Young immigrants at school: inclusion and location of rights in Italy

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Abstract: The paper addresses the theme of the policies of inclusion of immigrant students in the Italian schooling system. Italy (but also the others countries of the so-called Southern European Welfare Model) – formerly a country of emigration – has only recently begun to experience non-European immigration and 'integration' has become a buzzword in political and educational debates. Starting from a critical reading of the concept of integration, with reference to some European models and approaches of the more established migration experience (in the alternative modalities of inclusion including assimilation, differentialism and interculturalism), the paper examines the set of discourses / policies / practices developed in response to the demand for education that students without Italian citizenship are increasingly and differently making. The purpose here is to understand if performed interventions actually help inclusion, that is to say a full and successful participation in education.

Keywords: quality, mass higher education, equity, excellence

Introduction

Since the second half of the last century the huge variety of migrant ethnic groups on the European continent has been deeply modifying the demographic structure and the social order of each country, while undermining the cultural and linguistic uniformity of individual nation

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states (Gaine, 2008).

In the European context, Italy has historically been characterized by a substantial emigration "by need" both on the continent towards Northern Europe and as an intercontinental emigration towards the American continent and Australia. It can be stated that Italy is the stage of an event that repeats itself in reversed roles: it started as an emigration culture to eventually become a host culture for immigrants. The available data on the recent development of this phenomenon reveal the transformation of «labour immigrations into peopling immigrations» (Sayad, 2002). During the last decade there has been not only a significant increase in the number of immigrants in Italy, but above all, a qualitative change in terms of composition within the different ethnic groups as well as stabilization of permanent settlements, as a result of family reunification, and the birth and growing up of immigrant children in Italy (Istat, 2009).

The increase in migration flows and the consolidation of stabilization processes are becoming more and more visible in the growing participation of immigrant children in the Italian school system. On the demographic side, it can be observed that although the Italian school system has experienced a reduction in the number of the local new generation, however, the student population is growing (particularly in some local contexts in the northern regions with a low nativity rate) due to the constant presence of immigrant families (MIUR, 2009). On the other hand, a much more relevant fact is that the heterogeneity of those sociocultural worlds facing each other in the sphere of education and training has significantly increased, due to the large variety of ethnic groups and different migratory trajectories.

Based on this empirical evidence, the paper analyzes the different strategies used to include the younger generation of immigrants in the Italian school system. Starting from a critical reading of the concept of integration, with reference to some European models and approaches of the more established migration experience (in the alternative modalities of inclusion including assimilation, differentialism and interculturalism), the paper examines the set of discourses / policies / practices developed in response to the demand for education that students without Italian citizenship are increasingly and differently making.

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Integration: an «*overloaded notion*»

The issue of *integration* of members belonging to 'other cultures' in a particular social context as well as the contact dynamics among different cultures are common social phenomena. They have always existed because of the multiplicity of reasons that lead individuals, and more recently, social groups to move around different areas and territories (Gaine & Gewitz, 2008). This question found in the past different solutions, more or less sympathetic and conflicted, at different levels of inclusion (full participation) or marginality. The concept of "integration" holds different meanings deposited in different historical and cultural contexts (Sayad, 2002, 287-297). From this point of view, following the theoretical approach of Sayad (2002, p. 294), we regard the term "integration" as purified of the concepts of *adaptation* and *assimilation* that accompany it in more prominently ethnocentric traditional positions.

In the meaning of assimilating, integration is considered more as a *duty* rather than a right of immigrants: they are expected to be integrated or willing to integrate, that is to say to accept rules and customs of the host society in a linear and unidirectional way. From this perspective, the prevailing idea of integration involves, therefore, the gradual elimination of diversity and the "assimilation" of the foreign student into the culture of the host country. As regards practices, this response provides for forms of "compensatory education" that should encourage the integration of the immigrant student through the acquisition of the language and culture of the destination country. The "assimilationist" response is found, in particular, in the *republican school model*, in France (Raveaud, 2008), where the ethnic, religious, cultural and gender differences are tolerated as an individual's free expression exclusively in his private life. In the meantime, school as an institution is responsible for transmitting the principles and rules regulating behavior in the public sphere.

At the opposite pole, a second concept of acculturation, that of *differentialism or multiculturalism*, centered on the legitimization and respect for cultural differences, leads to the rejection of the idea of integration itself, conceived as imperialistic expression of host societies, imposition of behavior models by the leading majority as well as coercion of immigrant populations' identity. The result of the assimilation is the absolute negation of the differences, which leads to the stripping of the original identity elements and the prescription of an *unambiguous* belonging. *Differentialism,* instead, particularly in the form of radical

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relativism, implies self-closure in separated worlds - as it happens to the radical multiculturalists in Great Britain, who claim the creation of separate school networks - and the risk of ghettoization (or segregation), i.e. the excluding opposition with the developing of racist forms, intolerance among groups and behaviors of mutual marginalization.

These two approaches have an *essentialist* vision of culture, as an unmodifiable natural fact. Actually, cultures are dynamic and complex phenomena in unceasing evolution. Borders among them move and have to be continuously redefined, and the hybridization forms, especially in immigration contexts, are restless and unavoidable (Ambrosini, 2001 p. 166). Moreover, currently, both the approaches are called into question, on one hand by the pluralist configuration of the host societies which appear less and less cohesive, well-integrated systems, based on a single cultural model; on the other hand, by the upraising of a concept of individual identity based on a pluribelonging condition (national, cultural, religious, professional, ethnic) that makes the individualization process more complex (Melucci, 1994; Beck, Giddens & Lash 1994; Bauman, 2001; Beck, 2000). Consequently, the same happens to the representation of the self as a migrant and the own sense of belonging to a new national community. The debate developed in France, for example, about *affaire des foulards* and clashes in French suburbs with high concentration of immigrants shows clearly the transformation of the laicality principle concept: considered as even public freedom of expression of individual differences, a means of social inclusion (Van Zanten, 2001).

These limits have brought to the consolidation in the debate on the definition of European policies (see the works of the European Council) of a third form of inclusion, called *interculturalism*, based on an idea of "dialogic and contractual" acculturation (Besozzi, 2009, p. 22). This form of integration offers a search for a sensitive and changeable balance between identity and differences, within an inclusive process based on participation, comparison, and mutual exchange (Faas, 2008). So it goes beyond both the ethnocentrism of the assimilationist vision and the differentialist vision that absolutizes cultural incompatibilities and the essentialist concept of culture.

On the theoretical level, the meaning of integration proposed by Sayad (2002) applies tellingly the intercultural perspective. To say it with the words of the author: «integration implies integrity of the person melt but not dissolved in the group; while assimilation equals to negation and disappearance of this integrity» (p. 294). From this perspective, the issue of

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immigrant integration is requalified as a matter of integration of the receiving society. Following this point of view, the integration concept refers to the integration of the whole itself -of the entire society- and not only to the integration of some foreign or external individuals.

This implies the necessity to go beyond the representation of the immigrant as a "foreigner" constantly *ante portas*, in the doorway (Bauman, 2001, p. 122) and to see him fully integrated into the social body. This implies the recognition of *all* the diversities – not only the ethnic origin- as a constitutive feature of the *human race*. From the same point of view, Bauman (2001, p. 124) asserts that contemporary mankind speaks with many voices. From this perspective, the core issue of integration is how to turn this *polyphony* into *harmony*. «Harmony does not mean uniformity, but it is always an interaction of many different motifs, keeping each its distinctive identity while supporting the resulting melody through and thanks to this identity». Diversity is considered as a value and integration is an interactive process involving both migrants and members of the host society, on the basis of equal rights and dignity. It becomes the place «where we can meet as *equals*, acknowledging our diversity and postulating the maintenance of this diversity as main goal of our meeting» (*ibidem,* p. 125*)*.

If the European policies have produced a convergence effect in institutional discourses towards interculturalism, inclusion policies carried out by various European countries are different and reflect, partly, the general trends of the models of integration and construction of citizenship and, partly, the institutional models of their own school system. Below, the Italian situation will be analyzed in order to describe the set of the discourses/policies/practices accompanying the inclusion of foreign students and to understand the position of the institutional actions comparing them to the above alternatives, outlined by assimilationism, segregationism or interculturalism.

'Second generations' in Italy: heterogeneity of conditions and paths

The first decade of the new millennium in Italy saw a progressive and intense growth of second generation immigrants, that is immigrants born and raised in Italy but that can't be said to be Italian, because they do not possess any legal Italian citizenship. This refers to people born in Italy but this conceptual category includes cases characterized by different socio-

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cultural conditions and educational problems, such as minors reunited with their families after having completed a more or less long process of socialization in their country of origin, unaccompanied minors, refugee minors, minors arrived in Italy within the international adoption process, children of mixed couples (Favaro, 2000). Therefore, based on an extensive phenomenology of young generations permanently present in Italy, when it comes to 'second generation', we should avoid the concept in the plural (Ambrosini, 2004, p. 6) and consider the pluralization of educational needs which the schooling system must respond to.

Whether born in Italy or not, the percentage of immigrant children growing up in Italy is significantly increasing. The establishment of second generations, as pointed out by studies in contexts characterized by a long tradition of migration, draws attention to the worsen of social risk phenomena (school failures, employment marginalization, residential segregation, deviant behaviors). However, improvements in educational achievement and in families' symbolic investments in education are also recorded (Colombo & Queirolo Palmas, 2002; Besozzi, Colombo & Santagati, 2009), which opens the way to a turning point compared to the «subordinate integration» achieved by the first generation (Ambrosini, 2004, pp. 11-19). As also shown by international research (Portes *et al.*, 2004, pp. 55-105) a definition of the results of the inclusion process is extremely complex, due to the deep inner differentiations in past experiences and paths concerning life conditions, such as available material, relational and symbolic resources as well as training opportunities. As will be seen below, both the theoretical reflection and the empirical verification reveal the importance of all the life contexts that young generations have to go through during their growth process. In order to achieve a successful inclusion, young immigrants need to receive not only a high cultural and social capital from their family of origin, but also a human capital, which they should have the opportunity to build up at school and in all the other social contexts shared with their peers. In particular, school plays an important role, we can say a basic one, not only in the formation of cognitive skills, but also in an identity building process, in defining future life expectations and plans of young generations, wether migrant or born in Italy. In this regard, in the following paragraphs we will analyze the current educational policies implemented in Italy in response to the educational needs of young generations without Italian citizenship. The purpose here is to understand if performed interventions actually help inclusion, that is to say a full and successful participation in education.

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Students without Italian citizenship in the Italian school system

Because of the lack of a centralized system capable to detect the presence of migrant minors and because of the "invisibility" of a large number of migrants among which are the "unaccompanied" or the children of parents without regular residence permit, official data give faulty results about the number of under 18 living in Italy.

The growing presence of immigrant children in Italy is made particularly evident in Italian schools, in which from a little more than 70.000 registered units in 1997-98, in ten years there has been an increase of over 500.000 registered units, consisting of students without Italian citizenship[2]. We moved from a national average incidence of 0,8% in 1997/98 (1 foreigner out of 125 Italian students) to 7% in 2008/09 (corresponding to 629.360 units compared to a total school population of 8.945.978 units) (tab. 1).

Table 2. Students without Italian citizenship by educational stage School year 1996/1997 - 2008/2009- Value in %

School Year	Total	Nursery school	Primary school	First grade secondary school	Second grade secondary school
1996/1997	0,7	0,8	1	0,6	0,3
2001/2002	2,2	2,5	3,0	2,5	1,1
2002/2003	2,7	3,0	3,7	3,1	1,3
2003/2004	3,5	3,6	4,5	4,0	2,0
2004/2005	4,2	4,5	5,3	4,7	2,4
2005/2006	4,8	5,0	5,9	5,6	3,1
2006/2007	5,6	5,7	6,8	6,5	3,8
2007/2008	6,4	6,7	7,7	7,3	4,3
2008/2009	7,0	7,6	8,3	8,0	4,8

Source: Miur

By analyzing the distribution of students without Italian citizenship in the different types of school during the last decade, it can be seen how the inclusion of foreign students in our schools has changed from a mainly partial phenomenon (affecting mostly primary school) into a structurally more widespread condition at the different educational stages (tab. 1).

Primary and first grade secondary schools continue to receive the highest number of foreign students (8,3% and 8% of the entire school

Total

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[2] See the data published by the Ministry of Education in the annual surveys of students without Italian citizenship.

population in the 2008-2009 school year). But the available data mark a significant increase (equal to 5%) even in upper level schools (tab. 1).

Table 2. Students without Italian citizenship born in Italy by educational stage School year 2008/2009

Educational stage	Absolute values	For 100 students	For 100 students without Italian citizenship
Total	233.003	2,6	37
Nursery school	91.647	5,5	73,3
Primary school	105.292	3,7	45
First grade secondary school	26.366	1,5	18,8
Second grade secondary school	9.698	0,3	7,5

Source: MIUR school year 2008/2009

Table 3. Students without Italian citizenship born in Italy by educational stage (values in %)- School year 2008/2009

Educational stage	%
Nursery school	39,3
Primary school	45,2
First grade secondary school	11,3
Second grade secondary school	4,2

Source: MIUR school year 2008/2009

Table 4. Percentage composition of foreign students by place of birth and educational stage – School year 2008/2009 – Values in %

Nursery school		Primary		First grade secondary school		Second grade secondary school	
Born in Italy	Born abroad	Born in Italy	Born abroad	Born in Italy	Born abroad	Born in Italy	Born abroad
73,3	26,7	45,0	55,0	18,8	81,2	7,5	92,5

Source: MIUR 2009, School year 2008/2009

Although over the last two years growth rates have slowed down[3] because of the world economic crisis and the decrease of international mobility, the number of the students without Italian citizenship enrolled in Italian schools will increase for another decade, due to the strong rise in the registered number of people born in Italy from the school year 2003-2004,
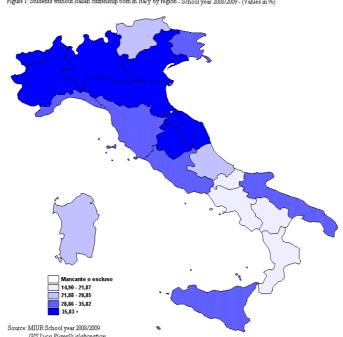
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[3] In the 2007-08 school year the total increase was 14,5% against 9,6% registered in the 2008-09 school year, resulting in a decline of almost 5 percentage points. The downturn in growth was 4.6 percentage points in nursery school, 6.5 in primary school, 1.0 in first grade secondary school and 6.4 in second grade secondary school.

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because of the regularization implemented through the so-called Bossi-Fini law. In fact, the number of children born in Italy from immigrant families has increased at all the educational stages (with a percentage increase equal to 17 % compared to the previous school year). The percentage increase of children born in Italy from immigrant families is considerably higher than the general increase of foreigners (17% *versus* 9.6%). In the 2008-09 school year children and teenagers born in Italy from immigrant families who were enrolled in school constituted 37% of foreign students. As an emerging phenomenon, the greatest concentration is found in nursery schools (73,3%) but it is likely that in the next few years this rate will affect primary schools (tab. 2, 3 and 4).

The presence of students without Italian citizenship remains strongly differentiated across the country, by continuing to grow in mid-north regions, where Emilia Romagna has the highest incidence (reaching almost 12%), followed by Umbria (11,4%), Lombardy (10,3) and Veneto (10,2). In the south, instead, the lowest incidence is registered (between 1,3% and 2,3%), with the exception of Abruzzo with a 5% (fig. 1 and 2).
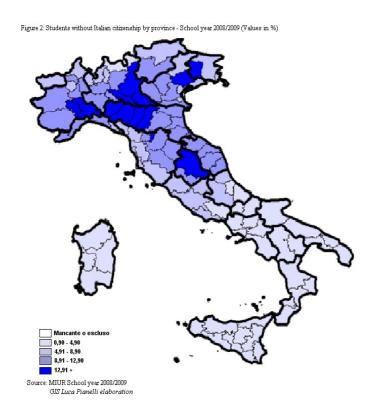
As regards territorial distribution, there is a widespread presence and multifaceted phenomena of high demographic density in some areas of the country (large cities, small towns, districts) and in some schools. The latest data based on provisorial calculations made by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research[4] on the first cycle school in the 2009/2010 school year reveal that schools in which the number of immigrant students goes beyond 30% are about 470 as regards primary school and 140 as regards first grade secondary school; in both cases, over 70% of the classes are in northern regions (Lombardy, Emilia Romagna, Veneto, Piemonte) and in medium-sized and big cities like Milan, Turin, Bolzano, Rome and Brescia. If we consider the classes with foreign children born in Italy the phenomenon is scaled down. In this case, the classes with a presence of foreign students not born in Italy reaching more than 30% are about 1300 (1% of total) in primary school and a little more than 1550 (2% of total) in first grade secondary school.

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[4]   The data refer to 93% of schools.

Figure 1: Students without Italian citizenship born in Italy by region - School year 2008/2009 - (Values in %)

Mancante o escluso
14,90 - 21,87
21,88 - 28,85
28,86 - 35,82
35,83 +

Source: MIUR School year 2008/2009
GIS Luca Pianelli elaboration

We can distinguish different types of concentration according to the causes that produce them: *external to school*, related to the features of labor market, the specific needs of welfare (services for family and elderly people), the characteristics of the residential market, migration networks and communitarian orientations of the specific migrating population; or, *connected to school*, based on the features of educational offer, orientation and choice procedures that also involve families, and organization and strategies of acceptance/ non acceptance (Giovannini, 2008, p. 137). With regard to countries of origin, there is significant variety. The most represented nationality in Italy is Romanian. After the entry of Romania in the EU the number of Romanian students has experienced a sharp increase (92.734 students, equal to 16.15% of all foreign students) exceeding the number of immigrant students from Albania (91.829 equal to 14.59 %), that in previous years was the most represented country. Together with Morocco (83.608 admissions, 13.28%), Romania and Albania reach 45% of the foreign presence in schools. Numbers are also growing in the Chinese community followed by the Ecuadorian one.

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Figure 2: Students without Italian citizenship by province - School year 2008/2009 (Values in %)

Mancante o escluso
0,90 - 4,90
4,91 - 8,90
8,91 - 12,90
12,91 +

Source: MIUR School year 2008/2009
GIS Luca Pianelli elaboration

Heterogeneity of culture, language, religion is a peculiarity of the Italian context, compared to the situation in other European countries such as France, Germany or England, which are instead characterized by a higher concentration of ethnic groups and greater uniformity of origin. Therefore, the issues involving cultural transmission and education of new generations – also with regard to the complexity of the negotiation process to define values and reference regulations, generated by the multiplicity of ethnic settlements – become more and more indispensable and require a radical transformation of educational policies.

School inclusion policies

Italian school is one of the institutional sphere which is more sensitive

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to the immigration issue as well as to the issue of integration of children of foreign origin. The intercultural perspective has been for many northern European countries the culmination of a long process of debates and experimentations; for Italy, instead, it has been a starting point. Since 1989 numerous ministerial memoranda have phased out the limits concerning school admission[5] and defined the theme of intercultural education and integration of foreign students.

The consolidated act on immigration in the version amended first by Law of 30 July 2002, n. 189, then by the so called «security package» (Law by decree 92/2008 converted by law 125/2002) and most recently by Law of 15 July 2009, n. 94, has not changed its procedures for admission of foreign students in schools, that continue to be governed by Regulation No. 394, 1999.

In short, the regulations expressed by central governments, educational policies, actions of local authorities refer to four main general principles: *universalism*, *common school*, *centrality of a person related to the others* and *interculture*[6]. *Universalism* confirms equal rights to education also for children without Italian citizenship, regardless of legal status, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN 1989, Art. 28) ratified by Italy in 1991. The principle of a *common school* shows the trend to include immigrant students within regular school classes as a good practice to encourage integration through peer socialization and daily interaction. The principle *centrality of a person related to the others,* borrowed from modern pedagogy, guides to valorize the person and build individual educational projects based on the biographical and relational uniqueness of any single student, their life context, their family and social biography. Therefore, it recognizes and legitimizes all the differences of ethnicity, gender, social and cultural level, etc. Finally educational policies adopt the *intercultural perspective* that promotes intercultural dialogue and exchanges, not only with respect to the specific issues relating inclusion of students without Italian citizenship, but as «an opportunity to open the entire system to all the differences (of origin, gender, social level,

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[5] In 1995 we got to the overcoming of the contradictory formula for admission «with reservation» for illegal migrant minors, that used to compromise the achievement of attendance certificates and diplomas at the end of school (Bertozzi & Santagati, 2006 p. 139).

[6] See in this respect the document produced by Osservatorio nazionale for the intercultural school and the integration of foreign students, *"La via italiana per la scuola interculturale e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri"*, October 2007.

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educational history)»[7].

Referring to these principles, the action lines identified in the legislation which provides guidance on practices to be followed at different stages of school education can be grouped into three macro-areas:

- *actions for integration* that include practices of reception and integration into schools, learning of Italian as a second language (Ital2 laboratories, customization of curricula and learning schedule adjustment; introduction of language facilitators, etc.); valorisation of multilingualism (introduction in the didactic offer of the languages spoken by the larger communities in the different areas of the country, teaching languages of origin); the relationship with foreign families through linguistic-cultural mediators (initiatives of information and guidance to an acquainted school choice, involvement of families during the reception of the students, active participation in school events and initiatives).
- *actions for intercultural interaction*, that is to say, lines of action concerning pedagogical and teaching management. They include interventions concerning relationships at school and during extracurricular activities, discrimination and prejudices, intercultural knowledge and skill perspectives;
- *actors and resources*, that is the action lines related to organizational aspects, actors at school and in other places on the territory (local authorities, third sector, etc.); the forms and modalities of collaboration between school and other civil society actors, the territorial specifities.

In consideration of the inspiring principles and action lines set out in Ministerial guidance documents, the reality is very diversified across regions in relation to the different incidence of the immigrant students in Italian schools, to policies, local investments and investments of individual schools in education of foreign students.

Actions for integration and inclusion

Even though central government issued many documents on this topic, no standard criteria have been defined to guarantee, yet, the integration of immigrant students with a certain degree of uniformity. On the empiric level, integration criteria and procedures for integration of immigrant

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[7] *Ibidem*, p. 9.

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students into classes are characterized by high spatial variability. As part of the many regional responses we can identify a number of more established measures that include: reception protocols to define shared procedures, the institute's Welcome Committees, multilingual application forms and information materials for students and parents, etc. Among the most significant experiences, we can highlight the intercultural centers that have contributed to the dissemination of working tools and procedures, that have become, in many situations, routine practice in dealing with this first phase (Giovannini, 2008)[8].

According to the ministerial guidelines, enrollment can occur at any time of the year. Since the arrival of the first flows, no special classes have been created for foreign students, which is consistent with the choice in the 70s to abolish "differential classes" and "special schools" with students with difficulties or disabilities (Ministerial Circular No. 2005/1990). As regards the methods of class composition, the ministerial circular No.2/2010 sets a limit of 30% to the presence of foreign students who were not born in Italy, from the experimentation in the first classes of primary and first and second grade secondary schools in the 2010-2011 school year. The limit can be raised for the presence of students without Italian citizenship born in Italy, or lowered if at the time of enrollment students demonstrate an inappropriate mastery of the Italian language for a complete participation in educational activities. At the same time, no national plan for training of school staff is prepared and the rationalization of financial and human resources continues (schools are closed, the number of teachers and non-teaching staff is reduced, resources for normal operation of schools and projects necessary to support educational inclusion of foreign students are set to zero).

With this measure, the central government aims to promote the integration of students without Italian citizenship, actually, it increases the risk of strengthening not only the difficulties of school inclusion, but more generally, social exclusion of students of foreign origin and an unequal

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[8] In terms of coordination of actions across the country, the Memorandum of Understanding for the establishment of a national network of intercultural centers is particularly important. The Memorandum was signed by the eleven centers that have been networking for about a decade (Intercultural Centre, City of Turin, Documentation Centre, City of Arezzo, Educational Documentation Center, City of Venice, Intercultural Centre Millevoci of Trento, Intercultural Center, City of Bari, Genoa City Migration Laboratory, CD / LEI Municipality of Bologna). This restricted network is in contact with a wider informal network, represented by all intercultural centers, among which there are frequent contacts and exchanges (p. 140).

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treatment of students depending on their residential environment. In this regard, several critical comments can be made.

First, neither the damage caused by the uprooting of children from their everyday life context, nor the organizational difficulties that parents have to face in order to take their children to schools situated in a district other than that of residence, even at a distance of kilometers, are taken into consideration. Secondly, for the definition of the figures only the place of birth is used as a parameter, assuming simplistically that those born in Italy have fewer difficulties integrating because of their knowledge of Italian. Language is certainly the first instrument of inclusion, but based on this advantage that those born in Italy are supposed to have, we cannot resize the inclusion difficulties related to the different ethnic origin and family background, according to which language skills and learning abilities are differentiated. It follows that over the definition of "figures", other problems arise that in particular, affect educational needs of children: beyond the level of concentration of "foreigners", starting from the level of knowledge of the Italian language (different depending on the time of arrival, previous educational level, spoken language and the level of family cultural background) diversity of starting points in terms of cultural background should be taken into account. The specific condition of the children of "foreign origin" raises the problem of fragmentation of the cultural worlds affecting schools, because of the diversity of individuals which the rights to participate are recognized to. In this perspective, any educational policy oriented at inclusion, that is implanted on the principle of equity and therefore the recognition and respect for individual rights of these children to participate and benefit from effective learning, must aim at interacting with this diversity through actions that compensate for the gap in disciplinary learning. The autonomy legislation wanted to respond to this need. It provides *inter alia* the possibility to split and reassemble the classes in order to carry out specific activities, including the recovery of curricular subjects. This requires a structural reorganization of the school system not only in terms of quantitative composition of classes and times, but above all, in qualitative terms, starting from the re-establishment of an educational program that includes all the differences, including those of ethnic origin on which the contents of curricula, teaching methods and interactions should be reshaped. For example, the reduction of time in primary school produces savings in terms of teaching staff. However, the consequences of this are paid by children of lower classes, including the "children of immigration", for whom school attendance and school time are

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the main chances for linguistic and social inclusion. It is also necessary to discuss the qualities that school time must have to be effective, that is, to oversee learning and understand its difficulties, instead of causing disaffection. However, in actual fact, the gradual reduction of financial resources by the central government is contributing, against the principles and directions given in accordance with the best international recommendations, to increase the inequality of opportunity. Beyond the rhetoric expressed by the policies, the implementation of the practices involves the organizational capacity of the school. It requires a capacity for action (planning, training and flexibility in the use of human resources) and an endowment of financial resources that are present (or often lacking) in differentiated proportion across the national and local territory.

Practices of intercultural integration

Practices of intercultural interaction comprise the learning / teaching of the Italian language (development and dissemination of materials and tools), training/acquaintance of teachers, promotion of some pedagogical and teaching knowledge addressing non-teaching staff. In this regard, there are a number of experimental and significant disparities within local communities: in some towns schools are well equipped with regard to tools (books and materials, laboratories), human resources (consultants and specialists) and financial means, and in other towns schools are completely lacking in.

It is exactly when it comes to practices of intercultural integration that it is observed, in particular, the gap between the rhetoric of ministerial guidelines and the actual ministerial capacity for implementation of measures envisaged in programmatic documents. In fact, a severe week point for the consolidation and development of interventions is represented by a low endowment of human and financial resources, reflecting the containment policy of public spending. Against an increase in school population due to the entry of foreign students, over the past decade there has been a decline in the number of permanent teachers (3,4%), while the number of supply teachers has more than doubled (from 64.000 to 141.000): ten years ago we had one teacher on precarious contracts every twelve permanent teachers, today we have one every six (see Ministry of Education, 2009).

Hence the volability of the initiated projects based on limited resources

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as to quantity and duration. Suffice is to say that the presence of cultural mediators in schools is linked to the temporary nature of their individual interventions and there is still no recognition of the skills needed to perform that function. In this respect, several local and national surveys point out the complexity and isolation of teachers' working conditions. First, teachers denounce lack of support from experts / mediators, absence of a network of support from the local and national institutions, lack of fulfillment of vocational teacher training[9], and lack of ability to cooperate among educational institutions.

Successful education

Successful school education is one of the qualitative elements against which to measure integration. In this respect, empirical evidence suggests a high level of educational aspirations expressed by students without Italian citizenship and within the same cultural capital and working status of their origin families there are no significant differences in the choice of secondary channels between Italian and foreign students (Giovannini & Queirolo Palmas, 2002; Santagati, 2009). Beyond the issue of first reception, there is the question of adopting educational practises which support school success within a logic of equal rights and equal opportunities. However, the Italian school system is poorly equipped to cope with the increasing and diversified demand for education made by the children of immigration.

The lack of school regularity among students without Italian citizenship (calculated on the basis of correspondence between chronological age and attended class) is a particular alarming fact, affecting final success. To a greater extent, the inclusion of foreign students occurs at the beginning of the school year, but for a substantial part of them this occurs during the school year, after having already started part of the school program in their country of origin, and in a class which does not often correspond to their age.

It follows that, on average, the proportion of students with foreign citizenship who are behind schedule is much higher than that of Italians (respectively 41.9%, *versus* 11.9%) and it increases as the educational stage grows (50.2% in the first grade secondary school, reaching 71.8% in the second grade secondary school (tab. 5).

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[9]   In this regard, see L'*Indagine Neoassunti 2009*, Fondazione Agnelli.

The disparity between the different rate of admission to the following year and the rates of repeating confirm a more difficult educational route for foreign students compared to the Italian ones, which affects educational continuation (tab. 6). At the end of the school year, foreign students admitted to the following year have a passing rate that even in primary schools differs in that it has one point less than the passing rate of Italian students; then this gap widens to about 10 points in the first grade secondary schools and to 16 in second grade secondary schools (tab. 7).

Table 5. Italian and foreign students who are behind schedule by education stage (in a sample of 100 students) – School year 2008/2009

	Primary school	First grade school	Second grade school	Total
Foreign citizenship	20,4	50,2	71,8	41,9
Italian citizenship	1,8	7,1	25,1	11,9

Source: MIUR school year 2008/2009

Table 6. Students without Italian citizenship repeating the year by educational stage – school year 2008/2009- Values in %

		Year				
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
	Primary	2,5	1,1	0,9	0,8	0,9
School	First grade secondary	8,6	7,8	6,9		
	Second grade secondary	13,5	11,6	1,2	8,2	5,5

Source: MIUR school year 2008/2009

However, if we consider the data relating to the completion of the curriculum in upper secondary education it can be observed that the "second generation" in the strict sense, i.e. the component that is not immigrated, but born and raised in Italy, is building on the level of educational attainment better results that approximate those of Italian students. At the end of five years of secondary school only 90 out of 100 foreign students are admitted to the final examination compared with about 95% of Italian students, but this difference diminishes greatly when foreigners were born in Italy (94.2% of admitted students) (tab. 8). Moreover, the percentage of foreign students born in Italy obtaining the school leaving certificate (98.2%) is very close to that of Italian students (97.8%), compared with 95% of students who were not born in Italy (see tab. 9).

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Table 7. Students with Italian and foreign citizenship, admitted to the following school year by educational stage (in a sample of 100 students) - school year 2008/2009

Students citizenship	Total	Admission rate by year level				
		year				
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Primary						
- Italian	99,7	99,4	99,7	99,8	99,8	99,6
- foreign	98,5	96,9	98,6	98,9	99,1	98,9
First grade secondary school						
- Italian	96,0	95,7	95,8	96,3		
- foreign	87,2	85,9	87,9	88		
Second grade secondary school						
- Italian	83,7	78,5	84,7	85,8	87,5	
- foreign	67,8	59,2	72	74,2	77,6	

Source: MIUR school year 2008/09

(*) For the 3rd year it relates to the admission to the final exams

Table 8. Students admitted to the final examination (in a sample of 100 scrutinized students)- Public second grade school- School year 2008/2009

Students	%
Foreign students	90,6
Foreign students born in Italy	94,2
Italian students	94,9

Source: MIUR school year 2008/2009

Table 9. Students obtaining the school leaving certificate (in a sample of 100 scrutinized students)- Public and private second grade secondary school- School year 2008/2009

Students	%
Foreign students	95,5
Foreign students born in Italy	98,2
Italian students	97,8

Source: MIUR school year 2008/2009

The data related to the first cycle school leaving exam in the 2009-2010 school year confirm that the most successful students are those without Italian citizenship, born in Italy with rates of admission[10] and graduation

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[10] Since the 2007/2008 school year the judgment of fitness for school leaving examinations has been reintroduced (Law n.176/2007). Since the school year 2008/2009 the admission to school leaving examinations has become even more strict, as it demands the requirement of

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that are the closest to the rates of their Italian peers. Conversely, for students without Italian citizenship born abroad the rate of admission to the school leaving exam was nearly 9 percentage points lower than that of Italian students (87.7% *vs.* 96%). The gap is reduced when considering the graduation rate (98.9% students without Italian citizenship graduated against 99.6% of Italians).

Regarding the factors that affect educational outcomes, in international studies and research educational success is considered as a complex phenomenon that transcends the binary distinction between native students and students of foreign origin[11].

On the other hand, students without Italian citizenship can't be considered as a homogeneous whole, but rather as a compound world, deeply different in terms of age, prior schooling, migration temporality, language resources, professional status, cultural and social capital of households, national group of origin, mobility expectations, characteristics of schools and classes they are enrolled in. In this perspective, school success is a process influenced by *ascribed factors* (ethnic origins, social origins, economic status etc.) as well as a multiplicity of other factors findable in schools and in the overall school experience, in which the core is given by *school effect* (teachers' expectations, classroom climate, operation of individual schools, the organization of the education system, financing, etc.) (Queirolo Palmas, 2006). All these factors affect native students, resulting in distinctions in terms of social status and cultural capital and become more evident with the arrival of migrant students. In this perspective, successes and failures are explained not only starting from the alleged deficiency of the subjects, but also through institutional responsibilities of individual schools and school policies.

Together with the centrality of the *school effect* based on available research it is evident that family resources and strategies, parents' skills and determination in fostering their childrens' school career also exert a major

a mark which does not have to be worse than six out of ten in each subject or group of subjects. In the overall assessment it has been also introduced the mark about behavior which, if less than six, results in the automatic exclusion from the exam, regardless of the profit obtained in the various subjects (Law No. 169/2008).

[11] Concerning this, see also the research conducted in 1999 by Giovannini and Queirolo Palmas (2002) in the third classes of first grade secondary schools of 10 Italian cities (Genoa, Turin, Brescia, Bologna, Arezzo, Padua, Ravenna, Modena, Bari), which for the first time questioned the legitimacy of the distinction between *foreigners* and *nationals* as a criterion to understand outcomes and schooling routes.

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influence on educational outcomes, not unlike what happens to the native population (Bosisio, Colombo, Leonini & Rebughini, 2005; Santagati, 2009). With particular regard to students without Italian citizenship, empirical studies point out that the educational processes within families are particularly problematic. First of all, it is necessary to consider the limited and precarious availability of means of subsistence (regular employment, housing, etc.) and care (absence or fragmentation of the parental network, not supported by a network of proximity and collaboration). Furthermore, in terms of identity construction, on a symbolic, normative and value level a situation of cognitive dissonance arises between original cultural model belonging to their parents and the new one belonging to the host society that gets progressively into family relationships through school experiences, socialization and aggregation of the children (Ambrosini, 2004).

Nevertheless, even if the family is the microcosm where the tension between different cultural worlds is most expressed and experienced (role reversal, loss of parental authority, the tendency of children to escape from the forms of subordinate integration accepted by their fathers, intergenerational conflicts, etc.) which deeply influences the paths and planning trajectories of new generations, school also plays a crucial role in the process of identity construction. As observed by Giovannini, school represents the place of the most intense confrontation between students from different backgrounds, and thus encounter/clash of different identities. According to the scholar, interactive difficulty arises even earlier than in didactic practices, in the ability to recognize the meanings of adolescence in different cultures. «Identity processes, standards of behavior, relational practices among young people of the same age, as well as the attitude towards teachers' authority become the crucial components of school climate and the variables that help define the state of wellness/illness and, in this way, the educational attainment» (p. 161)[12]. From this point of view, social status of origin, educational styles, cultural capital and educational meanings affect the school climate, the choices and expectations of the subjects (the image of their future school and work), the investment capacity and therefore final outcomes. Finally, the third influential factor on educational attainment, which also affects the other two – particularly binding in consideration of the tightening of the current political climate – is given by the overall context of reception of immigration: as observed by

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[12] For further discussion of the factors that create discomfort of immigrant students at school, see Colombo 2009, 153-178.

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Ambrosini (2004, p. 36): «The possibility to enter legally, the recognition of educational qualifications gained in the home country, the ways of filling in the labor market, the impact of prejudice and discrimination, are involved in shaping the chances of inclusion and social development, affecting their children and their educational career».

Conclusions

The analysis on policies of inclusion of immigrant students in school makes it clear that the concept of integration is a term which covers a multitude of meanings and involves various forms of acculturation. This brings to different ways of dealing with differences (assimilation, differential and interculturalism).

As regards Italy, the inclusion of younger generations without Italian citizenship is developed in law on universalist criteria and on the perspective of cultural integration. However, beyond the rhetoric expressed in speeches and policies, implementation of practices involves the organizational capacity of schools. It requires a capacity for action (planning, training and flexibility in the use of human resources) and an allocation of financial resources that are present, in different degrees, on both national and local territory. Regarding practices for intercultural interaction it is observed, in particular, the gap between the rhetoric of ministerial policies and the real capacities for implementation of measures envisaged in programmatic documents.

Therefore, in practice it is pointed out that there is a strong discretion of responses to educational needs from town to town and from school to school. In some territories and schools the guidelines of schooling policies have urged resource planning and optimization from "below", starting "good practices" based on forms of "volunteer mobilization". While, in other contexts emergency viewpoint can't be overcome. This involves a wide differentiation of inclusion paths and a profound difference in the actual viability of the right to education and in the chance to use in practice appropriate educational opportunities.

The limited effectiveness of inclusion policies is reflected in educational outcomes achieved by immigrant students: in particular, the lack of regular schooling is a particularly alarming datum which affects school success.

Practices, therefore, face the real risk of increasing and consolidating school segregation processes with the creation of polarized classes and

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schools (Bottani, 2002), or "ghetto schools" attended mainly by students of foreign origin and Italian students belonging to the most disadvantaged social groups. The question of the inclusion of immigrant children clearly points out the structural problems of our school system, primarily anchored in institutional arrangements that tend to reproduce social inequality (Barone & Schizzerotto, 2006) and makes therefore even more urgent the need to redefine the overall educational policy for promotion and practical implementation of equal educational opportunities.

In conclusion, based on the analysis conducted so far, school represents an important border and hybridation territory for different identities. Hence the necessity to invest into concrete actions, able to temper the equal integration in the receiving society with the development of different cultural identities. In particular, as now many studies and research on second generations, especially related to increasing discrimination, marginality and social deviance phenomena, have highlighted, it becomes more and more urgent to address the issues concerning the processes of identity construction, the negotiation of values and normative structures of reference, in the interests of interpenetration, mutual understanding and equal dignity. In regard to this issue, the school system with adequate resources (financial, structural and human) can be a privileged field of construction of intercultural dialogue by virtue of its special role in education.

In a global society the educational challenge concerns the achievement of the broader goal of social cohesion. The implementation of inclusive and successful education programs, in fact, implies social integration, development of social ties and sense of belonging. However, despite the many trials, (there are several positive experiences that show the possibility of a not merely theoretical development of intercultural pedagogy) the current stiffening of the political climate is a key impediment to the concrete realization of an intercultural pedagogy, starting from the denial of a citizenship, that is the legal prerequisite to be recognized as *citizens* and *integrated* into the community they are living in. The integration of second generations can be achieved only within a context willing to include outsiders in the system of fundamental rights and benefits which belong to citizens.

School can't do everything. The school action capability is strongly related to other local agencies, that deal with caretaking and socialization. In particular, the modalities of reception, formal and informal gathering, use of free time, that can be experienced in other contexts of life, are all

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foundational areas of the social inclusion process, where young immigrants often experience "invisibility" or discrimination. The positive school experience often demonstrated in empirical research, is not found in any other spheres of life. Hence the effective expression "students in class, foreigners in town" coined by Giovannini (1996). On the overall social and cultural experience, as well as on the redefinition of the foundations of citizenship depends, therefore, the chance to leave a condition of "double absence" (Sayad, 2002) experienced by their parents: that is to say, being *atopos*, not belonging anywhere, being foreigners twice, in the country of origin and in that of adoption, being "out of place", "unclassifiable", neither citizens nor foreigners (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 6).

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