

Youth migration in a recent immigration country: a new working class?

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Introduction

The most important difference between immigrant and native children is the migratory biography. The age at the moment of immigration determines ethnic differences in educational attainment in migrant pupils. The explanation is based on the logic of a generation-integration-cycle implying that the generation status is determining the education career. Following this hypothesis, children starting primary school and having attended kindergarten in the host society (namely the second generation) have higher opportunities to end up with higher educational qualifications. Those arriving after the age of twelve are more likely to leave school without having obtained a high school level diploma. It is clearly shown in the experience of recent immigration countries where migrant pupils are over-represented among the “1.5” generation (namely it is referred to children rejoining their family between 10-14years old). Consequently, studies based on the experience of the new European immigration countries found that there is a lack of inclusion of immigrant children in the school environment and that native students need to be supported to adapt to the arrival and inclusion of immigrant students. These studies noted that immigrant children encounter hostility and difficulties at school, as well as in their insertion in the labour market (Faist, 1993; Crul and Vermeulen, 2003; Bolzman, Fibbi, Vial, 2003).

In these countries, educational systems see themselves obliged to respond to a significant number of pupils of various nationalities, with very different educational levels and, in many cases, with little or no command of the host society language. The increasing numbers of pupils enrolling has been important, but even so, in all countries high indices of absenteeism, education failure and premature school drop-out are observed among these pupils (EUMC, 2003; Eurydice, 2004). The reasons that led them to abandon their studies are diverse. Nevertheless, as the statistical data show, the effect of belonging to an ethnic minority or a different nationality seems to be an important variable to consider.

Another aspect determining the education of children is the parents’ resources in terms of rendering assistance to the educational efforts of their children. These can be both socio-economic (occupational status, living conditions) and cultural (language proficiency, education) resources. This impact is also confirmed by the PISA survey (examining reading competence and proficiency in maths and natural sciences): differences between immigrant and native children are explained by socio-economic status and the common language spoken at home (Oecd, 2006; 2008). Language and specific ethnic beliefs represent an other important factor influencing educational outcomes. Language proficiency is of key importance for immigrant children particularly if they want to get on in their educational career. The language skills of their parents, especially of the mothers, influence the language knowledge of their children. Linked to the language proficiency is the family social capital (Ogbu, 1987). The embeddedness in ethnic communities and family values can have positive effects on the educational attainment of immigrant children; it can also be found that a closer parent-child relationship impacts positively on school results among immigrant children, even outperforming native children. On the other hand, ethnic communities can be a hindrance, for example, when families or ethnic communities expect children to help in the family business instead of completing higher education, or to earn money in the ethnic economy as an unskilled worker. The role of the family social capital could be ambiguous, favoring in the latter case a process of “downward assimilation” (Portes and Zhou, 1999).

The last factor to consider is the institutional setting. It is quite clear that educational attainment also depends on the place of residence, the educational system and the local school type. The main differences among European school systems are the age at which education begins, the number of face to face contact hours with teachers during the years of compulsory schooling, the school selection mechanisms and the existence of special programmes for migrant pupils. The PISA study

intensified the debate concerning the procedure and timing of the first selections, especially in the German education system. As a general rule, this first selection, which channels pupils into different types of lower-secondary tracks forming a clear hierarchy, takes place after six years of primary school. The type of school, in turn, has a strong influence on the education that follows and thus ultimately on the choice of occupation. The selection decision is based on the children's school achievement. Several research projects have, however, shown that this selection often leads to discrimination against children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds or whose first language is not the national language.

One controversial question is the separation of children without sufficient knowledge of the language of instruction into special classes for foreigners. Scholars criticizing this model add the argument that without contact with native pupils the probability of the language acquisition of the host country is reduced (Ruesch, 1998; Heckmann, Lederer and Worbs, 2001; Felouzis, Liot, Perroton, 2005). Furthermore, schools where immigrant children are taught in the same class with the native population offer better opportunities for inter-ethnic contacts among students. According to the institutional setting, it could be useful to remember the negative impact of ethnic concentration/segregation on achievement. In classes with over 20% of immigrant pupils, the mean proficiency level of all students can progressively be lowered (Elliott, Payne, Ploesch, 2007).

The institutional setting is extremely important for the future opportunities of the second generation. This of course does not mean that we should forget other role-players: parents and teachers.

In many countries, schools encounter difficulties in communicating with immigrant parents. Language forms a barrier, though certainly not the only one. Until recently, language teachers fulfilled the role of translators and were often asked to bridge the gap between parents and teachers. In some countries, this is still a common practice. Language teachers, however, are neither trained nor paid for this role. The role of intermediary is gradually being taken over by school contact persons and school assistants who themselves have a migrant background. They are not trained as teachers but specifically as intermediaries (cultural mediators).

1. Youth migrant in Italy

Around three million migrants were registered at the beginning of 2007 (Istat 2008), which outlines a complex situation, characterized by immigrant flows from more than 191 countries, especially Central and Eastern Europe, Northern Africa, Latin-America and South-East Asia. There are no predominant nationalities nor can we talk of a predominant religion.

In this context, Italy is becoming an interesting case study. It is a recent immigration country, facing a growing presence of immigrants. Of course the migratory flows follow a growing trend, but they are characterized by internal transformations.

The main change took place on the 1st January 2007¹. The entry of Romania and Bulgaria in the European Union meant, on the one hand, the decrease of non-EU citizens staying (with consequences in terms of free circulation, access to the labour market and expulsions), and on the other hand it has not yet improved the conditions of insertion and integration in the Italian socio-economic context.

The principal reasons for entry (eight out of ten) are family reunion and work.

National groups can be divided into different types according to the proportion of these two kinds of permits:

- immigration exclusively for work reasons (Senegal, China, Ukraine);
- immigration mainly for work reasons with family reunification below average (Philippines);
- a balance between the two types (Morocco, Albania);
- very strong family migration (Romania) (Caritas, 2008; Ismu, 2009).

¹ Among the ten countries who joined the EU in 2004, Poland is the only country sending numerous citizens to Italy, both for temporary work and for settlement.

Tab. 1 – Immigration in Italy: an overview.

	2007
<i>Immigrant population*</i>	
- total estimated population, including minors	3,432,651
% female	50.4%
% minors	5.8%
<i>First 5 nationalities*</i>	
Romania	624,741
Albania	401,915
Morocco	365,908
China	156,634
Ukraine	132,581

Source: *Elaborations by Caritas/Migrantes Dossier Statistics on Ministry of Interior data (Caritas/Migrantes, 2005; 2008)

In this context the second generation or, according to recent immigration history in Italy, of the 1.5 generation as defined by Rumbaut (1994), is an important issue. The rate of the second generation (the children born in Italy from first-generation immigrants) is increasing, but at the moment it is mainly represented by children under 10 years old. Therefore, in most cases studies refer to minors belonging to “1.5 generation”, a definition that allows those “in the middle” or “half-way”, to easily manage the world of identity and plurality of integration and interaction paths that young people’s experience shows on the personal, internal (family and the original country) as well as on the external (school, peer groups, host or society of origin).

As data show, in the period 1996-2007 the number of minors increased at a much higher rate than immigrant residents as a whole (respectively 120% and 66%), increasing from 125,565 to over 600,000 (Caritas 2008). Two factors influenced this tendency: the arrival of minors from abroad and the number of births of children of foreign-born parents (Bacci, 2008). The proportion of immigrant minors, 19% of the foreign population, is higher in the North and reaches levels of between 24% and 27% in the various provinces of the Lombardy region. These data show deep structural and socio-cultural changes in Italian society, as reflected in Italian schools. In the school years 2007/2008, there were around 574,000 foreign pupils, approximately 6% of the total, whereas in the school year 1993/94 they had reached only the number of 37,478 students, equal to 0.4% of the overall number of students. In the last twelve years, the number of foreign students has become almost ten times greater, with a 50,000 unit yearly increase during the last three years (Miur, 2009). This is a distinctively Italian situation: this rate is not comparable with other countries where the “transformation” took a longer time.

The research is focused on the migrant youth experience at school in Turin, a city in the North West of Italy. The main goal were two: 1) to outline the current schooling situation of migrant students; 2) to identify, using some indicators, the best practices for solving key issues emerging in the national (and international debate) on migrant school - and subsequent labour market- integration: lack of language proficiency, differences in school curricula, difficulties in school-parent relationships, teaching of languages of origin. The various phases of welcoming, insertion, integration and then either school success or school failure are crucial in order to better understand in which way students with migratory backgrounds (or migrants themselves) are defining their careers, both at school and in the labour market. In other words, does the school integration promote high-qualified education paths or improve a “downward assimilation”? How does it is considered by

foreigners and how does school redefine itself due to the new characteristics of the school population (e. g. place of birth, family socio-economic conditions, spoken language at home)?².

In the last 30 years, Turin has experienced increased migration waves with differing thrusts and motivations, less temporary and more inclined now to be permanent. Has experienced (with an acceleration in the last decade) various migration waves, with different motivations and thrusts, promoted by less and less temporary plans and more inclined towards permanent settling. At the beginning of 2007, there were 83,977 legally settled foreign citizens, and after Rome and Milan, Turin was the third Italian city in terms of number of immigrants (Istat, 2008). Nowadays, immigration from Middle-East European countries is the most dynamic of all, making the characteristic Italian immigration model, the pluralism of foreign subjects, less evident.

Three characteristics can sum up the current immigrant population in Turin: 1) high rate of families with plans to remain; 2) high rate of pupils from migratory backgrounds attending school; 3) increasing participation in the labour market.

2. Minority background pupils at school: a general overview

With regard to the education of immigrant minors in the national territory, Italy guarantees the right to instruction in the same manner as it does for the Italian citizens regardless of legal status. Registration can be requested during any period of the academic year. All current regulations on the right to an education, access to educational services and participation in the life of the academic community apply to foreign minors, including regulations on mandatory vaccines.

Minors are enrolled in the class that corresponds with their real age unless the teaching staff decides otherwise. The teaching staff must take the following into consideration:

- the school system of the country of origin, which may require that students be enrolled in a different class not based on their real age
- the verification of the students' skills, abilities and level of preparation
- the course of study followed in the country of origin
- the students' degree (if applicable).

The teaching staff formulates proposals based on the criteria and methods used for communicating between the school and the foreign students' families. If it is necessary, the school can use qualified cultural mediators.

In Italy, the education context is characterized by some elements:

- the presence of several nationalities within any given classrooms
- the growth of second generation foreign students who display a demand for requirements and needs different from those coming from abroad with a different educational path
- foreign pupils are concentrated at primary and secondary levels, that continue on to high school.
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The enrolment rate of foreign children is always higher than that of nationals in those cycles with either require only minimal qualification or provide only a short course of instruction.

² The qualitative research has been carried out through 5 focus group with teachers and 30 in depth interviews with migrant pupils, 16-24 years old.

Tab. 2 – Foreign pupils in Italian schools (school years reported 1995/96 – 2005/06)

School year	Pupils without Italian citizenship	% foreign pupils on the total pupils at schools
1995/96	50,322	0.56%
1996/97	57,595	0.66%
1997/98	70,657	0.81%
1998/99	85,522	1.09%
1999/00	119,679	1.47%
2000/01	147,406	1.84%
2001/02	181,767	2.31%
2002/03	232,766	2.96%
2003/04	282,683	3.49%
2004/05	361,576	4.20%
2005/06	424,683	4.80%
2006/07	501,445	5.6%
2007/08	574,133	6.4%

Source: MPI, 2007.

Tab. 3 - Educational success in the different school levels (a.y 2006/2007)

	Total pupils* (a)	Immigrant pupils (b)	Italian pupils (c)	(b-c)
Primary school**	99.7	96.4	99.9	-3.6
Lower secondary school	95.8	90.5	97.3	-6.8
Upper secondary school	85.8	72.0	86.4	-14.4

* Successful pupils per 100 after mark assignment.

** Data are referred to the a.y. 2005/2006 and they don't include Roma pupils.

Source: MPI, 2007.

The school scenario is rapidly changing. On the one hand, there is an increase of students born in Italy and enrolled in the Italian school system from the beginning; on the other hand, there is a growing group of student that has already had two or three school-years in Italy. These two groups introduce new aspects on the daily managing of classrooms, dealing with different educational paths, language proficiencies and school results.

In this scenario, *Piedmont* is one of the regions in which the foreign presence is numerically significant (7,5% of the total students), higher than the national average and slightly lower than the regions with the highest numbers of non-Italian students.

In which areas of the region of *Piedmont* are the foreign students³? Almost half of them are in the *Turin* province (49%), 16% in *Cuneo* and 12% in *Alessandria*, in line with the distribution of the population, whereas their presence is lower in other provinces.

As far as their origins are concerned, the records indicate that approximately one out of two is from non-EU countries (48,9%), followed by African countries (30%) and countries of the American continent (11%).

The most represented nationalities are the Moroccans (8,104 students), Rumanians (8,099) and Albanians (6,644). They show a different distribution, depending on the school level: the Rumanians are more numerous in the primary cycle and in secondary school, whereas the number of Moroccans is higher in nursery school.

Over the last few years, the *Turin context* has recorded a higher increase of foreign students than the regional average. In this respect, the span of school years between 1998/9 and 2007/8 highlights the differences already detected among regional school levels. Primary school is still the level at which

³ In order to outline the *Piedmont* region scenario, the school year 2004/5 data are available.

there is the highest number of foreign children, with 7,81% of the total number of students, but middle school also shows a significant 6,77%. The percentage of their presence in high school amounts to 4,02%, due to the settling of foreign families in the country and to the increase in the number of families reuniting. The number of non-Italian youth in high school also increases – they were minimally involved in this phenomenon during the first few years.

The increase of students who are non-Italian citizens took place under two aspects: standard management (therefore review of the methods and contents of teaching itself) and the socializing role of the school, in other words the educational function of preparing citizens in a context where they are not all really citizens and where, on the other hand, the acquisition of citizenship shapes situations of legal entitlement to various rights.

3. Foreign students, schools and results: best practices for successful school careers

The increasing number of non-Italian children has influenced the standard management of schools and their socializing role. In other words, the institutional adaptation to this new kind of user has involved starting a competence definition as regards basic issues, such as the blend of different cultures and the development of innovative didactic interventions. Schools and teachers have responded to the expansion of this phenomenon in recent years with numerous initiatives that reveal great vivacity and a growth of competence. However at a national level there is a lack of systematic collection of initiatives and projects in favour of foreign pupils and more general intercultural education.

Therefore, the phenomena of withdrawal, setback and exclusion of foreign students are obvious within the Italian context and are consistent with other European countries. In this respect, the transition from lower to higher education represents an indicator to assess the quality of the relationship between education (and society as a whole) and foreign students. Some variables can influence the encounter between immigrant children, families, communities and schools: for example local school cultures, the different meanings immigrants and educators assign to schooling and the structural characteristics and cultural practices of immigrant communities. These variables can define different scenarios such as schools with over 70% of foreign pupils out of the total school population, high percentage of enrolments in high schools, discriminatory behaviour on the part of teachers. It is obvious, then, that schools represent a good observatory to understand the situation of foreign children and their course of integration in Italian society.

The first issue to become an object of attention, and hence investigation, concerns children in primary and secondary school⁴. Several works (Demetrio et al. 1990; Favrega and Palmas, 2003) investigated the social characteristics of immigrant children and their difficulties with the Italian school and language⁵. Classrooms and schools are governed by linguistic, socio-cultural and social interaction codes that may well differ from those governing the homes, peer and community lives of foreign pupils. Linguistic and literary acquisition, in particular, may be impeded when the social organization of teaching and learning ignores these differences, and fails to provide opportunities and activities that enable students to integrate into the classroom and proceed in their schooling. This is the reason why schools are beginning to define projects aimed at the parents of foreign pupils, recognizing the strategic importance of family involvement for the success of the students⁶.

The awareness of such vast problems, of their various facets related to the pupils' nationalities when integrating into the school system, their previous courses of education, their mother tongues, etc, force one to narrow the field of research, focussing the search for good strategies on specific issues.

⁴ These schools form the first educational cycle: they are compulsory and last for 8 years, beginning at the age of 6.

⁵ Despite the progress Italy has made in the field of integration since 1998, policies in this area still contain contradictions, mostly with regard to a discrepancy between theory and practice.

⁶ More information about this kind of activity is available on the following websites: www.centrocome.it; www.pianetapossibile.it; www.ismu.org, www.interculturemap.org.

In order to make effective the right to education and facilitate the integration of migrant children, the National, Regional and Local Authorities should establish programs aimed at promoting and facilitating the reception, integration in the Italian social context as well as to protect the pupil's original culture and language.

Local authorities recognize and embrace their role as those who set and oversee minimum standards, as promoters and financiers of flexible and innovative initiatives in the education field. This role is played in according with private and non governmental sectors. These sectors – employer and worker groups, church groups, civic, ethnic and immigrant organisations, private foundations, and the various community-based non-profit entities - has supported schools in their work with migrant students.

In this context a key role is played by associations and the third sector. If school and social services are the first ones to become aware of the arrival of foreign minors, their presence has also become progressively more visible in meeting venues and out of school activities.

I am happy to come here (to the Association) because I have some friends, I practice with the computer, improve my Italian, we organize tours, I play some musical instruments, play sport, learn to walk on stilts and meet kids from everywhere in the world (18 year old Moroccan).

I come here often to do my homework; there is teacher who helps me with Latin. He's a former teacher and very patient. But sometimes I get tired because after school I would like to spend some time with the other kids, but I must go home and finish other homework. Perhaps this summer I will join in the activities. I'd like to do something other than studying...But languages are important, I don't want to be picked upon because I can't pronounce double consonants (17 year old Peruvian).

It is now obvious that dealing with school integration problems means entering a multi-faceted and constantly evolving world, in which there are numerous actors: teachers, autochthonous and allochthonous students, native and migrant families, cultural mediators, associations, local government operators, etc. The research, analysis and definition of methods and activities must take into account each school-involved actor's viewpoint in order to develop efficient projects, responding to foreign students' requirements and compatible with the local education system.

Lots of initiatives and projects have been funded in recent years to:

- support migrant pupils' school integration (language courses, cultural mediators, translations of educational materials and definition of leaflets explaining the characteristics of the Italian school system);
- improve the relationship between schools and migrant families,
- organise training courses for teachers to develop new methodologies and define new instruments for teaching in a multicultural class.

Specific attention is dedicated to the students' families.

The relevance of the family and the significance assigned to education as an instrument of social mobility is obvious. However, if the family may represent a resource to support educational efforts, it is sometimes transformed into an obstacle to the definition of schooling paths as well as an encourager of education withdrawal.

"Jawad is very good at school. He started in Turin in grade 2. After grade 8, he will enroll in a vocational institute" "But 'd like to become a nurse [as a secondary school choice], it's a good profession". He thinks for a moment and then adds: "I would have liked to attend high school, but my family did not agree. For us, high school is too much"⁷.

Personal inclinations are silenced and replaced by the parents' economic needs and worries, especially in the case of families with both lower economic and cultural capital, as they prefer to direct their children towards professional careers that ensure a quick access to the work market.

⁷ *La Stampa*, 2007/04/03 - Turin newspaper with nationwide distribution.

Even within the Italian context, adolescents with a poor family background mainly attend vocational institutes because these are considered as less educationally and culturally demanding and more useful for job placement. Even more so for immigrant pupils or pupils with a migratory background.

Tab. 4 - Upper secondary level: percentage of Immigrant pupils in the overall school population (a.y. 2006/2007).

Education type	Incidence of Immigrant pupils in the overall school population
Classical, Scientific, Teacher Training Education	1.7
Technical Education	4.1
Vocational Education	7.5
Artistic Education	2.9
Total upper secondary level	3.8

Source: Miur, 2007.

“I enrolled in this school because I already knew other kids coming here. To be the only Moroccan in a class I couldn’t bear it” (Moroccan boy)

“When I arrived I went to the high school director to enroll and he told me that that school was too difficult for us foreigners, so he sent me to a vocational institute” (Albanian girl)

The family’s socio-economic status continues to be an important factor in school failure. According to this, in Italy there are still today significant differences between both the North and the South of the country and between residential areas and the peripheries in the main cities. In these specific contexts, first, the low educational and economic capital of the parents have a negative effect on the school careers of Italian children.

Second, the lack of other strong educational figures (teachers, youth workers, priests) influences the situation of children’s well-being, favouring the increase of illegal activity. Finally, the arrival of migrants (thanks to the low cost of accommodation) has added a new element of instability for both adults and youths.

In the migration process, the family is weak because in most cases it is marginal to the new context of integration (furthermore, it sometimes finds itself to be in an inferior social position compared to the original context) because the latter represents values and traditions that are different from those of the prevailing culture. Consequently, the outcome is a devaluation of parental models, even though the reference models in the host society that could replace them are still missing or are not easily accessible. Various intercultural associations address some of their activities to parents with migratory backgrounds, especially if they are arrived early in Italy. Two examples are famous in Turin and their experience has been recognized by numerous European projects focussed on good practices in the integration process: Alma Mater⁸, an Intercultural Centre for Immigrant Women, and ASAI⁹.

⁸ This Centre offers information and orientation for services (social, cultural and labour) and self-help groups, mainly addressed to women, both of first and second generations. It also provides intercultural activities such as a documentation centre and a theatre. Economic activities by immigrant women are also encouraged and there are two co-operatives managed by immigrant women who run a Turkish bath, a laundrette, catering and dress-making services.

⁹ Asai (Association of Intercultural Activities) runs a centre aimed at: supporting the social and vocational path of foreign youngsters and improving their cultural and language skills; improving youngsters’ self-confidence and promoting youth empowerment; promoting intercultural dialogue as a resource for social cohesion and responsible participation; fighting social isolation and discrimination by offering learning opportunities.

Furthermore, the network of external survival support for the elaboration of one's migratory experience, combined with the adolescents' crisis stage, is poor. Often, the second generation has neither people nor places where it can express uneasiness, worries and difficulties.

The socio-educational world in general seems still unprepared to tackle – and even notice at times – the specific relevance of diversity and of cultural, religious and family feelings of belonging during these adolescents' growth process. In these conditions, adolescents' growth processes can increase inter-generational gaps and negatively affect assimilation and integration paths.

Like everyone else, foreign adolescents are expected to take up a role and work out identity choices that are not merely individual but rather involve family, school and friends (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000; Perone, 2006). In fact, the choices not only result from the individual's decision and will, but are also connected with numerous factors. Therefore, it is deemed necessary to assess how individual freedom – with limitations due to migratory conditions – relates to the second and first generation projects, and to the integration politics of the host society.

In brief, when facing various identity aspects, adolescents might activate options based on a continuum that sways between two opposite poles: the positive one, where young people supported by family and a network of friends are able to manage the various levels, transforming their perception of belonging to more than one cultural system into an asset, and the negative one where pupils, still retreating into a defensive position, come to define their own identity in a rigid and non-negotiable way.

A strong signal of integration in the host society - especially in the case of adolescents - is the opportunity to enjoy their free time, in other words the peer-group dimension, entertainment, leisure and sport time with their peers, which seems to be especially significant for drop-outs. There are many leisure-expressive activities offered to pupils focussed on supporting their school integration processes, because nowadays it is clear that a synergic cooperation between schools (whose training and educational tasks play a fundamental role in fighting emargination) and informal socialization and meeting venues (that are a natural complement to schooling) is essential, because the firm educational belief is that through interpersonal relationships, working together and sharing of activities and leisure environments that adolescents' development and growth within a cultural context thrive.

4. Are they geniuses or foreigners? The human costs of qualification.

As it is already said, school represents the passport to understand in which way the socio-economic integration paths are oriented. Education becomes the most important element in defining both a successful socio-economic integration and an ascendant mobility for young people. In this view, migrant adolescents face a double challenge: on the one hand, they are looking for good education and on the other hand they have to fight against discrimination and prejudices.

Some interviews have stressed a kind of parents' obsession about education and school success. It happens overall among families coming from Eastern Europe, where the parents' high level of qualification represents an important resource for the young people. They grow up in families with a high cultural level, where there is a great awareness of the importance of good qualifications and education. This is why, nowadays, we're facing two interesting phenomena: 1) migrant families leave schools where the rate of migrant pupils is growing and 2) negative perceptions by Moroccans and Maghrebians are growing among migrants coming from other countries.

“when I arrived, my mother wanted to enroll me in a High school, because I was enrolled in this kind of school in Romania, but when she went to get information (in a school), the secretary told her that there were vocational courses where students could succeed without sufficient Italian knowledge. So, I did a hairdresser course. After a few months, a friend of my mother told us that there are high schools in Turin where foreign students are enrolled and supported in their Italian knowledge. I changed school immediately. And now I'm very happy” (18 years old Rumanian)

These words introduce a key issue: the teachers' socio-representations of foreign pupils. There is a group of teachers who consider all foreign pupils in the same way as pupils characterized by: lack of education (even if they have been educated in the Italian schools), a poor socio-economic family context, only interested in a very rapid insertion in the labour market. This image, maybe true at the beginning of the migratory phenomenon in Italy (when pupils were mostly Maghrebinian, living with fathers, in a poor context), is continually changing and evolving. In the same classes teachers are faced with second generations and neo-arrivals, with over ten different nationalities, differentiated by years of presence in Italy, educational paths, languages spoken. It is a dangerous attitude that can become discrimination, condemning foreign pupils to seek only educational careers with a low profile.

"I remember a teacher of Italian in the last class of high school. She was surprised while evaluating very good a composition of mine. She was ignorant: I was the first in my class: we foreigners are sometimes better than Italians and maybe this fact is not appreciated by teachers. We are supported when we arrive, when we need help and when we cannot "disturb" and "inter-act" with the school career of Italians" (Moroccan, 19 years old).

"Sometimes in the class, someone says that we foreigners are better treated than Italians because we are foreigners and teachers don't check us when we speak and don't evaluate us in the same way as them. Maybe it is true at the beginning: I remember that when I arrived, I spent a lot of hours out of my class learning Italian. But, after a few months I began to follow the school programme as well as my classmates. My first compositions were insufficient, but, step by step, my performance increased. Thanks to my mother, who encouraged me to read books in Italian and to study, I'm now an university student: I study engineering like my father, but I don't whether I'll work in Italy or come back to Romania, because in Italy Rumanians are discriminated against. Generally I don't speak Rumanian when I'm in public areas or on the bus and I'll ask my parents to speak English when we are together" (Rumanian, 20 years old).

It is sometimes the lack of language proficiency that cancel all the educational paths and the brilliant school careers developed abroad.

"It seems that in our countries there aren't any schools. Teachers don't know that our schools are stricter than Italian schools. We have to study very hard. It is impossible to walk around during the lessons and nobody arrives in the classroom after the teacher" (Rumanian, 18 years old).

"At school I was enrolled in an Italian language course. One day, I came back in to my class during the math lesson and I solve the problems without difficulties. Everybody seemed astonished: in my country I enrolled at high school (liceo) in the fourth class, now I'm in the second class of a vocational school" (Rumanian, 17 years old).

It seems that at school teachers separate Italians and Foreigners, without paying attention to the various characteristics of pupils.

"In the same conditions, pupils coming from abroad have the same results of Italians. I don't believe that a reasonable teacher could expect great result from pupils just arrived from China or the Philippines. I wonder about this, but unfortunately it happens, even in my school. Foreign students are highly motivated and their families use every opportunity both at school and in the leisure time to support their school career" (Italian teacher)

Thinking of their future, all the interviewees seem to be disillusioned. They know that in their case the school path can be harder than for their Italian colleagues.

"In Italy it is not as in France, where foreigners are a normal experience. Here if a Moroccan boy, with a degree applies for a white collar job, it seems strange. When you go into the labour offices there are few foreigners. Only if you go to restaurant or a bar you can meet migrant workers. It is clear: you start in this way and then you may proceed to obtain better positions" (Moroccan, 19 years old)

"When I arrived in the third class at high school, the teacher of Italian treated me as a child. Some teachers think that we immigrants are without culture only because we were forced to leave our countries. It is true, at the beginning we don't know the language, but now I'm the first in my classroom. Maybe teachers have to pay more attention to the Italians. When I declare my will to go to the university, some Italians answer me that it will be useless because I'll be a

foreigner forever. I want to have a degree and then go away from Italy: here, there is no space for us. Italians want us only as caregivers, but our mothers accept this job only to allow us to study, to go to the university. My mother has a degree in Economics” (Rumanian, 19 years old).

This quotation introduces another issue: the risk of occupational segregation facing specific ethnic groups. For example, young females want to escape from the jobs held by their mothers. They don’t want to do the same work as their parents: they are aware that their parents have had to accept low-aid jobs, abandoning their qualifications, abilities and previous careers. But, when these students think of their future they imagine becoming doctors, lawyers, and engineers. Generally they don’t choose the marginal and the invisible strategy of insertion in the Italian society.

Tab. 5 – Strategies supporting identity building (Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

Reaction	Description	Example
Individual mobility	People try to abandon the generally low status in which they find themselves and to advance socially.	Upper social mobility
Social creativity	Members of the discriminated groups try to redefine themselves in order to better improve the image of their ethnic groups in the majority.	New elements of comparison: evaluation is given on various aspects.
Social competition	Member of the discriminated group try to compete and overcome those of the majority group.	Changes in the socio-economic status among migrants and natives

Following Tajel’s theory, it is possible to identify in the Turin experience a preference for the first strategy. Due to the recent history of migration and the lack of strong ethnic communities, young people are trying to define an individual integration path in Italian society based on three pillars: 1) school success; 2) positive interaction with their origins and 3) developing of intercultural/bilingual competences.

These young people are aware of the importance of learning Italian, acquiring qualifications and abilities for the best interaction with the Italian society. In the meantime they are aware of their identity, of being different from others with regard to citizenship and the negative attitude of Italians. Racism came up spontaneously in all of the focus groups. A group of immigrants indicated that it was difficult for them to tell whether discrimination by authority figures was based on the fact that they were immigrants or because they were members of a visible minority. Another indicated discrimination and bigotry in their attempts to find employment. However, many felt that this was not a serious problem in Italy. They compared Italy to other nations and noted that Italy's tolerance of multiculturalism lessened the problems of racism. Several participants felt that efforts to promote tolerance and understanding should be focussed on schools and aimed at both teachers and students.

Some of these young people experience a downward mobility and they bet on the school success to improve their social conditions. Unfortunately, the Italian context is not prepared for this. The complementary presence of the migrant population in the labour market (united to the idea of the German figure of “guest-worker”) is accepted. The possibility of people born or grown up in Italy, speaking Italian, sharing the Italian culture and rooting for Italian soccer teams, becoming competitors for the same qualified job position is on the horizon. Some interviewees are involved in youth associations and participate in youth project, where discussions on their future in Italy are frequent. The issue of their insertion in the labour market and the probable difficulties encountered and the possible discrimination is on the agenda: this issue is strictly connected to the complex issue

of citizenship status. Born in Italy from foreign parents does not mean to be Italian citizens: following the *jus sanguinis*, these boys and girls are foreigners and they can apply for Italian citizenship when they reach 18 years old and can demonstrate having lived in Italy for 18 years continually. In the same way, being Peruvians or Rumanians, Nigerians or Senegalese does not mean the same thing. There is also discrimination on the basis of country of origins. Till now being Moroccan has been more difficult than being Filipino, even if the Italian language is perfect and skills are high.

5. Conclusion

The most important lesson emerging from our project is the importance for supporting youth integration programmes concentrating on the following core areas: language acquisition, education, integration into labour market, social counselling and social integration.

However, the integration program is not a one-time project but a continuous, dynamic process open to address other issues as they become important. There are also a number of intersectional issues that are specifically important for developing a comprehensive approach to school integration, such as diversity/intercultural competence, voluntary/civic engagement, evaluation and sustainability.

To sum up: first, for pupils at risk of school failure for different reasons, it is feasible to hypothesize that these young people grow up in a context characterized by the lack of strong identification models. Family is weak because, in most cases, it holds a marginal position in the society (low capital and socio-economic status) as well as not possessing the cultural tools useful for promoting school paths and the success of their children.

Second, there is a scarcity of external aid, essential for survival, combined with adolescent crises and the process of elaborating one's own school and society experience. Often, the pupils at risk do not have models or places where they can express discomfort, worries and problems.

Finally, there often is, in the socio-educational world, inadequate support, which seems still ill-equipped for the management of the continuous challenges facing adolescents especially those living in the suburban and socio-economic deprived areas. In these conditions, their growing process can increase the generational gap and negatively influence school and socio-integration paths.

The Italian case shows that there are contexts in the process of activating positive collaboration, using the various links of the education network to lead this youth in the three facets of the growing process: training, identity recognition and integration. Educational programmes external to the school perform a key role, especially with regard to the integration in a "positive" peer group. Transversal to school time and free time are youth workers, associations (both ethnic and intercultural), parishes and NGOs continuing to play a significant role in the Italian scenario but whose role, when performed within the integration perspective, could be helpful for parents on one hand, and on the other hand, for teachers, in decoding those identity dynamics, that are a potential source of inter-generational conflict and of anti-social behaviour.

So, in order to improve the integration of foreign children and youth into different school system, it is considered useful to: a) design specific sub-policies (sub-practices) aimed at the different immigrant groups; b) better support foreign families and promote the potentially crucial role they play in furthering their children's education: in this way an initiative could contribute to avoid the risk of reproducing exclusion over generations in a knowledge-based society and of stabilizing stratifications along ethnic lines; c) establish initiatives at local level promoting the positive interaction between pupils of different origin and the process of secondary socialization to tolerance, pluralism and democratic values.

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