profession and the level of detail in teaching play a more modest but significant role, as well as the influence of own participation on trainers-trainees interaction, some organizational issues and the significance of the internship; *iii*) on the contrary, both place of internship and headmaster's collaboration do not affect the overall satisfaction (probably due to a perception of continuity between this experience and the daily working life), likewise the school level where respondents work and (unlike what found in the univariate analysis) their role.

Other significant correlations were found between the response to learning needs and: the objectives-contents consistency ( $r_s=0.61$ ), the median importance of the subjects for the profession ( $r_s=0.62$ ), the median level of detail in teaching ( $r_s=0.66$ ) and, mainly, the teaching ( $r_s=0.71$ ). The latter, moreover, is weakly correlated to the median of the level of detail ( $r_s=0.61$ ),

**TABLE 1. Correlation analysis between overall satisfaction and other variables.**

Factors of overall satisfaction (independent variables)	$D_{yx}$	$t_b$	$r_s$	$r$
School level where the respondent works	-	0,188	0,212	0,225
To be headmaster	0,080	-	-	-
To be intercultural, inclusion or special needs referents (respondents: only the teachers)	-0,056	-	-	-
Objectives-contents consistency	-	0,539	0,568	0,569
Satisfaction in teaching	-	0,666	0,692	0,736
Response to learning needs	-	0,638	0,663	0,720
Importance of the subjects for the profession (median of the responses about the single subjects)	-	0,531	0,553	0,610
Level of detail in teaching the subjects (median of the responses about the single subjects)	-	0,538	0,560	0,640
Influence of own participation on trainers-trainees interaction		0,471	0,499	0,456
Place of the internship (dichotomized: own school or other places)	-0,034	-	-	-
Degree of collaboration of the headmaster to the internship (respondents: only the teachers)	-	0,010	0,011	-0,073
Significance of the internship with respect to professional training	-	0,437	0,458	0,378
Total time scheduled-objectives consistency	-	0,392	0,418	0,452
Schedules-own personal needs appropriateness	-	0,45	0,488	0,497
Calendar-own personal needs appropriateness	-	0,35	0,377	0,364
E-learning-own learning needs appropriateness	-	0,282	0,309	0,262

Source: our elaboration on original data.

In conclusion, we can affirm that the proposed questionnaire has taken sufficient factors that determine the satisfaction, nevertheless, some aspects – e.g., the perspectives emerged from the open questions – could be profitably taken into consideration to further develop this instrument.

#### 3.4. RQ-d: products, topics and methodologies of the internships

About the papers resuming each participants' internship experience, we analysed two dimensions: structure and contents, intra-institutional and external networking.

About the first one, the papers are usually divided into the following sections.

1. Context analysis: almost all of them present a first chapter consisting of a research (document analysis, interviews, surveys, observation...), conducted during the first 30 hours of internship and aimed at studying the context (territory, city, neighbourhood, school), identifying the main multicultural issues and useful resources.

2. Educational design: a simple textual analysis on the Keywords assigned to each paper (up to a maximum of 5: a total of 59 Keywords and 372 entries) reveals the most common topics and methods. Among the first, in order of frequency: teaching of Italian as L2 (30), intercultural education (27), IRP - Institute Reception Protocol (21), teachers training (18), reception of single cases (18), socialization (12), reflection on citizenship (11) and identity (11), Among the most common methods, in order: laboratory (23), creativity stimulation (15), reflexivity (13), guidance (11), storytelling (11), ICT (11), collaboration (10).

3. Activity evaluation: almost always based on an unstructured qualitative approach.

4. Attachments: numerous works contain interesting annexes, e.g., learning unit projects, logbooks, tests, students' feedbacks, questionnaires and databases, photos, institutional documents, etc.



Regarding the second dimension, we point out that the experimentations nearly always involved groups of colleagues. Besides, numerous projects about refresher courses took the form of self-training, peer education, sharing of experiences, collaboration and co-design of teaching within a community of practices. Even more, the design and evaluation of IRP, e.g., are frequently based on the dialoguing involvement of the entire school community: the headmaster, the collegiate bodies, teachers with specific tasks and students' families too. Lastly, the internship frequently represented an opportunity to plan (and often to activate) networks between school and external subjects: educational institutions, local authorities (social and health services, police), non-profit organizations, migrants' management networks.

### 3.5. RQ-e: Dissemination and follow-up

As this paper demonstrates, the Master attended in Catania activated a series of processes (research, auto-training, documentation writing, intercultural events, laboratories, etc.) aimed at enabling the involved schools to manage the cultural diversity at various levels: didactics, reception organization, inclusion, education to diversity, families and territory links.

The conference *Scuola e Territorio. Prospettive e prassi per l'interculturalità*, held at University of Catania on November 30, 2018, broadened the perspective on the results achieved by the 3 twin Masters in Sicily (Universities of Palermo, Messina, Enna), confirming its generative effect on the school contexts as well as the sensitivity of the Sicilian schools to multicultural issues.

In that place, 197 pre-enrolments were collected for a follow-up course, addressed to teachers who collaborated in Master participants' internships. The course – offered free of charge – took place from February to June 2019, during 25 hours (of which 20 in e-learning mode), in addition to the design and experimentation of an intercultural activity inside their own school. It involved 23 Master alumni as tutors and was completed by 169 teachers. Further data is being analysed thanks to a related research grant funded by AMIF.

## Conclusions

The Master held in Catania showed excellent results in enrolled/graduated students' ratio, attendance and satisfaction. The latter appears particularly related to contents and teaching, in spite of a request of more practice-oriented subjects. In this direction, the need to take better care and provide greater emphasis to the internship emerges clearly. The relationships between the variables considered in the satisfaction survey allow to outline a consistent pattern, both to better read the satisfaction construct and to guide the improvement of this tool. The analysis of the papers traces the rich panorama of educational activities carried out in the involved schools, offering a reflection on the main topics and methodologies.

Finally, the high level of participation in the follow-up course can be seen as further confirmation of the approval won by the proposed intercultural training, which appears to respond to the needs actually felt by the teachers.

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## Reception and Integration of Modern Action: A Sociological Perspective

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**Keywords:** *Dualism, Stigma, Social exclusion, Stereotypes, Behaviour*

### Introduction

The concept of social integration is extended and polysemic. Its meaning varies in time and space, because its perception changes according to historical and political circumstances, the phases of the migratory phenomenon and the territory it refers to. The process of integration involves different aspects of a person's life (economic, social, cultural and political integration); therefore, it cannot overlook a multi-level governance (central government, territories, local authorities, civil society, associations, etc.).

### 1. The process of integration and social exclusion behaviors.

The process of integration has to be a bidirectional process, because «in the intervention planning and management, it is necessary to pay attention to the migrant citizen and the arrival society, in order to prepare both of them to their meeting, dialogue and mutual respect» (Esposito, 2017: 50),

«We cannot think of promoting the integration process through actions involving just immigrants and refugees, because there is an interdependent relation between locals and people entering a new life context» (Giovannetti, Olivieri, 2012: 21). Therefore, it is necessary to promote sensibilization activities first, in order to operate on the non-integration problems of locals. It would be better to prepare the community to welcome the immigrants, and only in a second moment organize their integration.

According to this perspective, it is necessary to educate locals to interact in a positive way with immigrants, in order to avoid social exclusion behaviors. Excluding people influences social relations; for this reason, teaching the best way to welcome refugees means understanding human relation supremacy over power hierarchy. Recognizing our shared fragility theoretically makes it easier to build equal relations. The community must free itself from the 'us' and 'them' concept in order to welcome immigrants. If I consider another person as a stranger, an enemy or someone different from me, therefore I fear him/her and I start believing he/she is unworthy of being by my side. On this aspect, Cavalli-Sforza talks about «noism» (Cavalli-Sforza, Padoan, 2013), the individual necessity of taking care not only of him/herself, but also of the social group he/she belongs to, whose defence implicates the exclusion and elimination of those who do not belong to the same group. As a consequence, noism produces lack of empathy towards other people, who are considered as the enemies who threaten the balance of the entire group. For this reason, they become expendable subjects, because they belong to the bottom rung of the social stratification. In this way, the immigrant becomes what Girard calls 'scapegoat', blamed for actions performed by the leading group, which legitimates violence and usurpations.

### *1.1. The radical delegitimization process.*

According to Bar-Tal, the radical delegitimization process «excludes permanently the delegitimized group from the circle of groups who consider themselves civil. This exclusion is marked with intense negative emotions and it is regulated by specific social rules. [...] Therefore, this process positively differentiates the delegitimizing group, strengthening its internal bonds. Moreover, it hardens the inter-group barriers and promotes negative actions against the delegitimized group» (Volpato, 2011: 41). Bar-Tal identified different types of radical delegitimization often used against migrants. They are:

- social expulsion: migrants are killers and criminals because they violate moral and social rules;
- characterization: migrants are defined according to their negative physical or behavioral features;
- group comparison: locals describe in a negative way the immigrants belonging to the outgroup;
- dehumanization: the immigrant is not recognized as an individual or as a person belonging to a group.

### *1.2. Dehumanization: what is it and what are its functions?*

In the dehumanization process, the migrant is very often seen as part of the animal world. In the 17th and 18th centuries, Afro-Americans were already considered animals who could not talk nor reason. As they were considered animals, they could be sold on the market, thus legitimizing slave trading. It is no coincidence that racism towards these people was not the main cause of this type of trade, but rather a result of it. Moreover, the immigrant is considered and treated as a tool for other people's purposes: he/she is interchangeable and has no autonomy nor subjectivity. The animalization and objectivation of the stranger are strengthened with dehumanizing ideas from the past, which unconsciously influence our daily actions, especially when it comes to link black people with monkeys. This connection was widely popular from the 19th century on: although it was banned from media, the American press still uses it in some ways, evoking the image in their readers' minds.

Volpato presents the functions carried out by dehumanization:

- justification of violence between groups as a premise to expel individuals or groups to the edge of the society, repressing our feelings towards suffering people;
- legitimization of the status quo, «dehumanizing poor, unlucky and defeated people is comforting for those who are not or do not consider themselves poor, unlucky or defeated. It helps thinking those people deserve the little or nothing they have, that we do not need to move closer to make room for them, nor we need to share with them our resources, perceived as lacking». A symbolic example is our behaviour towards immigrants and refugees: we do not help them because we feel above them. In this way, our actions encourage social inequality;
- facilitation of a difficult decision which will make other people suffer, paying less attention to others' perspective and emotions as a defensive action.

## **2. Reception and integration premises.**

In his essay *The Stranger*, Schutz (2013) believes that an individual endorses the standardized cultural model of the group he/she belongs to and acts accordingly, ignoring the models followed by other groups coming from different contexts. However, when a stranger leaves his/her homeland and arrives in another country, he/she undergoes a crisis and is forced to question the system of knowledge he/she had, because it is different from the reality of the hosting society. When the stranger starts to interpret the culture of the new country through his/her own standards, he/she becomes aware of his/her inadequacy and starts to lessen it and to lose faith in it. Therefore, a stranger approaching a new cultural model has to define the situation and modify his/her original standardized cultural scheme to conform it to the new one, in order to obtain new tools to direct his/her actions.

Solivetti (Antonilli, 2012) identified the integration factors (social and economic conditions of the hosting country, culture and behaviour of the individuals, immigrants' competences, culture and lifestyle) and the immigrants' adjustment models towards the hosting society:

- integration with assimilation, when the stranger becomes part of the hosting society because his/her system of values is not that rooted;
- cultural adjustment in a multicultural context, when the stranger assimilates the secondary values (of the groups he/she came into contact) of the hosting community, but still keeps his/her primary values (internalized during the first years of life in his/her family and original society);
- integration without assimilation, when immigrants stay deeply linked with their culture and values and they only have a working interest in the hosting country;
- assimilation without integration, when immigrants diverge from their culture and partly accept the secondary values of the hosting country;
- no assimilation nor integration, when strangers leave their homeland because of different ideologies or political reasons, but they still keep their values, different from those of the hosting country, because they want to return to their homeland.

### 2.1. *The attribution of a stigma on immigrants.*

People guided by stereotypes and prejudices do not accept reception and integration premises, therefore they consciously or unconsciously react aggressively towards migrants. Irregular migrants are the target of stigmatizing behaviours: for this reason, it is necessary to avoid depriving an individual from his/her personal features, due to the fear and insecurity locals feel in their presence. On the basis of the claim of moral superiority, the members of the hosting community legitimize and justify the attribution of a stigma on immigrants, discrediting their personal identities with negative features as something ontological, so much that very often the same immigrants identify in this assigned role. «The individual is downgraded: from a complete person, he/she becomes a marked subject. [...] The stigma identifies a lack, a deficit, making the marked person feel a condition of diversity – or better called, inferiority. [...] It should be noted that the community considers the person marked with the stigma as 'less human'. Therefore, that deficit reflects on any other area of his/her existence. This mechanism creates processes of discrimination, removal and exclusion to the detriment of the marked individual, who is considered not entirely worthy of belonging to the same social community» (Vezzadini. 2012: 62-63),

Dal Lago, in his analysis on those mechanisms producing a common sense which labels the immigrant as a public enemy, identifies the immigration rhetoric (Dal Lago, 2004) that scientists and experts internalize and spread, acting as influential people:

- we Westerns are the real discriminated people, because we are surrounded by people not speaking our language who want to steal jobs from our children;
- we can accept them, but only if they stay below us. Therefore, immigrants must have duties, but not rights, because they are guests to whom we guarantee benefits;
- all men are equal, but some are less equal. This idea is justified with culture and society incompatibility;
- immigration is an overwhelming wave which will make us sink. This concept becomes an alarmist truth with no scientific basis;
- immigration is an ethnic problem. Actually, ethnicity is a social construction, and we forget that migrants move for many reasons. The fact that they belong to a culture and territory varies with their movements, enriching them.

## *2.2. How stereotypes take shape.*

The members of the community take for granted what they think is an objective fact: actually, it is just an erroneous belief and a prejudice, turned into a stereotype. Stereotypes help us define and guide our actions towards another person. They also help us to understand what behaviour/role to adopt when we talk to strangers, because our mind needs to categorize and simplify the reality surrounding us. This process becomes a cognitive mistake when we give individuals or stranger groups a sudden negative judgement, based on their physical or moral features, which are against what we take for granted.

Therefore, the prerogative of integration is knowing the other person, because we fear what we do not know, and we do not have the chance to discover that others live and commit crimes as we do. Integration does not mean we need to replace us with them; for example, if their stay in Italy is just temporary, it is necessary to diversify our integration policies.

Migrants who arrive in Italy endure a dependence and subordination process, mainly because of their different language, which forces them to ask for continuous assistance and makes them lose their decision-making power. This is the reason why a project of «integrated reception» (Giovannetti and Olivieri, 2012) was presented, which turns the social operator's help in a simple support for the integration and adjustment to the society.

## **Conclusions**

Therefore, integration becomes the actual implementation of human rights. Integration also helps redefining the standards of the single citizen and building a cross-cultural society, and not just a multicultural one, teaching the Durkheimian – or organic – solidarity which can value the personality of each member, who mutually needs other people's activities. «When we talk about multiculturalism, [...] we have already accepted the false idea that migrants are fragments or advance guards of different cultures. We believe they are different, and we create a rift between us and them. The paradoxical result is that very often migrants, destined in their cultural, ethnic or religious boxes, start to recognize themselves in these false ideas. [...] Very often, we talk about multiculturalism to reaffirm the unlikelihood of migrant integration, that is their civil and social equalization with locals» (Dal Lago, 2004). «The right to cultural diversity, as well as the recognition of our own cultural identity, must combine with the recognition of the right to citizenship, that represents a guarantee for safety, legal equality and social justice. Therefore, a town working towards multicultural

coexistence and cultural cohabitation must turn its public and private services into intercultural support for every citizen» (Elia, 2017). The government manages all of our diversities, for example by building ramps for people with disabilities, and in the same way it has to adjust the society to its need of expressing its own cultural diversity, by spreading the concept that it does not damage the identity of a country.

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## Social Isolation and Bullying among Italian Student with Immigrant Background: Improving Protective Factors Through Art-Based Methodology

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### Introduction

Considering the increasing number of immigrant students attending the school system, the Italian context is a particularly appropriate example to study the phenomenon of bullying focused on nationality background. Students with an immigrant background are defined as those students who are either foreign-born or have at least one foreign-born parent (OECD, 2018). Although a considerable amount of literature has been published on bullying and victimisation in cultural contexts involving both native and immigrant students, the controversy about scientific evidence is persisting (Fandrem et al., 2009; Strohmeier, Spiel, 2003). On the other hand, studies regarding victimisation of immigrants consistently show a higher risk due to differences in language, culture, ethnicity and appearance (Strohmeier et al., 2011; Peguero, 2008). Peer victimisation is currently associated with significantly higher levels of psychological problems, including depression, loneliness and anxiety. Moreover, higher levels of peer victimisation contribute to lower academic performance, global self-esteem as well as social self-concept. Social isolation during childhood can have several negative effects (Matthews et al., 2015), such as the increase in problematic externalizing behaviours, manifestations of anxiety and depression. In addition, bullying appears to be a disruptive factor of school climate because although it is accurate that bullies are very popular in the class-group by virtue of the visibility linked to aggressive conduct (Garandau, Cillesen, 2006), it is also factual that such popularity is not necessarily accompanied by a high level of peer acceptance (Salmivalli et al., 1996),

Regarding the Italian context, research on bullying has focused mainly on lower and upper secondary school students (Vieno et al., 2015), but the scientific debate regarding the best strategies for effectively tackling these issues still continues. The focus of this paper is to present the key elements of a formative intervention based on art-laboratory to reduce bullying of students with an immigrant background. This objective is especially significant given that stressful life events, like bullying, can lead to depression, anxiety and symptoms of other psychological problems, such as sleep disorders (Swearer, Hymel, 2015). Ultimately, victims of severe bullying think more often about committing a suicide (Ybarra et al., 2006). In order to select the relevant factors, we briefly introduce the results of a national survey conducted in the context of a wider research programme on bullying for modelling more adequate educational interventions (Marini et al., 2019),

## 1. Relevant factors for designing the intervention model

As anticipated, data of a survey administered to 2,063 students of lower secondary schools in 20 regions of Italy were used to investigate the principal factors linked to bullying of students with an immigrant background. The questionnaire was administered to the students after reading Olweus's definition of bullying (Olweus, 1991: 125) as «intentional, repeated, negative (unpleasant or hurtful) behaviour by one or more persons directed against a person who has difficulty defending himself or herself».

In fact, some studies have shown that victimisation linked to ethnic background is mainly expressed through social exclusion and isolation, where first-generation immigrants of non-European background are significantly more likely to be isolated than majority youth (Plenty, Jonsson, 2017). It is plausible to argue that the difficulties related to the knowledge and acquisition of the language of the host culture are the obstacles to the learning processes and to the performance of curricular activities, and may define a condition of fragility, thus becoming an easy target of the prevarication of bullies.

The preliminary analysis of correlations showed that the variable 'bullying suffered' is negatively correlated only with social networks ( $r = -.17$ ,  $p < .01$ ). No significant correlation was found between the variable 'bullying suffered' and school performance ( $r = .03$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and between the bullying suffered and the quality of integration perceived in the class group ( $r = -.06$ ,  $p > .05$ ). However, there is a significant positive correlation between the social networks of foreign students and the perceived quality of integration with their Italian classmates ( $r = .21$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The results of regression analysis showed that the score in bullying suffered by immigrant students is predicted only by their social networks ( $\beta = -.16$ ,  $p = < .01$ ) and is characterised by a negative correlation which suggests that victimisation of immigrants increases when they fail to establish stable social relations, presumably with their Italian peers. In most countries and economies, students with an immigrant background were less likely than students without an immigrant background to report that they interact with friends before or after school (OECD, 2018),

In the light of the evidences pointing to isolation and unpopularity of victims as predictive factors, we designed an innovative model of laboratories of autobiographical artistic expression, implementing art-based methodology to overcome social isolation.

## 2. Innovative characteristics of an Art-based formative model

The modelling and design of laboratories of autobiographical artistic expression started from the same concepts used in previous researches in different context, in particular an experimental project for the identification of personal potentials, through the exploration of self-concept. In this project the re-evaluation of self-concept, triggered by the identification of one's potentials and reinforced by the following formation of personal talents, offered to a sample of deviant women a strong perspective of psychosocial re-adaptation to the outside world. This objective was obtained through the activation of laboratories of autobiographical artistic expression (theatre, poetry, dance, paint, ceramic, sculpture). This model integrated art and autobiography, the latter defined as autobiographical experience that brings out individual past events (negative and positive), strengthening resilience as consequence of each constructive path of critical review.

Therefore, the choice of an art-based methodology is motivated by its specific capability attributes and benefits, but principally because it ensures the development of resilience. In fact, resilience expresses individuals' ability to cope with adverse circumstances, like the ones pointed out describing bullying (a physical, verbal, or psychological attack or intimidation determined by an actual or perceived power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim). The very concept of resilience is increasingly used to identify when, how and why people who have been exposed to negative experiences display less vulnerability (Luthar, 2003; Rutter, 2006). Current literature on this topic provides evidence on how people's responses to adversity differ. First of all, the concepts of art and resilience are common to well-being because they both promote positive personal growth. Any artistic process promotes personal empowerment (Chambon, 2009), in the acquisition of skills, thus facilitating resolving interpersonal conflicts as well as improving self-esteem and self-confidence.

Secondly, there is a double connection between art and resilience. On the one hand there is a link to the personal dimension, i.e. intrapersonal communication can be made through art by understanding our inner being. Moreover, there is the inter-subjectivity connection in art, which relates to the social dimension of resilience. In addition, art-based formative intervention can grant further benefits, such as the growth of one's individual autonomy, self-awareness and individual reflection. Furthermore, the introspection process, a distinctive element of art, can encourage the acceptance of indigenous values, consequently fostering the development of social support through sharing experiences with other people and group cohesion.

Lastly, children with an immigrant background with language difficulties are found to be more likely to be bullied, discriminated against and are more likely to suffer emotional problems, such as depression and low self-esteem (Padilla and Perez, 2003; Romero and Roberts, 2003). Language fluency enables children with an immigrant background to participate actively in the social life of their school, and to develop a sense of belonging at their school community (Zhou, Xiong, 2005; Dawson and Williams, 2008). Although little is known about the role that language fluency plays in shaping the socio-emotional and motivational resilience of immigrant students, language facilitates the socialisation of children with an immigrant background in their new environment and supports their acculturation in the destination country. The implementation of laboratories based on artistic activities surpasses the linguistic difficulties and enhance group work as well as peer collaboration.

## **Conclusions**

The results of this research support the idea that the art-based methodology can constitute a protective factor against social isolation and a model of intervention based on laboratories of autobiographical artistic expression, that can mitigate or even eliminate risk of bullying among students with immigrant background. The relevance of this kind of formative intervention is clearly supported by the current findings and can determine a positive effect for three main reasons. Firstly, art being a universal language allows students to overcome linguistic difficulties and previous literature indicates that fluency in the host-country language is one of the most important determinants of social integration of immigrant students (OECD, 2018). Secondly, autobiography is not an individual experience, but a group one, and that is a key factor considering that human beings in general, and teenagers in particular, desire strong social ties and quality relationships. Students who consider themselves as the part of school

community and are accepted by their peer report that their life has more meaning. They are more likely to be healthy, to perform higher academically and to be more motivated at school. They can be protected from bullying, loneliness, physical and mental health problems. In particular, for immigrant children, interactions with peer group (social support) proved to reduce the risk of victimisation as they offer a valuable opportunity to learn or improve the language, to learn about the traditions and values of the host culture and to enrich social relationships which, especially during adolescence, are fundamental elements for the development of a stable sense of identity and, in general, for psychological health (Palmonari, 2001).

Lastly, this kind of formative intervention constitutes a transformative experience, that outstretches the sense of belonging and social integration. Students with two foreign-born parents or students with one foreign-born and one native-born parent, might struggle with feelings of belonging and a sense of identity. They need to develop a personal identity that simultaneously integrates and transcends the experiences of both parents. Students' well-being is not just about feeling happy and obtaining good grades in school, but also about being engaged with life and with other people.

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## 'I'm Italian and I'm other'. Citizenship in the Making among Second Generation High School Students in Rome

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**Keywords:** *Second generations, Integration, Identities, Peer relationships. Education*

### Introduction

The current debate on citizenship acknowledges the importance to adopt a micro-sociological perspective for understanding the transformation of citizenship in a context of international migration and mobility. Without dismissing the crucial role of legal citizenship as a set of rights and privileges, obligations and allegiance, this perspective focuses on «lived citizenship», i.e. the ways in which social actors live, act and practice citizenship in their everyday lives (Lister, 2007).

As subjects that particularly experience the mismatch between different dimensions of citizenship, second generation youth represent a fruitful empirical ground for studying citizenship in its making, enabling us to observe change in a society rapidly becoming more diverse and multicultural (Ambrosini, Molina, 2004; Besozzi et al., 2009; Dalla Zuanna et al., 2009). Many contributions rely on Rumbaut's typology (1997) of children of migrants, built according to the place of birth and/or the length of staying in the host country. In this paper, the terms 'second generation students' and 'young people/students with a migration background' are used interchangeably, with an extensive connotation comprising students born in Italy or abroad from at least one parent of foreign origin.

The crucial role of school education in promoting inclusion and social citizenship of younger generations is well acknowledged in social research. In the Italian context, the universal school system offers second generation children and their families the first and most significant connection with the local community, becoming a physical and symbolic place for experimenting new practices of integration and intercultural dialogue, even in the absence of adequate normative instruments (Colombo, Santagati, 2014). Nonetheless, schools can also render intercultural conflicts more evident as inequalities linked to a migration background may create «unequal diversities» (Portes, Zhou, 1993) and «subaltern integration» (Ambrosini, 2001),

Triggered by the fast-growing number of students with a migration background in Italian schools, sociological research on second generation students in Italy has steadily developed in the last twenty years, mainly devoting attention to explain the large gap between Italian and non-Italian students in terms of educational outcomes (Azzolini, Barone, 2012; Istat, 2016; Giannetti, Dasi Mariani, 2015; Ravecca, 2009) and occupational attainment (Giancola, Salmieri, 2018). According to the latest data collected by the Ministry of Education in 2017-18, 9,7% of the overall students were non-Italians, two thirds of whom born in the country (MIUR, 2019)

More recently, a new stream of research focusing on the relational dimension of second-generation experiences in and outside school (Besozzi *et al.*, 2009;

Besozzi and Colombo, 2012; Cannavò et al., 2018; Casacchia et al., 2008; Cvajner, 2015; Colombo, Santagati, 2014), reveals a complex picture in which positive practices of relation and integration coexist with relational disadvantages, interethnic conflicts and discrimination (Azzolini et al., 2019). Our paper engages in this debate by exploring social relations and practices of identification and belonging of students with a migration background in Rome's high schools.

## 1. Method of study and participants

Data for this study come from 5 focus groups organised in secondary schools in Rome (4 general schools/*licei* and 1 technical school). Participants were selected through a non-probabilistic sampling method, combining considerations about field accessibility (convenience sampling) with the purpose (purposive sampling) of exploring practices of relations and belonging among students enrolled in more academic-oriented education tracks.

A total of 44 students, between 15 and 21 years old, have been involved in the study (25 female and 19 male). Most of them are born in Italy (27) but their national background is very heterogeneous: their parents come from 20 different countries and 9 of them are children of mixed couples. Most of their parents have a regular job and a secondary education level. Our respondents are thus not statistically representative of the second-generation population in Italy, but as 'vanguards' of a low-middle class of immigrant origin attending a high-quality school track, they may offer useful insights about trends of integration and positive engagement in society (Bosisio et al., 2005; Frisina, 2007),

## 2. Main research findings

### 2.1. *Relationships in and outside schools*

A first field of inquiry of our research has been the relationship between school friends and teachers, with a specific focus on obstacles met in the process of integration in the Italian school system. Confirming previous findings (Elia, 2014; Azzolini et al., 2019), the knowledge of the Italian language is the main critical issue for our respondents. Those who are born abroad or arrived in Italy after the first cycle of education, consider initial poor language competences as an obstacle for both learning and establishing and maintaining social relations with their class peers.

Interestingly, no issues other than language were reported as obstacles for positive relations at school. As observed by other scholars, it is likely that the strong value attributed by our respondents to school as an instrument for to the acquisition of knowledge (hence for upward mobility), leads them to dismiss the relevance of relational problems within the class group (Mantovani 2008; Besozzi et al., 2009)

The role of teachers in overcoming the initial language gap is widely acknowledged among our interviewees, who always offer a positive portrait of their teachers' relational and professional competences. Some also refer to the role of peers of their same country of origin, born in Italy or living in the country since a long time, as important mediators in the learning and socialization processes at school.

Outside the school context, students' relations with peers and adults are multifaceted. On the one hand, it is in the extended context of Italian society that youth of foreign origin sometimes experience prejudice and discrimination. This is particularly true for those whose otherness is more visible, as revealed by the



experiences of students of colour or girls wearing a veil. On the other hand, cases of discrimination remain confined to the 'outer world' and they do not seem to play a decisive role in the construction of positive friendship connections.

While past research, mainly based in the US, has demonstrated the presence of homophily with respect to ethnic traits in school settings, many Italian studies highlight how the number and intensity of relationships with Italian peers increase with the length of staying because of a gradual hybridization of their culture of origin with Italian values and life style (Mantovani, 2015; Perino, 2013). Our study confirms such findings and displays networks of relationships which do not follow a pattern of ethnic homophily, i.e. the tendency of agents to be linked to people of their same nationality or ethnic group. On the contrary, most respondents are part of networks of all-Italian or, to a lesser extent, multinational peers. Students with a migration background thus show a tendency to engage in open and permeable networks (Cannavò et al., 2018) where ties are built on the basis of attributes other than ethnicity, e.g. gender, age, preferences and life style.

Second generation youth also maintain intra-group ties within the national/ethnic community, not least because they keep some knowledge of their parents' native language and do some travelling back and forth to their parents' country of origin. However, in the observed context, the main ethnically homophilial relationships they engage in are with relatives or family friends, whom they occasionally meet for specific events, like birthday parties, weddings or religious ceremonies. In-group and out-group differences and boundaries thus seem to be modelled more on social settings, friendships and youth culture than on origin (Perini, 2013),

### 2.3. Identification and belonging

A further aim of our research is the understanding of how students with a migration background identify themselves and others and their changing modes of belonging and exclusion. As shown by other research (Besozzi e Colombo, 2012; Colombo, 2004; Perino, 2013; Mantovani, 2015), non-ethnically homophilial social ties usually correspond to multiple forms of identification and belonging.

In this regard, we have to signal that our interview protocol did not include direct questions on national identity or belonging (i.e. feeling Italian/country of origin national) in order to avoid the risk of skewing the interviewees' answers within a system of classification constructed ex-ante by the researchers (Eve, 2013). Nevertheless, categories based on nationality or ethnicity sometimes spontaneously emerge in group conversations. It mostly happens when some participants want to affirm their inclusion within the Italian in-group (i.e. *I'm Italian, I'm almost one hundred %Italian*). Statements of this sort, often prompted responses in a similar fashion (i.e. *I'm half and half; I'm Italian-nationality; I'm first Italian and then...*) revealing that the majority defined themselves as being both Italian and other or, using Portes' label (1999: 470), «hyphenated Italians».

More frequently though, ethnic/national categorization arise in students' discourses not so much because it figures saliently in second generation students sense of self, but rather because they reject its relevance for their everyday practices and experience. Other axes of difference like the way of life, gender, education, and socio-economic status appear to be more relevant to define in-groups and outgroups. One example is offered by the words of a teenager stressing the distance between herself and the national group she is supposed to be part of:

They have a way of life which makes me uncomfortable [...] When I go to their parties - as we don't see each other often – they have a sort of music that I don't like to dance. I'm not at ease with them, they are noisy (caciaroni), they drink a lot, I also do a bit, but I don't like it the way they do. [...] Also... they live in the suburbs. They have different habits not because they are Peruvians, simply because they are like that. They are boors [coatti]. I feel that I don't really fit in (Focus 4, Participant 4),

Therefore, our interviewees actively negotiate their identities within a social space that may include a sense of belonging to both parents' country of origin and country of settlement, but boundaries of the ingroup to which they identify are variable, multiple and do not run along ethnic or national fault lines.

In forming identities, young people also take into account the way they are perceived by others. The children of migrants are highly aware of being classified according to their parents' country of origin, or simply for them being different, for being immigrants. As pointed out by Ambrosini (2017:11) though, such a collective category, which is broadly used in pejorative terms in Italy, only includes those coming from poor countries. Some of our interviewees who happened to meet visiting students from the US spontaneously voice their anger over this bias:

- It happened to me to meet a child coming – according to her - from New York. And everybody went to her saying: Wow! Cool! You come from New York! You are American! I never saw the same reaction with one coming from... Bolivia!

- Those coming from countries in need are treated badly. Those coming from countries richer than this one, they are always the best! (Focus 4, Participants 1 and 4)

Moreover, some students also denounce a racial classification system that categorizes them as black, in a collective macro-category which includes Indians, Bengalis, Libyans, Peruvians and all those visibly non-white without any further distinction.

## **Concluding remarks**

Our study reveals a complex picture of second-generation students quite well integrated in the educational system, who developed strong and extended ties with their Italian peers in and outside school. In accordance with previous studies, this does not suggest the decline of boundaries among social groups based on ethnicity or nationalities, neither does it indicate a linear and smooth process of inclusion of a new generation of people with migrant background.

Rather, our findings shift attention to new boundaries for defining ingroups and outgroups in a society where the heterogeneity of (and within) ethnic minorities is becoming more and more visible. The proliferation of identities and the contestation of their meanings demand a research perspective which sheds more light on the ways in which second generation youth actively negotiate experiences of inclusion and exclusion and the dynamic interplay between ethnicity, generation, education, and socio-economic status.

Furthermore, in opposition and contestation to the external labelling in the wider Italian society, students with a migration background offered the researchers images of themselves that were rather unanchored from their origin and firmly embedded in the texture of everyday relational experiences with their Italian peers and friends.

In the encounter with Italian society children of immigrants can, within certain limits, shape the classificatory system at use, questioning and contesting the

categories we position them in. They are not helpless vis-à-vis external labelling and their ambivalent identities, not necessarily choose between two cultures but actively hybridise them, renders them agents of change for themselves and for society as a whole.

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## Refugee Integration in the Swiss and Italian Labour Markets: Challenges, Governance and Future Perspectives

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### Introduction

Italy and Switzerland are ‘neighbours’, yet extremely different under many viewpoints. In this article, we will describe the two contexts as it pertains to refugee integration in the labour market. It is important to say that a one-to-one comparison between refugee integration policies in the two countries is hard, if not impossible, due to the uneven starting points, the enormous differences in the structure of vocational education and training (VET) and further professional education, the characteristics of their labour markets. However, from the analysis of the different challenges and responses, this article aims to increase existing knowledge of the factors impacting successful work integration of refugees.

Research findings suggest that effective integration policies benefit not only immigrants, but also the receiving society. Countries with inclusive integration policies tend to be better places for everyone to live in (European Commission, 2016). However, the capacity to manage effective integration policies depends very much on the possibility to govern migration flows and to avoid massive increases over a short time span concentrated in a few territorial areas (European Parliament, 2017).

Despite the fact that refugees generally have higher chances of becoming citizens of the host country compared to other migrants, they remain one of the most vulnerable groups in the labour market, being more likely than native-born to have low pay and irregular jobs (European Parliament, 2016, 2017; European Commission, 2016; Desiderio, 2016). The crisis and the terroristic attacks have increased prejudices and reinforced discriminations. The lack of coordination between integration agencies and employment services, the negative attitudes of some employers, and the legal/administrative obstacles to legal employment often push refugees and asylum seekers into the shadow economy, where they can be at risk of exploitation and abuse (European Parliament, 2017).

Integration policies remain primarily a national competence. There is a lack of comparative information on policies and practices across European states and it is difficult to assess the specific labour market conditions of asylum seekers and refugees, because most of the available data does not distinguish refugees from other immigrants. Studies consider migrants in general, without focusing on the entry channel and, hence, ignoring an important layer of integration complexity. Instead, there is strong empirical evidence that the entrance channel impacts the integration path (European Parliament, 2016). According to EUROSTAT data, the labour market integration of refugees is in general much slower compared to the other migrants and, in the short-run, refugees are likely to present worse employment conditions than economic immigrants (European Parliament, 2017; Desiderio, 2016). While the latter tend to choose their destination to maximize employment opportunities, refugees tend to secure

personal safety, and thus they may arrive in countries and regions with few employment opportunities.

## 1. Italy and Switzerland: so close, and yet so far

Table 1 draws a synthetic comparison between Italy and Switzerland, highlighting the main differences as it pertains to the arrival of refugees.

**TABLE. 1. Key information (2018)**

	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>
Number of refugees	189,243	104,037
Asylum seekers	105,624	14,797
TOTAL incl. IDPs and stateless persons	295,599	118,883
Percentage of population	0.5	1.4
Main countries of origin	Nigeria, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Gambia, Ivory Coast.	Eritrea, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Sri Lanka.
Migration history	Emigration country in the 20 <sup>th</sup> century, recently become a 'second choice' or 'transit' immigration country. Main entry point in the Mediterranean, peak of arrivals in 2016 – mid 2017. Transit country. Most policy and economic efforts for first reception.	Immigration country with long experience in managing inflows.
Role in the recent European 'refugee crisis'	From mid 2018, the new right-wing government has taken a clear stance against immigration.	Destination country. Policy and economic efforts targeted to integration programs.
Political situation	High unemployment rates; large size of the informal economy; still struggling to recover from the 2009 global crisis.	Restrictive asylum policies, rigorous application of the Dublin agreement, relative low acceptance of refugee status for asylum seekers.
Labor market	Generally inefficient and underdeveloped. Wide territorial differences in the quality, quantity and variety of services offered.	High absorption rate for those with working permit.
PES and VET system		Dual VET system is well developed, with a specific preparatory program for refugees. PES is transparent, permeable and widely used.

source: authors (Statistics are from UNHCR, year 2018)

### 1.1. Italy

While the absolute number of refugees and asylum seekers in Italy is the third in the EU, the incidence on the total population is aligned with the average. Italy received the peak of arrivals during 2016 and the first half of 2017 (European Parliament, 2017). However, as we gain more distance from the high number of migrants trying to come to the European Union since 2015, the number of people arriving has drastically decreased. Therefore, the Italian government could put more efforts towards integration policies that treat migration with a sense of normalcy, not as an emergency, and ensure the well-being of those who have already arrived. While Italy in the previous years has implemented measures to establish an effective system of laws, regulations and institutions to foster integration, some of which can be evaluated positively, in the more recent past it has drastically changed its route.

Having little pre-existing experience in the reception and integration of refugees, and difficult socioeconomic and employment conditions, the country has

struggled to manage the inflow. Being a transit country, its main policy investments focused on reception rather than integration measures, while the high short-term costs for the reception of asylum seekers might not be balanced by long-term returns from investment, as most of the asylum seekers tend to move to other destinations.

The political costs of the refugee crisis have also been high. The topic of refugees is highly prominent in media campaigns and in the political debate, with a rise of negative public attitudes towards the reception of asylum seekers, and migrants in general (European Parliament, 2017).

### 1.2. Switzerland

Switzerland has traditionally been an immigration country and has over 100 years of experience. About 30% of young adults have one or two parents from abroad. Therefore, the country has a lot of experience with integrating groups of foreign people into the society, including into the labour market. The percentage of asylum applications is at the moment 1.4 in relation to the population living in the country (8.5 million, 8.7 million estimated by the end of 2019) (BFS, 2019). The so called protection rate – the relation between the number of official acknowledgements as refugee or provisionally accepted persons and all categories of asylum applications – is high with 60.5% in the year 2018 (SEM, 2019).

Institutions and procedures are in place to support the integration process, especially in terms of labour market integration. In order to manage the influx of refugees various procedural steps need to be taken to which are different Visa statuses attached. The distribution and administration of these processes is mainly managed by the Swiss cantons, whereby agreements to support each other and finding a fair allocation for all are in place. A lot of different aspects need to be taken care of, such as how to cope with heterogeneity in the classroom and at work, the recognition of prior learning and prior education, special education and support for those in need or alphabetization (Schneider et al., 2014).

## 2. Integration of refugees into the labour market

### 2.1. Italy: from SPRAR to SIPROIMI

The activities concerning integration of refugees in the job market are mainly implemented at the local level. The so-called SPRAR system, established by law 189/2002 and recently re-named SIPROIMI by law 132/2018, implemented by municipalities with the support of NGOs, offers accommodation and food, health assistance, legal and psychological support, language courses, pre-integration support to labour market access, VET programs, and traineeships to beneficiaries of international protection. Measures have also been taken to facilitate the participation of refugees in tertiary education, through the activation of protocols with universities and the provision of scholarships and tax/tuition exemptions (Ministero dell'Interno, 2017).

The positive results of these programs can be explained by their being tailored both to the needs of the receiving municipalities and those of the refugees. In order to start a project, the local administration has to support it both from a political and from a 'practical' viewpoint. The project is then tailored to the needs of the participants and hires human resources who possess the necessary skills. Local institutions and NGOs participate directly offering their services. The centres are small and located within towns and villages, so that the beneficiaries live at close contact with the locals. This way, the integration project ends up



supporting the local economy, while fostering mutual knowledge and understanding (European Parliament, 2017; Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016)

According to the data of the Italian Ministry of Interior, in 2017 the SPRAR system operated in 103 Provinces/Metropolitan cities and 659 towns: as a matter of fact, the strength of the system lies in it being deeply rooted in the territory. In the same year, it employed 1,428 full time operators and 7,050 part time operators: cultural mediators, educators, administrative assistants, psychologists, legal counsellors and tutors; 3,300 agreements were signed with schools, vocational training institutions, cultural and sport associations, firms and volunteer organizations, creating a wide network of institutions and impacting positively on the hosting territories, a crucial element for the effectiveness of any integration project.

As far as work integration is concerned, in 2017 more than 40% of the people hosted could leave the centre thanks to the positive results of their socio-professional integration project. In the same year, 22,452 beneficiaries attended language courses and 8,042 earned a certificate recognized at the regional or national level; 7,589 people attended a vocational training course, 6,962 engaged in a traineeship that in 1,344 cases turned into a work opportunity. Overall, 4,124 people found a job (Ministero dell'Interno, 2017).

While the integration programs described above under the previous law used to be available also for asylum seekers, recently the Law 132/2018, known as *Decreto Salvini* from the name of the Minister of Interior who promoted it, decided to limit them only to recognized beneficiaries of international protection, reducing the budget and the potential of the whole system. Asylum seekers will have to stay in first reception or extraordinary reception centres, large 'containers' that cater only to primary needs and are often unable to guarantee any quality. Moreover, while previously the SPRAR projects were funded with 35€ pro die/per capita, now the government is offering from 26.50€ to 21.50€, a sum that is discouraging many providers from participating in the competitions.

Examining the Decree's contents, one can observe that it is based on a presumed emergency situation. Yet, in 2017 there was a significant drop in the number of arrivals in Italy in comparison with the previous two years, a trend that continued into 2018 when there was a reduction of more than 80% compared with 2017 and of over 90% compared with 2016. There seems to be no emergency to justify the drastic change of route. Rather, immigration is being used as a scapegoat for the purpose of creating political consensus. The decision to reserve access to the system managed by local authorities just for those who are already entitled to international protection may produce perverse effects on the integration process. Being eligible for reception in SIPROIMI only after formal status recognition means remaining in first-reception or extraordinary reception centres for a long time, creating the premises for situations of marginality and alienation (Corsi, 2019).

## *2.2. Switzerland: limited labour market integration with qualification requirements*

Since 2014 the integration support in Switzerland is taking place at cantonal level (KIP Phase I: 2014 - 2017). However, there are substituted programs and projects at national level financed by the federation as well. All of them aim at the development of quality assurance instruments and instruments to control effects, to test innovative projects and new solutions and to close gaps within the existing offers and programs. The Federal Office for Migration (BFM, 2014) supported 103 projects. In 2013 and 2014 the federation and cantons together invested about 112.5 million Swiss Francs (approximately 103.5 million €) in eight support areas, integration into the labour market being one of them. Also,

for the KIP phase II from 2018 - 2021 several pilot projects and programs have been defined which are of national importance (see website BFM / SEM).

On the basis of the federal law for vocational education and training that came into effect in 2004 in connection with the *Berufsbildungsverordnung* (BBV) five pathways have been identified to enable adults to acquire a recognized vocational education and training (VET) certificate. The target group comprises adults, refugees and provisionally accepted persons, who have not attended more than the primary school, but who would be granted access to transitional programs at cantonal level that target a consecutive access to VET.

An apprenticeship, that combines school-based and workplace learning can be started up to an age of 24 years. Often refugees lack language skills as well as education and cultural knowledge necessary for starting an apprenticeship. The *Intergrationsvorlehre* – a program that prepares young adults for an apprenticeship has therefore been implemented. Many companies have started to offer this program and if possible, transfer the participants into regular apprenticeships afterwards. Other measures for the integration include job shadowing and job rotation to enable refugees to gain insights into workplaces. Next to preparing for job tasks and the world of work, vocational training provides a socialization into a community of workers in which cultural skills and knowledge about Switzerland can be acquired. Here, refugees have contacts to locals and learn with them and from them. Especially behavioural aspects are highly important during this time. Employers often so not have much time to teach them, but expect refugees to comply, such as being punctual, work in well-kept cloth, being polite and honest, acting with a service orientation towards customers, take initiative and ask questions in decisive moments.

Refugees with asylum status and provisionally accepted refugees have free access to the labour market in their canton. Wage and work conditions apply as to any other worker. Therefore, each employment requires an approval. The number of vocations that are open for application varies between the cantons. Generally, the local workforce is protected in terms of having primary access to the labour market. Although, registration, acknowledgment and integration procedures are established and function well, the number of refugees being employed at the labour market has been judged by the OECD as to low and not satisfactory (Liebig et al., 2012). Reasons for the lack of integration are manifold. Besides structural obstacles, a lack of self-competence, stamina, learning abilities hinders ones forthcoming. Also, managing multiple burdens with caring for family members, language learning, managing a household, taking care of health issues and balancing all of this with work is a challenge.

Switzerland, therefore, developed various measures to help refugees to enter the labour market, since this is the primary goal when accepting people to stay temporarily. On average the quote of employment increases in the first three years after processing an asylum application to about 20 percent, but 10 years later only 25% of the provisionally accepted persons are in employment. This is different for those who are recognized refugees where the employment rate amounts to about 48% (KEK-CDC Consultants; B.S.S, 2014). These quotas are relatively low in comparison to other persons with a foreign status living in Switzerland (79 percent) and the number of Swiss persons at an age between 25 and 54 (88 percent).

### 3. Factors impacting refugee work integration

#### 3.1. Positive factors

The experiences of Italy and Switzerland suggest that it is crucial to make the integration of refugees an opportunity also for the hosting society and economy. This limits the risks of an 'us versus them' rhetoric and makes everybody feel part of a common development project (European Commission, 2016). When this mechanism works, refugee integration becomes a win-win game and integration policies have an educational value, demonstrating that a multicultural society is not only possible, but also desirable.

It is also crucial for integration projects to be located in villages, towns and cities, and not far away from them. In this way, both the immigrants and the locals have chances to know each other, language learning can be enhanced by practice and the integration in the job market can be facilitated through individualized programs and mentoring for both the employer and the employee. In countries like Italy, with a large informal economy, this strategy reduces the risks for refugees to be attracted and then 'trapped' into it. The network created by a well-managed integration project introduces the refugee gradually into the local society and economy, increasing the probability of successful long lasting integration.

In addition, if refugees have successfully acquired an apprenticeship diploma, they are eligible to work as qualified workers in their profession. This not only provides them with a steady income and makes individuals self-reliable, it also is the pathway to being a well-integrated member in the society. Often co-workers help with the various issues and challenges that refugees face when trying to understand the new culture and new behavioural expectations. For the society the benefit is that refugees can work in fields with a high need for employees and that refugees can bring their knowledge and skills to enhance work or stimulate new approaches to work. The cultural exchange between refugees and their colleagues contributes to the development of inter-cultural competence and helps when workers go abroad or cope with international individuals as customers or colleagues.

### *3.2. Obstacles and risks*

Integration into the labour market is not an easy and straightforward endeavour. The following challenges occur for VET institutions and individuals.

#### a) Risk of discrimination

The risk of discrimination in the social and occupational integration of persons with a migrant background should not be underestimated, especially among employers who have little or no experience with such employees and whose market and customer relationships are regionally oriented (Scherr et al., 2015). A perceived 'lack of training ability' among refugees promotes an *inter alia* 'culturalizing' perspective and might contribute to a social selection in decisions about admission to education and thus to discrimination of young people with a migrant background (Hormel, 2016). Although a large proportion of refugees need to be recruited, because there is a workforce demand, even those who are adequately qualified often find it difficult to find gainful employment. There is also a hierarchy of recruitment preferences, with companies and organizations initially actively recruiting workers through the free movement of persons within the EU/EFTA. This also reduces the opportunities for refugees to find employment.

#### b) Recognition procedures

Many of the refugees currently arriving in Europe have no documentation to prove their qualifications. In these cases, the examination of competencies often becomes very time-consuming. First, the procurement responsibility for documents that show previously acquired qualifications, lies with the refugees. If these are available, they must be translated and checked. Various recognition

procedures are currently being tested (KEK-CDC Consultants, 2011). If recognition on the basis of appropriate documents is not possible, existing competences must be recorded and assessed using complementary methods (such as interviews, questionnaires, tests, observations in work assignments).

c) New training design required

The heterogeneity of the refugees and their experiences require not only new perspectives and patterns of action, which can be an enrichment for the working world, but also an openness of all workers for joint learning. For education and training, especially in the workplace, this means a broader understanding of work and experiential knowledge as well as methods on how this can be made visible and usable for the work process. On-the-job learning must normally be supported during the introductory phase, e.g. mentoring programs, but this requires extra staff capacity.

## Conclusions

Overall, both countries invest in integration programs. While in Italy there is less of a coordinated effort among the institutions, probably also due to the fact that refugees still try to move to other countries, Switzerland has a comprehensive infrastructure in place for those who have been accepted into the country. Despite many challenges for both the administration in the receiving countries and the refugees themselves, a successful labour market integration is to their benefit. Experiences have shown that an early preparation for vocational education and training in connection with the recognition of prior learning serves an early socialization in the world of work. If this is achieved, much of the support needed among refugees throughout the integration is than provided by co-workers.

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## What Competences Are We Talking About?

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**Keywords:** *Competence, Permanent learning, Lifelong learning, Self-Training, Professionalization.*

### 1. Post-democratic era and adult education

It is well known that European policy in the area of adult education, especially since the Lisbon European Council meeting of 2000, is to invest in continuous education, whose conceptual, methodological, and procedural framework includes lifelong learning - or learning that continues over the entire life span. Since 2001, following a meeting of the European Commission in Brussels (European Commission, *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*, Brussels, 21/11/2001 COM (2001) 678), the notion of lifelong learning has been supplemented by that of lifewide learning, defined as the opportunities for learning and development offered by the multiple life contexts and varied range of experiences in which adults take part: situations which have not necessarily been intentionally set up and which are not necessarily institutional or professional in nature (De Carlo, 2014). Adult education in our post-modern and post-democratic era - is both synchronic and diachronic, involving both time and space factors: the time and the space in which the personal and professional lives of adults unfold. This is especially true for the women and men of our contemporary era (*ibidem*).

Clearly, if adults are to independently identify which of their multiple experiences have made the most significant contribution to their personal and professional growth by allowing them to acquire and/or enhance various kinds of skills, they need training designed to boost their self-reflective and meta-reflective abilities and hence their critical awareness of the trajectory experienced to date and that yet to be experienced/re-planned. In light of this background, I focus here on the concept of competence, which is so frequently used and, in my opinion, dangerously abused, in the Italian educational and professional development context.

Indeed, the term competence is subject to a series of distortions and manipulations designed to hasten adults' adaptation to the current economic-political and socio-cultural scenario, with significant implications for their personal and professional life paths. This gives rise to new forms of exclusion on top of the existing and more familiar forms.

### 2. Becoming competent in competence

Viewing learning as lifelong and life wide leads to the major emphasis now being placed, in adult education policies and strategies, on the concept of *competence* and all that it entails, including the question of how competences may be certified. As we know, the certification of competence is a key issue for a range of institutions and community services including universities: an issue that partly concerns the teaching/learning of knowledge (*ibidem*).

Given that space constraints prevent me from exploring in depth how the concepts of *lifelong learning* and *competence* may be subject to manipulation and distortion, I focus, albeit briefly, on how the second of these notions might

be thematized. In so doing, I follow De Carlo (2014), whose perspective I share, and aspects of whose work are salient to my topic here.

Competence does not consist of purely disciplinary or technical knowledge. It is not merely a question of cognitive skills to be acquired once and for all. It does not correspond to the definitive and decisive mastery of a specific ability.

Being competent as adults does not imply acquiring and storing knowledge and/or skills brick by brick - to use a learning metaphor (De Carlo, 2014): this would be ineffective and even risky, given that the continuous and sudden changes characterising the contemporary era require adults to be highly flexible in their behaviours at various levels and across multiple contexts.

Competence is something less reductive, something deeper and more all-encompassing, which all adults are constantly developing, throughout their lifetimes, via cognitive, emotional and relational investment in their multiple life contexts, including those which are not purely and intentionally educational or aimed at professional development (*ibidem.*),

Constructing a network of competence requires the adoption of an interconnective logic that progresses on the basis of links and connections that we may identify within the present, or between present and past (as interpreted from our current standpoint), or that we may hypothesize/predict in relation to our expected/planned future experience.

Building competence following a procedural and progressive approach, implies, we might say, knowing how to think 'top-down', bringing to bear a gaze that is broad, complex, ductile, critical and generative. Such a perspective translates into key questions that adults need to ask themselves in relation to their own personal/professional development and that involve their knowing-being, knowing-thinking/feeling and acting.

The adult is invited to ask him or herself:

'What knowledge do I possess?'; 'How/where/when did I construct it?'; 'From where and/or from whom have I drawn it?'; 'In what situations has it been useful, or useless?'; 'Might I use it again, now or in the future, and if so, in what way?'; 'Do I need to revisit or let go of this knowledge, at least in this situation?'; 'What do I know how to do?'; 'Is my approach to being, acting, relating to others effective?'; 'Could I change it?'; 'In what way?'; 'In what contexts, in relation to whom?'; 'Are my emotions, my lived experience, a resource that I can draw on, or on the contrary, are they an impediment to me in my personal/professional life?'; etc.

On examining these questions, we immediately realize that adults constantly renew their competence within a process dominated by their *life story* and *how* it has taken shape. Our ultimate question to ourselves might be: 'How did I / may I become the adult that I am / am not / could be / would like to be'? The answer will be as a function of experiences that we have lived or not lived, planned or encountered randomly, contexts we have experienced or not experienced, emotions we have experienced, denied, revisited, etc.

Competence is the ability to dynamically, consciously and responsibly mobilise and combine (Lokhoff et al., 2010, De Carlo, 2014, p.85) in-context features of the multiple dimensions of action (cognitive/meta-cognitive; attitudinal; emotional/motivational; narrative-communicative-relational; social; lifelong (experiential); lifewide (pervasive)), in order to perform a task or set of tasks in a given context [...]. Thus, «competence is not something that we possess, to be used when appropriate, but a way of thinking and acting that we develop by constantly committing to learning how best to organize the 'material' (knowledge, experience, skills, emotions) at our disposal, and/or that we acquire with a view to



understanding problem issues (at the practical-operational level and beyond)<sup>27</sup> and developing constructive hypotheses about how we might solve them, through our own efforts or in collaboration with others» (De Carlo, 2014: 85-86),

In the final analysis, we might say that from a procedural point of view, competence is what each of us, 'is, knows, thinks, and does', and that developing our competence makes us more coherent - as individual adults and professionals - with ourselves, others, and the organizational system we work in.

I understood coherency in this context as the possibility to rediscover the 'meaning' (*ibidem*) of what 'is, is known, is thought, is done'. This is no small gain, in an era such as our own that puts both the adult and the adult/practitioner severely to the test.

### 3. For an old and new model of (self)training: the socio-emotional dimension of competence

Adult education policies and epistemological models of adult education and development require comprehensive, complex and deeply critical reassessment: this will mean revisiting programmes and practices in both third level education (all degree courses, *ibid.*) and continuous professional development contexts.

It is therefore increasingly urgent to develop an educational dispositive that recognizes and legitimates reflexive and self-reflexive action at two levels: the level of current and/or past experience, and the more personal and profound level of our educational - or even life - story, which, when translated into a narrative of education and development that we have reflected upon and are open to reinterpreting, can generate fresh cognitive and socio-emotional learning, making a crucial contribution to our overall learning and to the construction of our personal and professional identity.

«Lifelong learning and lifelong wide<sup>28</sup> strongly impact on the phenomenology of life and existence, drawing on models from within the eidetic paradigm» (De Carlo, 2014: 102). Again: «University and in-service training, following the logic of lifelong learning and lifelong wide, must invest in the emotional, social and cognitive processes of students and practitioners who are already in the caring professions<sup>29</sup> with a view to refreshing and enhancing the intelligence of individuals who already belong to or are about to enter the workplace<sup>30</sup>» (*ibid*, 2014: 47),

At this point, it is a natural progression to introduce the concepts of self-education and soft skills, or transferable competences, which from my epistemological perspective may also be defined as social-emotional and meta-existential skills. The last-mentioned competences often remain 'silent', but this does not make them any less powerful, especially when we are involved in providing care, a type of work that engages all the layers of our personal repertoire, including subjective and autobiographical knowledge, strategies, attitudes, etc., that are often emotive and emotional in nature.

Finally, we cannot ignore the self-formation processes that are generated and should be encouraged within formal planned professional development programmes, provided that, following Biasin (2009: 70), we understand self-training as the opportunity to have an experience that «[...] combines the acquisition of knowledge, the construction of meaning, and the transformation of self, and that unfolds within social practices and life as a whole» (2009, p.70).

<sup>27</sup>As above.

<sup>28</sup>My addition.

<sup>29</sup>As above.

<sup>30</sup>My adaptation.

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## Soledad: Comùn

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**Keywords:** *Adolescence, Social bonds, Solitude, Time of Life, Adulthood.*

### 1. A new form of bond in contemporary modernity?

Argentinian philosopher, essayist, poet, George Alemán is a psychoanalyst of the Lacanian school who lives and works in Europe. One of his books, recently translated into Italian, from which this essay borrows its title, ponders the «[...] possibility of a social bond not dominated by a dictatorial discourse (totalitarianism), nor by a capitalist attitude (nihilism). As a man of the Left, the problem of a communist ideology afterlife arises» (Alemán, 2017: 10). This is how Massimo Recalcati introduces the short text that inspired my reflections.

The question seems distant from the domain of pedagogy that is now independent of the political commitment of those who educate, active in the philosophy of education, or who recognize themselves as rooted in Transcendence. In the contemporary modern age, we separate goals from the objectives in pedagogy, at least from the time of the success of Herbartianism. Political (because it is right), religious (because it is true), or aesthetic (because it is beautiful) dimensions – what Riccardo Massa (1987: 17-22) called the «ideological device» – are all inevitably linked to education, but they are not exhaustive. Propaganda, an uplifting sermon, or (something not so evident today) the essential manoeuvre of socialized training does not permeate the educator's actions. Educating means something else entirely.

It is not enough for the educationalist to acknowledge the one-to-one relationship that links a historical-cultural, economic and political system to (their own) educational devices. To provide something akin to the educator's new professionalism and the real possibility of an educational intent, specific fictional space must be recognized. This intermediate space for mediation, as Riccardo Massa called it, not only connects what a certain jargon refers to as structure and superstructure, it also organizes the educational experience where it is possible to linger. Indeed, education opens a field of experience that renders complex the simplicity of initiation rites (Van Gennep, 2012). What Arnold Van Gennep called a margin then has now acquired a factual breadth of such importance that we almost no longer perceive the moment of entry and above all that of departure from it.

In his 1909 work, the anthropologist classified three sub-rites in initiation: the first separates the novice from the peer group; the second often administers the state of marginal suspension thanks to a test; the third brings together those who pass the test for entering the group of initiates. In these two steps – as Plato also narrates in the myth of the cave (liberation from chains, experience of sunlight, return to the cave to free the others) – it is clear how the transition from a condition of non-learning to that of learning requires a threshold to be crossed, one that distinguishes the initial from the final condition. The transition is not automatic but – as we have already said – mediated, in other words, opened and closed by a special educational experience. However, the current fictional dimension of education is suspended and marginal, and less evident, so may be confused with the very flow of existence. Which occurs promptly

when the category of change is emphasized, for example by saying that living means changing.

In this way the realm of pedagogy risks having neither borders nor proper consistency. Beyond apparent success that requires everyone to be educated to develop skills and abilities, there is the real risk of seeing the margin that truly educates disappear. A situation that obliges educationalists to work to support a new cultural policy of pedagogical discourse worthy of our times. It obliges us to deal once again with the theme of adulthood (a subject we thought was behind us) and, above all, to ponder the model of social bond established by new adults.

## **2. Education: permanent, recursive and recurrent**

There is no doubt that adulthood no longer exists as the pinnacle, the perfection of growth, development and evolution longer exists. While adulthood is no longer a point of arrival followed by a decline, it is a question of opening up massively and continuously to metamorphosis, also driven by personal and social motivations, desires or needs, sometimes even quite simply. Lastly, if change is the code of today's pedagogy, it is urgent for us to understand our idea of change, and above all if this new adult, open and willing to change, is still able to manage the difference between generations. Traditionally, pedagogical thinking and its experts dealt with childhood: how to raise children by protecting them during their early years was the task of those who were not only tutor, instructor or teacher tasked with watching over the development of children. The pedagogical investment in children has been characterized by their age and fragility but also by encouragement. This spirit which preserves (infantilizes) on one hand and on the other grows (fosters development), seems to stall in much current pedagogy if it is true that adults (and not just children), grow, in other words change, adjust, evolve. Of course, John Dewey might say that an experience is educational if it opens the way to more experiences, but this affirmation acquires a different intention if made today. When utility is no longer the criterion of truth, either of the scientist or the child, it becomes what serves – in all senses of the term – the market. Then desires become dangerous mediators of consumption, starting precisely with young children. The point is not to treat adults as growing children. We must be cautious when applying an evolutionary perspective to the pedagogical discourse. Jacques Lacan, arguing precisely with Jean Piaget, clarified the difference between the logical and the chronological time required for development. Logically the structure precedes those who take their place in it (alienation), yet this synchronic precedence does not prevent individual originality (separation), namely the time of diachrony and difference. In the past, structuralism was accused of fixism, then gradually seemed to disappear. Conversely, if we assert a position of critical neo-structuralism in pedagogy, it is because we believe that education, before being a task (and without shirking from it in any way) is a fact, in other words something whose functioning should be studied. It is possible to educate in a professional way only if the workings of education are studied beforehand. In point of fact, it precedes and shapes those who wish to be (a) professional.

## **3. If and when does adolescence end?**

Duccio Demetrio unfettered Italian pedagogy from the limitation of dealing only with small children. In Italy, the education of adults was supported by the

commitment of those who, for many years, wrote for the *Adultità* review founded by Demetrio. This sector of pedagogy is currently still fast expanding due to the increasingly obvious fact that we are all the object of educational investment and interest in all stages of our lives.

I still believe, however, that an experience can be said to be educational only after it has ended. In his monumental 1962 work, Hans Georg Gadamer stated that a human becomes expert after they have had a negative experience (Gadamer, 1997). I believe that mourning is more educational than trauma. Certainly, negative experiences have deep impact, but for an experience to make sense it simply has to be complete, that is to say finished, leaving an infinity of positive or negative traces. Jacques Lacan recalls how it is possible to understand after the fact the meaning of a sentence, a joke in the Freudian sense. Similarly, the educator should be sensitive to realizing when adolescence comes to completion (Orsenigo, 1999). Does something like adulthood still exist after adolescence?

It is not only pedagogists who wonder if adolescence comes to an end: psychologists and sociologists have long pondered this problem. Today's scenario actually reveals that there are adults more adolescent than their children, young people who lack role models and are often more sensible than their own parents: mothers who are rivals to their daughters and fathers doing the same things as their sons. This situation seriously questions whether adolescence is really the transition from childhood to adulthood. Today's adolescence, on the other hand, never seems to end, vanishing into an equally perennial change: shifting, imperfect, never stable (Fabbrini, Melucci, 2007). The Eriksonian model of adult – attributing to this stage of life the stability of family affections and employment – has faded away entirely. At this time, these two set points of adulthood have begun to fluctuate: the traditional family and a permanent job no longer exist.

Despite educationalists being convinced and committed to developing those adolescents all too often seen from the perspective of a minority to be protected, safeguarded and supported, or a risk to be prevented, or looming marginalization to be monitored, a question remains open for reply: should this season of life end or should it never end? If we continue to lack the words to define adulthood, we will not be able to tell the difference between those who have achieved the status and those who are still seeking it. Surely being an adult means aiming to achieve responsible and shared maturity? What links adults to one other if not the fact that they differ from young people, adolescents and children?

#### 4. Emilius and Sophia. Solitary souls

The story of Jean Jacques Rousseau's Emilius is well known: he is the leading character of a fictional tale yet intellectuals, philosophers and writers made the rural story not only a successful literary genre at least until today (in 1999, Moretti defined it the novel of education), but also the myth of modern pedagogy. Indeed, there are those who have been in favour of negative education and those who have condemned the supposed deception of poor Emilius, destined to become the new man. However, from a pedagogical point of view it is not worth taking the side of criticism of current education to dream of the alternative, nor siding with anti-pedagogy equally bound to what it thinks it is negating. The point is to consider what really happens between the lines in that book that was meant to be a treatise on education.

Certainly, if we compare Emilius's fate with that of the main character in box-office success like *The Truman Show* (1998), it would appear that he is deceived, but considering the perspicacious arguments of Jacques Derrida (Derrida,

1969), nature, the countryside, the bubble that shields childhood from any intrusion, perversion and corruption is simply the power of modern education. And Rousseau seems to be completely aware of it.

The novel has a textbook ending, with the celebration of Emilius's maturity, in other words the end of the process, of that very different education. Emilius, husband and father, learns a trade not because he will make a living from it – he is a noble – but because it can render him human. He truly is the first new man. What will Emilius and Sophia do with their adulthood? The few lines that Rousseau wrote in the sequel to the better-known events, vaunt little but solitude. At least this is the title of the short, unfinished epistolary novel that followed the major work. Rousseau imagines there will be events that will temper the education received. Firstly, there are some bereavements for the young family. Emilius will decide to move to the city. Here, Sophia will betray him, bearing a son to another man. While Sophia raises her children alone, Emilius flees in despair. He works as a carpenter. He travels.

The ending of the second novel is unknown as we have only hearsay: perhaps the two will meet again to live together again, perhaps they will not. One thing is certain, they will finally be able to live alone. This is a finale worthy of Lacanian psychoanalysis, which makes the condition of separateness the essence of the adult: knowing how to deal with the fact that there is no metalanguage and with the impossibility of bridging the gap between a personally defective condition and its ideal projections. Only thanks to this awareness can an authentic life opportunity be generated. A separate but not separated life, in solitude.

This solitude has nothing to do with narcissism, autistic pleasure or cynical detachment. It is rather the condition shared by human beings, adults. In their separateness, women and men alone are not capable of being socially active in the way of identifying with a leader (Freud's lesson of psychology of the masses) or of becoming an elite (right or left wing). From this perspective Emilius, as protagonist of the second novel, seems to be contemporary: he has made a series of ruinous decisions and errors, suffering dramatic experiences. He is a father but does not live with his children, nor with their mother, who cares alone for her extended family. Emilius, passing from one event to another (Agamben, 2015), grows, changes and progresses: he lives his life.

## 5. Separated in society

George Alemán uses the expression *soledad: común* to mean «a space inhabited by a paradoxical logic» (Alemán, 2017: 21). The first term connotes the Lacanian subject as «emptiness without substance and without possibility of being represented in its totality from the signifiers that establish it» (Alemán, 2017: 22). The second term is what produces – transversally – the human condition. The subject we ourselves are is logically preceded by the Other, namely the Symbolic order that structures language. It is a question of thinking of a radically asymmetric and anti-empathic dimension in relation to the Other, not connected at all with humanistic rhetoric.

The solitude of which Alemán speaks is not the property of someone shut within their own solipsism. It is a transversal condition, of someone who appears in the field of the Other. This condition does not allude to any intersubjectivity but to the fact that it is typically impossible for the human condition to say everything and to self-determine. The common aspect is the solitude that has nothing in common with «common properties», «common foundations» (Alemán, 2017: 25). The solitude we would share is a structural dimension while other

manifestations are completely imaginary. Similarly, this structural solitude diverges from «pathetic» (Alemán, 2017: 25) solitudes like isolation and proud detachment. These pathetic solitudes are more likely to be celebrated by the devices of capitalist individualism. As already mentioned, (Nicoli, 2015), the outcome of today's education implies a key role played by the individual, with a personal curriculum collecting and growing knowledge, skills and abilities acquired in the general development of human resources. Michel Foucault called this bio-power. On the contrary, says Alemán, «our ontological absence of foundations, our barring, is profoundly different from liberal and relativistic irony» (Alemán, 2017: 32). While the former protects from Master-signifiers, the latter continues to produce them. While the former has to do with cause, the latter with ideal. The vertical difference between the Other and the subject is something else compared to the horizontal variability of the differences that can be tested.

The point is, how can we participate in something shared, collective, be one of a group, if we have managed to detach ourselves from all identification? More precisely: does the collective dimension still exist without reference to Master-signifiers? George Alemán's answer is that it will no longer be the solid to organize the collective: it will be the void. It is this void, this nothing to share and nothing to be in together, a condition of dispossession, which will restore to the adult the opportunity to bear witness for whomsoever comes after. In truth, if there is an adult, there can be no mass. Indeed, this common void is topologically both «central and external» (Alemán, 2017: 35), which is to say it will never be owned by anyone.

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## The Usefulness of Learning as a Category for Rethinking the Relationship between School and the World Of Work

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**Keywords:** *School, School-work transition, Adult learning*

### 1. The current relationship between school and the world of work

When addressing the issue of the development of skills in adulthood, one of the central themes is the question of professional identity (Erikcson, 1982) and the consequent promotion of functional skills which allow the individual to not only enter the world of work, but to also find within it a place of achievement and development. As Dominique Lhuilier reminds us, work performs several important functions for the adult, including that of «a symbolic operator that is indispensable to the separation with oneself, to the delimitation of the self» (Luhilier, 2005: 193). Hence the need to reflect on the development of skills which can allow adults or future adults to find their place in the labour market—a problem that is rather common in Europe, and particularly so in Italy.

As is well known, the onset of the crisis has severely eroded employment opportunities for young Europeans with a sharp decline in 2009 which continued, albeit at a slower pace, to diminish throughout the following years and only started to recover in 2014. This brought the average number of employed European graduates aged between 20 and 34 years old, three years after completing their studies, to 76% (Cascioli, 2016). This percentage drops to 45% in Italy. In other words, if on average three out of four young people in Europe find a job within three years of leaving school, in Italy the figure is reduced to less than one in two.

It is well known that difficulty in the school-work transition, which is typical within Italy, is the result of multiple concurrent factors: the educational system, its structure, and the presence of a school-work transition regime which, as with welfare, follows the «Mediterranean model» (Cascioli, 2016) and is therefore characterised by the State's tendential absence with regard to active policies to support workers and passive policies to bolster income.

The «lack of dynamism of our productive system» (Cascioli, 2016: 109) and the presence of a stagnant economy which presents a productive structure that is dominated by traditional sectors, in which the demand for highly-qualified workers is limited, should not be forgotten, as data concerning over-qualified students remind us. It is precisely the complexity of this image that leads us to dwell on one of the issue's central aspects, namely the intricate relationship between school and the world of work and, in particular, the difficulty that these two situations have in finding a space for real dialogue, as well as the difficulty of co-constructing paths for the creation of skills which are useful in supporting young adults in the difficult task of placing themselves within the social context. Hence the question: what are the obstacles that—from a cultural point of view—prevent a true comparison? Why then do schools and the world of work struggle so much to find space for dialogue?

## 2. The fear of the school's enslavement to the needs of the market.

The first question concerns the fear of endorsing a subjection of the school to the world of work. This fear is rooted in the belief that thinking of the school as a processor of useful skills for the future coincides with thinking of the school as an extension of the market.

Indeed, it often seems that even just asking oneself the question relating to the professional preparation of students and their subsequent placement in the world of work implies fully subjecting the school to the needs of the productive reality, and the compromise of its autonomy. The effect of this belief, however, is that the school, in order to avoid losing its cultural autonomy, fails to question itself about the issue of useful productive skills, consequently hindering the possibility of a real receptiveness to the outside world and the opportunity to change its current form.

In view of the positions of those who defend the current form of schools and the scholastic device precisely to avoid a complete return of education to the productive situation, it should be remembered, however, that – as Michel Foucault teaches us – the modern school inherits and is an expression of the typical structure of the disciplinary devices and that it re-proposes the strategies of control and subjugation. Those who therefore resist attempts to rethink the school experience, fearing a worn-out drift towards production, should be reminded that the same school form, as we are accustomed to thinking, was created to create 'docile and productive' bodies, those same functional bodies to be employed as labourers in factories and plants (Marchesi, 2002; Foucault, 1975). Zygmunt Bauman also offers us a reading of the school in this direction, placing it in relation to the work ethic that has been imposed since the process of industrialisation. The new industrial production system needed soulless creatures, people stripped of interests and ambitions, but left functional enough to fit into the working mechanisms imposed by large factories. Therefore, there is the need to produce subjects capable of responding to requests without asking questions, efficient and productive, and consequently the need for an institution, the school, capable of using its structure and formative process to support this complex yet fundamental social need (Bauman, 2004).

## 3. The opening of schools as a standardisation towards technicality

A second obstacle to the relationship between school and the world of work concerns the prejudice that thinking about school in relation to employment coincides with the opinions of those that wish to standardise school with hyper-specialisation and technical rigidity. It seems that opening up schools to the needs of the world of work implies proposing highly professional training courses at the expense of broader cultural reflection.

The presence of this belief in mentality and common sense is perhaps conditioned by the schools' approach of gentile memory that – although driven by opposing needs – has resulted in a clear split between a 'technical' and a 'cultural' school, and in the connection of attention to the world of work with technical aspects. Antonio Gramsci warned of the risk of introducing a dichotomy between a 'formative' and 'disinterested' school aimed at a small elite of people who could afford not to think about preparing for a professional future, and a school anchored in the development of technical-manual skills functional to employment (Gramsci, 2012). Recognising that all men are intellectuals, although not all men in society perform the function of intellectuals, Gramsci invited the abolishment of this alternative and proposed a unitary school capable of

inaugurating «new relations between intellectual and industrial work, not only in the school, but in the whole of social life» (Gramsci, 2012: 141).

However, the belief that there is a substantial overlap between schools that are attentive to social reality and those who favour technical aspects is still alive. So, in order to avoid becoming lost amongst easy solutions that prescribe English and business, impoverishing the complexity and potential of the educational experience, the school ends up not accepting the increasingly complex and necessary challenge of pursuing cultural learning that is open, and at the same time significant, for young people and their future lives, including their professional ones (Gosetti, 2004).

#### **4. New labour market needs**

The third belief that hinders a fruitful and productive comparison between school and the world of work concerns the needs of the labour market and the organisational anthropology that is assumed to be proposed within it, an anthropology that seems to re-propose a subject that is meek, a-critical and leaning towards power, and who renounces thinking with one's own mind. But is this really the kind of individual organisations require?

Over the past 40 years, a path has been made to redefine the models, principles, designs and operation of the organisation. As Ulderico Capucci (2006) reminds us, we have moved from a vertical model of organisation to a horizontal model. From mass production (an organisation that works on volumes) we have moved on to lean production.

Today, organisations have become progressively 'standardised'. Production processes are being outsourced. We have moved from a hierarchical and proceduralised organisation to a standardised and process-driven organisation which, precisely because it is lean and loose, is able to better adapt and respond to rapid changes in the market. It is in this way that the image of the worker and the demands made of him by the organisation are also completely modified (D'Egidio, 2001; Striano, 2015).

Once again adhering to the teachings of Capucci, we recognise how people involved in an organisation with these characteristics are continuously exposed to the need to make decisions, to plan their actions in the light of changing and uncertain situations and to identify new and innovative, unexpected actions to address unpredictable problems for which the unstable scenario and the dynamic and global markets must come together. However, these complex tasks are no longer left exclusively to the management, but by virtue of the standardisation of the organisation, they also extend to the operational roles. The need for complex professional figures emerges; people not so much capable of executing orders, but of identifying new solutions for thinking outside the box and recognising new ways to progress, of collaborating in a team and of exercising their leadership and, above all, working in a situation where a hierarchy is no longer required in order to be heard.

The identikit of the subject requested by new organisations therefore seems to refer to a complex professional figure, endowed with reflective learning and meta-learning skills – a figure capable of autonomy and lateral thinking, who is also capable of collaborating and finding, along with others, new possibilities; a figure capable of having an open and conscious outlook, able to read contexts and interpret them, to welcome complexity and manage it. In the light of this new context, there is a need to thematise these beliefs that hinder the relationship between school and the world of work, in order to re-establish it with a dialogue that is altogether freer from conditioning.

## 5. Moving towards the concept of the 'usefulness' of learning

With regard to this important work, a good path could be to start with the concept of the 'usefulness of learning', a principle that Jean Jacques Rousseau describes in the third book of his *Emile* (Rousseau, 1997). The Rousseausian indication seems valuable for carrying out a courageous and necessary rethinking and redesign of the school experience at all levels, from the definition of the programs to the identification of the training objectives, up to the methodologies adopted for the preparation of the experience and evaluation methods.

Rousseau encourages the promotion of a type of educational path that operates a redefinition on the basis of the wishes of the student and at the same time of the significance of learning for his future life. The hypothesis proposed in the Geneva-born philosopher's text is to promote a type of knowledge and set of skills that can be put to good use, and that can be practised in real life; a type of learning that has an impact within the social- and life-experience that the student encounters every day, and especially outside of the scholastic context. It is therefore a question of placing the 'what' the type of learning to be proposed, in the background, in order to first reflect on the 'why', on the purpose that this learning has for the pupil's life.

The project of redefining learning objectives and methods on the principle of usefulness, therefore, as we have seen, being reorganised in a technical standardisation, instead leads the school and the training agencies to constantly question their meaning and their vital significance, to reflect on the social value of what is proposed, and to focus on and think about the school situation in relation to the context that hosts it and that the student experiences. This movement therefore foreshadows the possibility of the school emerging from a profound self-referentiality that blocks its opportunities for change and risks impoverishing its own meaning.

The need to question the purpose of learning makes it possible to not only guarantee a training path that is consistent with the needs of the students, and therefore the context, but also to work towards promoting autonomy of judgment and the strengthening and exercise of 'common sense', a fundamental trait of an aware adult: «not wanting to know anything except what is useful: here is the most important lesson. He who has learned it asks questions in the manner of Socrates, never asks a question without giving a reason to himself, the reason of which he knows that the person questioned will ask him to account for himself before answering». This work seems to prefigure elements of strong continuity which, more than a century later, Dewey affirmed by underlining the need for a constant dialogue between the school and the social context hosting it. Dewey, in fact, hoped for a profound change in the school system so that «the acquisition of isolated skills through exercise stands against the achievement of being as a means of achieving ends that meet vital needs» (Dewey, 1916: 6). In this way it would be possible to return to the vital dimension of the school experience (Massa, 1991), and to create a field of experience that manages to preserve its role as a place of great vital and social importance; it truly is possible to provide students with the fundamental skills needed for them to find their place in the world.

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## Adults and New Forms of Job: Between Inclusion, Exclusion and Agency

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**Keywords:** *Adult education, Lifelong learning, Workplace learning, Agency*

### Introduction

The social changes increase the range of skills asked in everyday life and in workplace. Thus, adults in particular need to learn and to balance themselves with new forms of job. The modern employment requires complex skills and mastery of new technologies, resulting in the need for a new emphasis on life-long learning (Edmonton, Saxberg, 2017). Involving employees in formal and informal learning is now considered an important prerequisite for social inclusion as well as effective work performance. They need to develop competences such as technical and specialized preparation but also adaptability, problem solving and take risks. They need to make sense of his or her personal and professional experience and it is linked with the intrinsic human desire to realize themselves. This theoretical paper describes a summary of literature review of the relationship between adults and actual work world, analysing in particular three aspects: adults and learning, adults and workplace learning, adults and agency.

### 1. Adults and learning

The work changes increase the range of skills asked in workplace and it is constantly widening, and individuals need to learn and to improve their skills and professional competences faster than in the past to stay inside in this new work world. Consequently, traditional training is not sufficient to support individuals. They need a transformative and permanent process of improvement of the living conditions of the individual and the society. It is therefore necessary to offer pedagogical approaches, as lifelong learning, in which individual can be involved in a process of continuous learning focus on cognitive, emotional, social and personal development. It is therefore fundamental to work in a systemic way and involve directly the individuals in the process of lifelong learning.

Knowles (1980) argues the importance of active involvement of adult learners in the learning process. Indeed, they specifically require the opportunity to examine their experiences and they need «to connect the 'abstract world' of concepts with the 'real world' of personal experiences» (Gitterman, 2004: 96). Learners in general use past experiences to situate their learning by modifying, transferring, and reintegrating meaning (Reybold, 2001), and adult learners, in particular, bring a number of experiences, both personal and professional, that become the back-drop for their learning of new content around values, knowledge, and skills. Learning is a process in which individual constructs the meaning to make sense of his or her life experience and it is linked with the intrinsic human desire to obtain competences and strengths in areas of interest to the individual (Merriam, Caffarella, 1999).

Adult learners are generally goal-oriented, and experience based, and they see the acquisition of knowledge as a step toward career advancement; sometimes they want a new job, a promotion, or to take their current position to a new level. Three different types of learning characterize the learning of adults:

learning from oneself, learning from others, and learning from informal sources. Learning from oneself includes spending time reflecting how to improve one's performance and experimenting with new ways of performing. Learning from others includes interacting with peers, co-workers, superiors to solicit feedback on ideas and devise strategies for performance improvement. Learning from informal sources includes reading publications and searching resources and information on the web. Lifelong learning supports people to improve abilities and be part of the current society and work world.

## **2. Adults, job and workplace learning**

In literature, the relationship between adults, job and workplace is described with three different dimensions: organizational (Quinn *et al.*, 2012; Kuckenberger *et al.*, 2012; Milia, Birdi, 2010), of socialization (Billet, 1999), experiential learning (Ericsson *et al.*, 1993; London, Smither, 1999; Jørgensen, Warring, 2001; Orvis, Leffler, 2011). In particular, the interest in learning in the workplace emerged around studies on work efficiency, (Arrow, 1962) and the value of human capital (Boud, Garrick, 1999). Learning in the workplace takes place in the encounter between the learning environments of the workplace and the employees' learning processes. Recent research has given prominence to informal learning and assume a relationship between learning and the way in which the workplace is organized and the interaction with the communities (Hager, 2011; Lave, Wenger, 1991). Jørgensen and Warring (2001) described that learning takes place in a dynamic relation between the employees' learning processes, the communities at the workplace and the enterprise as technical-organizational system. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the employees' background, experience and future perspectives in order to understand the dynamism in the encounter between learning environment and learning processes and develop the understanding of learning to work and the effect of workplace on learning.

The life of the individual is as a continuous learning process that builds on the complex experiences of the previous life course and which is given direction by the forward-looking life plan and future perspectives. People need to create their personal and professional identity to recognize themselves and to be recognized by others. Indeed, identity is both an individual, biographical identity and at the same time a social identity: an experience of a certain position in the social community (Illeris, 2003c; Erikson, 1968). Another important aspect is self-efficacy, one of the most commonly examined constructs in studies of motivation, that has been shown to predict effort and performance in numerous domains (Gist, Mitchell, 1992; Gist, Stevens, Bavetta, 1991; Stajkovic, Luthans, 1998). It reflects a person's confidence in his or her capabilities to perform a task (Bandura, 1997). When individuals have greater confidence, they are more likely to engage in a given task and aware of their abilities and competences.

## **3. Adults, agency and learning**

Amartya Sen (1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2000; 2010) identified in the capabilities approach the possibility of developing people's potential and the guarantee of a dignified life and evaluation of the quality of life. It represents «a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposals about social changes'» (Robeyns, 2005: 94).



An important element of the capabilities approach is agency, characterized by one's ability to pursue goals that are valued important for each individual. Agency means being an active participant in planning and conducting one's life. Sen (1999) argues that agency is important for individual freedom, but it is also modality for collective action and democratic participation.

The concept of agency is particularly relevant for Adult education because it is necessary to expand people's empowerment to enable them to be the authors of their own lives in a lifelong learning perspective. In this way there is also the theory of recognition. Honneth (1995) uses this term referring to the essential formation of self as involving becoming a person with value and autonomy and he describes the meaning of self-actualization as fulfilment or successful subjective capabilities and desires. Thus, recognition goes beyond a psychological need and an indispensable ontological need.

Studies of Maslow (1954) focus on the need for 'self-actualization', that represents the potential to reach personal and professional goals that individuals consider really important for themselves. This need to obtain self-actualization drives learners, especially adult, to look for a change in their personal and professional lives. Mezirow (1985,1990,1991,2000) claims that change that leads to transformation started from a disorienting dilemma, and during this process adults conduct a critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions and recognize the need to acquire knowledge and skills for implementing a new plan for their lives. Honneth (1995) argues the importance of inter-subjective recognition as a fundamental aspect in the building of individual identity. It involves three stages: self-confidence, developed through relationships in family and friendship; public acknowledgement, leading to the development of self-respect; self-esteem arising out of the recognition that an individual's achievements, aspirations and capabilities contribute to the realization of goals in communities of value. In this way individuals develop their self-confidence, self-dignity and self-esteem in order to be able to progress towards self-actualization (Honneth, 1995).

## Conclusions and future developments

In front of the constant changes of work market, research has continued to focus on workplace and learning processes, professional identity, agency and recognition. Research has to study in depth the relationship between adults and job transformation for supporting individuals to stand up to changes. It is necessary find instruments that can help people to analyse different situations and their abilities and agency in front of innovation and requirements of current society. One of these could be reflective practice that enables the capture of self-awareness giving meaning to the actions and choices to be made. It helps to understand that in the face of uncertainty and mistrust, there is the possibility to either adapt or change.

Starting from this theoretical analysis and guided by some research questions, as 'What is the relationship between adults and learning? What is the relationship between learning and work experience? What do adults want from working? What can adults do for working?' it will be studied the relationship between adults and actual work world in empirical way.

It will be conducted an action research that will involve fifteen workers from different professional contexts. Specifically, interviews will be carried out and they will have the occasion to reflect on the relationship between learning and their professional experiences.

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## Learning from Empathy: Violence and Vulnerability in Susan Sontag's Photographic Researches

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### Introduction

The interest of Susan Sontag's visual research for an understanding of the post-democratic societies is mainly related to the cultural value of the photographic gaze in the capitalistic world. Since photography refers to cognitive and social processes, in which construction and deconstruction of common sense are in the running, this object should be associated with the likes of social pedagogy and sociology of education. In a more general sense, an ethical and political interrogation of photographic culture should be crucial for the study of processes of subjectivation, formation and self-construction in modern societies. This interest represents – at a very basic level – the main reason for the importance of Sontag's work in interdisciplinary research between education and post-democracy.

Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, modern capitalistic societies have been educated to experience material and psychic reality in a photographic way. For example, we can recognise the didactic value of photographic images in social, communicative, relational and affective dimensions of learning processes. Within this framework, we are able to refer to Susan Sontag (1933-2004) as one of the main interpreters of political, psychological, ethical and aesthetical tensions that cross contemporary western democracies. Her interdisciplinary work is unanimously recognised as that of «one of the major essayists of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century» (Belpoliti, 2018). Among the issues developed by this combative intellectual, the question of photographic gaze in capitalist societies has been absolutely central.

In order to be more analytic, we should consider some sub-questions related to the main theme: the photographic conscience of time and space; the relations between technology, society and vision; the photographer's and the public's ethics; the connection between violence, mortality and photographic images; the residual chance of empathy in a visual experience generally devoted to hypertrophic consumption of images and shock addiction. In the next steps we will basically move within this range of questions, following Sontag's intellectual effort in order to understand: 1. how images influence our perception of events; 2. to what extent photography conditions our knowledge of what is outside our reach; 3. how the consumption of photographs shapes our opinions about pain and catastrophic events that we do not live first-hand.

There is a convergence between this order of questions and the contemporary post-democratic age, analysed by Colin Crouch (2004) through the collapse of democratic institutions before the dramatic growth of inequalities produced by the market fundamentalism of neo-liberal policies. Aiming at political understanding of our everyday visual experience, we will focus on a single and more psychological issue: the relationship between violence and vulnerability in the contemporary photographic conscience, i.e. in «a culture in which shock has

become a leading stimulus of consumption and source of value» (Sontag, 2003: 23).

## 1. Photographic vision in modern societies

In 1977 Sontag defines «photographic seeing» (Sontag, 2005: 68) as a transformation of the way of seeing, therefore of acknowledging reality, typical of societies in which the everyday usage of cameras has become a crucial element in the symbolic construction of reality, as well as in communication processes. In this perceptive transformation of modernity there are two main directions, whose opposition is only outward. On one side, the materials of visual experience are fragmented by the multiplication of images. This phenomenon is especially evident in the relationship with space and time that we build through photographic media: «The photograph is a thin slice of space as well as time. [...] Through photographs, the world becomes a series of unrelated, freestanding particles; and history, past and present, a set of anecdotes and faits divers» (Sontag, 2005: 17).

On the other side, the chance – at least a potential one – of ‘seeing all’, in the sense of owning, controlling, registering, witnessing, proving, remembering events, has been the promise of photographic industry since the beginning. This perceptive revolution concerns a ‘parcelling totality’, an atomic reality: «It is a view of the world which denies interconnectedness, continuity, but which confers on each moment the character of a mystery» (Sontag, 2005: 17).

Analysing a visual culture through these elements implicates a dwelling on «a grammar and, even more importantly, an ethics of seeing», that Sontag defines as «a new visual code» altering and enlarging «our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have a right to observe» (Sontag, 2005: 1). If we aim a deeper understanding of this perceptive step, basically based on spectacularization and consumption of reality through images, we need to include another element in the theoretical frame: the lack of a visual education for a critical deciphering of what appears in photographs, or the necessary query about the context from which images are collected.

«The ultimate wisdom of the photographic image is to say: ‘There is the surface. Now think – or rather feel, intuit – what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way’» (Sontag, 2005: 17). In Sontag’s perspective this compelling need refers to the importance of critical thinking in interpreting photographs, but in a more specific sense it may be put in contact with the development of ‘citizenship skills’, shifting the author’s point of view from a visual culture perspective to the challenges of an education programme.

## 2. Violent images: spectatorship between vulnerability and addiction

The perceptive and cognitive revolution of photography produces very interesting consequences on an ethical level. Sontag concludes her first essay (*In Plato’s Cave*) with a critique, presenting at the same time a psychosocial thesis, about the anesthetizing power of photographs. Phenomena of visual hyperstimulation produce a defensive reaction in the spectator, in the same way as Freud’s «repetition compulsion» stabilises shock threshold in experiencing traumatic events. Moreover, Sontag clearly acknowledges the impact of hegemonic ideologies directing public opinion in front of an image towards the attribution of a particular sense, like in a ‘horizon of expectation’. In summary, the ethic

content of photographs is a very fragile object and, especially in our hypestimulated perceptive milieu, visual conscience of reality could easily become numbed instead of awakened. We consequently need education practices to support our ability in reading flows of images, especially when they concern pain, and our opportunity to recognise it.

«To suffer is one thing; another thing is living with the photographed images of suffering, which does not necessarily strengthen conscience and the ability to be compassionate. It can also corrupt them. Once one has seen such images, one has started down the road of seeing more – and more. Images transfix. Images anesthetize» (Sontag, 2005: 15). In order to realize the violence of wars, terrorist attacks, shipwrecks and genocides through the photographic representations of wasted and vulnerable lives, spectators need to add other elements to their pure visual perception. When I look at these images, I need to reconstruct a context around the victims, recognizing the depth of their subjective existences, leaving the spectacular regime of the pure observer situated in front of a lifeless object. In other words, I need to recognize a condition of vulnerability in myself as a spectator. As Sontag states in the final essay of *On Photography*, «one is vulnerable to disturbing events in the form of photographic images in a way that one is not to the real thing. That vulnerability is part of the distinctive passivity of someone who is a spectator twice over, spectator of events already shaped, first by the participants and second by the image maker» (Sontag, 2005: 132).

Thirty years later, commenting Virginia Woolf's notations about the press coverage of the Spanish Civil War in *Three Guineas* (1938), Sontag's thesis is even more radical: an image does not give a pure information; it is a document demanding not only explanations but an understanding, an interpretative act involving the experience of the observer, his/her socio-cultural milieu, political conscience, affective life and, of course, education. «Torment, a canonical subject in art, is often represented in painting as a spectacle, something being watched (or ignored) by other people» (Sontag, 2003: 42). This statement about the iconography of suffering clearly denounces a voyeuristic condition, referring also to an education challenge related to it: «citizens of modernity, consumers of violence as spectacle, adepts of proximity without risk, are schooled to be cynical about the possibility of sincerity» (Sontag, 2003: 111).

In her critique of modernity through the medium of photographic spectatorship, Sontag analyses the itchy desire of watching horrific images. At the heart of this apparently perverse perceptive drive she finds the satisfaction of knowing without participating: «This is not happening to me, I'm not ill, I'm not dying, I'm not trapped in a war — it seems normal for people to fend off thinking about the ordeals of others, even others with whom it would be easy to identify» (Sontag, 2003: 99). And *Regarding the Pain of Others* is the manifesto of her mature, critical understanding of this phenomenon.

### 3. Empathy and democratic criticism

If we follow Sontag's reasoning to the very end, we have to articulate a final question dedicated to the residual possibility of arousing feelings of empathy and compassion in the photographic experience of wasted life. This last question can be written in many ways: are we able to assimilate what is shown by those images, connecting those materials to our present? What does this stimulation produce in terms of ethical conscience? Can we, as spectators of violence, learn something about others and about us, and insert this consciousness into our everyday practices?



«What is the point of exhibiting these pictures? To awaken indignation? To make us feel 'bad'; that is, to appal and sadden? To help us mourn? Is looking at such pictures really necessary, given that these horrors lie in a past remote enough to be beyond punishment? Are we the better for seeing these images? Do they actually teach us anything? Don't they rather just confirm what we already know (or want to know)?» (Sontag, 2003: 92). We find here a civic challenge consisting in working on a new social imaginary. But there is also an educative one, focused on the overcoming of the dynamic of spectacularization of information as a form of macabre entertainment, that is incompatible with the formation of critical consciences because of its involvement in the consumer cycle of capitalistic post-democracies. In this particular context, the only escape is going to the heart of the problem, aiming for a perceptive revolution, reaching a critical empathy that recognize the other as a real subject, and not as a victim, of the experience.

The core of these questions is that the other is often «regarded only as someone to be seen, not someone (like us) who also sees» (Sontag, 2003: 72). Even the feelings of pity, compassion, indignation could be manipulated and exploited, thanks to particular figurative techniques and perceptive automatisms deeply rooted in our culture. In order to overstep this blind alley, transforming empathy into an incisive feeling of participation to the pain of the others, we need to work on a critique of compassion, emphasizing the ambiguity of this experience. «Compassion is an unstable emotion. It needs to be translated into action, or it withers. The question is what to do with the feelings that have been aroused, the knowledge that has been communicated. If one feels that there is nothing 'we' can do – but who is that 'we'? – and nothing 'they' can do either – and who are 'they'? – then one starts to get bored, cynical, apathetic» (Sontag, 2003: 101).

By way of conclusion, Sontag's contribution to a better understanding of human condition in modern, capitalistic societies deals with an education towards the exercise of a critical empathy as an open horizon and a never-ending challenge. It consists in recognizing an existential sense in the pain of the other; it relies on the ethical consciousness, and the hope that everyone could translate the pure perception of pain into an existential orientation through performative practices. In order to face this challenge, we have to respect the body and its gaze that conceal, and occasionally reveal people's inner lives. We need to work on marginal perceptions, on the less eye-catching remains situated in the periphery of our visual field. We need also to transform the unproductive power of compassion into a critical comprehension of bodily emotional life. Not only the body-object of the vision, but (also) as the body-subject, i.e. the living body in which psychic experiences are articulated. And finally, we need to translate the stimulus to emotional participation through practices, questioning our position of privileged spectators, while abstract thinking «comes slap against physical suffering, affliction, like a fly against a pane of glass, without being able to make the slightest progress or discovering anything new» (Weil, 2004: 483).

Reading Sontag's photographic essays in such a way leads out to the conclusion that *critical empathy* is an essential resource in the field of visual education. The critical part of this discourse is addressed at consumerist voyeurism, colonial gazes and spectacularization of violent images; while the constructive, related to empathic action, deals with moral interactions and sympathetic awareness. Both of these resources are required if we want to rebuild an educational community around the ability «to imagine what is like to be in that person's place» (Nussbaum, 1998: 91), «to see the world from these people's point of view, and to approach a new knowledge in a more empathetic spirit» (Nussbaum, 1998: 12), to see ourselves «as human beings bound to all other human



beings by ties of recognition and concern» (Nussbaum, 1998: 10). We can see then, that we have to rebuild a narrative plot that ties images of those lives – «artworks prepared for consumption by the world that killed them» (Adorno, 2003: 423) – to the everyday reality in which we live, in order to reverse the processes of dehumanisation, on a both material and symbolic level, related to «the profit calculation of global capital» (Crouch, 2004: 123). And we need to transmit, by any means necessary, the political sense of this challenge for an ecology of the democratic visual field.

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## Between Grade Retention and Social Promotion: Inclusive Strategies, Caring Attitude and a Gift of Time

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**Keywords:** *Inclusive methodologies, Aid programs, Emotional literacy, Educating community, School dropout*

### Introduction

Newspapers periodically raise appeals, amplified by the social networks, for a stronger use of grade retention. This position is based on personal opinions and betrays nostalgia of a past, where school system is depicted as serious and formative while it was just severe and selective. However, more than a century of research has shown no evidence of advantages for rejected students.

The first studies in this regard are prior to 1930 but the first significant meta-analysis is by Jackson (1975). In it, the author concludes that there is no significant evidence that supports the effectiveness of non-promotion as many of the research reports analyzed are limited or without significant results. This issue has been taken up by a great deal of research conducted throughout the 1990s, especially in the USA (Jimerson et al., 2006; Holmes, 1989; Roderick, 1994; Shepard, Smith, 1990) and up to the present day. Not only there is no evidence of advantages for failed students but rather, the school itself, as research unfortunately demonstrates (Balfanz, Legters, 2005), sometimes contributes to aggravating students' initial discomfort particularly because of the didactic and evaluation strategies fielded, first of all grade retention (Batini, Benvenuto, 2016). Several studies show, also, as a repetition multiply the possibilities of school leave (Batini et al., 2016).

Contrary to retention, social promotion means that a low achieving student is allowed to pass onto the next grade level, despite scores and performance, like in Corea, Norvegia and Japan where, however, supplementary learning opportunities are provided for the children most in need (Brophy, 2006). In some European countries an alternative measure taken is to modularize contents and exams in secondary schools on a six-month basis. The students must pass all the modules, but they are allowed to pass in any case to the next grade.

Often people erroneously commit to time, without any specific action, the function of recovery of undeveloped skills while the prevention of early school leaving instead requires profound and capillary actions. The educational failure linked to the lack of basic instrumentality represents one of the main reasons for failure (Sabates et al., 2010). For many students, especially those who start school far behind their peers, intensive intervention, could be the best way to success.

Other options could provide an extra equivalent time in ways that are more effective, as long as recovery do not include the same intervention strategies of curricular hours and the same modalities of teacher-student relationship (Trinchero, Tordini, 2011). No solution is the good one for every student. An important point is that rejection causes a reduction of self-esteem and motivation that make rejected students much more likely to leave the educational institution. (Ikeda, García, 2013; Brophy, 2006).

Moreover, especially in pupils who behave badly what appears to be a cognitive difficulty is often of an emotional and social nature. In conclusion, besides

the sterile debate between rejectionists and promotionists, the most important think to discuss is what kind of initiative is to be taken to support weak students at all school levels.

## **1. The case of *Luca Pacioli***

The *Luca Pacioli* school, in the city of Crema, elaborated its own answer to this issue, a model focused on those secondary school students who, shortly after the start of the second term, are already at risk of flunking, due to serious and widespread shortcomings. The research on this model was carried out as a descriptive case study by the means of semi-structured interviews (with school managers and teachers) and document analysis, such as project documents and school-family contracts.

### *1.1. The premises*

The idea comes from afar. In 1994 the D'Onofrio decree (1994, n. 729) abolished the September reparation examinations, for low achievers in one or more disciplines. Thus, the 'formative debts' were established and the students with insufficient scores in some disciplines became the 'promoted with debt'.

Therefore, at Pacioli during the teacher meeting for the final evaluation, analyzing the situation of a student with too many insufficiencies to be promoted with debt, the phrase: 'and if he rejected him with credit?' came out almost as a joke. At that precise moment the slogan 'rejected with credit' came to life but the idea was born gradually through a series of experiences matured in the reflective atmosphere of a school that was looking for an innovative path reflecting on its teaching practices.

At that time the debate on the certification of competences was in full swing, in particular the need to be able to give partial certifications to the students who could not manage to get a complete diploma certification, such as the disabled, emerged. For students who did not fit into these two categories and were not promoted, a contradiction was highlighted. Students who have widespread and serious shortcomings throughout the school year often lull themselves for a long time in the illusion of recovering all the subjects, but in April they understand that they are getting a repetition. As a result, they leave school or continue to attend exhibiting annoying and deviant behavior.

Certifying the adequacies to these students as credits can trigger a motivation path for them. Instead of pretending to be able to recover all the subjects, the student is invited to focus only on a few to reach the sufficiency that will be recognized next year in case of repetition.

A second experience stemmed from the arrival in the city of a girl fleeing from Rwanda, bloodied by the 1994 genocide, a consequence of the Tutsi-Hutu war. The student, who had already attended the second-high school in her country, spoke English and French fluently, in addition to her mother tongue, but not Italian. For this reason, her application for enrolment in high school had been refused.

Pacioli accepted his registration but put her in a first class, activating for her a personalized path that included a more hours of Italian, so that he could learn our language, and fewer hours in those disciplines such as foreign languages, the math and physics that the girl already mastered. Being in the first class gave her the opportunity to socialize and learn Italian from the dialogue in a real context but avoided confronting herself with the linguistic obstacle in dealing with new content. At the end of the year she was enrolled directly in the third grade. At the end of her schooling, the student graduated with honor. Finally, the school

had thoroughly studied the Finnish model, in self-training meetings promoted by the Director with a group of teachers and had been convinced by the curriculum divided into capitalizable training units. The idea of 'bocciato con credito' took shape slowly starting from all these suggestions and was formalized and carried out thanks to the conviction and the persuasive ability of the school Director.

### *1.2. Pacioli School as co-founder of an innovative movement*

The study started when the school became one of the founders of the AE movement and promoted BCC to be adopted by other schools. It was November 6th, 2014. Thus, BCC becomes one of the ideas that make up the ideas in the gallery. Guidelines were drawn up and the idea is proposed for adoption at other educational institutions. Definitely it arouses a lot of interest, but it will be really applied to the end by very few schools with very different characteristics that interpreted it to adapt it to its own context.

### *1.3. The context: the movement of the Educational Vanguard*

The reference context for this innovative idea is the Movement of the Educational Vanguard (AE), one of the main experimentation laboratories in progress in Italy, a project born to identify the most significant experiences of transformation of the organizational and didactic model of the school and support their scaling up.

Promoted by INDIRE together with 22 founder schools, the Movement has expressed its vision for change in a Manifesto with 7 points: 1) transforming the transmission model of the school; 2) exploiting the opportunities offered by ICT and digital languages to support new ways of teaching, learning and evaluating; 3) creating new spaces for learning; 4) reorganizing school time; 5) reconnecting the school with the knowledge society; 6) investing in 'human capital' by rethinking relationships (inside / outside, frontal teaching / peer learning, school / company, etc.); 7) promoting innovation to be sustainable and transferable.

Educational Vanguard operates in a systemic perspective, by leveraging the logic of contagion of ideas, that can become promoters of change. INDIRE's research and experience confirm that innovation processes encounter resistance if it is descended from above but 'take root' if contagion dynamics are triggered, (Kampylis et al., 2013). The change come in a research-action perspective (Murray et al., 2010; Schön, 2006).

Educational Vanguard aim to create the conditions for implementing transferable and sustainable innovation. The Movement proposes a series of 'ideas for innovation' (contained in the 'gallery of ideas') that are proposed to 'adoptive' schools to start an experimentation process in their own context.

### *1.4. The idea of 'Bocciato con credito'*

The model presented here focuses on those upper secondary school students who, shortly after the start of the second term, are already at risk of grade retention because of serious and widespread inadequacies. In general, this kind of students make a lot of absences, show demotivation or carry out deviant behaviors and stop attending school. The BCC idea is designed as a strategy to prevent school. The proposal consists of mapping the entire curriculum into content units so that can be recognizes what the student has already learnt and what must instead be reviewed and strengthened. According to this logic we can hypothesize a pact with students who during the second term can already assume that they will be rejected, asking them to commit to completing one or more subjects.

In fact, all the disciplines for which the student has achieved a score of sufficiency will be recorded as a credit in his curriculum and the following year, in

case of confirmed repetition, the Class Council will take note, in its first session, of any positive results achieved, despite the overall negative outcome, and will record them as a starting point for the construction of the curriculum and the commitments to be proposed to the student. The Class Council may also decide to exempt the student from attending the classes of some disciplines, once the maintenance of the acquired credit has been verified. The hours saved can sometimes be used for a shorter school day, respecting the minimum number of hours, or for personalized activities that student likes that will lead to small achievements and give him opportunities for satisfaction and gratification.

They should be guided to gain a better capacity for self-orientation and self-determination but also greater self-esteem which can be strengthened by socializing with the peer group of which the school is a privileged place.

Above all, the school, with the adoption of the 'Bocciato con credito' method, tries a destigmatization of the student at risk, takes charge of its problem, considering it as an issue that concerns all the actors involved who share the responsibility and engage in the construction of sense of school experience. This work has as a consequence an increase for all of the sense of belonging to the school community that is, clearly, a significant result against drop-out.

### *1.5. Adopting schools*

Several schools tried to adopt the idea, implementing and adapting it to their specific situation. Among them, let us consider only those who made a significant application. Three schools have both implemented the idea completely (that is in all its phases for at least one school year) and participated in the work on the platform of the Educational Vanguard community. At the IC Marco Polo in Prato, a Chinese student presenting the phenomenon of linguistic fossilization is supported by leveraging her interest in the figurative arts, making her carry out a school year in two years, avoiding that this leads her to school leave.

At the IPSEOA in Paola the idea is applied to two multi-flunked students, now in their twenties, without great success but at least managing to keep them hooked to the school for a further semester. At the 'Leonardo da Vinci' high school in Cassano delle Murge the idea was interpreted as a measure against the phenomenon of selective abandonment. In some cases, scholastic failure linked to a single discipline (for example mathematics) takes the form of selective renunciation (Mata et al., 2012), which often also leads to the choice of surrendering to the entire scholastic path. Students involved appreciated the experiment: they commented that not only their scores increased but also a new relationship was established with teachers, marked by greater confidence, mostly because they tried to talk with them sincerely, asking their help.

Having said that in none of the three schools, the experiment, although judged positively, continued beyond the first year.

## **2. Some critical points of the idea**

A critical aspect of the model can be identified in the need for human and economic resources. This problem can be more easily managed if the school adopts forms of organizational flexibility. Further the success depends on the sensitivity and professionalism of the teachers. During an interview a teacher pointed out that «a weakness of the model consists in the crucial figure of the tutor who must accompany the student. In fact, there is not an officially assigned role like this and for this heavy and delicate role a sensitive teacher who spontaneously offers his availability is charged».

Last, the relationship with students' parents is always a problematic point. Naturally, some resistance to accept the idea of grade retention is unsurprising from parents but, on the other hand, preparing students even for the negative outcome is a teacher task.

## Conclusions

'Bocciato con credito' gathered a lot of interest; schools adopted it making interesting adaptations. Despite this, the idea neither it settled nor spread for various reasons, first the high commitment of human and financial resources. However, it has grown a sensitivity to these issues in adopter schools.

In conclusion, it is probably impossible to insert an element of strong flexibility into the rigid structure of the current school, divided into school years, ending with a global promotion or retention outcome. This means that the current school system must go towards a slow but global reorganization if it really wants to be the school of all, which is the place where students identify their talents and learn to recognize and manage their emotions, in the respect of time and pace of each.

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## The Aid Relationship: The Place of Emotions

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**Keywords:** *Educational responsibility, Emotional dimension, Integral education, Inclusion, Learning development.*

### Introduction

Instability and personal and relational fragility permeate the contemporaneity. These two aspects are summarised in the concept of precariousness. It synthesizes the emotional malaise generated by deep forms of emotional illiteracy, which is expressed through the inability to intercept, recognize, manage and express emotions and feelings. It is more evident that in the past, as in the educational experience is interwoven the inner world, whose value dimension cannot be questioned or considered marginal. Only if an adequate planning space is reserved for the emotional state, within the formative/educational action it can generate positive behaviors, constructively guiding the life choices of each student. Education contributes to the process of overcoming the emotional crisis, transforming it into opportunity and resource. It will be inserted into the educational-didactic action, as an indispensable element to generate a process of change, involving the ethical, emotional cognitive and affective dimension of the person. The relationship of help that the teacher builds, accompanies the student in a path that sees him engaged in bringing out his own emotional life. He is helped to create a synapse between cognition and emotion, in order to be able to understand and express himself in a relational and affective climate (Rossi, 2002).

### 1. Affectivity

The term affectivity refers to all phenomena that characterize an individual's psychic reactions, such as feelings, passions or emotions. Human communication and its development find in the affectivity the element that contributes to support in each a personal level of well-being or, in case of absence, records the manifestation of malaise the person who is deprived of it. From an educational point of view, the tendency to speak of affections rather than emotions is dominant, generating a sort of anticipation of the latter on the former. Affections are related to relational forms of dependence, which give the foundation to the bonds between people. It is characteristic of affectivity to bind oneself to privileged plans of experience, such as the family context, school or professional, making the bond recognizable in terms of stability and continuity.

The affectivity has a solid basis of identification; however, the sedimentation assumes a physiognomy that makes it partly predictable, at such level that, despite its high affective value, does not appear to involve particular implications of arousal of emotions or of their activation.

### 2. Emotions

Unlike affections, emotions are characterized by their dynamism and the discontinuous way in which they are activated, this happens due to the person's

exposure to countless and unpredictable factors generated by the experience, which are not significant in themselves, but are significant to those who experience contact with them. It is a consequence of emotional experience if the affective experience undergoes and receives unpredictable interference from other planes of experience (Fabri, 2018). Interferences that will certainly complicate the existence, but at the same time contribute to its enrichment, allowing, moreover, to be able to draw up the balance of their own and others' affective experiences. If the affections risk to set boundaries or, even, to cage the personality, the emotions make it feel alive.

These are inherently reactive, although not always in a positivity perspective. Knowledge and management of emotion cannot be naively resolved in elementary experiences, instead it can be the prerequisite for a high complexity path. The emotional dimension is an essential component of the evolution process; although in the past it has long been considered the source of conflict with higher cognitive functions, assessed as an activity subordinate and opposed to cognition. Recent studies (Immordino, Yang, 2017) highlight their mixing with the latter and their contribution to the development of civilization, think of the theory of the emotional brain (Ledoux, 1998) and that of the relational mind (Siegel, 2001). Emotion is defined as an educational problem at a time when it is no longer considered as an opposition to rationality but as a complex reality to be analyzed in its cognitive roots and behavioural implications.

### **3. Educating to emotions**

The educational-formative path cannot separate the affective and emotional plan, whose effects, more or less profound and conscious, are inscribed in the diversity of each pupil (Rogers, 2007).

The difficulty of educating to the recognition of emotions and then naming them, can be interpreted as the most pungent and desolate manifestation of lack of emotional education within the family. It represents the first school to learn teachings of emotional nature. Borrowing the words of Goleman, we can share as «emotional education operates not only through the words and actions of parents addressed directly to the child, but also through the models that they offer showing him how they handle their feelings and their relationship» (Goleman, 1996: 11).

The emotional experience of the child finds its formation in relation to the mother (De Sorio, 2012), who is capable of loving with thoughtfulness, and is this thoughtful love (Pestolazzi, 1993) to mature in her educational awareness, without neglecting the responsibility that derives from it, and which is characterized by rationality and reflexivity (we could say today by a metacognitive action), in recognizing the feeling, and not just to act, the ability to promote the good.

In this scenario is inserted the predominance of the images that characterizes the contemporaneity, and that exposes the young, if not sufficiently formed, to carry out an illiterate reading of the same which will condition the understanding of reality and its participation in forms of active citizenship. Reading and decoding the message are in the emotional dimension, without generating an authentic decoding. The process of emotional formation connotes itself as a path through which everyone assumes his own form. The path through which this conquest is achieved, the fruit of interpretative work of an emotional nature, takes time, space and care, with the aim of enabling the young person to enter his inner world by giving him an order. The personal structure will take on the character of a continuous process of analysis of life experiences, interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics, emotions, disturbances, defeats and

disappointments. A multitude of elements will contribute to the development of the person and to the ability to communicate his singular physiognomy. The emotional world founds the affective and sentimental one, therefore it needs education (Dewey, 1913) and valorisation. From the ontogenetic (progressive stages of change) and evolutionary point of view, the link between emotion and learning is inseparable. We learn by facing situations that assume emotional meanings (evolution) and only if this is moved by emotions and affections (ontogenesis). To be able to identify the relational modalities through which the process can be started it is necessary to understand which place the emotions occupy and then the feelings for the young person. Only later will it be possible to design the appropriate educational intervention to place the emotional sphere at the centre of the educational relationship and translate it into well-being, expendable also for cognitive learning. The effectiveness of the educational intervention is largely subordinated to the quality of the affective relationship established between the educator and educating, whose maturation of the affective sensitivity of the educating depends very much on what the educator does, from what he says, and especially from what he is. Knowing how to be a formator is as important as his knowledge and knowing how to do (Rossi, 2002).

Many teachers have a clear awareness of how much the learning of the students, like their own, is not characterized by the characteristics of stability and constancy. The days of each are some good, others less, characterized by moments of exaltation and felling. Every disposition of the individual, whether student or teacher, to the outside influences the way in which one learns or is taught, with remarkable consequences on the performance of both.

Two elements still contribute to make articulated and complex the structuring of an aid relationship that takes into account the emotional state of each component, are the class-group, in which stratified relationships are structured, and the high number of pupils. The educational and formative context is reflected in the characters of dynamism and sociality of relationships and learning, due to the variety of different daily emotions and feelings: between the relationship of equals, with the teachers and with the very structure of the setting.

These important elements have significant repercussions on the thing, how, when and why pupils participate, remember, learn, grow and what form they take. The disciplinary work of the teacher is daily imbued with these elements, in the didactic work of transmission, in a more or less conscious way, they occupy a specific space, providing students with precise input to guide them in choosing the information they think they can receive, and thus to accommodate in their own emotional tissue, and which should be rejected. The building up of the inner world of each pupil is enriched in this way by emotional and cognitive pieces (Iaquinta, 2019). The educational responsibility of the teacher is undeniable, he is led to consider the emotional dimension of the student through the conscious consideration of the emotional state of his own and of the student. The latter will only prepare itself for acquiring the content of the transmission once it has been assured that its emotional need has been recognised and that the teacher has taken charge.

The construction of the relationship of help that the teacher offers to the student, and that it is oriented to educate its emotional world to help its well-being, answers to one of the ten competences whose possession is considered winning in the world of work according to the international organization World Economic Forum (Pigman, 2017), which has written, twenty years ago, the top ten of the capabilities required until 2020 in every work area and necessary in every human organization.

The sixth position of the classification of competences is occupied by the possession of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2011): knowing to recognize,

use, understand and manage consciously your emotions. Ability can also be defined as orientation towards the person (Goleman, 1996). The affective dimension turns out to be the key to access that allows everyone to connect to the cognitive dimension of knowledge, which will be perceived as accessible through the possession of specific skills. The cure to education (Piaget, 2000) overall of the person for its importance cannot be neglected or left on the bottom, so much that the Italian constitutional dictum, in art. 3, calls for the commitment to overall education, stressing its full and harmonious dimension towards which education must strive. Teaching and learning activities benefiting from the existence of aid relationships are characterised by acceptance and inclusivity, enable them to be accommodated, to contain and guide the educational and formative process of individuals with needs originating and/or derived from different bio-psycho-social and cultural conditions that the complex society generates relentlessly.

The school is characterized as a space dedicated to social formation, to the development of quality relationships, within which culture and skills are integrated supported by the government of emotion. The communication exchanges between students and/or teachers take on a significant connotation when the value of each person's feelings is recognized and shared, and the exchanges absorb continuous nourishment. Contributing to the building up of the student's emotional baggage means helping him to generate in him the ability to ask and offer help. Report that the teacher structure to promote the emotional health of the student and the development of prosocial skills in those who experience this form of relationship. These subjects feel that they are oriented towards choices and paths that adhere to their feelings, they in turn promote a culture of solidarity capable of supporting even those who live forms of discomfort or isolation. The teacher lays the foundations for the building of relationships of help through the ability to appreciate the dignity and value of the student, avoiding barricading himself behind his role and showing to be free from prejudices and deeply himself.

The professional thus manifests the possession of the ability to express himself specifically towards what refers to the emotional world and the experiences of the learner, operates with precision and immediacy, noting, without expressing any judgment, any contradictions between what the student says and tries and between what manifests through his behavior (Recalcati, 2014). In the delicate stages of growth, when the inner world remains without sound or mute, some young people experience ways of escape in technology (Turkle, 2012), which allows them to anesthetize the emotional world, until closing them in a state of loneliness and emotional impoverishment that leads them to move away from any form of sociality. The virtual artifact world can find its way out through the relationship with the other, which becomes an emotional place of exchange. In order to be able to hope that this relationship will develop, it is necessary for the teacher to take a look at the emotions that allow him to grasp the truth (Hillmann, 1996) of being, wondering what emotion still accompanies his relationship with learners.

## **Conclusion**

The link between young people and adults is built mainly at school. Pupils frequently manifest the need to be guided in order to understand their inner world. It is the duty of every good teaching to hold together the two aspects of which each knowledge is composed: the cognitive and the emotional. Separating the two components means depriving young people of an important support

that promotes their growth, to the point of also reflecting on learning, reducing it to a form of mechanical acquisition, destined to be consumed quickly without leaving any trace.

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## Education, Person, Suffering: The Possibilities of Education

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**Keywords:** *Education, Pain, Suffering, Person, Control*

### 1. Pedagogy and pain

One of the most urgent issue but at the same time a marginalized one, if not even absent, of the contemporary pedagogical debate, continues to be the one relating to pain. A topic that, although has already been investigated by other human sciences, has not yet gained the attention and speculative commitment of pedagogy. The pain is present in our time in a confused and contradictory way. If on the one hand it has become a television host, an object of attraction and curiosity, on the other hand, in the private and away from the cameras, it is silent, denied, and removed (Boltanski, 2000). Spectacle and silence, exhibition and lack of interpretation are its main features, an antinomy connotation that makes it possible to talk about it in public, television and social media, but it is kept silent in private, right there where the listening, participation, sharing, support, would instead be necessary (Iaquina, 2015). In our time, therefore, pain is a two-faced creature; a public one, television and ostentatious, and a private one, invisible because it is hidden. While the spectacle of pain does not arouse feelings of modesty, of defending one's inner self, it often invites the exaltation of the smallest details, mostly linked to macabre or morbid aspects, the pain far from the spotlight lives the season of exile. Mortified, if not even unnamed, not so much in the interiority of the subject that in any case lives it and suffers it, as in the possibility of being told, participated and shared with others. Pain is the term generally used in the medical field to identify physical suffering, but its wider and complete meaning is not limited to bodily nature alone but includes emotional, affective, spiritual and social suffering. Often, we tend to neglect or forget this breadth of meaning and pain; we end up talking with the sole objective of lifting from physical evil the person who is afflicted by it. This does not involve humanistic skills but only technical skills.

There is a gap, a distance still not filled between the practice of education and the theory of education, a disconnection between the places where education takes form and the places where education is thought, discussed and theorized. There is a colourless area, which, although becoming part of it, constitutes educational practices, remains outside reflection and pedagogical theorizing. Within this colourless area, that includes everything that belongs to the subject's affective dimension: desires, emotions, impulses, passions, feelings, pain is, among the latter, the one most excluded by the studies of scholars. In Italy there are essays on specific topics, death for example (Mottana, 1998; Mantegazza, 2004; 2018) or which deal with aspects of human suffering (Pati, 2012) but their presence is so little in Italy as well as in the international pedagogical framework. It is still missing within the pedagogical knowledge, and therefore in educational practice, a field of study and specific reflection, a pedagogy of pain, a term already used in the early eighties by Maggiolini (1981). Contini (1998) states that pain, love and death are great signs for the existence of each one who, from them, and from the way of facing them, draws its most significant connotations; but if we ignore them, avoiding them or living them without



awareness, if we do not learn to question them and accept the confrontation, which they solicit, with ourselves and with others then life goes by with poor happiness, commitment and meaning. We need to learn to know our feelings: to know who we are, where we come from, where we are going.

Along the same lines is the thought of Mottana (1998) who points out a serious gap in the contemporary experience, that is the prudent attitude, educative speaking, towards feelings. They are always considered destabilizing agents and therefore threatening. Moreover, he points out the 'excommunication of the so-called negative feelings', of which one must always look for a remedy, as soon as possible, a pharmacological cancellation. These are considered experiences increasingly deprived of sense and marginalized, hidden, shameful, unworkable, unutterable and not socially exhibited.

The contemporary pedagogical debate is, therefore, strangely silent on this important aspect of the education and upbringing of the subject, neglecting that idea of education as a life that takes shape with all the possible variations and inclinations. Life that is a biological growth but also a multiplicity of dimensions that are measured not only with historical time and with geographical space, with linguistic horizons and cultural forms, but also with manifestations of human communication, including emotional and affective ones (Fadda; 2016). The great test for the subject, of every age and condition, is always the moment of pain and suffering, a time of emotional annihilation and inner darkening. Among the feelings is the pain that puts at risk the survival of man, his ability to resist, to build, to continue.

Whether it is the pain due to abandonment, separation, failure or the loss of a loved one, it does not make much difference. It is a matter of constructing a space for reflection within the pedagogical knowledge that has as its object the pain and the suffering of the person in its infinite shades and nuances in order to put into practice educational actions and interventions. A silence, that of pedagogy, which produces a deafening noise, which screams louder than any other voice, because it is the human cry, and at the same time inhuman, of those who feel fearful, helpless, unheard.

## 2. To educate suffering

If pedagogy is a discipline that recognizes in the future the privileged dimension of its action, and if the words utopia, project, perspective and change constitute fundamental elements of educational practice, education is the hope given to the subject not only to prepare to face the trials of life but to go through moments of crisis and, therefore, to overcome pain, through the construction of meaningful paths (Mapelli, 2006). Education and hope, in fact, have in common the dimension of the future, the time that will be, in which education can be seen, and that particular aspect of education, as well as evidence of the merits of hope nourished in a precise time and with respect to a specific fact and that today, or in the *hic et nunc* of both education and hope. They have the propulsive centre from which every action and reflection starts, aimed at favoring the growth, development and emotional holding of the subject (Galeazzi, 2004).

Bertolini (1988) describes education as the process of human formation, understood both as an individual and as a group, in the direction of a slow but authentic discovery and clarification of oneself, or of the peculiar, physical, mental and spiritual characteristics. Education means every intentional and therefore conscious action wanted by the adult (and society) to help the child grow and develop harmoniously, in view of a progressive enrichment and strengthening of his biological, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions; in order



to favour his positive and therefore active and critical integration in the environment in which he lives.

Whatever the goal of educational action, it becomes authentic if it produces a modification whose reverberation spreads over the entire existence of the person to whom it is addressed. The ultimate task of education is, in fact, to expand the dimensions of living and, thus, from a certain point of view, every situation or moment in the existence of man, every practice, can be intrinsically educational. Demetrio (1988) in this regard states that the greatness and at the same time the poverty of education lies in rooting itself in the immense complexity of life while Erbetta (2005) recognizes the equivalence between education and existence. Certainly, education cannot always coincide with life, because some important aspects of life cannot be understood completely by means of a teaching. An act of the will, as in the case of pain, of a sudden event that falls down on the subject disturbing him in depth, but it is nonetheless irrefutable that education has its *raison d'être* and its ultimate meaning precisely in the existence of man in his living life. The latter arises, at the same time, within and outside the 'natural' flow of existence, in fact, education comes from life and returns to it, but after being detached from it as to reduplicate it within an area of experience distinct from immediate life and not for this is less vital, such as to sink its roots into it while at the same time tending to distance itself from it.

The complex relationship between education and life inevitably calls into question the concept of experience, and therefore Dewey's thought, as a valiant concept, *trait d'union*, between the events that constitute the life of the subject and their possible educational meaning. The concept of experience is the main conceptual tool of the American philosopher's thought, in fact, in *Experience and Nature* (1925) he states that two are the dimensions of the experienced things: the first is to have them, the second to know them in order to have them in the most significant and reliable way.

Experience, in Dewey's philosophy, is not separated from knowledge and from reflection, that are indispensable and decisive actions to reach experience itself. An experience that has its own intrinsic historicity, since each individual experience is situated in a continuum in which the formative event of each one is realized. No experience can be considered on its own, independent from the other ones, but all together constitute the history of the subject who builds and becomes himself through them. However, living is not enough to have an experience, because an event becomes an experience when the person makes it his own, intentionally. Moreover, this concept demonstrates all its validity in the subject's painful situations; it is before the tragic events that interrupt the usual linearity of everyday life that the deterioration of experience manifests itself in the most dramatic manner (Mapelli, 2006).

In fact, these events introduce into the biography of the individual a discontinuity that calls for the effort to acquire new meanings. Gadamer (1983) states that when we say we have had some experience; we mean that so far, we had not seen things correctly and that now we know better how they are. The negativity of the experience has a particularly constructive sense. In addition, such experiences, states the German philosopher, initiate a process of demodulation, of redefining identity, from which the subject comes out transformed.

However, there is a risk that the work of critical review to which these events lead to remains unanswered due to the difficulty in making the experience one's own. And so, on the one hand education does not automatically coincide with life and experience, it is something in which we are potentially immersed but which, at the same time, we risk of never having. It is in the gap that exists between event and experience that educational action finds its *raison d'être*.

The educational experience is the intentional action through which the subject appropriates back his experience, through which all existential questions acquire meaning. According to this issue, Mapelli (2006) states, education comes to coincide with a real elaboration exercise, an intentional practice of existential hermeneutics.

Education has the future as its dimension, which is a temporal segment, a ray of action that, although rooted in today, from which it starts, has the 'verification of results' at a later time, as well as the hope. Aristotele conceives it as an act of the will that is born from a virtuous habit, which potentially tends to reach a future good that is difficult but not impossible to achieve.

In this behaviour, it is necessary that the good to be obtained is well defined as well as the mean to achieve it. For this reason, hope refers not only to the objective good towards which the will tends, but also to what one trusts to get it. And in this regard Fromm (2002) states that if a tree that does not receive light bends its trunk in the direction of the sun, we cannot claim that the tree hopes, because the hope in a man is linked to the feelings and the awareness that the tree does not have.

The expectation of the future that is typical of both hope and education, specifically of an education in suffering, which through a process of awareness of the subject to pain. This awareness of pain considered as universal and non-singular can help the subject to resist the tests of life through ways of processing pain and containing and managing suffering capable of allowing the subjective appropriation (meaning) of lived experience. Only through education, in its being preparation, accompaniment, care, it is in fact possible for the subject to understand the pain. This can be possible by providing knowledge in a pedagogical-educational sense and in opposition to the prevailing culture of the media. Moreover, helping in the case of a painful event, to start the process of acceptance and elaboration through dialogue, externalization of emotions and feelings, sharing of experience; to situate the event beyond the contingent, and accompanying him, with appropriate educational methods and tools. An educational commitment aimed at encouraging the awareness of the subject and giving perspective to that particular painful event considering it an important part of being and becoming, a peculiar trait of taking shape (Iaquinta, 2014).

The experience of pain, says Mapelli (2006), is one of those experiences that, even though it is delicate and difficult to elaborate, it is possible for the subject through education and before, if avoided or postponed, it is expressed in a pathological way. It is by fully assuming its hermeneutical task with regard to the events that point out human existence, that education can help transformation, preparing and accompanying those difficult changes that, happening against the will of the subject, create a state of suffering and disorientation.

The commitment of pedagogy, and specifically of a pedagogy of pain, is therefore to recognize and accept the dimension of pain in the educational experience and imagine, hypothesize, build, modalities and practices that allow the subject to give name and voice to the pain to go through it.

It is not possible to pedagogically conceal the present and increasingly widespread social pain, nor to continue to show hesitancy and excessive timidity in dealing with the issue of pain and its problems with the proper tools of education, especially in the face of knowledge and practices that try to claim as their own the exclusivity of the path and the treatment of the subject in moments of crisis of existence.

It is typical of education to «accompany the subject along the vital path by punctuating the critical moments, detecting fractures and hiatuses, highlighting scraps and strident sides. In this sense education as the constitution of the subject has also always been a powerful counterweight to the solitude of the subject;

born as a project of social integration, it shows the subject that the community is always present, not so much behind him but inside him» (Mantegazza, 2004: 50).

Integrating the pain into the subject's life, making him aware of the possibility of crossing it, is a task that belongs to pedagogy since it is evident the educational responsibility in helping the subject to manage the delicate phases and moments of existential crisis, also dialoguing with other knowledge fields.

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## Gender and Education, Slow Progress: Paradoxes, Controversies and Missed Solutions

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Even today, being a man rather than a woman significantly affects all aspects of educational and professional paths. A large literature has shown two central aspects in the relationship between gender, educational paths and work-related outcomes. On the one hand, a consolidated fact is that which shows how female students outperform male students in almost all indicators of school and academic success, both in terms of performance and completion of the various stages of the training course (Buchuman et al., 2008). Girls as young as 10 and 15, already have more homogeneous and superior skills than men, with a gap growing with age (Liu, Wilson, 2009). These differences also correspond to a different hierarchy of values between males and females, according to which academic and school success are better for girls, while male students are more devoted to sporting and professional successes (Greene, De Baker, 2004).

On the other hand, however, important gender differences persist with regard to the choice of study programs based, also, on future job expectations. In Italy, for example, art schools, classical high schools, linguistic and human sciences have a high rate of feminization, unlike technical and professional institutes, which see a clear prevalence of males. These differences end up inevitably conditioning the choice of university degree courses. As Barone (2010) has shown, the imbalance between males and females in the different degree courses shows a remarkable stability of gender segregation at European level. Segregation characterized, today as in the past, by the preference for scientific studies for boys and for humanistic ones for girls.

An explanation to the persistence of these differences can certainly be traced back to the role that, even today, gender stereotypes seem to have in addressing the educational choices of boys and girls in view of their future professional and social position. These stereotypes are based on a «hyper-simplified and generalizing construction of roles deemed appropriate for the two genders» (Leccardi, 2007: 233). The transmission of stereotypes takes place through mass media and relations with peers, but the parental couple plays a primary role, especially in the transmission of gender stereotypes. In particular, the father's attitude and behaviour seem to have a greater impact than the mother's, probably due to the fact that the father has a more differentiated behaviour depending on the gender of his own children. Also, through observation of their parents, boys and girls between three and five years of age know exactly who usually carries out certain activities (Signorella et. al., 1993). From a young age, boys and girls imagine their professional future in a highly differentiated way (Farina, Genova, 2016). In a study conducted in Italy among middle school students (Dalla Zuanna et. al., 2009), a clear preference for careers involving support and responsibility in the care of others emerged in the female students; recognizing themselves in the role of caregivers, they want to be doctors, paediatricians, psychologists, nurses, teachers. The jobs desired by the male

students, on the other hand, are consistent with the professional skills commonly recognized by men: technical ability, but also status and social visibility. As for long-term expectations, while boys expect to earn more money than women and have prestigious careers (Furnham, Wilson, 2011), girls are more oriented towards building a comfortable life and fulfilling their individual interests (Marini et al., 1996). Psychosocial studies have found in girls a greater fear of success and a stronger motivation to avoid failure (Pomerantz et al., 2002; Monaci et al., 2012).

The resistance of these stereotypes and their repetition in space and, most importantly, in time, can be traced back to the fact that they are hardly perceived as discriminatory. As Charles and Bradley (2002) note, to the parents the son and daughter are the same, but different. Their differences are perceived as natural and harmless. The processes of social construction of these differences are almost unknown to the social conscience, as well as their possible consequences on the scholastic and working future of children. Parents who push their daughter towards a humanistic high school and their son towards an industrial-technical institute do not feel like they are discriminating, even though, in fact, the girl is directed onto a study path that probably opens up less employment prospects. The tension between gender stereotypes and equal opportunities remains in the background, to the benefit of the persistence of the formers (Barone, 2010).

As mentioned, the reproduction of these stereotypes takes place, above all, in the family environment where a significant role is played by the material and symbolic resources held by the parents. The different positions of social stratification correspond, first of all, to a different attitude towards the educational system, as well as a different inclination to invest in it, to guarantee a better future for children (Boudon, 1979; Breen, Goldthorpe, 1997). Cappellari (2006) has shown, for example, how the family background, especially the parents' educational qualifications, clearly conditions the choice of the children's high schools, the probability of their future enrolment in university and their chances of obtaining a degree. Those who have parents with high levels of education are more likely to enrol in high school, to attend and complete university, and to achieve good grades at all levels. The higher the parents' educational level, the greater the importance intrinsically attributed to education itself. At the same time, students belonging to working-class families show an interest for the purposes of cultural growth and deepening of their own interests that is decidedly lower than that expressed by the members of the upper class.

Moreover, other studies have emphasized that the ambitions of the students are largely conditioned by their social origins. Young people belonging to the upper classes have a greater inclination to personal success than young people belonging to the working class; middle-class young people evaluate negatively the execution of an activity, and among the youngsters of the working class and of families with a modest cultural background a more marked functional orientation towards work prevails (Jackson, 2008).

From a gender perspective, the influence of the family of origin on the career choices and expectations of children has been at the centre of 'career development studies' since the 1960s. These studies have considered, mainly, the 'paternal' socio-economic status, while the 'maternal' variables were used only after the increasingly frequent and stable entry of women into the labour market. Russell and Sabel (1997) stressed, however, the importance of considering both the gender of the parent and the gender of the child, keeping the four possible dyads separated. According to this perspective, the father-son dyad is the one that shows the strongest relationship. In fact, the paternal variables weigh more heavily on the professional aspirations of the males than the maternal

ones. The maternal and paternal variables, instead, show more complex interactions on the aspirations of daughters. On the one hand, the employment of mothers outside the home is closely linked to daughters working outside the home, being more career-oriented and having a broader and more equal attitude towards gender roles (Mannheim, Seger, 1993). On the other hand, however, even the father plays a crucial role in the employment path of girls. For example, paternal occupation seems to influence the employment status reached by daughters (Huang, Sverze, 2007) more than maternal employment. Furthermore, although young women are more likely to pursue non-traditional careers when their mothers have non-traditional careers (Zuckerman, 1981), this probability increases if support is offered by the family and, in particular, if it comes from the males of the family, first among all the father (Houser, Garvey, 1983).

A recent study conducted among university students in Italy (Carbone, Monaci, 2015) revealed the primary influence of the father figure on the professional expectations of the children, both male and female, especially in coincidence with a high occupational prestige of the parent. In these cases, in the higher social class families, the processes of social inheritance of the professions begin at a young age through the transmission, not only of human and social wealth linked to a profession, but also of values and impressions of work in general (Corak, Piraino, 2011). It would be very interesting to further investigate this aspect to understand the processes of transmission from fathers to daughters related to the type of professions of the formers. In fact, it is in these circumstances that the transmission of work-related values would seem to result, more frequently, in counter-stereotypical attitudes on the part of girls.

As suggested by the theory of social roles (Archer, 1996), gender differences are socially determined, since beliefs, expectations and abilities possessed by individuals are conditioned both by stereotypes that make such differences highly resistant to change, and by social institutions, which incorporate and mirror the traditional sexed division of roles, thus supporting its repetition. It therefore happens that, for example, the stereotypical idea that women are more inclined to care services that are not very specialized, the fact that these services are often provided free of charge due to affection and / or sensitivity and are not associated with a market value, not only ended up confining generations of women in domestic work, but dragged many feminized employment branches, such as nurses, nursery school teachers, social workers and so on to low incomes and short careers (Mingione, Pugliese, 2002). On the other hand, the idea that male professional paths must necessarily lead to success, money and power translates into pressing working expectations on the part of the boys, inevitably conditioning their educational and professional choices even at the expense of personal preferences, tastes and orientations.

Therefore, the results of the numerous researches mentioned above underline how the persistence in the labour market of allocative mechanisms based on gender roles and cognitive inertia towards gender stereotypes, above all in the family, perform a regulatory function that severely limits the choice of future work within a limited and socially determined range of options.

In this as well as in other areas of social life, the pacification of relations between the sexes that took place in recent decades (Farina, 2013), ended up obscuring important contradictions, which are still present. For example, the satisfaction with the best female school performances, often present in the public debate but also in the academic context, has limited the possibility of adequately reflecting on the profound differences and inequalities that, even today, characterize the working environments and career opportunities of women and men and on the mechanisms underlying their reproduction. These mechanisms,

as clearly shown in this study, refer to the predominant role played by gender stereotypes in the school and educational orientation of young people.

Therefore, the suggestion that comes from the various studies is to keep the attention alive on the relevance that, still today, the gender stereotypes have in influencing the educational choices, especially at a young age, thus making desirable the implementation of scholastic orientation that addresses and supports the choices of students in terms of talents, skills and truly personal aspirations, in a perspective of real expansion of opportunities.

To what extent a girl who does not choose the scientific high school or a technical institute, is conditioned by the common and widespread conviction of male superiority in mathematics? Or is she conditioned by the fact that math is of little use for her possible future career?

Raising expectations and in general freeing girls, but also boys, as much as possible from those powerful stereotypical influences seems to be the only way to intervene at the base of the processes of reproduction of structural inequities still rooted in the labour market.

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## Sociological Approach to the Influence of Gender Stereotypes in Sport Education

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**Keywords:** *Gender, Sport, Gender Stereotypes, Sport Education*

### Introduction

Given the importance of sport as an element of social and cultural cohesion, Spanish regulations consider it as one of the activities of national interest with greater roots and capacity for mobilization (Law 10/1990, of October 15, on Sport, in BOE 249 to 10/17/1990). This law considers sport as a fundamental element in the educational system, corrector of social imbalances, as well as a practice that contributes to equality. Therefore, the Law of Promotion and General Coordination of Scientific and Technical Research (13/1986 LFCGICT in BOE 93 of 18/04/1986) and the Superior Council of Sports reflected in their statutes the obligation to boost scientific research in sports. In addition, the Organic Law for the Effective Equality of Women and Men includes explicit references to the need for equality in sport (Art. 29, LOIEMH 3/2007), highlighting the obligation of all public programs to incorporate the principle of real and effective equality in the development of sport, in addition to the development of specific programs by the Government for the promotion of women's sports.

Likewise, physical education plays an important role in the secondary education curriculum, included in the Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (LOMCE 8/2013, in BOE 295, of 10/12/2013). As well as Royal Decree 1105/2014, which establishes the basic curriculum of Compulsory Secondary and High School Education (in BOE at 03/01/2015) where they point to Physical Education as a compulsory subject to promote a healthy lifestyle and balanced; favour personal and social development; improve and preserve people through control and understanding of their motor skills and the environment. Its importance for the healthy development of young people is pointed out, while its value is recognized in the promotion of active citizenship fostered by teamwork, fair play, and respect for the rules. In the Canary Islands, the new Canary Sports Law will include the regularization of sport, recognizing the need to professionalize and integrating the gender perspective in a transversal way. Therefore, the Fourth provision of the draft, entitled *Promotion of equality*, covers the obligation to promote positive actions to facilitate and promote equality in sport.

The impact of sport does not go unnoticed by the Office of Sport for Development and Peace of the United Nations (UNOSDP, 2015), or the European Commission (2007) who recognize the importance of sport as a fundamental tool to promote education, health, development and peace. The sports practice reproduces values related to the body, hygiene, control and, in general, the corporeal image, around which the sports market develops: clubs, associations, facilities, clothing and specialized materials, television programs, etc. (Duret, 2012; Rodríguez Díaz, 2008; Gasparini, 2000).

However, despite the sociocultural, educational and institutional importance of sport, the studies carried out by the Ministry of Education reflect that both sports practice and the professional sports field maintain gender biases (MECD, 2017). It is thought that the legislation on gender equality is not applied correctly and that there may be different types of obstacles that may be contributing to

these biases. This doctoral thesis aims precisely to contribute to the location of these barriers that prevent further development of sport in equality. The objective is specified in the educational scenario, as this is an area considered very influential both to transmit sports values and practices to new generations, as well as to reproduce or reduce gender gaps and inequalities, present and future of more generations.

## 1. State of the art

The European Commission (2007) recognizes sport as one of the activities most practiced in Europe. As a social phenomenon, sociology considers sport an activity whose limits are difficult to define because it is strongly integrated into everyday life and with its own identity (García Ferrando *et al.*, 2009). Sport forms identity ideals and reproduces cultural values of great symbolic, ideological and economic relevance, being an important socializing agent (Daudes, 2014; Pujadas *et al.*, 2011; García Ferrando *et al.*, 2009; Rodríguez Díaz, 2008; Elias, Dunning, 1992; Blanchard, Cheska, 1986). Current Spanish regulations consider sport as one of the activities of national interest and as a fundamental element in the educational system due to its capacity for mobilization, social cohesion, corrector of social imbalances, as well as a practice that contributes to equality (Law 10/1990, of Sports, in BOE 249 to 10/17/1990). Due to its great effectiveness in resolving conflicts and as a socializing agent there are programs directed by the United Nations Office for Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP, 2015) where sport is used as a tool to promote education, health, development and peace in countries around the world. The institutional relevance of sports practice is related to its great capacity to reproduce identity and body ideals. These ideals are not exempt from symbolic burdens that reinforce gender stereotypes in society; for example, those of strong and virile men and thin and elegant women (Duret, 2012; Rodríguez Díaz, 2008; Gasparini, 2000; Fasting *et al.*, 2000). Given a scenario of previous inequality the Organic Law for Effective Equality of Women and Men (Art.29. LOIEMH 3/2007) makes explicit reference to the need for equality in sport. There are numerous investigations that reflect the undervaluation that women experience in sports, (Lantillon, 2009; Fasting *et al.*, 2000). Since childhood, elements of inequality are detected despite the fact that physical education is compulsory for girls and boys from the age of 6 in schools. Still, the parents tend to consider that sport is more important for the development of their sons than their daughters, which has a direct relationship with the perception that girls and boys have of their own abilities, as well as with the construction of identity and therefore of future expectations (García Cuesta, Sáinz, 2013; Lantillon, 2009; Fredericks, Eccles, 2005). Sports jargon is also overloaded with allusions to physical and psychic abilities. For example, women are understood as weaker and less gifted by nature for sport than men and, on the other hand, men are valued as stronger and more gifted for these types of activities (Lantillon, 2009; Fasting *et al.*, 2000).

Various theories confirm the absence of biological differences that explain the unequal academic competencies that boys and girls develop throughout primary and secondary education: the expectation-value theory of the choice of studies linked to achievement (Wigfield, Eccles, 2000; Eccles, Parsons *et al.*, 1983), the stereotype threat theory (Steele, Aronson, 1995), or the gender similarity hypothesis (Hyde, 2005). In addition to that, the study in which this doctoral thesis is framed, called *Challenges of the persistence of gender roles and stereotypes in choosing higher education from a longitudinal perspective. Role of families and teachers* (2014a), directed by Milagros Sáinz Ibañez and funded

by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (State Plan), notes that the assessment of immediate surroundings and most influential (teachers and family) about the capabilities of child correlates with self-perceptions and decisions regarding their future expectations. For example, teachers' belief that girls are less good in mathematics leads to that girls consider themselves less good in this area and do not identify with work related to mathematics, such as technology or engineering. In the same sense, it happens with boys in the case of languages, which coerces their choice in careers related to science in education and humanities. It is concluded that girls are professionally oriented towards careers congruent with the female gender role (such as nursing, teaching, pedagogy and humanities), while boys are more related to careers related to technologies, information technology and engineering (Women's Institute, 2016; Sáinz, 2014b; García Cuesta, Saínz, 2013). In the same way, sports practice maintains male roles linked to competitiveness and achievement. The gender studies in sport are based on the idea that the differences in sports participation between men and women do not have a biological but social origin (Rozenwajn Acheroy, 2014; 2016). A previous theoretical analysis has indicated that: the institutionalization of physical activity and sport have an androcentric and sexist origin that prevails to this day; likewise, sport and physical activity are active and determining factors when defining themselves in society and confirm bodies and subjectivities; Finally, sport and physical activity reinforce the stereotype of women as 'weak', in a binary frame that opposes each other attributes associated with gender stereotyping.

## **2. Objectives and approach**

The purpose of this thesis project is to make an approximation to the predictable gender inequalities present in the formal sports education of both secondary school students and those of professional training centres. Special attention will be given to the analysis of sports education in both types of centres and, in the case of professional sports education, sports with different levels of female and male participation will be attended, which in turn present considerations generated within the cultural imaginary. From these considerations, sports chosen for analysis in the field of sports vocational education will be a) football and tennis (sports male predominance) - b) Swimming (equal representation of men and women in practice) - c) Gymnastics and volleyball (with high female representation).

The initial research question of this project is based on whether gender stereotypes that can be found in the current educational system are related to and have an influence on self-perceptions of competencies of girls and boys as well as the impact it might have on their future career choices. To that end, the methodology combines various techniques of social research of qualitative and quantitative nature, adapted to the different contextual considerations of the educational environment of secondary education and sports clubs. The methodology includes group interviews of 4 (2 boys and 2 girls)(n=11), in-depth interviews with teachers, coaches and directors (n=11), surveys undertaken in three secondary schools in Barcelona, Madrid and Gran Canaria (Canary Islands) (n=450), and it is expected to do at least 1 focus group. In addition, participatory observation technique will be applied in every centre in order to observe if there are elements that might reproduce gender stereotypes and therefore, might be enhancing the gender gap.

### 3. Preliminary observations

There are no final conclusions yet as the data are still being processed and the fieldwork is not done, but there are some preview results. Even though laws tend to equality, data and previous research reveal a clear gap into the practice in general in between women and man in the field of sport. Not only in the practice level in the way that boys seem to see themselves as better in sport and tend to have more intentions of professional career in sports, but also in the kind of sport practiced. There is still a huge gap in the sports considered as masculine and feminine. However, boys and girls interviewed so far do not seem to consider the difference in between them as the result of physical limitations. Instead they seem to explain it as a difference of interest; girls will say that they could be as good if they wanted to and boys will say that they do not think there is a biological difference after all. On the other hand, teachers and adult in general believe there is a clear biological difference that explains the gap.

Another interesting preview is that there seem to be a clear difference in future expectancies related to sport; boys will consider the possibility of being a professional athlete while girls will consider a more 'responsible' option, like studying at university even if they are actually considered valuable in their own sport. This suggest that the social responsibility seem to be stronger in women, while boys will consider taking the risk, a way of 'chasing the dream'. This can be related to the gender stereotype of men as competitive, audacious and courageous and women as domestic, stable and responsible. The data analysed to date might lead to the following hypothesis: it looks like adults have more integrated stereotypes (physical education teachers specially) than their students. Boys and girls will see that there is a gap, but they generally do not consider this difference as determinant. They usually consider it as a lack of practice or interest while teachers see a big gap in between boys and girls in terms of interest but also in terms of biological capacities. Almost all physical education teachers consider boys better at sport than girls and explain this difference in biological terms. Therefore, girls could never be as good as boys.

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## Promoting Active Citizens in School Communities: The Importance of Well-Trained Teachers on Service-Learning

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### Introduction: Schools and democratic culture

The promotion of a democratic culture in schools is a fundamental step to make democracy crucial in every citizen's lifetime. In order to foster active participants in democratic processes since childhood, education institutions need to be shaped as places where students might be able to achieve democratic competences (Council of Europe, 2018b).

Nevertheless, the education system plays the crucial role to teach pupils knowledge and competences essential for personal development, future professional career, and democratic citizenship. However, such process is not easy, since schools have also to deal with issues related to current threats to society (e.g., violent radicalisation; socioeconomic crisis) while maintaining the core democratic values (Council of Europe, 2016).

In this framework, literature has frequently highlighted the important contribution of teachers in affecting the quality of democratic education in schools (Dadvand, 2015). As Howes and colleagues suggest (2009), educators instill schools' values in students, in order to make them able to participate actively and democratically in classroom. For these reasons, the Council of Europe is providing teachers with a basic set of skills addressed to teach students how to live together in diverse mixed societies. A key element – and a main challenge as well - is teaching pupils how to think, in order to sustain democratic values and to foster a peaceful coexistence between different cultural groups (Council of Europe, 2016).

Since its establishment, the Council of Europe has always worked to promote democratic citizenship and intercultural dialogue, through its commitment in human rights education (Jackson, 2017). Recently, by means of the campaign *Free to Speak, Safe to Learn. Democratic Schools for All*, the Council of Europe has acknowledged the key role of the education system in building and sustaining a culture of democracy in today's societies (Council of Europe, 2018a). Indeed, schools across Europe keep on promoting the main values and principles of the Council: democracy, human rights and the rule of law (Council of Europe, 2012). Following this, the competences for Democratic Culture are a useful tool to be taught and are suitable to be adapted to the needs and cultural features of all European countries, in order to train students to become active in a democratic society (Council of Europe, 2016).

### 1. A model of the competences for democratic culture



Within the project 'Competences for Democratic Culture and Intercultural Dialogue', the Council of Europe (2018b) developed a conceptual model of the competences, whose aim is to help manage different intercultural situations properly and in a democratic manner. Educators may support pupils to learn and practice competences and empower them to act and behave competently as democratic citizens.

Such model describes four main dimensions: *i)* Values; *ii)* Attitudes; *iii)* Skills; *iv)* Knowledge and critical understanding.

Twenty competences are included in the model, which consist of psychological resources aimed to be employed to deal with demands and opportunities triggered in culturally diverse societies.

In more detail, the first dimension 'Values' refers to main principles that might be mobilized in order to pursue relevant goals in individuals' life. In particular, they represent core indicators useful to guide: an evaluation process, a planning of behavior, the reaching of a decision, an attempt to influence someone, a defense to opinions/attitudes/behaviors. Values comprised in the model are: 'Valuing human dignity and human rights', 'Valuing cultural diversity', 'Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law'.

The second dimension 'Attitudes' concerns beliefs, emotions, an evaluation process and a subsequent behavior towards a person, a group, an object etc. It comprises: 'Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices', 'Respect', 'Civic-mindedness', 'Responsibility', 'Self-efficacy', and 'Tolerance of ambiguity'.

The third dimension 'Skills' represents the ability to think and act in an efficient and adaptive way, in order to pursue a specific aim. Skills listed are: 'Autonomous learning skills', 'Analytical and critical thinking skills', 'Skills of listening and observing', 'Empathy', 'Flexibility and adaptability', 'Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills', 'Co-operation skills', 'Conflict-resolution skills'.

Finally, the fourth dimension 'Knowledge and critical understanding' concerns the information individuals have about a matter (knowledge), and an active and critical reflection devoted to the understanding of meanings (critical understanding).

Such dimension consists of: 'Knowledge and critical understanding of the self', 'Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication', and 'Knowledge and critical understanding of the world'.

In order to train pupils able to respond competently and in a democratic way, the Council of Europe encourages to foresee several dimensions of the model as the goals of the same educational paths and actions.

## **2. Service-Learning for Democratic Culture**

As described above, the competence model includes some competences that meet the aims of the Service-Learning educational approach.

Indeed, Service-Learning (S-L) is an innovative teaching approach that combines both students' commitment and the academic learning to positively contribute to the society through an outstanding service for the local community (Guarino, Zani, 2017). The development of a planned experience within the community allows students to achieve knowledge and new skills in a specific organization. On the other hand, S-L allows the community to strengthen the social network with local educational institutions (McIlrath et al., 2012). This aspect concerns the reciprocity between service and learning, where both parties - the organization receiving the service and the students who learn - express

their own needs and offer resources to implement during the S-L experience (Vigilante, 2014).

A clear definition of S-L standard indicators was provided by the 3-year Erasmus+ Project 'Europe Engage - Developing a culture of civic engagement through service-learning within higher education in Europe' (Project Reference: 2014-1-ES01-KA203-004798), and helped identify S-L compared to alike experiences (e.g., apprenticeship). Such indicators are described in Table 1.

**TABLE. 1. Quality Standards Indicators of Service-Learning**

INDICATORS
1. Meet Actual Real Needs
2. Partnership
3. Reciprocity
4. Defined goals
5. Link to Curriculum
6. Civic learning
7. Learning in Real World Settings
8. Students' active participation
9. Facilitate systematic Student Reflection
10. Ensure support and coaching for students
11. Offer adequate time frames
12. Include evaluation and documentation
13. Values transdisciplinarity
14. Sustainability

source: Europe Engage (2016)

One standard indicator and an essential aspect for the planning of S-L projects is the partnership, that Himmelman defines as an organization of organizations that work collectively for a shared goal (Himmelman, 2002). In this regard, Himmelman identifies four possible strategies to build upon each other a partnership: networking, coordinating, cooperating, and collaborating. Networking represents an exchange of information to pursue a shared goal and is the most informal and less time-consuming bond. The second strategy is coordinating, where all partners share activities and projects to reach the same purpose. The third strategy is cooperating, which comprises a sharing of resources of all parties involved to achieve the common goal. The fourth strategy is collaborating, where the sharing of risks, responsibilities, and rewards increases partners' opportunity to reach the common purpose. The latter foresees high time commitment and levels of trust. Building stable partnerships is an essential step in order to shape worthy S-L experiences.

Another fundamental aspect in S-L is reflexivity. This process fosters the understanding of social problems that students may encounter during the project and supports them in achieving skills useful to face such community challenges. Reflection plays an important role during different moments of S-L, allowing to improve critical thinking, active engagement and to increase a mindedness on social issues (Guarino *et al.*, 2019). Teachers and community members should guide this process and provide support to students, in order to promote an active and consistent reflection in them (Europe Engage, 2016).

Based on these considerations, we can highlight some core aspects of S-L that meet the goals of the competence model developed by the Council of Europe. Firstly, S-L aims to promote the achievement of knowledge, values, skills, competences and attitudes associated with civic engagement, improving a civic-mindedness (Guarino, Zani, 2017). Secondly, consistent with the competence model, S-L is also addressed to enhance self-efficacy of students (Weiler *et al.*, 2013), on the one hand, and to increase critical thinking and responsibility on

the other hand (Baldwin *et al.*, 2007), thanks to moments devoted to reflection and active engagement.

### 3. To train teachers and educators on Service-Learning

In Italy, S-L has been implemented in diverse contexts and communities. In particular, some experiences have also been developed in partnership with educational institutions (Meringolo *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, schools are the starting context where S-L projects are planned in order to allow students to learn and apply academic skills in local communities, providing a meaningful service. Against this backdrop, it is essential to equip teachers with training based on not only the theoretical background and the standard indicators of high-quality S-L, but also the existing good practices. In this regard, literature highlighted the opportunity to design S-L projects at individuals, schools, and community levels (Marullo, Edwards, 2000). Differences among these kinds were analyzed, and recently, Millican and Bourner (2014) applied such projects and identified advantages and challenges of each design (Table 2).

**TABLE. 2.** *Advantages and challenges of different kinds of Service-Learning projects.*

<i>Project type</i>	<i>Student designed</i>	<i>Faculty designed</i>	<i>Community designed</i>
Characteristics	Project designed by an individual student or by a small group, based on an issue they care about and often then located with a community group.	Project designed to fit needs of a particular discipline or module, often in partnership with a community organisation.	A brief for a role or activity designed by a community group and advertised among a range of relevant students.
Advantages	Often deep commitment to a project, learning associated with project cycles, needs assessment, planning delivery, evaluation and budgeting.	Likely to have strong links between practical and theoretical elements, could be designed to incorporate whole group and to link smoothly between taught, face-to-face and community-based elements.	Generally based in the organisation and reflecting its mission and values, simulates the process of finding employment in application and interview, requires individual students to adapt to organisational cultures.
Disadvantages	More suited to third years or postgraduates than first- or second year students, higher risk of going wrong, not necessarily fully representative of community need or of discipline-related learning outcomes.	More oriented towards the needs of the institution and the course, less challenging to individual students who often have less opportunity to exercise their own initiative.	May be harder to make links between theory and practice or to fit into a university programme.
Example	School safety campaign, making a promotional video.	Drama workshop, mentoring programme.	Staffing an advice centre, setting up a database.

Source: Millican, Bourner (2014)

In particular, a S-L student-designed project is planned by a single student or a group and is focused on a matter of their interest which is observed in the local community. Students are generally highly involved and committed and have the opportunity to learn more about the planning of the project phases, the needs assessment, and the evaluation process. However, such projects are difficult, may encounter higher risk to fail and might not fully fit the community needs and the learning outcomes.

On the other hand, a S-L faculty-designed project is organized to meet the needs of an academic course or module, in partnership with a community institution. These projects present a link between theory and practice, and include cognitive, relational and community aspects. For what concerns the weaknesses, such project appears to be more oriented towards the school needs and may provide less opportunity for students to practice and exercise their skills. Finally, a community-designed project is promoted by the local community in order to involve a group of students. In these projects, the main strengths concern the opportunity for students to participate in the organization's context, sharing its mission and values, simulating a real employment. On the contrary, a link between theory and practice, as well as a relation to the academic program, might be missed. In conclusion, teachers and educators interested in carrying out S-L projects with students should take into account such possible projects designs, monitoring strengths and weaknesses of each of them in order to plan an effective S-L experience for pupils. Reflection on these aspects might be a possible focus of a training about the planning of S-L projects.

### *3.1. Training for teachers on Service-Learning: some experiences*

Following the abovementioned considerations, it is essential to train adequately educators to become more aware on S-L approach. For these reasons, in this paragraph we will introduce two training addressed to teachers and educators about S-L projects. A first training aims to increase critical awareness in participants regarding S-L as an educational approach able to promote academic learning and civic engagement in students, preparing them to become active democratic citizens. A theoretical background is described, and teachers are asked to discuss on existent S-L good practices and to reflect on possible projects designs at student/faculty/community levels. Through participatory technique like the World Café (Aldred, 2009), participants also discuss possible strategies to increase the network between the education system and the local community. On the other hand, a second training is focused on the increase of the skills for planning and designing S-L projects tailored on both school and local community needs. Moreover, the training aims to enhance awareness on S-L specific characteristics, purposes and goals (e.g., how to foster critical thinking and active engagement in students).

## **Conclusions**

In summary, the educational system - and teachers - play a crucial role in equipping individuals to increase active citizenship, and schools have to lead the achievement of competences required to make pupils able to participate democratically in intercultural societies (Council of Europe, 2016).

By means of the support and guide of teachers and educators, S-L is an approach that may promote the learning of such competences, increasing students' civic engagement in the society and supporting them to achieve autonomously their goals in life (Guarino, Zani, 2017).

Consequently, equipping teachers with knowledge and competences on S-L quality standards and good practices appears essential. Teachers provided with knowledge and skills will be able to systematize the S-L methods in school communities, using S-L experiences to promote academic learning, critical awareness and competences for democratic culture in all students, in order to empower them to become competent and active democratic citizens (Council of Europe, 2018).

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## Service Learning as Education for Solidarity. An Educational Alternative; An Experience at Some High Schools

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**Keywords:** *Service-Learning, School-Work Alternation, Competence-Based Teaching, Student Protagonists*

### Introduction

Having had direct experience as a school principal during these two years in which the normative L. 107/15 has been in effect in schools with the School-Work Alternation (SWA), and having gotten through the 'experimental' phase entrusted to the spontaneity and initiative of school employees, I feel compelled to make some observations and share with other educators the problems and critical issues which have emerged so far. This brings me to focus attention on significant experiences which were capable of growing through class councils and which did not call for an overlap of the curriculum but instead a portion, a segment of the curriculum, as well as the involvement of several subject areas with the end goal being the promotion of key citizenship skills. These skills are expected at the end of the two-year programme and at the end of the five-year programme by the European Union. and understood to be a 'pass' for European and global citizenship. This is a sector ripe for development and aimed at promoting civic and social skills, which are key citizenship skills, along with 'communication skills' and 'problem-solving skills'.

The need to fulfil a certain number of hours with SWA led the schools and the students (at least during the first year the normative was in effect) towards a frantic search for enough hours without stopping to ask what the real intent of the programme was. On one side, those resistant to change saw the programme as an extra burden which, if emptied of its purpose, made SWA a sort of 21<sup>st</sup>-century apprenticeship. On the other side, the programme was seen as an opportunity to promote miscellaneous activities which had little to do with any eventual future career. As the principal of a school split into four specialisations (Artistic, Classical, Human Sciences and Scientific). I had to bring these two sides closer together by shifting the first group's stringent practicality towards a wider development of human capital and by channelling the second group into more structured projects. This meant developing activities which were specifically tailored to the students' needs by their class council and which were at the same time focused on advancing those life skills which are so essential to becoming adults (Baldacci, 2014; Lotti, Betti, 2018).

Indeed, if, instead of making SWA a didactic methodology with sensemaking significant for learning, we allow it to exist as a miscellany of activities aimed at filling a quota of hours, the project and the planning ability behind promoting life skills essential for getting ahead in this world according to constitutional principles will be lost (Batini, Surian, 2008).

### 1. Service Learning as an opportunity

The experience of service learning can, in my opinion, answer various educational requirements, thanks to its ability to transform students into



protagonists through a 'know how to', a 'putting oneself in play' (helped out by taking part in social work) and by feeling part of something. This is because the students are personally engaged not as spectators but as primary actors, working together with individuals who are part of those organisations juridically responsible, be it an association, a government agency or the community itself. The action of solidarity, which is intrinsic to service learning, calls for activities which respond to community needs. Moreover, the students must have an active role in all phases of the project and what the students do should be inserted in their school curriculum, seeing as advancing civic and social skills cannot possibly be outside of the school's purvey. (Fiorin, 2016)

The experience of service learning thus allows us to get the SWA activity (often understood as merely curricular/scholastic) started, and reduce that gap between theory and practice, between stated and done, and put in motion that virtuous circle inside of which the line between learning and teaching begins to blur, seeing as the student is learning through making himself available for a project of solidarity and at the same time contributing his own personal experience to the project. Below are some notes on past experiences done in collaboration with *Proteo Fare Sapere*, as the association worked with the schools, I run on the *School Work Solidarity* project – a project which gave students the chance to be protagonists, to «learn by doing». (Dewey, 1938)

## 2. Projects actualised 2.1. a.s. 2016-17

The IIS Carducci di Volterra secondary school, where I was principal up until two years ago, realised service-learning experiences in two classes, a third year (Artistic) and a fourth year (Human Sciences). The project involved two class councils and was able to count on significant and precious support from *Proteo Fare Sapere* and scientific coordination from INDIRE researcher Dr Patrizia Lotti. The project involved six schools in the Tuscany region which, by networking together, were able to exchange feedback during each phase of the project. The types of intervention varied from education on legality and on issues of rights (starting with those of employees), to the value of associations and on how to realise fully formed social projects.

The phases were as follows: *i)* Meeting among class council, Dr Lotti and *Proteo* to establish the area of intervention and co-design the activities; *ii)* Meeting with the teachers to define the details of the overall activity and its various steps. The meetings with the two class councils were of strategic importance for motivating participation in the projects and done with an eye on the critical issues mentioned previously, including that of SWA being considered simply a bureaucratic requirement of a quantitative nature. Service learning provides the chance to resolve these issues thanks to the process which creates cross-department teacher-to-teacher alliances, given the inter-disciplinary character of the planned actions. The process also creates student-teacher alliances, since the students are equal partners in designing and realising the service activities of a selected organisation in a certain community. Finally, the process facilitates school-association-territory alliances, since the 'service' offered has social capital returns. A plan of action was established, with all the separate phases well defined, from the co-creation of the project, to its monitoring, evaluation and final documentation.

Among the various paths possible which *Proteo* proposed, the class councils chose itineraries which suited their particular interests. The third-year Artistic students opted for art as narration, as a story, as a form of mediating cross-generational connections, since the action was planned for a retirement home

run by a private social association. The fourth-year Human Sciences students decided to concentrate on kindergartens, as this is the start of the educational process and education is the principal professional destination of Human Sciences graduates. Their project was focused on health and nutrition.

Once the issues and the fields of intervention were settled upon, the class councils concentrated their efforts on structuring the formative modules according to how the skills sets could be divided, identifying the various subject areas involved, the material and human resources required, the recipients of the services, and the methodologies for enabling the students to become more and more the protagonists. We then moved on to activating the actual itinerary, followed by an evaluation of the experience, the promotion of the students involved with the challenge of presenting the project, the publication of the results and final thoughts on the sustainability of the project and the possibility of its continuation.

During the school year, in relation to the various phases of the project, teachers participated in brief but intensive training courses which gave them knowledge on the theory matrix which supports the service-learning experience and, thanks to the INDIRE researcher and the professional association *Proteo Fare Sapere*, allowed them to understand the project as real research combined with action.

From the feedback received as school principal, from the discussions held with class councils who experimented SWA as service learning and from self-evaluation questionnaires, I was able to verify greater interdisciplinary collaboration among teachers and a greater assumption of responsibility for SWA by the class councils, instead of leaving it to the individual, the person of reference and the internal tutor. This is in addition to the fact that it was possible for us to actually become closer (and not just in theory) with the methodological approach of laboratories, using the laboratory-class of life. Moreover, the projects allowed the students to see a 'third path' for SWA. This path goes beyond approaching SWA as merely an obligation with a quota of hours to be fulfilled, just quantifying it all, and planning activities based on occupying time without wondering if all the activities can truly be defined as 'alternative' since they often have little to do with the school curriculum. It also goes beyond the logic which says SWA should be used purely to prepare students for their post-educational entry into the work force. However, the projects were not just about learning of alternatives for SWA, as the programme aimed at upending points of view. Students acquired a new language, that of 'us', of those who feel involved in a project and feel part of something larger, and in which the distinction between teachers and students becomes blurred. The skills learned can potentially help students learn other skills, putting in motion a virtuous system, a guarantee of self-awareness and participated citizenship for our future adults and for the 'overall internal well-being' of a community.

### **3. 2017/18–2018/19**

During the school years 2017-2018, I realised the *School Work Solidarity* project at the school I have been running for the last two years, the secondary school IIS Roncalli in Poggibonsi. The project involved third- and fourth-year classes specialising in tourism in the economics department of the technical school and the project focused on students developing itineraries related to sustainable tourism.

Starting with the assumption that 'School is the territory and the territory is the school', the teaching action set itself the goal of promoting life skills among the students and how what was learned could help learning in other areas.

The organisational phase involved:

- Structuring a questionnaire to solicit from students their concept of 'sustainable tourism';
- Identifying the teachers to involve;
- Identifying the classes to involve;
- Organising a round table with those responsible for the territory.

Students produced: *i*) video on wine production in the territory, working with sector operatives from the territory; *ii*) 3 ecological-artistic itineraries, in collaboration with sector operatives from the territory; *iii*) a recipe book with 'grandma's recipes'.

The students developed operational strategies, as well as a deeper understanding of the potential of the territory in terms of sustainability regarding the product imagined or already being made, and how to promote and distribute it. They also developed strategies for reaching potential 'clients' through specific itineraries such as: *Be young for a day*, Direct distribution, *Social networks*.

The intermediate phase of the project included a moment for giving back to the communities of the school and the territory in which the students became protagonists, and stepping forward as 'prime actors', capable of elaborating ideas and proposals for sustainable tourism in the area where the school is situated.

## Conclusions

Students interpreted their SWA experience in the best way possible, learning the sense of 'giving' and 'receiving'. They used interdisciplinary skills and civic and social skills thanks to the motivational push from feeling 'recognised' and being able to 'appreciate themselves' and 'appreciate others'. The students understood the meaning of 'us', of 'forming a community' and of 'being a community' at school and in the territory. They activated positive relations with the world of associations and the organisations involved in their projects, and these relations did not expire with the end of the itinerary or the end of the school year, as they helped the students discover the value of being altruistic, of volunteer work and of solidarity.

What did the SWA path using the service-learning approach put in motion?

- Greater interdisciplinary collaboration, in an attempt to go beyond the solipsistic SWA approach of the so-called 'single-subject teachers';
- The possibility to experiment and not just theorise the laboratory approach, with the laboratory as a methodological dimension using the laboratory-class of life;
- The integration of SWA into the curriculum, thus going beyond the 'quantitative' logic of fulfilling quotas of hours;
- Greater involvement of the students, whose role as protagonists increased since they were involved in the project right from the start and part of a group. This, thanks to a more mature awareness of the sense of 'giving' and 'receiving' intrinsic to service learning and the sense of 'us', of 'forming a community' and of 'being a community' at school and in the territory.

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## Service-Learning Approach to Citizenship Education and Professional Learning: The ROMunicare Project

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**Keywords:** *Service-learning, Philanthropic model, Non-discrimination principle, Roma camps, Roma inclusion*

### Premise

ROMunicare was a DG JUST action project implemented in Rome between October 2017 and June 2018. European Commission aims to fight against discrimination of Roma on the grounds provided for the Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. With the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), the Charter became binding for the European institutions and the Member States. All the partners of the project were Italian:

- the Institute for Research on Population and Social Policies (IRPPS-CNR) that has a long history in participating European projects in the field of human and political sciences (demography, sociology, economy, education);
- the Municipality of Roma-Capitale represented by the Department of Social Policy, where the Special Office for Roma, Sinti e Caminanti operates under the direction of the Major;
- ARES 2.0, a Roman company specialized in social communication activities, management of projects, social research and training;
- POPÍCA Onlus, an NGO that operates in Italy and Romania, where it deals with street children. On the national territory and in particular in Rome, it provides support services for immigration and Roma inclusion, with particular reference to education on minors.

A large part of the documentation produced during the course and at the end of the project activities is downloadable at the website of the project ([www.romunicare.eu](http://www.romunicare.eu)). Its principal aims were to:

- empower the awareness of Romanian Roma living in Rome in informal (un-authorised) dwellings on their rights and how to actively participate in them;
- train public servants and NGO Operators to human rights and citizenship;
- raise awareness about the importance of diffusion of anti-discrimination procedures through actions and practices and to support the adoption and diffusion of correct procedural action;
- create a dialogue between those targets that usually occupy conflictual positions;
- promote social inclusion following the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategy up to 2020 adopted in Italy by UNAR: *National Strategy for Inclusion of ROMA, Sinti and Caminanti 2101-2020*.

### 1. Social context

There are no shared estimates about the presence of Roma people in Rome. According to official data provided by the Municipality of Rome (see Table 1),

based on the survey carried out in 2017 by the Local Police's Unit for Public Security and Emergencies, the various Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti (hereinafter RSC) settlements in Rome urban area host over 8,500 people.

**TABLE 1. Roma people living in Rome by type of settlements**

Type of settlements/camps	Number	Population	%
Formal/official settlements*	7	4,503	52.1
Tolerated settlements *	11	1,145	13.2
Unauthorized spontaneous settlements*	19	2,144	24.8
Reception centre**	1	100	1.2
Buildings occupied solely by Romani***	2	750	8.7
Total	40	8,642	100.0

Sources: \* Census by the Local Police of Roma Capitale – Public Security and Emergency Unit, Rome, 2017; \*\* Parliamentary Committee of Enquiry on security conditions and decay in cities and their outskirts, Chamber of Deputies, Doc. XX-bis, N. 19, 5 February 2018: 298; \*\*\* Associazione 21 Luglio, 2108: 3.

Formal and tolerated settlements mostly host RSC who are Italian nationals or who come from the former Yugoslavia (and now stateless), whose presence in Italy is longstanding, while informal settlements mostly host Roma people coming from Romania and to a lesser extent from Bulgaria, who have arrived in Italy more recently after the entry of these countries in the EU.

With specific reference to unauthorized camps, other estimates (*Commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sulle condizioni di sicurezza e degrado delle città e delle loro periferie*, 2018) paint quite a different picture from those of the of the above mentioned Local Police's Unit, with a much higher number of settlements (up to 300) but lower overall population (about 1,200 people).

The informal dwellings are located mainly in the territory of the third, ninth and eleventh municipality districts (the municipality of Roma-Capitale is divided in 15 of such districts). The majority of the Romanian Roma in Rome come from urban areas, namely Craiova, Calarasi, Timisoara and Drobeta-Turnu Severin. The predominant religion is Orthodox Christian.

A survey carried out at the beginning of the project highlighted the training needs of both Roma living in informal dwellings and service Operators. About the former, the survey reiterated the existence of an extremely fragile human capital: one out four is illiterate, even if one out of three has either a middle school or a high school diploma; none is university graduate and the 54% of the Roma interviewed (150 people) do not speak Italian. Among the adolescents, there are also a lot of dropout and NEET. As for the Operators, the sample interviewed (114) expressed unfavourable attitudes towards Roma, regardless of the (quite high) level of education, and in particular among the Operators who declared previous work experiences with the Roma.

The inquiry known as 'Mafia Capitale' has negatively affected this social context, fuelling a climate of distrust among the Operators of public services and causing a greater deterioration of the life in Roma camps. There are well-founded fears that all this could compromise the already problematic implementation of the National Strategy for RSC Inclusion and slow down the progressive overcoming of the camps envisaged by the new 'Roma Plan' adopted in 2017 by the Municipality of Rome.

## 2. Theoretical framework

As a *Service learning*, ROMunicare consisted of *Frontal and Mutual Learning activities* for and between public services Operators and Roma people living in informal dwellings based on a *Philanthropic model*, that is «a mechanism for

personal development, as well as of critical thinking» (Hogan, Bayley, 2010: 421). According to Robertson (2000), this model developed three principal attitudes in both Operators and Roma people engaged in the project: reciprocity, reflection-on-reality and reflexivity.

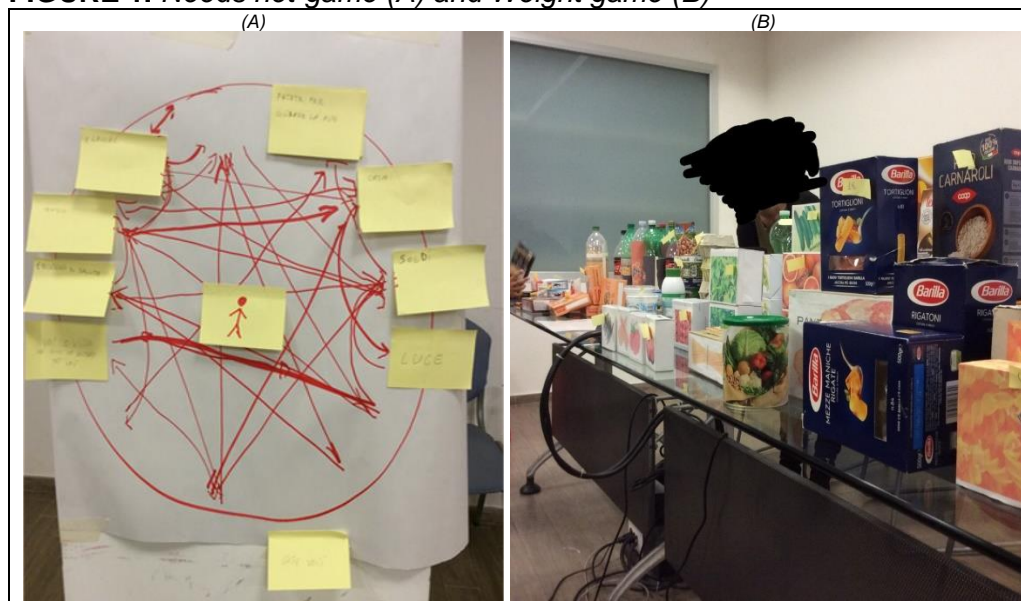
The first implies the 'development of knowledge', and it produced a tension between the theories related to Roma communities, prejudice phenomenon, citizenship and human rights. From this tension came the empowerment process between the researchers and the target groups. Thanks to a more consistent knowledge of the ROMunicare objectives, the second attitude has grown both in the operators and in the Roma people. They began to positively react dealing with the EU principle of non-discrimination and to reflect on the consequences of behaviours not adequate for the purpose to be achieved. These reflection efforts have produced a greater awareness of the Roma and of the Operators about the practices to adopt when they act in public services towards a shared and standardized model for the welcoming of Roma and other disadvantaged categories, in order to overcome biases and stereotypes and to create a favourable social environment for Roma citizenship.

### 3. The results of the Service learning

The training activities developed throughout three separate stages: a first cycle of frontal learning sessions dedicated to the Roma living in informal dwellings, a second action of frontal learning for the Operators of public services, and a final stage in which both the target groups have participated (mutual learning).

Frontal learning with Roma consisted of four meetings during which the following topics were addressed: Identity and prejudice; Needs, rights and responsibilities; Health; School, employment and housing. During this first cycle two tools were used, such as the 'flower game' and the 'needs net-game' (Figures 1), in order to strengthen the identity and subjectivity of the Roma and to promote greater awareness of active participation in citizenship rights.

**FIGURE 1.** *Needs net-game (A) and Weight game (B)*



Frontal learning with Operators has been organized in three meetings during which the following topics were discussed:



- principle of non-discrimination, human rights and integration of minorities;
- non-discrimination practices in the four axes of the European Strategy for the Roma Inclusion: Education, Work, Health and Housing;
- the new 'Roma Plan' and the evaluation of inclusion policies.

The operators were involved in a SWOT analysis (Strength-Weakness-Opportunities-Threats) in order to better understand the system in which they operate and to allow them a greater awareness of the aspects related to Roma inclusion.

Mutual learning, the third phase of training activities, served to create a dialogue between Roma and operators on a renewed basis. In particular, on the basis of the results achieved during frontal learning, this activity focused above all on stimulating the target groups to confront each other on three issues that emerged as the most relevant to favour the inclusion of Roma living in informal dwellings: Access to registered residence; School inclusion; Access to work.

The dialogue between Roma and Operators has developed on the basis of some hypotheses formulated by the project partnership, which has then become guidelines offered to the Municipality of Rome. Each of the aforementioned activities has achieved specific results. Thus, with regard to frontal learning carried out with Roma people, they were:

- awareness and acknowledgment regarding their status as subject of social and citizen right.
- questioning sensitive and discriminatory topics as 'homosexuality' in dwelling context to reduce negative stereotypes between ROMA.
- empowerment of participant women through the health and education issues.
- strong distrust of public authorities.

With reference to the Service learning with Operators, the relevant results were:

- awareness and acknowledgment of European legislation on non-discrimination goals, human rights and Italian Strategy for the Inclusion of RSC.
- lack of a structured link between central departments and municipal structures
- managerial goals poorly shared and too abstract; lack of tools for audit of the results.
- demotivation and discouragement, widespread among the Local Police operators (risks of burnout),
- last but not least, mutual learning highlighted the following results:
- establishment of a dialogue between two communities which historically had been in conflict.
- the residency issue emerged for both of considered targets as crucial question.
- producing new practices of hearing and helping to face the residency issue.
- promoting the implementation of ENI code (European not Registered) in the school system.
- emerging of discretionary and autonomy practices of public servant to deal with informal dwellings in Rome, according to the theory of street-level bureaucracy (Saruis, 2013),
- the incompatibility between fiscal code and ENI code produce exclusion of from health care.
- the introduction of ENI code for the school system could facilitate the inclusion of Roma pupils in the system.

## Conclusions

Although the exogenous factors have slowed down and compromised the implementation of the project, ROMunicare was an opportunity for Roma and Operators to reflect on the social spaces in which they act and come into contact. Many have asked to replicate the project to consolidate the acquired knowledge and to improve the interaction not only between Roma and Operators, but also between the latter and the top figures of the public administration.

The results achieved are encouraging and could help to tackle the numerous problems of inclusion suffered by the Roma. From this point of view, it is necessary to make public decision makers responsible for the importance of periodically carrying out training and updating courses. Far from being the loss of time and resources, these activities can be powerful factors in improving skills for the benefit of the whole community.

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## Service Learning at the Secondary School: a Case Study

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### Introduction

This research contribution aims at describing an educational experience of Service Learning (SL) realized by the Secondary School Liceo Attilio Bertolucci (Parma) within the *Avanguardie Educative* (AE) Movement. The experience has been analyzed in-depth through a case study design approach. A variety of qualitative data collection procedures have been used: semi-structured interviews, observation tools, analysis of organizational and public documents, narrative tools, focus group with students. The school has implemented an environmental Service learning process aimed at analyzing the characteristics of the waters of the rivers and streams around Parma. A network of partners represented by thirty-five secondary schools, the University of Parma, the Cariparma Foundation, a start-up company and a Fab Lab has been directly involved into the project. The case study pointed out that SL approach encourages the educational and organizational renewal of the school starting from the three dimensions promoted by AE Manifesto (teaching-learning practices, space and school-time). It clearly shows that when a SL approach is correctly implemented according to the quality standards, the global citizenship can really become a background integrating the curriculum and the disciplines, as recommended by the MIUR guidelines.

### 1. Service Learning approach

The SL methodology integrates learning with a supportive service for the community in which the school is located. With this interpretation it was born in Latin America, later spread in North America and now implemented throughout the world. The pedagogical-didactic approach refers to the thinking of John Dewey (1972) on Experiential Learning, and Paulo Freire (2002), especially for the pedagogy of the oppressed. There are many definitions of SL in literature. Sigmon (1994) compared different programs that combined service and learning; he broadened the definition of 'experiential learning' and 'reciprocal learning', as learning flows from service activities, and specified that SL occurs when there is a balance between learning goals and service outcomes. María Nieves Tapia (2006) defines SL as a set of projects of supportive service intended to meet a real and heartfelt need in a territory, working with and not only for the community, in an effective way. SL is connected with the learning contents (is part of the curriculum and supports the development of disciplinary, methodological, occupational and social competences) and the students play a central role from the initial planning stage up to the final assessment.

In Europe, Service Learning is widely applied in Spain, Germany and the

United Kingdom. In Italy, recent ministerial directives (in 2017 MIUR launched the Service Learning Olympics; in August 2018 it released the document 'An Italian Way for Service Learning') have opened the way to encouraging this practice in schools. In this vision, SL represents the point of intersection between theory and practice, between research and experimentation, between learning as development of individual skills and sharing and support, so that «what grows and develops is the community» (MIUR, 2018). In AE Movement, SL is part of 'Inside/outside the school' Idea (Giunti et al., 2018), fostering the implementation in schools of learning and teaching activities in real-world contexts, with the aim of developing disciplinary, transversal and professional skills (Fiorin, 2016). To really implement SL, learning and teaching activities must be included into the school curriculum, must respond to a need truly perceived by the community, school and community has to work together to find a possible solution, students play a central role during all the steps of the process (Tapia, 2006). Moreover, SL promotes the introduction of active learning and teaching practices in addition to the fully lecture-based lessons.

## 2. WeLab & WeMap: an environmental Service learning experience

*We Lab & We Map* is an environmental SL experience coordinated by the Secondary School Liceo Attilio Bertolucci in Parma. During the 2017/18 school year, it has involved 35 schools from the province of Parma, the University of Parma, a bank foundation, a start-up company and a Fab Lab. The main goal of the experience was to constantly monitor the quality of the water of the rivers and streams of the province of Parma and to share data with the citizenship. The evaluation covered both objectives: service and learning. Teachers and researchers from the University assessed students in relation to the planned competences using dedicated tools (i.e.: observational grids, competences assessment grids). The evaluation process also concerned the project implementation with regard to the time taken to complete it, the level of partners' engagement and the achievement of the planned objectives within the established times.

The experience has followed the five main steps of SL approach (Tapia, 2006): Motivation, Analysis, Preparation and planning, Action, Demonstration and Evaluation. The Motivation started from the necessity of monitoring the quality of the waters (service), while improving students' scientific and citizenship skills (learning).

The second phase, 'Analysis', has been focused on the identification of internal (teachers and students) and external resources for the creation of a network composed by partners interested at participating in the project. The network has been composed by the University of Parma, represented by two researchers supporting students in sample collection and water analysis, a bank foundation, a start-up company and a Fab Lab providing a mobile laboratory for sample collection and a database for data sharing.

The stage 3, 'Preparation and Planning', was based on identifying the activities, the learning and service objectives and the subjects to involve for reaching each goal. In the stage 4, 'Action', the students, with teachers and University researchers, have collected the samples along the banks of the river and the streams. They have analyzed them through the mobile laboratory and shared data with the other secondary schools through the database. At the end of the process students have also organized a public conference in Parma to spread the results and make them accessible to local administrators and citizenship (stage 5, 'Demonstration and evaluation').

### 3. Method

A case study methodology has been used. The intrinsic case study (Stake, 1995) has been preferred as the experience can be considered valuable for its specific contents and does not presuppose a generalization of the solutions. Qualitative data collection procedures have been used in order to describe the experience: semi-structured classroom observations, face-to-face interviews and interviews via skype for the teaching staff, the school leader and community partners, focus group with students. We also analyzed organizational documents (lessons plan, competences assessment grids) and public documents, such as PTOF (Piano Triennale dell'Offerta Formativa) and RAV (Rapporto di Autovalutazione). Teachers have been asked to fill in a narrative inquiry methodology-based form (Clandinin, Huber 2010) aimed at bringing out the 'didactic implicit' (Perla, 2010). All these tools have been designed around the eight *Quality Standards for Service learning Activities* elaborated by INDIRE from Europe Engage's *Quality Standards for Service Learning Activities* (Stark et al., 2017)

**TABLE. 1.** *Quality standards for Service learning activities*

Indicator	Description
1 Significant Service learning activity: the SL is a service rich in meaning	The service objectives are well defined SL experience is adapted to the age of the students and their learning needs SL experience responds to the students' interests
2 Curricular: the SL is linked to the curriculum	Students move within the expected curriculum (service actions for the community are designed around the curriculum) Learning objectives are well defined The SL experience encourages the transfer of knowledge and skills from one discipline to another (interdisciplinary value)
3 Constant reflection: the SL stimulates reflexive activity	All the protagonists of the experience reflect on the real needs of their territory and identify possible solutions All the protagonists of the experience question their own beliefs and opinions in order to explore and better understand their role and responsibilities as citizens (development of citizenship skills in students).
4 Understanding diversity: SL promotes understanding of diversity	The SL experience stimulates the analysis of different points of view in order to understand the different perspectives The SL experience develops skills such as conflict resolution and group decision-making The SL experience stimulates the identification and overcoming of stereotypes and fosters cultural and ethical understanding
5 Protagonism of students: the SL enhances the active participation of students	Students play an active role throughout all the phases of the process (planning, implementation, evaluation) Students are involved in decision-making processes
6 Partnership: the SL creates partnerships in the territory	SL considers the direct involvement of students, teachers, families, community members, companies in all phases of the process All participants share a common vision and consider each other an important resource Frequent meetings are organized among all participants in order to share and eventually renegotiate the workplan and the objectives The achievement of significant learning and service objectives is measurable
7 Constant monitoring of service and learning objectives	Evaluation and monitoring activities are planned for each phase of the project, allowing to analyze success factors and difficulties in a perspective of continuous improvement Students and teachers reflect on the contents learned, on the quality of the intervention and on the impact of the experience
8 Duration and intensity: SL provide sufficient duration and intensity to ensure real changes in the community	The SL experience involves the implementation of 5 phases (Motivation, Diagnosis, Design and planning, Execution, Closure and evaluation) and of 3 cross functional processes (Reflection, Documentation and communication, Evaluation and monitoring) The SL experience provides a sufficient duration to meet the needs of the territory and achieve the learning objectives The SL experience contains all the features that enable the replicability

Source: INDIRE elaboration from Stark et al., (2017).



The study was carried out following three main steps: during the first step, the start-up phase, a round of interviews has been conducted to share with the school community the data collection procedures and the research main purposes.

During the second step, semi-structured classroom observations and a second round of interviews addressed to the teaching staff, the school leader and community partners have been organized. At this stage, we wanted to understand two main points: 1) if SL approach was correctly implemented according to the international quality standards (Stark et al., 2017); 2) if *We Lab & We Map* was a SL experience that promotes the educational and organizational renewal of the school starting from the three dimensions of the AE Manifesto: teaching-learning practices, space and school-time.

During the third step, a representative sample of students has been selected by the school using a multiple set of criteria specified by INDIRE. The sample has been involved in a focus group. The focus group main goal was to incorporate student perspectives and to highlight if the experience has been meaningful and significant in quality according to four international criteria (Tapia 2006, adapted from Furco 2005, NYCL 2004, UNESCO, 1996; 2018).

## 4. Outcomes

### 4.1. Service Learning quality standard

Europe Engage's *Quality Standards for Service Learning Activities* (Stark et al., 2017) provides a framework to develop experience-based learning practices. According to Europe Engage high quality SL programs have significant impacts on participants (students, schools and communities) and can also improve community development and social change. The eight *Quality Standards For Service Learning Activities* elaborated by INDIRE from Europe Engage's *Quality Standards* (Stark et al., 2017) have the main purpose to customize the international standards to the Italian educational scenario.

Classroom observations and interviews conducted during the case study show that *We Lab & We Map* experience comply with indicators of quality SL practice. For example, as regards to the indicator related to 'meet actual real needs of the community', *We Lab & We Map* has met community-identified needs (there is no monitoring system of the surface water quality and the schools of Parma have few chemistry labs), driving mutually benefits both for the community (water quality assessment and monitoring) and the students (improve scientific skills, enhance laboratory teaching, promote citizenship skills). Furthermore, the SL realized by the Liceo Attilio Bertolucci has had sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet the planned outcomes. As regards the indicator 'Link to Curriculum', *We Lab & We Map* has been linked to the curriculum and has been intentionally used as an instructional strategy to improve scientific and citizenship skills and to approach environmental problems like water pollution. This clearly shows that when a SL approach is correctly implemented according to the quality standards, the global citizenship can really become a background integrating the curriculum and the disciplines, as recommended by the MIUR guidelines.

### 4.2. Teaching and learning practices

The case study pointed out that SL approach is in close connection with the AE Movement and promotes the educational and organizational renewal of the school starting from the three dimensions promoted by AE Manifesto (teaching-

learning practices, space and school-time).

Firstly, case study outcomes pointed out a renewal in teaching and learning practices. The pedagogical-didactic approach to SL has supported Liceo 'Attilio Bertolucci' teachers' transforming the lecture-based teaching practices into more active and participatory activities. On the other hand, in *We Lab & We Map* experience the students' protagonism transforms the teachers' role that become a mentor supporting the activities and increases their motivation by active involving them during the whole process. The students' protagonism in each phase (from conception to assessment) allows them to become carriers of knowledge. Furthermore, *We Lab & We Map* experience relates concepts and skills to 'real world' promoting learning by doing and laboratory-based practices. In the end, active methodologies allow to support the vision with the students at the center of the teaching and learning process enhancing youth leadership and decision-making.

#### *4.3. Learning Spaces*

Students' protagonism and active methodologies need flexible spaces. Liceo Attilio Bertolucci renewal of learning spaces has been planned to equip classrooms and schools with flexible and versatile furnishings that enable students to work individually, in pairs or in groups. The environments have been also equipped to support open class activities and to promote outdoor education.

#### *4.4. School-Time and new organisational models*

*We Lab & We Map* experience was carried out within a suitable time frame and a more flexible timetable. In fact, active teaching-learning, laboratory-based practices and outdoor activities methodologies need rearranging the school time to perform engaging and fulfilling activities. Furthermore, *We Lab & We Map* experience promotes new organizational models between school, territory and community with a positive impact on community partners.

#### *4.5. Civic engagement*

A focus group has been realized in March-April 2019. It has involved a representative sample of ten students selected directly by the school using a multiple set of criteria specified by INDIRE: homogeneity (participation in the same experience), heterogeneity (with respect to gender, age) and, when possible, not mutual knowledge among students (with respect to the class to which they belong). The focus group has been registered and all the answers have been written down literally. The text has been tagged using the four international criteria: 1) Learning to learn, 2) Learning to do 3) Learning to be 4) Learning to live together (Tapia 2006, adapted from Furco 2005, NYCL 2004, UNESCO 1996; UNESCO 2018). Focus group findings highlight the positive impact on students' learning and perception of environmental problems. For example, under the tag 'Learning to learn' they have reported: more engaging lessons, immersive experiences, contents much more related with the world of work, relative ease in linking theory to practise. As for the tag 'Learning to do' students have declared more teamwork, more peer-tutoring; they have also learnt to handle the unexpected and found the presence of external teachers (eg. tutor from the University) as very challenging and inspiring. As for 'Learning to be' they have experiencing with hands the impact of our behaviour on the environment, so they feel aware of the central role that the human being can play in respecting the planet; they discovered they could think on their feet and improvise. As for 'Learning to live together' they have reported they have learnt to be very respectful of the organisational arrangements; they realized their role as students have changed



throughout the experience, they play more a central role while teachers became more a support figure; they noticed the relationship with teachers has improved, some professors have better understood students attitudes.

## Conclusion

The case study pointed out that Liceo Attilio Bertolucci environmental SL experience comply with indicators of quality service-learning practice and helps teachers transforming the lecture-based teaching practices into more active and participatory activities. It also promotes the educational and organizational renewal of the school starting from the *Avanguardie Educative* Manifesto: it increases students' motivation by active involving students during the whole process, by relating concepts and skills to 'real-world' contexts, by promoting learning-by-doing and laboratory-based practices. Furthermore, *We Lab & We Map* experience takes place within the classroom and outside (space dimension) and promotes laboratory-based practices and outdoor activities in a more flexible timetable (time dimension). Finally, it helps students while in classrooms to feel connected with the natural environment through learning-by-doing activities. In addition, it supports a vision of a civic school, promoting knowledge, values, skills and attitude associated with civic engagement. Finally, '*We Lab & We Map*' experience has helped students to develop disciplinary and social skills and enhance their sense of autonomy and responsibility.

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# Small Schools as Pioneers of Innovative Didactic Solution: a Literature Review of the Features of Multigrade Teaching

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**Keywords:** *Multi-grade teaching, Innovation, Heterogeneity, Differentiation*

## Introduction

Heterogeneity and differentiation are relevant topics recently discussed in the field of inclusive education. Indeed, the increased perceived diversity of the pupils in all classrooms is always more and more seen as a burden, and it needs an urgent solution by the school institution: the traditional and transmissive way of teaching and learning based on a fixed curriculum directed to the 'average-student' fits no more the needs of today's pupils and students. For these reasons, mixed-age classrooms and small schools might be considered pioneers and a model of innovative instruction and good practices, since its intrinsic heterogeneity demands and legitimates strategies addressed to inclusion and differentiation. Moreover, multi-grade teaching is gaining a new importance in the context of future plans for small schools and as an alternative solution to the one-year class sorted per age even in urban settings, due to the current decreasing trend of birth rate and of incoming pupils in schools.

The present contribution aims to review recent studies on multi-grade and multi-age teaching in order to define the mixed-age class with its potential and to provide an assortment of pedagogical principles and practices that could be used as a theoretical foundation of the construct 'mixed-age teaching'.

## 1. Definition

Small schools are usually located in rural areas and employ few teachers, who teach different grades in the same classroom; this is called multi-age or multi-grade teaching. Different contributions show that it is a worldwide common phenomenon, both in developed and developing countries (Little, 2006). Nevertheless, international reviews on rural education research show that it is one of the less researched areas (Coladarci, 2007; Little, 2001) and that quality research about rural education is missing (Arnold et al., 2005; Hargreaves et al., 2009). According to Domingo (2014), this lack of precedents on the subject can be caused by several factors, such as epistemological difficulties, social opinions, and political and economic disinterest in rural education.

Epistemological problems begin with the word multi-grade. Veenman (1995), for example, says that the grouping (mono- or multi-grading) alone is not sufficient when referring to the multi-grade classroom. Cornish (2006) draws a clear dividing line between the concepts of 'multi-grade' and 'multi-age' classrooms. The former is created out of necessity and the latter is chosen as an alternative educational option because of its perceived benefits.

According to Little (2001), several terms can be found in the literature to describe what could be recognized as a multigrade class, such as combination class, composite class, vertically-grouped class, un-graded or non-graded class,

mixed-age class, etc. However, it can be argued that in terms of potential there is no difference between these different types of classes: the intrinsic heterogeneity that characterizes them is identical, and the effectiveness of mixed-age grouping seems to depend on the way that teachers manages the diversity present in the classroom. Teachers can choose to capitalize that diversity and to use it or to teach separately different age groups, losing in that way all the advantages of the multi-grade classroom. Consequently, in this paper the terms multi-grade, multi-age and mixed-age will be used as synonyms, as a particular setting where pupils of different grades and ages are taught together in the same classroom.

## **2. Features of the mixed-age construct**

### *2.1. Theoretical background*

The concept of multi-age or multi-grade teaching is directly related to its philosophical and pedagogical basis. In principle, the multigrade classroom legitimates an individualized and student-oriented instruction rather than a curriculum-based one, while recognizing and capitalizing the intrinsic diversity of all pupils. In this sense, each child is treated as a whole person with a distinct continuum of learning and developmental rate and style: each educational goal reflects a developmental process rather than the learning of discrete skills in a prescribed curriculum.

According to the Theory of the Zone of proximal development advanced by Vygotskij (1978), children whose knowledge or abilities are similar but not identical can stimulate each other's thinking and cognitive growth. Several authors, indeed, agree that in such settings the presence of children with different ages in the same classroom provides a wider range of abilities and of stages of development that enables a more developmentally appropriate learning and allows pupils to progress at their own pace. These assumptions reflect a socio-constructivist perspective, whereby the knowledge is constructed through mediated social interactions. In line with these principles, Cornish (2006) affirms that in multi-age classrooms the learning process is a socially constructivist one in which students build up their own understandings through exploration in a social context. Thus, whereas graded schools focus primarily on the model that teaching is transmitted to the learner, multi-age settings focus on the interactive nature of the teacher–student and the student-student relationships.

In order to capitalize on this interactive nature and to enhance learning successfully, it is crucial that the teacher become a facilitator and a mediator of the learning process. Multi-grade settings allow teachers to know better their pupils and to easily assume this role, thanks to the limited number of them and the fact that they stay in the same classroom with the same teacher during all the grades.

Another key hallmark of a multi-age philosophy is the establishment of a classroom community. As a result of the elements abovementioned, the mixed-age classroom can be defined as a «community of practice» (Lave, Wenger, 1991), meaning a context of shared and mediated cognitive experience. The community of practice is a particularly adequate environment for the integration of the differences since the support of each one is fostered and the potential of everyone is valued. Such a community, as Lave and Wenger (1991) described it, is characterized by the heterogeneity of the members which allows an exchange of competences and expertise.

### *2.2. Putting theory into practice*

It has been argued that multi-grade teaching has several advantages, including student-centred learning and teaching processes, flexible teaching, a more familiar and secure learning environment, the possibility of implementing innovative practices, support for individual learning paces (Hyry-Beihammer, Hascher, 2015). However, multi-grade teaching can be also seen and experienced by teachers as especially challenging because of the widely varying needs of pupils of different ages.

As Cornish (2006: 28) stated, «because teachers of multi-age classes embrace diversity, they have successfully learnt to implement strategies for coping with diversity». Among these strategies he mentioned, for example, open-ended activities, frequent and flexible grouping, development of routines and practices that encourage and support independent learning as well as cooperative learning and peer tutoring, authentic assessment, team teaching, etc.

It is fundamental that, in such settings, pupils learn to be more independent and to take responsibility for their own learning. Peer tutoring and collaborative learning, which have to be trained and supported, are also crucial. Nevertheless, they should not replace teacher instruction but rather supplement it.

According to Hoffman (2003), the multi-age classrooms heterogeneity allows various grouping by age and other factors which in turn promotes cognitive and social growth and reduces antisocial behaviour. Furthermore, multi-age age settings are an ideal environment for capitalizing on peer learning opportunities like peer-tutoring, reciprocal teaching and collaborative learning.

As regards the assessment, which could be seen as particularly challenging in such a setting, Hargreaves (2001) has suggested that multi-grade settings lend themselves to 'formative assessment', which is designed to promote learning because it encourages teachers to recognise individual differences. Its purpose is to diagnose how a learner is learning and is intended to improve teaching and learning. Such an assessment can be realized in the form of open-ended tasks, portfolios, self- and peer-assessment, children's presentations, etc. (Hargreaves, 2001).

With respect to the curriculum, there are different practices that can be found in the literature, which could be set in a continuum from situations where different grades are taught in turn separately, studying different subjects or topics depending on their age to settings in which the entire class is taught for the whole period together, studying the same identical subjects and using the same material.

The following sub-categories were structured by Hyry-Beihammer and Hascher (2015) based on the definitions of multi-grade practices proposed by Kalaoja (2006) and Cornish (2006), concerning the way in which student groups and subject are organized: subject stagger, parallel curriculum, curriculum rotation, curriculum alignment and spiral curriculum, and whole-class teaching. The so-called subject stagger refers to classrooms, where grades study separately different subjects and each grade is taught in turn. Parallel curriculum consists in a classroom where students share the same themes or subjects but study only the syllabus of their grade, while each grade is taught in turn. The curriculum rotation refers to an entire class (usually a two-grades class) which studies the curriculum of one grade for one year and in the next school year, the syllabus of the other grade is followed, with the purpose of teaching together the different grades. The spiral curriculum (or curriculum alignment) is a concept strongly supported by the ideas of Jerome Bruner (2006). The theoretical principle is that the basic concepts of every subject should be taught in the lower grades, if possible, and then the subject matter should be deepened and expanded on in the upper grades. Thus, similar topics are identified in different grade curricula and students share the same themes or subjects. Finally, when

all the grades study and are taught the same subject at the same time and use the same material, this is called whole-class teaching. As Little (2006: 313) highlights, «The underlying principle uniting almost all the patterns of class organization above is curriculum differentiation. Differentiation is the corollary of learner diversity. [...] It is the teacher's way of responding to the principle of learner diversity».

### **3. Multi-grade and differentiation**

In the field of inclusive education, the recent teaching concept of 'differentiated instruction' has been developed to address students' heterogeneity. As Tomlinson and colleagues (2003: 121) state, «differentiation can be defined as an approach to teaching in which teachers proactively modify curricula, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, and student products to address the diverse needs of individual students and small groups of students to maximize the learning opportunity for each student in a classroom».

As compared to the multi-age construct, several similarities can be found between the two teaching philosophies, both in the theoretical framework and in the strategies carried out in the practice by teachers. Firstly, they share a socio-constructivist perspective and a student-oriented approach, which aims to respond to the needs of all learners while recognizing the intrinsic diversity of everyone. Furthermore, the organization and adjustment of the curriculum are required either way in order to guarantee quality learning opportunities to all students. Besides, formative assessment responds in both cases to the necessity of an authentic and flexible evaluation. Finally, heterogeneous and flexible grouping can be seen as a significant contributor to students' learning in multi-age settings as well as in classes where differentiated instruction is implemented. In several studies focused on the practices carried out in multi-grade classrooms the concept of differentiation strongly emerges as one of the crucial and determining factors of the success of a multi-age program. For example, Hyry-Beihammer and Hascher (2015) found teachers felt that the differences between the learners in their classes were so numerous that individual differentiation was essential, but also that differentiating was one of their most challenging tasks. Moreover, Smit and Humpert (2012) point out that in certain countries small schools report a high level of differentiated instruction (e.g., the Scandinavian countries).

### **Conclusions**

Simplifying the discourse about multi-grade and small schools focusing only on their pedagogical benefits would be naïve. Multigrading can be extremely challenging, especially in rural settings, where teachers are often left alone and have to cope with isolation, lack of adequate training, facilities, support and materials. Nevertheless, different authors concluded that teachers and the practices they implement in classrooms are the critical variable that affects student learning. The decisive factors seem to be the choice to capitalize individual differences and therefore the flexibility needed in order to respond to this diversity. Thus, it can be assumed that differentiating could represent the central core of the mixed-age construct.

Ultimately, differentiated instruction is an approach that essentially aims to respond successfully to the diversity of all learners. Consequently, it can be stated that differentiation is an effective model that could guide and support the

teaching and learning practice in multi-grade settings. Likewise, it can also be argued that small schools, in which strategies addressed to differentiation are successfully implemented, could serve as a model of good practices also for all other schools.

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## Distribution, Efficiency and Choice: Social Justice and Small Schools in Rural Areas in Market Oriented Education Systems

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### Introduction

Throughout Europe, small, rural schools face similar problems of justice and democracy. Despite more diversity in the political development of European states, rural areas are still regarded through a lens of predominantly urban society (Beach et al. 2018). The last decades, have seen a number of key developments in the operation of schools across Europe. Although legitimized through different arguments and ideologies, these developments have resulted in similar results in different European countries (Altrichter et al., 2014; Bajerski, 2015).

We aim to illustrate change processes in education operation with two particular examples; small rural schools in Czechia and England. We make use of Iris Young's (1990) concept of social justice (see also Cuervo 2016) as an analytical framework. Young (2004: 3) proposed an enabling conception of justice. «Justice should refer not only to distribution, but also to the institutional conditions necessary for the development and exercise of individual capacities and collective communication and cooperation». Young (1990) also argues that «to be just is always situated in concrete social and political practices» and so in our comparisons we work with the concrete and the situated. We present first the general position of these types of schools within the education policy of their particular countries. We then examine a series of paradoxes and tautologies in the everyday operation of small, rural areas with a particular focus on school distribution, efficiency and choice.

### 1. Method

The methodology makes use of our long-term studies of rural schools in our two countries, using quantitative and qualitative data pertaining to rural schools, their operations and users. These include case studies of small rural schools in Czechia and England and their geographical communities. The case studies developed knowledge about changes in the wider socio-economic context and driving forces in the educational landscape. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with key actors in the rural communities as well as documentary evidence. The analysis of these two case studies will be presented, concerning experiences in three dimensions: distribution, efficiency and choice.

## 2. Discussion

In Czechia during the 1970's, during the period of state socialism, there was a pressure to concentrate education operations outside of rural/small settlements. This pressure was as a result of a special political tool 'Conception of settlement development and urbanization'. Nowadays there is no central plan for school location neither from the state level of government, nor lower regional levels. Decisions about schools are made at municipal government level, as it is here that responsibility for school operation lies. Most rural mayors perceive a local school as a symbol of vitality and autonomy, so school closure is politically very problematic.

In England, most schools are now part of a Federation, Trust or Academy, a cluster of schools in a locality. They are managed by the management groups or leaders of these clusters and are funded from central government; schools, particularly the small ones, often share leadership and administration systems. Regional authorities still have some role to play in the distribution and funding of some schools. This grouping of schools has reduced school closure rates, but not improved disparity in attainment rates.

Elementary Schools in Czechia have two principal sources of school funding. 1. The Ministry of Education; schools are funded through a sum per student (to cover teacher salaries and key school equipment), which appears to be an equal system. Where there are low numbers of students, additional contributions are made from municipality budget in the case of low number of pupils. 2. Municipality budgets; these fund school operation and related investment (especially school buildings). Small rural (peripheral) municipalities and their schools receive the smallest amount of money, however they have the highest additional costs per capita (Trnková, 2009).

In England school funding is organised using a central government formula. There is a certain payment given per student which is adjusted for certain reasons. These payments are adjusted by local governments for 1. Pupil-led factors: eg deprivation, low prior attainment, English as an additional language, 2. School-led factors: eg sparsity, 3. Area cost adjustment eg for deprivation. Recent changes in the funding formula set out to make the system 'fairer' however some rural schools have had advantageous funding in recent years and the new system is causing problems. With a strict national funding formula based entirely on pupil numbers were to be introduced, small schools would find it even harder to balance their budget. (Church of England, 2014)

School choice. In Czechia, the history of state socialism led to strictly delineated school districts. Nowadays there is free parental school choice, however municipalities are still obliged to delineate school districts by means of a binding regulation and give preference to local students rather than applicants from other districts. There is also a long-term perception of urban school as 'better' than rural ones. This has led to overpressure in applications for schools in metropolitan centres. Although the general public meaning is to have a school in a village, the same parents themselves prefer to assign a child to a town.

In England, it is quite the opposite; here rural schools have been associated with romantic ideas of a rural idyll. Families opted to send their children to rural schools, on the edges of towns.

Pressure on concentration of educational function outside rural/small settlements in former times in Czechia has led to a centre – periphery dichotomy. There is a general public view that there should be a school in every village however the parents prefer to assign their children to urban schools. In England, there has been less pressure to close schools in peripheral areas, in part

because of the move to cluster schools into locally managed groups. Here there also remains a notion of the rural idyll to some extent, with parents choosing schools outside of urban centres for their children.

## Conclusions

The liberalisation and marketisation of education from the 1980's has led to significant changes in the organisation and operation of schools in Western Europe. Schools and the wider education systems in these countries reacted to the new conditions which included the closure of small schools and the consolidation of schools into larger units. Some Western European countries are still witnessing these school closures.

Following a phased delay, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these market orientated forces arrived in those countries which were a part of the Eastern (Soviet) Bloc before 1989. However, in these post-socialist countries a mass reduction in the number of schools and a concentration of educational function to urban centres was finished in the 1980's through the actions of centralised government policy.

There are two major groups of systems operating here both with inherent injustices, particularly for small schools in rural areas. There is an increasingly decentralised system with the transfer of responsibility (including financial responsibility) from central governments, to local authorities or even to parents. On the other hand, there are forces of national centralisation which struggles for optimisation of school networks with a view to financial efficiency, as well as social and political control of education.

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# Benefits and Challenges of Mixed-age Classrooms for Small Schools: the Montessori Approach to Early Childhood Education

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**Keywords:** *Montessori, Early childhood, Cultural competence, Mixed-age classroom, Small schools*

## Introduction

The Montessori method can support small schools, especially in rural areas of Italy, facing the problem of depopulation and consequently dealing with a low number of students, i.e. forced to have mixed-age (multi-age groupings) classrooms. The importance of the three-year age grouping is such that for a Montessori school to be recognized by some international Montessori organizations classrooms have to fulfil this requirement to be considered truly Montessori and thus eligible for accreditation.

Montessori education was developed in the first half of the 20th century by one of the first women physician in Italy. Maria Montessori (1870-1952), started working with atypically developing children and with low-income children. Her work reached then to children of all social classes around the world. Dr. Montessori first developed her educational approach while working with a preschool population, in particular, children with disabilities. She gradually extended her approach to children and youth of all ages and abilities. Today, some Montessori schools provide all levels of learning, from infant & toddler through the secondary (high school) level. Maria Montessori emphasized the need for mixed age groups spanning at least three years.

## 1. The Montessori method

The Montessori Method is a child-centered approach in which children are viewed as active participants in their own development, strongly influenced by natural, dynamic, self-correcting forces within themselves, opening the way toward growth and learning. The teachers are considered nurturers, partners, and guides to the children. They depend on carefully prepared, aesthetically pleasing environments as a pedagogical tool.

Montessori emphasizes independent learning, letting children grow into life-long learners and responsible citizens of the world. In Montessori education, children are grouped into multiage classrooms spanning three years, promoting adult-child continuity and close peer relationships. Montessori classrooms provide carefully prepared, orderly, pleasing environments and materials where children are free to respond to their natural tendency to work individually or in small groups. The children progress at their own pace and rhythm, according to their individual capabilities. The school community as a whole, including the parents, work together to open the children to the integration of body, mind, emotions, and spirit that is the basis of holistic peace education. The Montessori teacher plays the role of unobtrusive director in the classroom as children individually or in small groups engage in self-directed activity. The teacher's goal is

to help and encourage the children, allowing them to develop confidence and inner discipline so that there is less and less need to intervene as the child develops. Montessori developed a set of manipulative objects designed to support children's learning of sensory concepts such as dimension, color, shape and texture, and academic concepts of mathematics, literacy, science, geography and history. They are given the freedom to choose what they work on, where they work, with whom they work, and for how long they work on any particular activity, all within the limits of the class rules. No competition is set up between children, and there is no system of extrinsic rewards or punishments. These two aspects – the learning materials themselves, and the nature of the learning – make Montessori classrooms look strikingly different to conventional classrooms (Marshall, 2017).

### *1.1. Core Principles*

The Method is seen as a strong educational alternative to traditional education both in elementary and early childhood education, and it is a source of inspiration for progressive educational reform.

The core principles of the Montessori Method are:

- Mixed age classrooms
- Student choice of activity from within a prescribed range of options
- Uninterrupted blocks of work time, ideally three hours.
- Constructivist or self-discovery model rather than direct instruction
- Specialized educational materials often made out of natural, aesthetic materials such as wood, rather than plastic
- Environment organized to promote choice, easy access, and appropriate in size
- Freedom to move within the classroom
- A trained teacher who follows the child's lead and promote a child's innate talents and abilities

## **2. Mixed age classrooms**

Mixed age classrooms are one of the core principles of the Montessori Method. Children of mixed ages work together in the same class. Age groupings are based on the Planes of Development as identified by Dr. Maria Montessori. Multi-age groupings enable younger children to learn from older children and experience new challenges through observation, older children reinforce their learning by teaching concepts they have already mastered, develop leadership skills, and serve as role models. In Montessori schools the three-year age grouping is so that for a school to be recognized by some international Montessori organizations classrooms have to fulfill this requirement to be considered truly Montessori and thus eligible for accreditation. According to the Montessori approach, Children in three-year mixed age group benefit the most. Older children become guides to the younger ones, and consequently learning and teaching is constantly present at this level, and often requires little intervention from adults. This situation allows for older children to validate their knowledge and skills and share in ways that otherwise would not happen. Five and six-year old naturally become caretakers of the classroom, care for and become role models for the 3 and 4 year olds. There is a communication and harmony between the two that one seldom finds between the adult and the small child (Montessori, 1967). Peer tutoring and collaborative arrangements support both the learning and the social climate, this can be beneficial also when classroom include special needs pupils.

### *2.1. Small schools and Montessori method: an old future*

In Italy, where according to the manifesto of the small schools movement 76% of the Italian territory is at risk isolation, schools are often closing or grouping children of different ages and from several small villages into one mixed-age classroom. These schools continue to use the same mainstream educational method and the same curriculum of all Italian schools. There is no other change than the fact that classrooms are no more organized around single grades, but in one mixed-age group. This situation is often seen as a big disadvantage and it brings us back to the beginning of the twentieth century, when Italian public schools were primarily one-room school houses in which a single teacher taught all levels. Moreover, teachers are not prepared to work with children of different ages in one classroom. On the contrary, a Montessori teacher is trained to work with such a group of children. The method can provide a solution to the growing number of mixed-age classrooms, because Montessori Approach uses mixed age classrooms to the benefit of all students. Small schools of rural and isolated areas of Italy can become the most innovative places in terms of education if starting to use the Montessori method. The future of Italian education could benefit from an experimentation based on the Montessori method in small schools. The future of small schools can have its roots in the Italian Montessori educational method conceived last century in Italy, adopted all around the world but not adequately in the Italian schools. According to the supporters of Montessori Method the benefits to children are many and varied. The most valuable advantage of these early learning approach is that it ignites a love of learning. The supporters claim that benefits include resilience, responsibility, self-confidence, teamwork, problem-solving skills as well as creative and scientific thinking. Key-features in nowadays world. Small schools can be an innovative laboratory where it is all about the ability to teach 'learning to learn', one of the key competences for lifelong learning according to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (Recommendation 2006/962/EC), i.e. the ability to effectively manage one's own learning, either individually or in groups. Traditional schools have not fared well because the models of the child and school on which they are built – the empty vessel in the factory – fit poorly with how humans learn (Lillard, 2017). Montessori Education can be an answer to the crisis of Education, since the educational system should draw on scientific study of how children learn, which is exactly what was designed by Dr. Maria Montessori in the early 20th century. It is no more a matter of how much or what kind of technology you have in a classroom, but it all depends on how the learning environment is organised and on how the teacher is prepared to deal with the big challenge of a mixed age classroom.

### **3. Small schools as laboratory for an inclusive world of makers**

As the Montessori Method is based on constructivist teaching, it places more emphasis on sensory input. Children are actively involved in the learning process, using all of their senses, not just their eyes and ears. Active learning approaches emphasize the role of the teacher as a guide. All of these ideas combined, form a modern version of educational constructivism, which states that learning best happens when children get to construct and form their own knowledge. Instead of being told how to think or what to memorize, children are encouraged to create their own understanding of the world.

In Montessori classrooms we find children that engage in activities voluntarily for their own sake, and they repeat the activities often. Those activities are real



and directed to real ends. A key example is the Practical Life activities (e.g., table washing and snack preparation) children do in preschool with child-sized implements. Small schools often benefit from the territory they are in: i.e. they have great open spaces and gardens for outdoor activities. Ideal spaces for Montessori education.

Montessori classrooms serve children in 3-year age spans (from birth to 3 years, 3–6 years, and so on, to age 18) with specific sets of didactic materials that are replaced gradually with books. Children get individual lessons (typically from birth to age 6) or small-group lessons (typically from age 6 on) with the materials, and then choose among materials they know how to use during 3-hr periods intended to encourage deep concentration on work. The materials are self-correcting (i.e., children can recognize and fix their own mistakes), so teachers do not mark (or even give) assignments; the teacher's function is to observe children carefully and time presentations of new materials appropriately for each child, connecting the child to the didactic environment (Lillard, 2017). The 2017 review of the benefits of the Montessori education system (Marshall, 2017) indicates that there is evidence in support of certain elements of the Montessori method e.g. teaching early literacy through a phonic approach embedded in a rich language context and providing a sensorial foundation for mathematics education. This review also indicates that some evidence exist that children may benefit cognitively and socially from Montessori education that implements the original principles.

#### **4. Growing Interest for Montessori in the world: Data by AMI**

The AMI- Association Montessori Internationale has affiliated national associations and training centres located throughout the world in 72 countries. Dr. Montessori started her Casa dei Bambini (Children's House) in 1907, in the slums of Rome, her movement later on spread to other countries, especially after the Fascist regime denounced Montessori methods of education and she left Italy. In the United States, there was strong but brief interest from 1910 to 1920. Although the method flourished in Europe and India, it fell out of favor in the United States. The Montessori education movement experienced a resurgence in the US during the 1950s increasing its popularity.

According to the Census project, launched in 2013 in U.S. as a collaboration among the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (NCMPS), the Center for Research on Developmental Education, and some other Montessori organizations, today we have information on 514 public programs and 2,075 private schools in the U.S. The North American Montessori Teachers' Association (NAMTA) estimates that there are about 4,500 Montessori schools in the United States and about 20,000 worldwide. Available and official data about Montessori Education in Italy are those of Opera Nazionale Montessori dating back to 2013. Montessori Public Kindergarten and Primary schools in Italy are 104 and involve the work of 900 teachers. There are also 35 Pre-K and 22 private *Casa dei bambini*. Two middle schools and two high schools. These numbers involve 10.000 Italian families over a population of nearly 60 million.

#### **Conclusion**

The multi-age grouping of the Montessori classrooms can be the model for small 'mainstream' schools of rural or isolated areas. Small schools are today forced to have mixed-age classrooms, this is unfortunately seen as a big



disadvantage both for children and teachers. But it can be easily turned into an advantage if these schools start to use the Montessori method where the multi-age grouping is the focus of the all learning process. In such a school, children can work collaboratively, interact with peers, and find their place in the social community. In Italy, where according to the manifesto of the small schools movement 76% of the Italian territory is at risk isolation. Montessori can provide a solution to the growing number of mixed-age classrooms, which is considered a disadvantage, because Montessori Approach uses mixed age classrooms to the benefit of all students.

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## Free for All School. The Path is made by Walking. A story of a Long Life School Learning Curriculum

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**Keywords:** *Freedom of teaching, Student-centered approach, Problem based approach, Little school*

### Introduction

Seven small schools in five suburbs in Acireale, 52.000 inhabitants, a Sicilian town, near Catania, by the Ionian Sea and the Volcano Etna. 730 students from 3 to 13 years old, 100 teachers, 14 caretakers, 5 Administrative assistants, 1 head teacher. People who have been making the difference walking together along a path started six years ago. As Machado says we say: «Traveller, your footprints are the path and nothing more; Traveler, there is no path. The path is made by walking. By walking the path is made and when you look back, you'll see a road never to be trodden again».

If we look back we don't recognize ourselves, in 2017 the European Commission gave us a mirror :our school is one of the two Italian cases a study on supporting school innovation across Europe «and since then we have been mirroring to improve and let others know our story to promote it» (EU, 2018: 27).

### 1. Resources are the problems

First year 2013-2014, time to self-assessment, we applied CAF & Education model (CAF& education, 2013). We focused on weaknesses. The most important were: students' inner motivation to learn, their lack of attention, in some cases their bad behaviour. Other problems were: unattractive, spaces, pupils of different ages in the same class, headteachers' turn over in the past 10 years, consequent lack of vision.

As for the headteacher and vision we solved this easily: I fell in love with this problematic school and in September will be my 7th year of working here! For the other problems we needed and still need more time. Our strength was to believe that problems are resources, that you need to know them and to commit to finding solutions.

#### 1.1. Endless problems for endless improvement

We began a long process. To tell the truth, now, we haven't found final solutions, there aren't any final solutions to problems. It is an endless cycle done through trying to cope with our weakness : identify the problem-log it-look for solutions and benchlearning opportunities, categorize and prioritize, thinking about how much a possible solution can be economically affordable and how much teachers can be involved to begin a process to learn and act, to trial and error.

We can't say that if you have a 'x problem' you can manage in a x way, there a lot of ways to manage it , it depends on where, with whom you live in school ,it depends on your strengths and opportunities ,it depends on how much you can invest in good training. To tell the truth, we are improving our organization thank to problems and our attitude to look for a change.

We can say that if you need to solve a problem, you need to change something in your practice, we can say that to change you have to learn, train and change the school setting in space and time organization too.

### 1.2. *Join network for new training and new learning spaces*

Benchlearning, training, improving the educational environment to improve, changing some things in organization, teaching approach, attitude. As headteacher I knew I had to do everything possible to give teachers opportunities to improve their knowledge, abilities to teach, to improve their attitude to change, to try new practices, to manage problems as resources, to be helped by the third teacher: the learning environment (Malaguzzi, 1995).

We understood that we had to change and began looking for best practices all over the country: *Avanguardia educative* INDIRE, *Senza Zaino*, Outdoor education. We joined these national networks and discovered a lot of good practices, started to train, to try different practices, to develop the most effective in our classes, year after year.

We understood that we could ask for the help of our 3rd teacher: the classroom as workstation, community spaces as classrooms: the hall, corridors, the playground, gardens, and recently the countryside and town as big classrooms. Our few financial resources were all invested in training, as for learning environment we are grateful to the good will of a lot of people, mainly teachers, who wore painters' overalls when necessary. Step by step we have been building a clearer idea of school, so asking for financial resources or professional help became easier.

## 2. A global school idea: free for all

'Olly olly oxen free' is a catchphrase used in children's games such as hide and seek, to indicate that players who are hiding can come out into the open without losing the game. It's an inclusive shout, a shout that gives opportunities to all children despite different abilities, knowledge, cultures, languages, ages. It's our educational Offer Plan's motto.

### 2.1. *For all*

It's not a matter of having a plan for each diversity: age, language, culture, abilities. You would end up having more plans than pupils! It's a matter to have your Educational Offer Plan Setting out cultural and planning inclusive identity.

Our statement is: act for normal specialty in pupils (Ianes, 2006).

All people are different, inside a class with pupils of the same age, you normally find different ways of learning, different interests, different curiosities. The teacher is alone, in some cases in class with a particular disability pupil, the teacher is helped by a specialist colleague but not all day long, it depends on professional resources and their organization. So you can't really manage diversities and you can't always answer their requests, alone with 20-25 pupils you can diversify teaching strategies during the day, you can prepare extra work for pupils who need help and are slow or others who need to go ahead and are fast. It's not always enough, you lose someone along the way. Teaching for all pupils means acting in order to have each one of them inside the learning process.

### 2.2. *Free*

To be for all pupils, teaching must be free. Teaching can be inclusive and effective for all pupils only if it's free from prejudices, pre ordinate planning and

work sheets. It can be focused on real pupils, only if the teacher gives her/himself the opportunity to listen and observe them, only if she/takes time for observation, time for dialogue, time for research, time for collaboration. A school where teachers have no programs to follow, they think the road to follow is together with pupils, listening to their questions, looking for answers studying subjects and developing competences. The teacher leads the group, of course, his/her teaching follows the National Guidelines for the curriculum 2012 and 2018 editions and the European Framework for the Key competences 2018.

It's a strong framework where to follow all the different paths you need to succeed in teaching your pupils, together with them, making teaching and learning significant and durable.

Freedom helps the teacher to succeed in:

- «balanced integration of the time dedicated to care, relationships and learning, with routines (reception, meal, body care, rest/sleep, etc.) regulating the pace of the day and representing a 'safe foundation' for new experiences and stimuli;
- promotion of learning through action, exploration, contact with objects, nature, art, territory, in a playful dimension, as a typical form of relationship and knowledge;
- provision of cosy, warm, tidy rooms with an attention to aesthetics;
- unstrained management of time, so that children can spend the day serenely, play, explore, speak, understand, feel self-confident and secure in the activities they experiment;
- educational approach of teachers oriented towards listening, guiding, interaction, communication, mediation, continuous observation of the child, making themselves responsible for the child's 'world', interpreting the child's discoveries, offering support and encouragement to his/her learning developments. (MIUR, 2018: 20)

### **3. A process based on change: learning environment, time organization, teaching methods and attitude**

#### *3.1. Our change started by changing our learning environments*

Since 2015 our classrooms, corridors, courtyards have been becoming more beautiful, colored and functional, thanks to teachers and pupil's commitment, thanks to parents' help, thanks to coherent actions. In the classroom no more desks in rows and the teacher's desk, desks are put together in 'islands', the teacher doesn't sit at his/her desk, but he/she sits in the "island" talking in small groups; when the class needs instructions they move their chairs setting them towards one direction to listen and watch, then they put back in an island or a circle to work together in group or in pairs. The setting helps the teacher to manage work groups, to make interaction activities. Pupils have visual learning stations, they think, plan, create together with the teacher and mates. Day after day the classroom becomes home, they leave books and exercise books inside, they have stationery in common, usually in preprimary and primary school, in some cases in lower secondary, too. Courtyards, corridors, school gardens have been becoming learning spaces. In the playground you can find an international alphabet, fraction tables, numbers and a pentagram, in school gardens you find mud kitchens and grow flowers and vegetables, corridors and halls are permanent exposition spaces where learning is visible.

Pupils in primary school have the classroom organized with corner laboratories, the older attending lower secondary school have classroom-laboratories.

Recently, the whole school, from preprimary to primary and low secondary classes, have been using outside as a learning environment: roads, squares, museums, galleries, churches, mountains, woods, seaside, hills, the volcano are learning tools such as textbooks or learning games.

### *3.2. Change in time organization is a consequence*

Our change is based not only on spaces but also on flexible time organization. If you change learning settings, you need to change time organization. If you have an agora corner for instance, you need time to use it, if you have desks set in 'islands' you need time to work in groups, if you have a vegetable garden you need time to use it, if you want to think together, plan together, listen to all voices, you need time to do it, if you need to personalize individual curriculums in order to guide to school choice you need time to do it. In lower secondary classes, for instance, time lessons are reduced from 60 minutes to 55 minutes. 5 minutes of spare time are put together and once a week student stay at school till afternoon.

It's a special afternoon used to guide them in autonomous self-consciousness about interest and attitudes, to make them more aware of upper secondary school choice. In class laboratory they follow their interest in Arts, Music, Gym, Sport, Robotics, Math, Science, Foreign Languages. If you need to go outdoors to make real and meaningful learning experience, you need time to do this. You need time to think and play together with your pupils. Flexible time for pupils and for teachers: at the beginning of the school year, teachers don't write down a detailed plan, they draw a 'road map' around a topic, a map illuminated by the lighthouse of National guidelines goals, day by day the path will proceed following pupils' questions in an experimental, active research context., in a continuous heuristic dialogue. At the end of the school year a detailed school reports explain learning pathways pupil centered.

### *3.3. Space and time is not enough to change, it's a cultural matter. Change is based on people: teacher and headteacher, administrative an assistants and caretakers*

Good training in teaching methods, good training in school organization and management. We invest our resources in training: starting with little things such as AE webinar in Laboratory classrooms, "flipped classroom" in two classes, "without backpack" strategies in few small classes. Now all pre-primary teachers follow more than 80 hours outdoor methods, all primary and low secondary teachers follow more than 40 hours *Senza Zaino* strategies, inside *Avanguardie Educative* some teachers have developed excellent learning pathways, we participate in *Didacta* to tell about our good practices, in 2017 about lab classroom in secondary schools, in 2019 we will be there to tell about Inside and outside school Service learning, we are participating to heuristic dialogue research, we are SZ and AE regional school center. It's a long-life learning for all teachers, for the new ones and not only for them. It's a matter of our values: responsibility-community-hospitality. The new ones need training and support, old and new need training on new demands: formative assessment appropriated to our global school curriculum.

## **Conclusions**

Traveler, there is no path. The path is made by walking. Our lighthouses: National Guidelines goals, European key competences and Agenda 2030 goals

and outcomes. We give importance to outcomes and some are remarkable. We made progress in pupils' inner motivation to study, in drop out reduction, in real inclusion. We point out increase of registrations of :pupils with disabilities, pupils who suffer demotivation, lack of interest , pupils who have school relationship difficulties. And above all we can state that we are working day by day all year long in Agenda 2030 goals:

- 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development
- 10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status
- 11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage
- 11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities
- 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

We are walking on this path, playing our little part, we are wandering but not all those who wander are lost because

*All that is gold does not glitter  
Not all those who wander are lost;  
The old that is strong does not wither,  
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.  
From the ashes, a fire shall be woken,  
A light from the shadows shall spring;  
Renewed shall be blade that was broken,  
The crownless again shall be king.  
(The Lord of the Rings, 1949)*

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## Environmental Education and Active Citizenship in Smaller Schools to Promote Innovation and Inclusion

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### Introduction

The *Istituto comprensivo Bovino-Panni-Castelluccio* is located in a so-called internal area, the Monti Dauni, in the province of Foggia, in Puglia. This is a marginal and rural area, with a very low population density: people live in small inland hilltop towns built in the Middle Ages. Here the inhabitants live following a slow lifestyle, that preserves the traces of the values of the farming culture, far from the frenetic rhythms of the city.

The main resources of the territory where the school is situated are still linked to traditional agriculture, to small and medium-sized industrial and craft companies and to an embryonic tourism industry.

Main weaknesses of the area are:

- depopulation, caused by young people moving away and the resulting ageing of the population
- territorial isolation caused by an inefficient and crumbling road infrastructure and very poor public transportation facilities
- limited services
- low employment level and weak innovation

Strengths are:

- historical and artistic heritage, consisting of castles, cathedrals, historic city-centres and archaeological sites
- cultural identity and traditions deeply rooted in local communities
- natural and environmental heritage, with natural areas, intact landscapes and rare wildlife species, such as Apennine wolf, Biancone (short-toed eagles), wild cat.

This is the environment in which the Bovino-Panni-Castelluccio Institute, that joined the network *Piccole scuole* (smaller schools) promoted by INDIRE, is situated. It is a comprehensive institute, which includes *Infanzia* (pre-school), *Primaria* (Primary school) and *Secondaria di primo grado* (lower secondary school); as from September 2019 it will also include the second level of secondary school sections located in some municipalities of the area.

The institute, therefore, is a complex and articulated school, despite the limited numbers of pupils (about 500): the institute, in fact, includes different levels of school, and, moreover, is in different municipalities that have different characteristics. In this contest the school is the main training agency, the main place to gather and socialize; it is also a driving force for growth and innovation.

The institute has long focused the educational offer on the Environmental education, the centerpiece of pedagogical innovation, but also the mean to provide direct connectivity between the school and its community



## 1. What is meant by environmental culture?

Environmental culture is the knowledge, specific know-how, experiences that should inform sustainable conduct and lifestyles. The objective is to create conditions for developing an ecological awareness into young students on one hand, through the knowledge of environmental issues, and on the other, by experimenting good practices. Environmental education in the *I.C. Bovino-Panni-Castelluccio dei Sauri* took the form of various activities developed working with *Giornalisti nell'erba*, a network in which both children and teachers, journalists and researchers are involved, in order to promote environmental journalism and communication. The proposal for the inclusion of environmental culture in the educational programs, with specific and independent objectives and spaces, led Gaetano De Masi, headmaster of the *I.C. Bovino*, to become *Personaggio ambiente 2014* (2014 Personality for the environment).

## 2. The stages of the environmental culture path of the I.C. Bovino

At the beginning, the school included in the Vertical curriculum Goals for the development of key competences, recognizing Specific objectives concerning the environmental culture. Later, two interdisciplinary projects, named Environmental and territory and Let's activate the citizenship! have been developed in order to promote a competence-based education system on environmental issues and to increase among student's awareness of the protection of the environment and the cultural heritage. For the teachers, since 2014, the school has organized the Meeting gNe, in cooperation with *Proteofaresapere* and *Giornalisti nell'erba*: three days of training activities and exchange of experiences for teachers from all over Italy. Environmental education has been implemented also through workshops and practical activities.

### 2.1. The tree festival

From the knowledge of natural heritage and reflection on its alteration caused by climate change and anthropic pressures, the students increase their awareness developing a greater responsibility towards the environment. A key moment is the Tree festival, during which some trees are planted by pupils in public areas in collaboration with local authorities.

### 2.2. The collection of waste cooking oil

One liter of oil spilled in groundwater is enough to make one million liters of water non potable anymore! To avoid it, the school in 2015 has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with *SO.MI. AMBIENTE*, a company specialized in collecting waste from cooking oils. So, in the court of the school there is a big bin where the students can throw away the oil brought from home according to a timetable.

### 2.3. The biological school garden

In the school court, the Primary school students have made, with their Science and Technology teachers, a biological garden, in order to know and respect the seasonality of products and to promote a proper nutrition.

### 2.4. The ecological walks and the periodical reporting environmental risks to competent authorities

The project *Let's activate the citizenship!* aims to raise student's awareness on the need for the protection of the environment and the cultural and artistic

heritage. Moreover, it promotes young people's active citizenship, fostering a more positive attitude towards environmental risk: the pupils, in fact, can report risks for persons or environment to the competent authorities.

After debating on daily behaviors constituting a risk for the environment, such as illegal waste dumping, elements containing asbestos not removed, the students walk through the village's roads looking for the risk; then they have reported it using the form provided by the school. Afterwards they have returned and, when the waste was still there, the pupils, wearing gloves, have removed it.

### 2.5. *The sustainable snack*

A complete dossier is been dedicated to the sustainable snack. The students collected for one month the waste produced during the school snack; then they separated waste into the different categories, weighed it and displayed the results into graphics: it was found that they had especially produced plastic waste.

Pupils have also made an interview to their grandparents about what they were used to eat when they were young, what categories of waste they produced, how the disposal of waste worked. They concluded that the problem of waste didn't exist in the traditional farming culture; it is a peculiarity of industrial society.

Students, finally, made a Decalogue containing some tips for a more sustainable snack, such as carrying reusable bottles instead of plastic bottles.

### 2.6. *The course in environmental journalism*

The environmental journalism can be used at school to develop active citizenship and to deal with the issues of the Agenda 2030 (Iantaffi, Romano, 2019): students deepen the knowledge of environmental issues starting from critical paths and resources of their territory, so using the journalism tool-box they make interviews, articles, infographics, surveys, videos.

The journalism, moreover, foster the cooperative learning, allows the comparison between pupils that are at different levels of learning, encourage the peer-tutoring. In fact, the pupils attending the journalism course come from different school classes; the activities, moreover, are always performed as paired or group task: so, the peer tutoring foster the socialization. The students, based on personal attitudes, can share the tasks: writing articles, making info graphs or interview, taking pictures or looking for images. At last, pupils learn to use technologies in a conscious way, and to develop critical thinking. Just an example: in order to compete to *Giornalisti nell'erba* 2019, on the topic of the food-fake news, the journal's editorial board made a dossier named *Te la bevi o mangi la foglia?*, a play on words based on two Italian sayings. The students first introduced the fake news topic; then, they explained some historical fake news (such as the donation of Constantine), in order to comprehend the difference between the past false news and the present fake news, that quickly spread on the world wide web. The pupils made also a test to verify if the reader is able to distinguish a fake new. Finally, they realized an infographic with some tips to defend yourself from fake news.

## 3. Positive effects of environmental education on teaching

Environmental education activities have significant positive effects on teaching in small schools.

### 3.1. *Allowing a problem-based learning*

Environmental education activities allow a problem-based learning, based on the concrete reality. For example, the video *From Amiata to Minamata*, that concerns mercury pollution, is a result of the visit to the mineral park on the Amiata Mountain, in Tuscany. The story of mercury is emblematic of the need for a sustainable development: raw material that allowed the economic development of a whole area, it has become a forbidden material due to its harmful effects on the environment and human health.

During the visit students took pictures and gathered evidences that revealed different issues to be elaborated: the use of mercury in the industrial production, the working conditions in the mines, the effects on human health, the international Conventions to avoid the use of mercury. The Italian teacher led the students to the making of a video documentary: they collected and chose the pictures, drew illustrations, wrote the explanatory texts and then recorded audio and video. Finally, they edited the video in Moviemaker.

### *3.2. Improving the teaching in multiple classes*

Environmental education activities allow to differentiate the tasks according to the levels of learning so that they promote inclusion: the students with different needs take part to the activities implementing some skills that otherwise remain hidden.

### *3.3. Allowing both an interdisciplinary teaching and the use of innovative teaching methods.*

For example, the Italian teacher and the Science teacher have worked together on the video named *Let's build a greenhouse* to experience the climate change: in fact, the climate change is a cross-cutting issue and so it needs a cross-cutting approach including different disciplines (Italian, History and Geography, Science, Math, Technology). The students, after studying the climate change issue, made some little experiments, taking pictures and videos. Then, they built a greenhouse to test how the heat influences the growth of plants. Finally, they realized text and info graphs, recorded audio and edited the video using Moviemaker.

### *3.5. Encouraging the development of transversal key competences*

Here some evidence that can be observed through the environmental education activities, taken from the Vertical curriculum of the I.C. Bovino:

Digital competence:

- researching information on the web
- selecting and verifying information from the web, comparing different sources
- knowing the guidelines for conduct, known under the term «netiquette» and the meaning of copyright
- producing different digital contents and multimedia products
- understanding either the positive and the negative impacts of technology on the daily life and on the environment

Learning to learn:

- providing and organizing information
- work planning
- self-assessment capability

Citizenship competence:

- understanding the impact of the human changes on the environment
- adopting behaviors that respect the environment
- taking part to activities being inclusive

Entrepreneurship competence:

- taking decisions shared with the group
- evaluating the timing, tools and resources to successfully complete a task
- coordinating the work

## Conclusions

In addition to having significant positive effects on teaching, environmental education activities are oriented to the choice of high school and to work, as it allows students to test themselves and experiment their attitudes, to know the potentialities and opportunities of the territory, to know the green economy. The following are some examples.

In order to realize a dossier named *Sustainability Reports*, the students visited some local companies, such as an old watermill, renovated and used as a tourist attraction. Thanks to the school journalism activities, some ex-students cooperate with a local journal; the cooperation with local Pro Loco leads some students to become tourist guide.

Moreover, the different activities allow the knowledge of the Green economy and its potentialities. For example, the students interviewed the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of the startup Resilient Design, architect Alessandro Pucci, that realizes design objects made by waste, such as lamp made by bottles of vodka or beer. The pupils, moreover, made a video interview to the architect that managed a project of housebuilding, using wood and straw, in order to host migrants and quite built by a group of migrants.

In conclusion, the adhesion to national initiatives (such as the network *Giornalisti nell'erba*, the Campaign *M'illumino di meno*, the twinning between schools, the different national competitions) led students and teachers to deal with different situations, managing the risk of the insulation.

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