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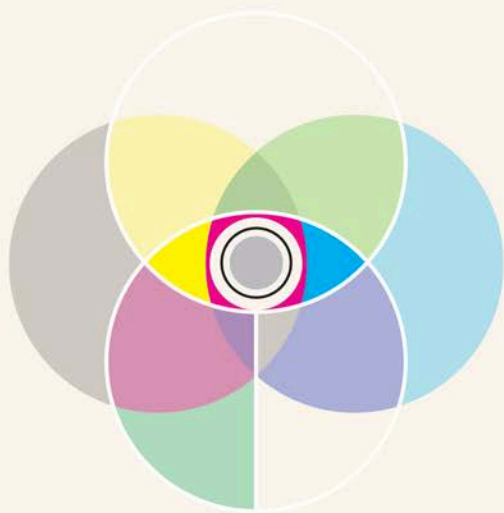
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Gabriella D'Aprile
Giambattista Bufalino

Intercultural
Leadership
in Education

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Intercultural Leadership in Education

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Gabriella D'Aprile wrote chapters 1,2, and 6, and Bufalino Giambattista wrote chapters 3, 4, 5, and 7. Both authors contributed to the Introduction.

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Introduction

This book was inspired by recent national and international trends in pedagogical research that emphasize the importance of educational leadership in an intercultural context. This is a new and innovative pedagogical theme that addresses the challenges of today's multicultural societies as well as heterogeneous and multiform educational contexts. The debate about educational leadership today, with all its theoretical-operational ramifications, is a response to the urgent need for training in intercultural care.

Intercultural themes comprise one of the most advanced frontiers of contemporary pedagogical reflection, in terms of scientific educational research and the implementation of training interventions aimed at educational professionals, school leaders, teachers, and educators. Interculturality is about pushing thought beyond the boundary, or beyond the border, a symbolic word that also serves as a metaphor for the frame of meaning that forms the backdrop for the reflections that follow and from which the content of this volume draws inspiration.

Interculturality is not only a thought exercise; it is also, and most importantly, an ethical practice of care education; it is an act of thinking and feeling that opens up to otherness, human relationships, and a profound, existential anthropological sense,

in which diversity is welcomed as a source of enrichment for the human condition.

To educate in intercultural *care* is to adhere to a philosophy of care education that opens up to an authentic relationship with the Other; it contributes to enriching personal and existential growth, in that evolutionary path that is the development of the human being, which always takes place in relation to others.

If on the one hand, structural reforms, regulations, and ministerial directives on school and educational integration policies are configured as driving agents of processes of innovation and change, on the other hand, they risk creating artificial, superficial, and short-lived transformations if they are not anchored to a genuine paradigmatic and cultural change. The radical transformation of the institutional-organizational structure has not included the educational context as a whole. In other words, rather than re-structuring, it is necessary to initiate processes of re-culturing, which will result in a redefinition of the meanings of Inclusion and Interculture, understood in both universal and more specifically pedagogical terms.

This awareness gives rise to the scientific and cultural need to delve deeper into the theme of educational leadership, going beyond the usual interpretative clichés referring to traditional models of management and organization in the educational sphere, in order to produce a different reading, that is intrinsically relational, because it is precisely in the relationship—in that prefix *inter*, in that being *between*, and being *with*—that we encounter the Other. Education leaders are positioned as activators and change agents who promote inclusion and diversity within their educational contexts.

When we talk about leadership, we are referring to a diverse and contentious field of study due to the convergence of models, theories, and research directions related to the organization and management of relationships, particularly in school and training contexts, all of which share a distinct and recognizable

vocabulary. Organization, management, performance, account-ability, merit, and outcomes have all become part of this language, which is now shared by managers, teachers, specialists, and education professionals. This is a reading that is frequently restricted to a functionalist interpretative perspective, which has led to an increase (more quantitative than qualitative) in the development of skills and competences useful for the needs of a logical system and effective functioning. According to this viewpoint, leadership responsibilities are objectified within linear and rational understandings, and within a debate dominated by processes of standardization of professional skills and homologation, the proliferation of bureaucracy, and the logics (im)posed by economic, cultural, and technological functionalism.

In contrast to this reading, we intend to outline a new way of thinking about leadership, to deconstruct its reification, in order to lead another reflection on the field of leadership in a strictly pedagogical key. Moreover, we welcome not just another leadership profile, but another *gaze* at leadership in its broad, articulated, and polymorphous perspective. What is the significance of the reference to the gaze? Whereas the term *profile* conjures up a meticulous description of the methodological and technical baggage that is required in order to carry out a specific professional activity, the value and specificity of the gaze is the ability to look the other person in the eye, the willingness to listen to him or her and read their silences, and the desire to accompany and support them in their growth.

The gaze of the other must reveal the foundation of my totality; it must allow my being to flourish. We are a long way from a management leadership philosophy characterized by an algorithmic paradigm of human organization. Rather, we adhere to a pedagogical anthropology, which is superior to certain functionalist organizations. The use of the gaze allows for the delineation of the contents of professionalism as well as the in-

tegration of professional authority with moral and ethical authority, which is an essential condition when working with otherness in all its forms, especially cultural diversity.

An educational leadership that is intrinsically relational does not center on performative, organizational, or managerial leadership, but on the *person* as a whole.

The theoretical-conceptual core of this view lies in the principle of guiding or leading in the broadest sense of education. Thus, the reflection on leadership lends itself to an unprecedented interpretive cross between the foundations of *educere* and *cum-ducere.*

This reflection can produce a different reading of leadership, not coercive and authoritarian, but humanizing and educational, rediscovering its authentic nature of accompanying and guiding in respect of the uniqueness of the Other, which becomes a modality, posture, and willingness to *care*.

In this perspective, teachers and school leaders play a critical role in determining and guiding educational processes and practices based on the principles of inclusive intercultural leadership.

Only by beginning with a proper approach to educational work in the school will it be possible to promote an authentic culture of welcome. The school is a privileged space for the development of intercultural dialog, a central space for the development of educational destinies, and a privileged relational space for promoting encounters with differences and affirming the ethical principles of otherness and democratic coexistence.

The reflections in this book present new ways of conceiving the practice of leadership, which is characterized by an intercultural perspective. This is a typical feature of educational professionalism and educational leadership that is founded on intercultural pedagogical knowledge and skills that promote models, themes, and processes of integration and educational inclusion of all forms of diversity. In this regard, teacher and leadership

training and intercultural leadership all play a critical role in promoting new ways of thinking and acting in order to restructure the field of managerial educational leadership.

It is necessary to develop a new poetics of the educational relationship as a training model and intercultural pedagogical banner, one that looks not at "the islands of the world"—implying cultural differences harnessed to cultural clichés in which competitiveness and protectionism reign—but at "a world of islands," in which the archipelago becomes a physical, material, symbolic, and metaphorical place to fully express the potential and semantic richness of an intercultural and inclusive educational leadership.

Gabriella D'Aprile
Giambattista Bufalino

Chapter 1
Education beyond Borders

Intercultural themes are among the most advanced frontiers of contemporary pedagogical reflection, in terms of scientific educational research and educational planning, the implementation of training interventions, and educational professionalism and teacher training. Interculture is about pushing thought beyond the limit, beyond the border—a symbolic word that also serves as a metaphor for the entire content of this book.

Before proceeding with the following reflections, it may be helpful to define the term *border*. *Limen* or *limes*? Is it a barrier, an enclosure, a defensive wall that prevents passage, or a threshold that implies a crossing? Do we perceive the border as a limit, a space in which we are trapped, or as a change, a desire to go beyond, or an experience of going beyond? (D'Aprile, 2017, 2018).

Closure or opening, internal or external, inclusion or exclusion: each 'or' is disjunctive but inclusive at the same time. Herein lies the ambiguity and enigmatic nature of the concept of the border. The ephemeral intensity of everyday life is entangled around sometimes imperceptible lines: lines that are thin but powerful; lines that divide and connect at the same time; and defining lines that we frequently fail to see because they exist only in the pencil marks of cartographers, or in our mental maps. Some words are rarely used until events force us to dust them off, at which point they explode in all their drama, becoming

specters, determining the time and space of existence and human relationships in their presence-absence. And the border, which had been placed in oblivion, has now grown larger, moving into an ultra-terrestrial dimension, into a human space, with visible cracks opening up within it (Walia, 2021).

In the context of a reception and inclusion policy that is revealing striking contradictions and fragility, at a time when the issue of the 'border' reverberates with tragic implications as a result of current migratory flow management policies, intercultural education has been called on to question the meaning of borders, in order to reflect on some important junctions that hold education together (Castiglioni, Bennett, 2018; Ambrosini, Cinalli, Jacobson, 2020).

The question of the border today, with its tensions and multiple meanings, is an important subject for intercultural reflection, with the goal of promoting a theoretical and operational commitment to respond to the issues that arise in multicultural societies.

There has been a surge in scientific interest in borders over the last few decades (Rovisco, 2010; Nail, 2016; Khosravi, 2019). More emphasis is being placed on the various ways in which human action traces and transforms borders, demolishes and rebuilds them, opens and closes them, reinforces and circumvents them, exploits them, and suffers from them.

The notion of the border today conjures up images of diasporas and conflicts, hopes dashed by massacres, human trafficking, arrests, solidarity, encounters, communion, and recognition. As a result of a culture of indifference and xenophobia, it is not only a geographical and political place, but a changing imaginary that contributes to influencing the perception of the Other. The Other is sometimes represented as a neighbor, peer, or brother from the other side, and at other times as an alien and enemy, which ends up translating into tragedies produced by blockades and rejection policies.

In the face of numerous emergencies related to the protection and respect of individuals' rights, the relationship between people's lives, cultures, and territories and the question of the border is reflected in human destinies, especially at a time when new invisible or real barbed wire fences are being erected every day for social, cultural, religious, ethnic, political, and economic reasons: "people hand over their lives and their destinies to these paths, which were once as ephemeral as the trace of a snail's slime on a wall. As a result, they develop resistance, both individual and collective, as if they were steel meshes" (Rella, 2003, p. 22).

The border experience crosses everyday life and involves both subjective and collective identity in an inseparable dialectic and continuous processual dynamic; it also takes on an important pedagogical meaning in those very spaces where symbolic borders are erected, where plural instances of the Self and the Other emerge, with ramifications for forms of exclusion, subalternity, and segregation (Wilson, Donnan, 2012).

In order to enter into the merits of a border epistemology in a properly intercultural pedagogical sense, it may be necessary to examine some essential conceptual nuclei.

The border is both what separates and what unites (from the Latin *cum-finis*). The ambiguity of the border, as well as the various interpretations of its meanings, stems from its conventionality and artificiality, from its status as a theoretical object that may be real or not, i.e., not necessarily bound to space-time determinations. The border appears to occupy a location that is difficult to define, in which one encounters all the aporias that bring with them the notions of margin, limit, bank, contour, edge, frontier, and periphery: semantic differences that define the physical space of living, in which the social human being has constructed his or her identity and geographical reality. Aside from the various conceptual and semantic declinations, the denotative concept implies the presence of a *finis*, a sign or furrow,

a line of demarcation, a topical line of separation, both material and immaterial, that defines and delimits something (Haselsberger, 2014).

"The border is strongly rooted in the earth" (Zanini, 1997, p. 5); "the furrow traced in the soil, the sign placed in the ground, or the gap measured between the territories, return, over thousands of years, the many versions of the transit from one geographical surface to another, determining lines, spaces, and limits, which join and divide and constitute very sensitive places of encounter/clash between different cultures and populations." The concept of the border arose with a dual statute that is structurally ambivalent and disjunctive/inclusive. Indeed, de-boundarying implies the establishment of a duality, that is, conceiving the existence of something other than the Self as well as the Self.

All human existence is sealed by a boundary, by something that limits it, dissolves it, or, on the contrary, gives it full meaning. To experience is to draw boundaries, to proceed by including and excluding extraneous elements in order to maintain and produce homeostasis.

Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1985) remind us that the living being itself, in its autopoietic connotation, self-produces boundaries in order to regenerate itself (self-production) and sustain itself in its stable but dynamic equilibrium (self-distinction). Every biological system's "organizational closure" is at the heart of the processual characterization of life, in its interrelationship of adaptation with the surrounding world. The entire evolutionary process is realized through the internalization of boundaries, and all of us, thrown into the world, into life, attempt the process of differentiation, encountering innumerable boundaries that condition us in every way, define us, signal discontinuities, barriers to be broken, and prohibitions to be observed.

According to Gregory Bateson (1976), establishing a boundary is reassuring because it identifies and preserves, and it serves

to contain the sense of disorientation caused by an infinite space with no points of reference, in which we lose our bearings. We feel the need to shrink, to simplify, in order to avoid confusion: it is the de-finite that allows us to project ourselves into the infinite. The chaos of the indefinite exists beyond the boundary of reason. According to Remo Bodei (2016), to "de-lirare" (to rave) is to go beyond the lyre (from the peasant metaphor, the sown, that fertile space marked by two furrows), beyond the *logos*, beyond the terrain of shared reason and logic. In this sense, clear and distinct ideas are required; knowledge cannot tolerate frayed or confused edges in differentiation; however, to know means to decide (and decision is also an operation that cuts and therefore de-limits).

Beyond the conventional material or spatial connotation and denotation, the concept of the boundary, in metaphorical and symbolic terms, demonstrates a powerful generative capacity. Defining a border zone addresses the need for identity self-determination by allowing for the construction of ties and belonging, as well as distinctions between individuals or groups. It has many implications in the field of an educational philosophy of integration and inclusion, which always implies an inside/outside dialectic, from this perspective. The concept of a border implicitly recalls the concept of otherness and, later, the concept of identity. The presence of a border is another factor that can cause someone to become a foreigner.

When we stand on one side of the *limes*, we recognize everything it distinguishes as *ours*, and our *identity*, whereas what pertains to the Other becomes alien to us: we do not recognize it.

Georg Simmel (2011) uses the concept of the *frame* to explain the role of the border: the delimitation of space is as important for a social and cultural group as the frame is for a work of art. The frame defines the work of art in relation to its surroundings and draws it in on itself. At the same time, the frame

emphasizes or conceals the *caesura* that separates the image from the surrounding space, centralizes or disperses the gaze, reinforces or, on the contrary, prejudices the mimetic device implemented in the construction of the perspective.

Moreover, the frame is always revealed as a necessary component in the formation of the relationship of the image with the observer (Simmel, 2011). By analogy, the act of establishing boundaries in a society is also the act of generating identity and giving meaning to a community's social activities and relationships. Furthermore, it is the act by which the Other is represented and by which the phenomena and dynamics of exclusion can be determined.

The logic of boundaries has its uses, but it also has some drawbacks: it locks a person into a forced and protective identity; it manifests cultural determinism; and it artificially emphasizes the characteristics of the in-group in comparison to the out-group (Debray, 2010).

As a result of this point of view, the territory and its boundaries allow us to distinguish between the inside and the outside, to designate the Other as *amicus/hostis* (as in Schmittian political reflection) or as *barbarian* and *foreigner*.

There is another useful cue for reflection that changes the grammar and pragmatics of the gaze, promoting a pure contemplative attitude, no longer in a direct relationship with otherness, but in a situation of immersion, in "listening mode." The metaphorical image of the frame is also recalled by Josè Ortega y Gasset, who sees it as a place of passage, a threshold, in which inside and outside are not excluded, but mutually determined, rather than as a place of closure and delimitation, an expression of the need to protect the autonomy and radical otherness of the work from the outside. In fact, as the Spanish philosopher expressed it (1997, p. 222), "the pictures live in the frames": their coexistence is necessary, and it would be almost unthinkable to imagine each one in its singularity.

As a result, the border does not close any faster than it opens. It establishes the partial, alienated, reified identity while also isolating the *limen* from the boundless diversity. The heuristic strength of the concept is found in its oxymoron. This is where it emerges as a topic of interest for pedagogical reflection that seeks to correspond to the demanding and complex challenges posed by multicultural societies, in which we witness interpenetrations between different worlds and cultures, and in which material and symbolic boundaries—which had a rigid and static character in the past—appear to be blurring, revealing a fluid and porous form. This shifting meaning of the border as a passage experience, both in its real and ideal forms, is an issue that should give us pause.

If we understand the concept in its etymological meaning of *limen*, or threshold, the epistemology of the border opens up a plethora of possibilities for pedagogical reflection. The liminal zone between inside and outside, the possibility of becoming a place of encounter and search for the other is grafted in this semantic interstice. In its dynamic praxis of crossing, the threshold implies the idea of permeability and contamination; it is less absolutizing and loses its dividing connotations as line-boundary, but it is a place of suspension in which to wait, where the person him/herself becomes a frontier toward the other. According to Foucault, the border could be classified as a "heterotopia," based on a "system of opening and closing that both isolates and makes it penetrable" (Foucault, 1985, p. 9).

In an era when space manifests itself in what Foucault refers to as "relations of dislocation," living liminality has become urgent and necessary from an intercultural standpoint—all the more so in a historical context in which we inevitably witness the contradictions associated with the problematic nature of borders, and in the face of the spread of a paralyzing sentiment that strikes when confronted with terrible news events concerning the rejection of migratory flows. The border, experienced

primarily as a boundary line that marks and separates the ultimate, impassable space, explodes in contemporary geopolitics in the most exasperated forms as a theater of clashes, revealing the complex, disjointed, and elusive nature of today's historical-political-social reality. Fences, barbed wire-capped walls, police forces, and control and confinement devices are erected as barriers to an epoch-making exodus of migrants, perceived as dangerous because they undermine the inviolability of borders, understood as limits that are not only geographical-spatial, but also mental, cultural, and ideological.

As a result, it is necessary to begin again with a fundamental and new cultural elaboration, with the construction of a new paradigm "beyond the border." This is the other meaning of *limen*, which implies an ontology of passage, of crossing, and opens up a new horizon of welcome.

According to this viewpoint, the threshold is metaphorically an aptitude towards otherness; it is figuratively the non-topical point of encounter with the Other that offers itself as a resource that expands the subjective experience; it is the site of the entrance ceremony; and it is the hermeneutic space of deconstruction that offers itself as a gift to the *arrivant* (Derrida, 1997). Itineraries of recognition, exchange, and dialogical processes of relational life can be experienced in the space of the "between," a mobile and non-objectifiable territory in which the encounter between the Self and the Other takes place. In the midst of this is the fundamental exchange that underpins every human relationship and contact (Perls et al., 1971), the fusion of the Self and the Other that, by putting themselves at risk, open up to each other. To "stand on the threshold" means to confront oneself with the silent extraneousness that dwells within us and is awakened by the Other, whose presence questions and disturbs us, and obliges us to experience confrontation with the extraneousness that is both within and without us. By inhabiting that "between," the person encounters the possibility of relationship

and rediscovers his/her intrinsically relational and dynamic identity. Being on the threshold requires the willingness to engage in a learning experience of the toucher (Augè, 2007): it is in that "touch" that I recognize, on the one hand, that every individual identity is built in relation to otherness, while, on the other hand, a distance is created between me and the person in front of me.

Therefore, here is a way of welcoming the inclusive boundary, not in a restrictive or subtractive key, but in an exploratory one, as a condition/possibility to promote the exercises of decentralization towards otherness, which is the beginning of knowledge enrichment. The threshold exists to be crossed, surpassed, and transcended. The meaning and richness of the place of diversity should be reconsidered on this second level, that of the bridges and spaces that are mutually involved.

In this particular historical and cultural conjuncture, when the foreigner is chased away, expelled, mortified, perceived as disturbing, and considered an intruder—an invader of other people's spaces and resources—the pedagogical challenge is specifically intercultural and must address subjectivities, the inalienable engine of historical and social becoming, in the logic of a relationship between reflective thought and reality. It is not on one side nor on the other, but in the confining itself that a new anthropological view can expand. It is in this context that education assumes the role of introducing the face of the Other, with the ethical responsibility, as Emmanuel Levinas (1961) would put it, to encourage the exercise of a restless tension that goes with the experience of precariousness and nakedness, of being or feeling exposed, uncovered, and defenseless. Martin Heidegger (1927) teaches us to experience restlessness as awakening and vigilance rather than as disturbance and chaotic confusion.

Only an intercultural education and care project can be entrusted with bringing about the necessary shift toward a culture of authentic inclusion. This is a call to pedagogy that genuinely

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wishes to promote intercultural dialog, understood as a practice to build the future. As a result, the border must be redesigned as a threshold rather than an end point.

Then we can ask ourselves what a border is, and the answer will imply the concept of something coming to an end or beginning again. The definition of the limit is the point at which something comes to an end. However, it is the human being in the relationship with the Other that marks the beginning of something. The theme of the beginning is an unavoidable invitation to create a learning experience that transcends habit, conventions, and prejudices. It is an intensely emotional experience that, in some cases, can be violent. This opens the door to a new direction. A stranger is calling you. It is a radical affirmation of the existence of the Other and, by extension, your own—because the stranger is the one who allows you to be yourself, and thus makes you a stranger (Jabès, 2001).

Interculture is not just a thought experiment; it is also an ethical practice of educative care that opens up to otherness, human relationships, and a profound, existential anthropological sense in which diversity is welcomed as the richness and foundation of being and the human condition.

Intercultural care education is a return to an educational philosophy that opens the door to an authentic relationship with diversity, in the sense that it emphasizes enrichment in terms of personal and existential growth, in that extraordinary evolutionary path that is the development of every human being.

Chapter 2
Intercultural Care in Education

Over the last few decades, there have been very substantial migratory flows in Italy (Ambrosini, Abbatecola, 2009; Biagioli, Proli, Gestri, 2020; Sandrone, 2020); indeed, it has become necessary to reflect on issues related to the matter, not only on an institutional-political, economic, and social level, but also in terms of cultural policies of inclusion and integration in the educational field.

In fact, the migratory phenomenon in Italy has been stable for some time now, owing to the characteristics of families' migratory plans as well as the growing proportion of students of immigrant origin who attend all levels of school education in Italy. The presence of students of different ethnicities and cultures is a structural fact of our school system. (Santagati, Ongini, 2016; Fiorucci, 2015; 2020; Sirignano, Perilllo, 2019).

Pupils with non-Italian citizenship in our school now comprise structured, diverse, and composite groups: recently immigrated pupils, children who arrived in Italy at a young age and went to school in our country, pupils born in Italy to foreign families, children of mixed couples, unaccompanied foreign minors, and children from nomadic communities (Catarci, Fiorucci, 2015b).

In a school that is now configured in a multicultural sense, defined by a prism of different ethnic groups and marked by

cultural and linguistic diversity, the role of education and training has become central in promoting dialog and democratic co-existence, in the interplay of active relationships between educational and cultural processes. As Franca Pinto Minerva said: "While education cannot claim to instantly reorganize and transform one's ways of being in the world, it is true that only a well-constructed training project can be entrusted with the necessary and possible shift toward a culture of collaboration, a society of inclusion, and active integration of differences. Given the double link between pedagogical and political action, the school is not only the social space where political decisions made elsewhere (often poorly) flow back, but it is also the 'the space where individual and social needs are given priority among public decision-makers'" (2014, p. 23).

Since it is a privileged space for identifying and respecting students' needs, the school must respond to a new educational challenge to accommodate the many cultural and social elements emerging from current migration phenomena and increasingly multicultural societies, in order to promote change processes, a culture of difference, and equal opportunity (Banks, Banks, 2009; Arar, Brooks, Bogotch, 2019).

However, to what extent is the Italian school equipped to meet the challenge posed by multiculturalism, as well as the heterogeneity of new educational contexts? To what extent is the educational institution capable of creating the conditions for genuine social integration and inclusion of all students, beyond the rhetoric of welcome?

It is important to emphasize the critical role of pedagogical reflection in defining and designing learning/teaching from an intercultural perspective.

In this regard, more investment in intercultural training for teachers, school administrators, and all school staff is required, so that they acquire the knowledge and skills to create a form of pedagogy that promotes welcoming and acceptance of the Oth-

er (Zoletto, 2007; 2012). The ultimate goal is to achieve the 'pedagogical absolute' (*assoluto pedagogico*) that Raffaele Laporta (1996) indicated in the construction of freedom, which coincides with the very humanization of each person in his/her emancipatory growth. As Massimo Baldacci points out, "the starting point is the ontological assumption of everyone's freedom, which makes him/her responsible for his/her own choices, both actions and omissions" (2015, p. 13). Attention must therefore be focused not only on individual cultures and their reciprocal exchange, but also on the students, the inalienable driving force of historical and social development, and their right to choose (Bertin, Contini, 2004).

This is a call for a commitment in the field of educational and school policies for the effective functioning and strengthening of the education system, in which the educational relationship becomes a central factor for intercultural and intergenerational dialog for the construction of identity paths and new spaces for citizenship (Loiodice, Ulivieri, 2017).

Schools are front-line laboratories for intercultural dialog, pivotal sites for shaping educational destinies, and privileged relational spaces for fostering encounters with differences and attesting to the ethical principles of otherness and democratic coexistence. According to this viewpoint, there is a greater need for increased investment in intercultural training for teachers, school leaders, and all school staff in order to promote an authentic inclusive culture based on the principles of *xenia* and *humanitas*.

As Massimo Baldacci (2014) correctly observes, a new idea of school should not be developed in the abstract but should be oriented towards school policies and the organization of the education system in relation to the historical-social scenario that schools must deal with today.

As a result of the ongoing migratory phenomenon, the Italian school has been culturally committed to intercultural edu-

cation over the last twenty-five years, with a diverse array of experiences, experiments, projects, and good practices on the themes of integration and inclusion (Ongini, 2011; Tabagi, 2016). Today, the intercultural approach to education is at the center of a radical conceptual and cultural convergence relating to a genuine cultural reform, with a strong impact on school pedagogy (Cambi, 2007; Catarci, Fiorucci, 2015a; 2015b; Catarci, Macinai, 2015; Santagati, Ongini, 2016; Sirignano, 2019; D'Aprile, 2019; Dervin, Moloney, Simpson, 2020; Zoletto, 2020).

Intercultural issues present a significant challenge to pedagogy, to the point where it can be stated that "education is either intercultural or not education at all" (Macinai, 2015, p. 13) in a multicultural democratic society. This is a challenge that calls for a new educational model. After all, education is fundamentally intercultural. Educating always entails dialogical reciprocity, a meeting and/or relationship between two different worlds and subjective universes (Fiorucci, 2015).

According to this viewpoint, the school's mission is to become an educational space of intercultural mediation, a privileged location "to teach democracy by practicing it" (Pinto Minerva, 2014). Intercultural training for teachers, school leaders, and all school personnel is thus critical in raising awareness of the affirmation of dialog as a pedagogical banner and educational model. Only through an appropriate approach to educational work in schools will it be possible to promote and spread a genuine culture of welcome (Santerini, Reggio, 2007; Lehman, 2017).

This is not an immediate goal: managers, teachers, and school administrators must question their own conceptual gestalt and reference maps, abandoning ethnocentric prejudices and stereotypes, and adopting a perspective of cognitive, affective, and existential decentralization in order to take up a new challenge: shifting from a monocultural mindset to a multicul-

tural, open, flexible, and creative one (Anolli, 2011; Karacabey, Ozdere, Bozkus, 2019).

The school is a living and vital environment in which cultural models and images of diversity are laid down, and of which all educational actors are aware to some extent: they can create a fertile, inclusive, or exclusive environment with their attitudes, behavior, and opinions. This question is inevitably reflected in a teacher's ethics (Rivoltella, Rossi, 2017) not only from a methodological-disciplinary standpoint, but also with regard to the affective and emotional sphere, as well as the possession of—or lack of—intercultural competences (Portera, 2020).

The pedagogical culture of teachers and school leaders, the styles of attribution and categorization, the mental habits with which diversity is represented, and the hermeneutic attitudes all have a significant impact on the practices of reception, participation, cohesion, and school inclusion of students with migrant backgrounds.

Teachers and managers must rediscover their roles as cultural actors by learning to take on a perspective of "critical ethnocentrism" (De Martino, 1977) and cognitive, affective, and existential decentralization in order to be open to the challenge of an authentic pedagogy capable of giving voice to cultural perspectives that can generate more and more authentic practices of welcoming and educational inclusion. The theme of cultural diversity requires a cognitive and cultural shift that allows us to engage with the paths of otherness.

It is impossible to ignore the fact that the relationship with the Other/Stranger generates aspects of obscure threat or enrichment as well as unexpected novelty. Jacques Derrida posed some important questions about the laws of hospitality in an essay published a few decades ago: what is the meaning of the "disturbing" and "disquieting" presence of the stranger? What is the response to the arrival of the Other? Is the presence of the Other merely a problem, or is it, above all, a question that the

Other poses to me, calling me into question? This is an astute reflection that emphasizes not only the structurally ambiguous meaning of the foreigner, but also the attitudes of rejection or welcome—which may be conscious to some extent—that we adopt. (Derrida, Dufourmantelle, 2000).

In a brilliant essay, Umberto Curi (2010) captures the ambivalence of the stranger by examining the Greek term *xenos*, which refers to both the person who is hosted from outside and the person who does the hosting at his or her home. The author emphasizes how the concept of the stranger is linked to the Greek world and to the principle of the *xenia*, a set of customary rules that inflexibly regulated hospitality, through an analysis of the 'mythopoetic' roots of the Western tradition. Mentioned by poets (Homer), philosophers (Plato), tragedians (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides), and historians (Herodotus and Thucydides), the *xenia* did not simply denote a rule, but a set of inviolable precepts that obliged hospitality towards strangers, who were considered sacred. The roots of such a principle lay in the belief that a deity could be hidden in the guise of an unknown traveller and that breaching hospitality obligations was an insult to the gods. The practice of *xenia* becomes, symbolically, a device for developing those forms of intellectual openness and hospitable thought that must be attained through the gifts that are the sacred gesture due to the Other.

Some questions can be raised in the light of these considerations: how much of this type of tradition has our culture inherited? How far does our veneration of the guest influence our actions?

It would be desirable to rediscover the original echo of an obligatory and inescapable relationship with the stranger by reconsidering the "unconditional" nature of this ancient attitude (Schérer, 1993).

Only those who have the courage to open their homes, to

have genuine closeness and intimacy, to endow a stranger with sacredness and let him or her enter within them can acquire awareness of themselves.

In educational terms, every teacher should learn to rediscover him or herself in his or her teaching as both stranger and host, in order to broaden the horizon of understanding, and thus develop awareness and planning capacity, from an intercultural perspective, peel away self-centered rigidities and go beyond the boundaries of an identity closed in on itself to open up to the gift of the Other.

Over the last twenty-five years, with reference to the issue of integration of foreign pupils and intercultural education, the Ministry of Education, University and Research has issued circulars, drafted proposals, developed documents, and produced research reports for a global proposal of rethinking the school on multiple levels (teaching, curriculum, methodology, subjects, relationships, and class formation). For example, important documents such as *The Italian Way for the Intercultural School and the Integration of Foreign Students* (MIUR 2007) or the *Guidelines for the Reception and Integration of Foreign Students* (MIUR 2014) give a programmatic outline of a variety of lines of action for educational intervention. Another important document is *Different From Whom?* (MIUR 2015). This sets out the organizational principles of the intercultural method in the Italian school system and proposes possible answers to the educational needs in multicultural school contexts, describing ten operational lines of the intercultural approach in the Italian school system. In the more recent document *Guidelines for the right to study of pupils outside their family of origin* (2017), it is noted that Italian schools have the merit of making inclusion the cornerstone of their educational activities, including all forms of diversity among students. The legislation is characterized by three general principles, which represent the constitutive axes of the inclusive school model:

– the principle of universalism, which derives from the right of every child, whatever the status of his or her family, and even regardless of the presence of the parents, to receive appropriate education. The State must therefore guarantee education and equal opportunities for all in terms of access, educational success, and guidance;

– the principle of one school for all is implemented by placing pupils in mainstream classes, avoiding the construction of separate learning places in order to accommodate different forms of diversity (gender differences, people with disabilities, and heterogeneity of social background). From an educational point of view, this is a matter of recognition of the positive value of socialization and peer-to-peer learning, and dealing with diversity on a daily basis; and

– the principle of the centrality of the person in relation to others: social and psychological research in contemporary education is geared toward the enhancement of the person and the construction of educational projects based on the biographical and relational uniqueness of the pupils; it focuses attention on diversity and reduces the risks of homologation and assimilation. Choosing the prospect of inclusion does not mean limiting oneself to mere integration strategies or special countervailing measures.

However, we must ask if effective ministerial legislation on inclusion and integration is enough to promote an intercultural school. The question is, of course, provocative and has become crucial. The answer is implicit: a project of genuine reception can certainly not be realized merely by indicating the steps. It is not enough to have a bureaucratic and technical view of the concept of integration, understood only in the perspective of the inviolable right to education.

A change of cultural paradigm needs to be set in motion in order to reform school training programs. The emblematic document titled *Different From Whom? Recommendations for the integration of foreign pupils and interculture*, drawn up by the National Observatory for the Integration of Foreign Students and Intercultural Education, marks a reversal of the trend in this respect: it contains not only recommendations and operational proposals, but for the first time in twenty-five years, it does not use the term *foreign pupils*, deemed to be inadequate and outdated, but other expressions: *students with a migrant background*, *migrant children*, and *pupils with migratory origins* (ISMU, 2015).

This change in the terminology causes pause for thought: Umberto Curi noted that when the delicate burden of legislating is assumed, the choice of words should be made with absolute "rigor and awareness" (Curi, 2010). He pointed out that the lack of clarity from the conceptual point of view is inevitably reflected in the cultural poverty that often inspires the different norms; "orphan" terms are adopted without their own theories of reference, connoted merely from legislative perspectives or only operational approaches in the light of simple and unilateral adaptation. Indeed, for a long time now, the scope of the role of interculturality has been restricted to a purely operational level, referring to special compensatory measures to deal with the socio-cultural disadvantages of students with a migrant background and to help them integrate at school.

Reflection on this matter and, above all, intercultural practice arose as emergency responses to the presence of foreign students in our schools, and it could be said that therein lies the problem.

To this regard, Poletti (1992, p. 118) noted a few years ago: "It derives from the so-called compensatory pedagogy that became established at that time within training systems to try to compensate for the socio-cultural disadvantages of the weakest

students compared to a well-defined school performance standard, and [...] integrate them into the geo-political context of the new country." A decade later, Franco Cambi said (2001, p. 3): "It is largely an emergency production sometimes improvised, often rhetorical: not a good theoretical link. Created under the thrust of the immigration urgency and the start of our multi-ethnic society [...] it is a pedagogy for society as well as school, that tries to mediate (rather than think through) the problems of the encounter between cultures and does so with weak or borrowed cultural categories."

Intercultural education, therefore, was initially described in a reductive way, and was limited to immigration and emergency only, as a necessary response to the new forms of civil and democratic coexistence that emerged in the 1970s and 80s in Europe, including Italy.

This approach diminished the real significance of intercultural education, now at the center, finally, of a radical conceptual junction with regard to a true reform of thought, an educational project that requires not only the rethinking of action in the field of education, but also the rethinking of the concept of integration itself, which should refer to a process in which two or more elements are mutually compensated and become integral and complete.

The process of integration is always intrinsically intersubjective and presupposes that every human being, potentially not complete in himself or herself, can be fulfilled in relation to the Other: Integration is a multidimensional concept that concerns the acquisition of tools and abilities (language, for example) but also involves relationships, and the wealth and intensity of exchanges with others. It also means integrity of the Self, which is expressed through the possibility of reshaping one's own history, language, and sense of belonging, in a dynamic process of change and discussion with others; it should enable everyone, on the one hand, not to be 'held hostage' to their own origins

and, on the other hand, not to deny references, differences, and aspects of their identity in order to fit in and be accepted. It is a process that is built day by day with countless glitches, leaps forward and backwards, nostalgia and hopes, fears and enthusiasm. It is, finally, an intentional project and it does not happen by chance or by force of inertia, but it must be desired, followed, and carefully supported by all the participants (Favaro, Luatti, 2004).

Therefore, the school is called on to perform an important role. There is certainly much to be done in the name of humanity regarding the reflections on diversity, marginality, citizenship, gender, culture, and educational poverty, for an approach to the problems that are not merely descriptive but also cognitive, critical, utopian, and transformative in nature (Fadda, 2007).

A school that can be defined as inclusive must not only recognize but make the most of all differences in terms of the infinite varieties of human diversity: learning styles, disabilities, talents, gender differences, sexual orientation, cultural and linguistic differences, and social and economic background (Race, 2017).

A ministerial decree is certainly important and necessary, but this alone is not enough. It is not just about slavishly implementing it, by compiling protocols for inclusion and acceptance in the classroom; instead, a philosophy of inclusion in its humanizing value should be created: school, culture, and an inclusion society are possible only if one's thoughts are rehumanized, to quote Edgard Morin (2000), to recover attention, awareness, listening, respect, and care for others.

We need to take on board the idea that intercultural education is not an exception, nor an appendix to add to educational action: it is a change in one's way of thinking and acting in the face of difference (Gramigna, 2004); it is a constantly changing process, a continuous cultural challenge and also a personal choice.

We must therefore promote a paradigm shift with the intention of building a dialog between cultures by reconverting the themes of intercultural education in terms of integrated education. The pedagogical imperative must be this: to always place "the whole human person, irrespective of nationality, language, culture or religion" (Portera, 2013) at the center. From this point of view, it is important to make a careful reflection on intercultural education centered on the principle and value of dialog and communication, and the categories related to the paradigm of integral education and the patterns of education for citizenship. It is the same idea as tomorrow's citizen which must be designed in a formative way (Santerini, 2017). As Milena Santerini observes, the most fruitful direction of research and action is toward the education of citizenship that includes the intercultural dimension and whose objective is openness, equality, and social cohesion (Santerini, 2010).

This is the direction of the idea of a new humanism, totally centered on the person, based on the need to structure a world community. In order to accomplish this important goal, the challenge is on multiple fronts and involves everyone in the school system, at all levels, who are called on to become the protagonists of a process of integration and inclusion (Catalfamo, 2017). In order to tackle the critical factors of heterogeneous educational contexts, we must intervene with preventative actions (for example, stopping students from dropping out of school) and provide quality education services and training opportunities that will enable the potential of all students to develop and flourish. We must see diversity as a paradigm of the very identity of the school, a privileged opportunity of opening to all differences.

What, then, does the school need to do to activate a plan for inclusive culture in an intercultural key, promoting fairness and sensitivity to differences? Certainly, the ability to conceive of a school with a fluid curriculum is required, starting with the idea

that inclusion is both an experience that takes place here and now in daily micro-practices (Dovigo, 2016), and a reference horizon that pushes the limits and continually struggles to prevent exclusion through the search for new ways to accommodate diversity and make it an element of educational and social cohesion (Booth, Ainscow 2002).

Giving teachers confidence in their ability to plan their work, analyze problems, build valid and specific answers, discuss with other teachers and educators, and disseminate the positive solutions they have come up with is a vital task for those who want to make the institution of school become more inclusive.

The school represents a privileged cultural and educational agency for building a pluralist and socially cohesive democracy, and it is an example of inclusive citizenship (Portera, Dusi, Guidetti, 2010). It is also the space where individual destinies are played out, and the time when one can expand the desire for life (Recalcati, 2014) and the creative power that each pupil brings as a gift, naturally, within him or herself.

The focus of the reflection should therefore shift to issues of personal and professional responsibility, ethical choice, and existential re-positioning inspired by a new feeling, with the awareness of our common interrelatedness and the relational quality of the human condition. This calls for care training, a "vital necessity" of any training course (Mortari, 2013).

Regaining the ethical and civic role of the pedagogical commitment (Contini, Fabbri, 2014) to put into operation a project of change and deconditioning, that plants in individual consciences the ability to recover what is human in us (Nussbaum, 2006), is not only a challenge to accept cultural diversity in school contexts, but also a silent revolution for society as a whole.

Chapter 3
Leading the Future.
Educational Leadership for the 21st Century

The importance of effective leaders and managers in schools and educational institutions is widely recognized among education professionals and scholars around the world. Indeed, educational leadership has been a popular topic since the beginning of this century (Bush, 2003; Day, Sammons, 2014; Miller, 2018). The discourse on educational leadership is becoming more and more important in an increasingly multicultural world where borders are blurring. Schools face a significant challenge that necessitates the development of new strategies and competencies in order to train and educate the world's future citizens.

Such complexities require a new approach to education: intercultural pedagogy, in which the school becomes a privileged place of mediation, oriented toward making the most of otherness and differences. This significant challenge cannot be met without considering the roles of all actors within the school, particularly those who play an essential role in the learning and training of their students as individuals open to diversity and the relationship with the Other.

In our globalized world, one of the major current challenges for building inclusive schools is the issue of intercultural education and its implementation in school systems (Woodrow et al., 2019). In fact, educational contexts (including schools) have be-

come "an international and global theatre," not only because of the increasing presence of foreign students, but also because of the numerous stimuli coming at us from all over the world, reducing distances and breaking down borders, necessitating the development of new tools and models to train future citizens living in a globalized world.

As our countries become more pluralistic, educational leaders must be prepared to lead schools and other educational institutions with increased student diversity in ways that bring education and democracy closer together, as well as mediate between culturally diverse individuals, schools, and communities.

In this scenario, the study of educational leadership has piqued the interest of the research community due to the widespread belief that leadership quality makes a significant difference in supporting learning, teaching processes, and change (Bush, 2003; 2008; James, Connolly, Hawkins, 2020).

What is educational leadership? What is the effect of combining the terms *educational* and *leadership*? What are the implications (and not necessarily the applications) of this semantic combination? What specific meaning do the terms *leader* and *leadership* have in educational contexts? How should leadership be conceived in multicultural contexts? How can leadership for education that explicitly considers students' cultural backgrounds be theorized in an increasingly diverse democratic society?

Before examining the characteristics and models of intercultural leadership, the goal of this chapter is to explore the topic of educational leadership, with particular reference to the main models which have been conceptualized in the literature.

One of the defining issues in the international academic literature on educational leadership is the so-called *epistemological issue*, which refers to the foundations of the discipline and agreement on its specificities, aims, methodologies, heuristic principles, and object/s of research (Cornacchia, 2009).

The efforts to found and build the field of educational leadership consist of movements and pushes directed toward the search for an epistemological identity, that has never been completed because this hybrid field of study is configured as an interdisciplinary field of study that is characterized by an articulated range of models, theories, and approaches.

One of the problematic issues concerns its disciplinary autonomy: whether this body of knowledge can be configured as a distinct field of knowledge and research or, rather, whether it is a branch of the broader management studies. In this sense, educational leadership and management is a pluralistic field, with many competing perspectives and an inevitable lack of agreement on the precise nature of the discipline.

Throughout the twentieth century, educational leadership was primarily focused on a bureaucratic, hierarchical system, driven by the pursuit of a science of educational administration, what Callaghan (1962) referred to as the cult of efficiency, and the belief that bureaucracy was the ideal type of organization (Weber, 1948). While leadership has been a focus in educational research since the 1950s, with the formation of organizations such as the University Council for Educational Administration in 1959, and the publication of the first academic journals in the field—*The Journal of Educational Administration* in 1963 and *Educational Administration Quarterly* in 1965—it has grown in importance since the turn of the century, to the point now where it is claimed that, of "all the factors that influence education," leadership is the most important (Leithwood et. al., 2004, p. 70).

There is a substantial body of research on various dimensions of leadership; theories and models abound in the literature to predict the success of an educational leader, and there is some agreement that four dimensions provide a foundational view of educational: vision and direction; understanding and developing people; redesigning the organization; and managing the

teaching and learning program (Leithwood et al., 2006). The various educational leadership and management theories reflect very different ways of understanding and interpreting leadership, and much depends on the context.

Although the meanings are still being debated, educational management and educational leadership have become central concepts in the understanding of organization in educational institutions. Connolly, James, and Fertig (2019), for example, have recently analyzed both categories in relation to the concept of *educational responsibility*, which should be a key category in the leadership of educational and training institutions: although educational leadership can ideally be exercised in a responsible manner, in practice, it does not necessarily imply responsibility for the functioning of the educational organization.

In an uncertain world, where issues of corruption, injustice, migration, poverty, terrorist acts, and other issues affect many communities and nations, the role of educational leaders is to open the doors of opportunity and nurture the capacity of all educators in our schools and communities. As previously argued (Bezzina, Bufalino, 2014), in a society based on what Somerville (2004) describes as "intense individualism," which leads to a sense of isolation and disengagement, every individual should discover a deeper sense of meaning and relevance only within a community.

Leadership is a relationship (Hoerr, 2005): a relationship with oneself, because every leader experiences the increasingly problematic nature of his/her role and the knowledge and skill set required within a context that demands ongoing professional "metamorphoses"; and a relationship with the follower, represented in various models as dyadic, shared, relational, strategic, and as a complex of dynamics (Yukl, 2006).

Investigating the field of educational leadership means reconsidering the symbolic value and generative power of words—words that become generative (Freire, 2002), as they

aid in the promotion of processes of awareness of a specific historical, political, and cultural season (D'Aprile, 2020). According to this viewpoint, the terms *leadership* and *management* are part of an organizational lexicon with nuances and geographical variants, and they continue to be part of conceptualizations and debates that have characterized the history of organizations. While the term *administration* is preferred in Australia and North America, and is frequently used as a synonym for leadership, in the United Kingdom the umbrella term *management* is used, which includes both leadership processes and "administrative functions" (Barzanò, 2008).

In any case, the presence of a Babel of definitions provides a first glimpse of the intricate complexity that characterizes the field of educational leadership studies.

In the school context, many broad-based studies conducted in recent years to examine factors influencing school success and the leadership role have found that school quality and success are largely determined by the quality of school leaders and what they do. The essential role of the leader in successful schools and his/her influence in the process of school improvement have been extensively researched, and the critical role they play in cultivating shared leadership has been properly recognized. Indeed, the level of quality of school principals can make a significant difference in the classroom. For example, research shows that among school-related factors that influence learning, leadership comes in second only to teaching. Moreover, school leaders, particularly principals, play a critical role in setting direction and fostering a positive school culture, including a proactive school mindset, as well as supporting and enhancing staff motivation by influencing teacher quality and focusing on relationships and the commitment required to foster improvement and promote success (Day, Sammons, 2014).

In this sense, having leaders who can act as "artists" and renew old ways of doing things, as well as enact and instill new

challenges within organizations, is of vital importance (Hoerr, 2005). Every leader's strength is to inspire, create, strengthen, encourage, and help people stand out from the crowd. Great leaders recognize that their most important responsibility is to assist in the creation of an environment in which each individual can grow and fulfill his or her potential.

The leadership literature has produced a number of competing and alternative models. In the following section, a list of emerging themes and current models in educational leadership is presented.

Collaborative models of leadership

A significant shift can be seen in the transition from formal, hierarchical leadership to "diffused" or "distributed" leadership (Crawford, 2019): that is, democratic and inclusive leadership aimed primarily at involving all actors in educational action and empowering the professional community of teachers (Domenici, Moretti, 2011). Collaborative leadership models in various forms and variants—distributed leadership, dispersed leadership, diffused leadership, shared leadership, and hybrid leadership (Lingard et al., 2003; Spillane, 2006; Harris, 2004a; 2004b; 2008; 2013; Diamond, Spillane 2016; Printy, Liu, (2021)—refer to a specific participatory and "democratic" mode by all actors in the school community (school leaders, teachers, school workers, students, and families). Harris (2004a) captures not only the descriptive power of the distributed leadership model to express the forms of practice implicit in professional learning communities, but also the normative and functional power of distribution to support the burden of work for school leaders that needs to be actively shared (Gronn reports on the "greedy work" of school leaders). The idea that leadership is not the preserve of a single individual is common to the many and varied definitions of dis-

tributed leadership. Leadership is to be understood as a fluid or emergent property, rather than a "fixed phenomenon" (Gronn, 2000, p. 24), which "develops [stretches over] through the work of a number of individuals in which the leadership process takes place through the interaction of multiple leaders" (Spillane, Halverson, Diamond, 2001, p. 20).

Collaborative modes of leadership, in their pedagogical implications, cannot be reduced to the mere distribution of tasks or duties—an argument similar to a functionalist logic of school organization management—but rather refer to a mode of development of the school and professional community that prioritizes relationships and interactions, as well as effective values of competence, dedication, collegiality, and responsibility. The characteristics of these relationships influence educational choices and actions, including the quality and impact of leadership itself (Bhindi, Duignan, 1997), and represent an opportunity for the person and institutions to broaden participation processes as a new practice for the common good (Neglia, 2017).

Such a characterization allows us to imagine the complex school system as a large number of highly connected agents, with all the actors of the school community having the skills and potential to be leaders. Furthermore, we can broaden the scope of educational leadership research to include not only the articulation of leadership potential in the teacher's professional profile (for example, see the concept of teacher leadership), but also the leadership potential and healthy protagonism of students (consider student leadership) or the active involvement of parents (consider parent leadership) within a shared school educational project. This form of leadership that potentially extends to all school actors encourages horizontal power development (DuFour, 2004; Lambert, 2005), in which the teacher and manager become "creators of community" (Cangià, 2012). This is a process of deliberate sharing, and those in formal leadership

positions should be trained to instill team spirit and team build-
ing within organizations by sharing actions and principles with
the other actors rather than by imposing ideas and norms.

The characteristics of these relationships influence educa-
tional choices and actions, including the quality and impact of
leadership itself (Bhindi, Duignan, 1997), and represent an op-
portunity for individuals and institutions to broaden participa-
tion processes as a new common good practice (Neglia, 2017).

Teacher leadership

The concept of delegating leadership functions, actions, and au-
thority to school personnel has resulted in a substantial body of
research focusing on how teachers can demonstrate leadership
in the classroom (Baker-Doyle, 2021; Webber, 2021).

Over the last few years, there has been a growing interest in
the concept of the teacher as a leader in the educational litera-
ture. Teachers, being agents of change, are regarded as leaders.
In fact, effective educational change is dependent on appropri-
ate leadership roles being played. Crowther, Kaagar, and Hann
define teacher leadership and its contribution in this way: "ac-
tion that transforms teaching and learning in schools, that binds
schools and communities together on behalf of learning. Teach-
er leadership facilitates principled action to achieve whole-
school success" (2009, p. viii). Crippen writes that once a teach-
er is appointed, he or she becomes a leader first in the class-
room, and then in the school and learning community. Howev-
er, it is difficult to see teachers as leaders with clear roles and re-
sponsibilities within a hierarchical school system. Unlike the
specifications in the majority of traditional leadership literature,
educational leadership is not vested in one person who is as-
signed to a formal position of power or authority, but rather it
is viewed as a potential capacity of both teachers and school

leaders. Teacher leaders, according to Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001, p. 17), are "teachers who are leaders within and outside the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved educational practice." Furthermore, those identified as teacher leaders are not only respected by their peers, but they are viewed as teachers who volunteer and accept responsibility for tasks. As a result, opportunities for leadership are not limited to hierarchical and structural positions; rather, this viewpoint reflects the idea that everyone can demonstrate leadership in some way. This does not imply that everyone is a leader; rather, everyone has leadership potential and "the right, responsibility, and capability to be a leader." This viewpoint appears to be particularly relevant in terms of empowering teachers to become involved in decision-making and actively participate in the life of the school.

Transformational Leadership

This type of leadership refers to the leader's transformational ability to influence the values, motivation, and performance of followers within an organization. Burns (1978) was among the first to develop this model, which emerged in the field of organizational theories during the 1970s and 80s. Transformational leadership, according to the American scholar, "occurs when one or more people engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers mutually raise themselves to higher levels of motivation and morality" (1978, p. 20). This approach is frequently contrasted with transactional leadership, in which relationships between leaders and followers are based on an exchange of resources (for example, when a teacher performs his/her duties in exchange for a salary or other rewards). Transformational leadership requires school leaders and leaders to act

as change agents who inspire and motivate employees to improve organizational performance (Hallinger, 2003). A transformational leader helps to shape the school's vision and goals by providing direction and individualized support, modeling professional practices and values, demonstrating a strong sense of commitment, and developing structures to encourage participation in school decision-making (Urick, Bowers, 2014; Anderson, 2017).

Instructional leadership

The work of Bossert et al. (1982) and Hallinger and Murphy (1984) sparked early theorizations on instructional leadership in the United States in the 1980s. These models focused specifically on the role and responsibilities of school leaders, with their primary function of managing the curriculum and the teaching and learning processes—placed at the center of all instructional activity, hence the term *instructional leadership* (Bridges, 1967). The development of this model can be traced back to research on school effectiveness (Rosenholtz, 1985), which began in the 1970s in the UK and especially in the USA in response to the simplified interpretations of the findings of Coleman et al. (1966), according to which students' socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds had a greater impact on their performance than individual educational institutions: in other words, schools do not make students smarter. Subsequent research (Mortimore et al., 1988; Mortimore, 1993) used quantitative methodologies to analyze student progress and confirmed the existence of statistically significant differences between the outcomes achieved at the end of a certain route in the different schools investigated. Following the development of more sophisticated techniques and software, a more analytical analysis of the variables influencing learning and estimating their impact on results was pos-

sible, which further developed this approach, which is now integrated with that of School Improvement. This approach, which employs qualitative methodologies, examines the dynamics of the organizational processes of educational institutions and is concerned with using school outcomes as elements of reflection for the improvement of educational quality (Wrigley, 2013). The existence of specific school leader behaviors that affect the quality of classroom teaching was revealed by research on 'effective' schools: these leaders were described as strong, goal-oriented leaders and culture builders who had often transformed their school by supporting a certain drive for learning, here understood as a drive to improve student and teacher performance levels (particularly with regard to outcomes). Despite the diversity of approaches in the literature, the instructional leadership model proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), known by the acronym PIMRS (Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale), has gained greater credibility within the academic and professional communities, both international and national. A particular aspect of the model is that it incorporated three original dimensions characterizing the role of school leadership—setting school goals, coordinating the curriculum, and promoting a positive school climate—which were later refined into other functions (see the PIMRS conceptual framework in Hallinger and Murphy, 1985; Murphy et al., 2016). These models are distinguished by a directive, top-down approach (Day et al., 2009), which emphasizes control and hierarchical coordination by the school leader, and is purposefully oriented to have a direct impact on teaching and learning processes. By the end of the twentieth century, the United States had become obsessed with performance standards, and principals faced more explicit tensions and expectations. This obsession has spread around the globe with many countries pursuing similar educational goals and employing similar leadership models (Male, Palaiologou, 2012).

A number of reviews of qualitative and quantitative studies have since confirmed the positive role and impact of instructional leadership on student learning (Liebowiz, Porter, 2019), the effectiveness of teaching processes, and, in general, the organizational well-being of schools (Leithwood, Harris, Hopkins, 2020).

Leadership for learning

The research themes that characterize instructional leadership studies have recently been extended to broader notions of learning, contributing to the emergence of models of learning-centered leadership (Goldring et al., 2009) and leadership for learning (Boyce, Bowers, 2017). The term *leadership for learning* refers not only to the school leader's leadership but, more broadly, to school leadership, teaching, transformative and shared leadership, and the research into how it contributes to school improvement and student learning. This broader model of leadership for learning is reflected in the search for behaviors and actions that qualify school leaders' professional engagement alongside teachers committed to learning how to improve teaching practices (Robinson, Lyoyd, and Rowe, 2008); this action strengthens the capacity for school leadership to shape itself as a resource to support teachers, enhancing its credibility and legitimacy as a leader in teaching and learning processes in education. Finally, these approaches are primarily concerned with the educational leader's guiding, directing, and influencing functions, the primary goal of which is student learning through teacher action.

In tracing the foundations of learning-centered leadership, Murphy and his colleagues (2008) suggested that, in recent decades, two strands of study have become established and particularly prevalent in high-performing schools: (a) leadership

oriented toward learning or teaching and instructional processes, and (b) leadership oriented toward change or transformational leadership. These two lines of research are most effective when combined in the leadership for learning model, which includes both dimensions.

Leadership for learning entails the active participation of the principal in curriculum and teaching planning, coordination, and evaluation in order to initiate transformative practices (Robinson et al., 2008). Although this approach has been widely adopted in the literature, it has been criticized for being overly focused on the principal as a "center of expertise, power, and authority" (Hallinger, 2003). Some considerations are required in order to critically reflect on a perspective that appears to be very popular and widespread in the literature today.

An emphasis on improving learning outcomes can often lead to competitive conditions between educational institutions and students, or to an overemphasis on outcome-oriented learning pathways that crystallize or 'fix' knowledge in formal structures (competences to be attained, information to be acquired, checklist criteria to be met, etc.), to the detriment of free learning exercises and knowledge construction-deconstruction-reconstruction processes. Adopting approaches or programs with such a narrow focus risks becoming anachronistic in a time when digital literacy and virtual realities are becoming increasingly important, and in a society in which technology is losing its anonymity and becoming 'anthropized' by evolving into a mental, intellectual, sensory, and emotional entity, altering the very nature of learning environments. As a result, today's young people are entering and will enter an adult world that is significantly different from the one occupied by previous generations; it is an uncertain and indefinite future that inspires anxieties and hopes, and in which risk (Beck, 2003) becomes the focus of everyone's life. When viewed from this perspective, change must be regarded as a fundamental constitutive configuration of so-

cial and subjective dynamics, a universal datum, functionally desirable in the form of movement (fluid, dynamic, liberated). As a result, it is impossible to identify any curriculum model as unique or to predict specific learning outcomes that will always change: the emphasis should therefore shift to learning processes rather than the achievement of desired outcomes. This should be the unavoidable humanistic foundation of an authentically formative culture, which risks being ignored today, following the scientist illusions of a school colonized by a standardized, dehumanized language that ignores the true bio-psychic mechanisms of learning and the existential and phenomenological dimension of human training (Bonetta, 2017). Furthermore, leadership models for learning refer to an explicit curriculum, which is more immediately visible, assessable, and modifiable because it refers to intentional choices regarding the objectives, contents, and methodologies of one's teaching action; however, these models appear to ignore the existence of a hidden curriculum, which acts latently and silently in school work and brings with it attitudes, expectations, motivations, and dimensions that are not thematically addressed and lack an explicit curriculum. Every school is a *pluriverse*; it is a social system and a community of practice in which cultural models and images are sedimented, in implicitly pervasive ways and forms. In this regard, attention should be paid not only to didactic tools that elucidate the operational strategies to be implemented, such as the curriculum, but also to those pedagogical *latencies* that are part of the same integral learning experience and act on the deep level of the formative experience (Bufalino, D'Aprile, 2019).

Moral and ethical leadership

The primary responsibility of the school leader is to uphold the notion that the school should be a "moral and moralizing place"

(Covey, 1992; Scurati, 2000; Bobbio, 2015) where the social values of democracy and equal opportunities, as well as those of the individual and his/her right to realize his/her full educational potential, converge. In several research studies conducted in a variety of cultures and situations, educational leaders were asked to identify the factors and characteristics of effective leadership. The analyses of these studies identified values such as honesty, integrity, trust, care, and compassion; indeed, from various perspectives, the search for authenticity, integrity, and trust among institutional members is regarded as crucial (Brown, Townsend, 1997). Theoretical constructs and models of leadership centered on ethical and value-based issues take a prominent position in the leadership literature. Sergiovanni asserts that leadership is fundamentally a moral craft, emphasizing the need for educational leaders to integrate three critical dimensions: mind, heart, and hand. "The heart shapes the head of leadership and guides the hand" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 7). This viewpoint emphasizes the underlying significance of a principle-based leadership supported by the meaningfulness of human relationships—an educational leadership that draws its strength from individuals' intellects and hearts. From this perspective, the task of the school is not limited to the transmission of a series of knowledge constructs codified by school curricula, but is configured as an authentic learning community, which is a community of people, a community of minds, in which all the actors develop forms of learning functional to the dynamic and meaningful development of their role. In fact, for Sergiovanni, the most important factor in "effective schools" as high-quality environments with shared ideals, goals, and emotions is the community: school institutions are thus conceived of as learning communities, collegial communities, communities of care, inclusive communities, and research communities. This demonstrates the importance of a paradigm shift in values, practices, and relationships based on a culture of service and the development of the so-called hu-

man side of management in order to improve school manage-ment (Alessandrini 2012a). Ethical leadership differs from transformational leadership in that it strengthens educational leaders' value dimensions, which serve as a kind of   compass orientation for decision-making processes as well as a school's vision and mission. Ethical leadership (Starratt, 2007; Bezzina, 2012), authentic leadership (Avolio, Gardner, 2005; Begley, 2007; Bezzina, Bufalino, 2014), spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003; Woods, 2007), and servant leadership models are among the models developed within this research orientation (Greenleaf, 1977).

Authentic leadership

Great leaders change the people who are the heart of any orga-nization, especially a school community, which is a community of minds; and by changing people, leaders can create an envi-ronment that promotes learning. Teachers demonstrate leader-ship in their classrooms by transmitting their passion for teach-ing a subject, leading group discussions, encouraging peer-tu-toring, planning and motivating the learning process, clarifying objectives, encouraging individual effort, and expressing appre-ciation to students. According to Cornesky, author of *The Quality Professor*, "leadership is the most important ingredient in determining the quality of any organization, including the classroom" (1993, p. 41). By demonstrating a love for learning while also respecting students as learners, this quality will broaden their possibilities and pique their interest in student learning. As a result, knowledge is empowered and expanded. In this way, leadership becomes more personal and situational.

For Starrat (2007), each leader bears responsibility as a hu-man being, an administrator, and a citizen: he or she is respon-sible for students, teachers, and others involved in the school

community. Starrat situates the reflection on the authenticity of the leader within a learning perspective, offering three fundamental principles. For Starrat (2010), authentic leadership cannot be defined solely in terms of interpersonal morality. It should not be forgotten that leadership is exercised within an institutional context that is far from neutral in terms of structures and processes. The second point to make is that leadership is more than just managerial abilities, strategies, or techniques. We risk missing the true meaning of learning if we place too much emphasis on these. The third point is that leadership should not be limited to adults unless it considers the authenticity of students' learning, as well as the associated teaching strategies, resource allocation, and reporting. To summarize, authenticity cannot be developed outside the context of the school and social environment. As a result, we must consider the cultural elements that students and teachers bring to each institutional setting.

Servant Leadership.

"A great leader is first and foremost viewed as a servant." This challenging quote, taken from the essay *The Servant*, captures the essence of servant leadership (Spears, 1998, Carroll, 2005; Crippen, 2005; Spears, 2010). Through this oxymoron, servant and leader, Robert Greenleaf (1977) posed new questions about the nature of leadership. The old, authoritarian models were all about the power associated with a role, not the service. While this concept of power can eventually lead to the desired productive results, it ignores people, their aspirations, and talents. Without service, leadership is less substantial, more ego-driven and selfish, rather than community-centered, altruistic, and empathetic. Years later, Greenleaf's concept (1997) continues to revolutionize the way we think about the workplace, upending

old organizational pyramids and putting employees at the top. Although not novel, this concept is still revolutionary and necessitates additional research and consideration in the field of leadership studies. Soderquist (2006) emphasizes several characteristics of servant leaders: their ability to believe in and feel responsible for the development of others; their ability to share not only responsibility but also recognition for success; their desire to build relationships based on mutual respect and trust at all levels; and their particular dedication to care about and seek ways to meet the needs of everyone with whom they come into contact. If we believe in servant leadership as a way of life, we must consider what it will take to create an environment in which we can relate and grow together. In this sense, servant-leadership becomes a guiding philosophy, and a model for institutions.

Gender Studies

Leadership literature has become a valuable reference to guide schools toward processes of innovation and change; however, it has addressed the various issues involved with a 'neutral' approach, completely ignoring the gender variable and the influences it can have within work and life contexts. This type of 'gender blindness' toward the gender variable does nothing but annihilate existing differences by depersonalizing, objectifying, and reinforcing the traditional male leadership models that have dominated the scene in all organizational contexts, including the school, for years (Cozza, Gennai, 2009). The *gender studies* approach offers a fresh look at the representations and narratives of gender subjectivity in the context of an authentically emancipatory and inclusive perspective, recognizing and enhancing differences, and adding value and richness to humanity. Gender pedagogy studies intend to demonstrate how gender differences

can no longer be ignored when dealing with leadership processes and dynamics (Knights, 2021). Gender differences can promote a critical reading of the processes and a wider range of perspectives toward change. A Copernican revolution must compel the school leader to act on new principles, criteria, and of course, new competencies. In this sense, the diversity management approaches developed in the corporate sector in the United States in response to the demands of an increasingly multicultural social and working environment should be considered (Alessandrini, 2010). In this context, the pedagogical dimension plays a crucial role in fostering the development of subjectivity and inclusiveness, which are defined as synonyms for participation, equity, care for others, and sustainability. This viewpoint proposes the development of some categories of transversal competencies that promote openness to divergent points of view, empathy and aptitude for relationality, cultural analysis of one's own work context, and openness to the mediation of differences (Cozza, Gennai, 2009; Alessandrini, 2010; 2012; Iori, 2014; Kairys, 2018).

Critical Studies

These are studies which are influenced by postmodernist and postpositivist approaches in which the critical perspective is regarded as the only effective antidote to neoliberalism's colonization of thought and professional practices, as well as the control and discipline aspects of leadership and school management. Intellectual reflections such as those of Arendt, Foucault, Derrida, and Lyotard have become heuristic and interpretative tools for revealing power structures in the field and presenting alternative ways of intervention to those professionals working in transnational institutions and agencies. The belief that critical thinking, in its various modes of expression and communication, is the

only authentically useful device for deconstructing the so-called "regimes of truth" of our present (Foucault, 2002) and thus imagining new ways of thinking about education (Ball, 2015), returning it to the role of "philosophy in action," is the common thread of this investigation (Gunter, 2016).

The approaches described above provide polyphonic and plural perspectives that point to a diverse delineation and interpretation of educational leadership. In the light of these considerations, educational leadership can be defined as a process of mutual guidance and influence based on values, convictions, and beliefs, both implicit and explicit, that build a specific culture or denote a specific project and training orientation in the educational relationship. Each position, point of view, and observation vertex presents a genuine vision of leadership, which is reflected in the various definitions and investigative orientations. However, each of the examined approaches appears to be partial and limited in that it provides distinct but one-dimensional perspectives, capturing only some aspects and dimensions of reality while excluding others.

Deconstructing Educational Leadership:
Some Perspectives and Open Issues

Before examining the characteristics and models of intercultural leadership, the goal of this chapter is to critically examine the essence of educational leadership, its languages, foundational structure, and goals, with the aim of rethinking how it can be conceptualized and reinterpreted. Models of leadership will not be presented through well-known reviews of studies, but rather through a critical-pedagogical reflection on educational leadership at a higher level of cultural reflexivity.

The topic of educational leadership has taken on significant importance for the analysis of school organizations, spawning a plethora of theories, models, and typologies that have drawn inspiration from the vast amount of theoretical and empirical work developed in other areas of research (e.g., organizational and management sciences, school law, psychology, sociology of education, and pedagogy). A simple definition of educational leadership becomes complicated, open to different interpretations, and prone to conceptual confusion as a result. According to Leithwood, Jantzi, Steinbach (2014), much has been learned about leadership over the last century. The rise in importance of educational leadership has been accompanied by the development of theories. In line with this, there has been some level of awareness among academics that the unique characteristics of education and schools should be examined when considering

leadership in the educational sector. This has aided educational researchers in developing specific leadership models applicable to schools, particularly in recent decades.

There is a plethora of definitions, models, themes, and various heterogeneous references in the field of educational leadership studies that make the category leadership—which is now widely used and (ab)used—difficult to "grasp" and make intelligible (Hosking, 1988). Indeed, the foundational and epistemological assumptions that educational scholars use as meaning frameworks for the terms *leadership* and *leader* are numerous and frequently conflated (Yukl, 2006). Educational leadership can be thought of and conceived of as contextually situated knowledge: knowledge that arises and develops within a specific environment, space, or context, determining how leadership should and can be thought of, conceived of, and acted upon. 'Maps' are created to categorize leadership knowledge as it is produced, experienced, and institutionalized, employing the various areas of knowledge—broadly defined as paradigms or models (described below)—and considering the various professional actors, organizations, and educational institutions with their particular areas of knowledge. For the purposes of initial systematization, it appears useful to recall Ribbins and Gunter's (2002) conceptual framework, which groups the various research directions on educational leadership into clusters and cognitive domains. Various leadership models have been conceptualized and presented, including collaborative leadership models, transformational leadership, teacher leadership, ethical leadership, and charismatic leadership.

International academic and professional research has been characterized by the search for solutions and interventions aimed at improving the existing situation; it has generally resulted in the development of prescriptions and simplistic solutions, or a viable set of behaviors and functional characteristics for a more efficient and productive management of educational insti-

tutions. Through attempts at classification and idealistic and uniform models, this approach has primarily been oriented toward the search for 'the essence' of leadership—the Holy Grail, so to speak. It is not surprising that such approaches continue to fascinate and remain at the center of many debates on education and upbringing: 'capturing' what makes for better educational leadership and its effects on school success is undoubtedly a priority for scholars in the field. Current approaches to educational leadership regard the world in which we live as a visible, discernible reality, which we can represent through data, best practices, and events: all elements that appear to have a life of their own (Bonetta, 2017) and neutral characteristics. Neutrality, as promoted by some leadership studies, appears to shape our sense of reality under the guise of common sense and creates an aura of legitimacy. The presentation of scores and comparative rankings of educational backgrounds or learning levels by government officials and others is an example of this. Most of the time, teachers, parents, and educators have no idea about the meaning of these values, which are frequently decontextualized and deparametrized, despite the claim implied by a certain dogma of neutrality.

In such a context, a critical and open, plural and tensional debate risks becoming outdated, as learning-centered leadership models (leadership for learning)—which have become particularly popular in the US and other Anglo-Saxon countries, and from there all over the world (including Italy)—represent the pervasive educational leadership models. Indeed, leadership for learning has become a major concern of educational and school policies around the world, as well as a significant variable directly or indirectly related to the quality of school education and training processes.

These models have been orthodoxically disseminated in specialist and sector manuals; authors with differing perspectives present leadership with a "certain obsession" (Storey 2004, p.

12). Leadership, regarded as one of the transformational levers of neoliberal reforms (Grace, 2000; Serpieri, 2012), has become a guarantee of success in facing the many challenges of today's world and productively directing improvement actions within educational and training institutions (Khalifa, Gooden, Davis, 2016). Indeed, today's cultural and ideological environments shape school-management philosophies based on meritocratic competition and the concept of enterprise as the paradigm of any human organization, including schools (Baldacci, 2019). A performative culture, animated by accountability logics, favors standardized practices, expressed by specific result indicators, and aims to "build professional communities guided by data" (Mazzeo, 2003, p. 2) that hold all stakeholders accountable for improving student learning and educational quality. Evidence-based practice (Calvani, 2013; Calvani & Marzano, 2020) has become a modern philosophy of educational research development in this context.

The development of transnational comparisons in the field of education demonstrates how educational leadership theory and practice develops and is socially constructed within the respective social, political, and cultural contexts of reference, resulting in significant differences in its exercise at the national or local level.

When the countries being compared do not share a cultural heritage, the disparity becomes even more pronounced. Indeed, as evidenced by recent systematic and bibliographic reviews, the majority of the research and educational leadership training projects in the OECD or the European Union are based on a Western-centric literature, which traditionally pertains to well-defined geographical areas such as the United States, the United Kingdom, North America, or Australia (Gumus et al., 2018).

Within the diverse and contentious field of educational leadership studies, a convergence of models, epistemic concatena-

tions, and research lines and directions appears to be primarily traceable to the field of study of *Educational Leadership, Management, and Administration* (EMAL). This can be regarded as a transnational field of contemporary educational research, easily distinguished by a distinct vocabulary, scholars, institutional actors, schools of thought, and recurring educational models and practices, primarily of Anglophone tradition (Niesche, Gowlett, 2019; Pak, Ravitch, 2021).

In a dated but authoritative review of studies in the field, Greenfield (1986) asserts that "the study of educational leadership has become congealed in a narrow stamp" (p. 134). Leadership research has been constrained to operational and simplified definitions, as well as the reductionist prescription of replicable definitions and variables, which has emphasized the technical, operational, and measurable dimensions of school management and leadership while marginalizing the historical, political, socio-cultural, and pedagogical dimensions.

The functionalist mainstream has emerged with all its deflagrating force: it has unfolded and revealed itself through the elaboration, conceptualization, and development of reflection and research orientations adhering to managerial and instrumental conceptions of school organization that represent the cultural scenario within which the various national school policies are implemented.

The founding aspects—the fundamental pillars of this agenda—have thus found global diffusion, with direct interlocutors in supranational and international bodies such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the OECD, where the various PISA, TALIS, and multiple international standardized tests have become a crucial and reliable reference for policymakers in a variety of settings.

These programmatic foundations have also been widely disseminated as a result of the advocacy work of social entrepreneurs who have funded and supported the research activ-

ities initiated by these international organizations. The outcomes of these initiatives can be found in the modern approaches that characterize EMAL: first and foremost, the models of transformational leadership, instructional leadership, and, more recently, leadership for learning! When transformational leadership, with its emphasis on change processes, could no longer find statistical support in data and proved insufficient in providing solutions to specific educational and didactic issues—except through common-sense notions (e.g., leadership focused on teaching and learning leads to better results!)—it was necessary to break it down into a series of additional functions. This has resulted in the fragmentation of teaching and learning processes into increasingly discrete and minute measurable modular 'units' that have generated a structure of learning, now reduced to a set of specific competences to be acquired: an operation with scientistic features, so to speak, not so far removed from the Tayloristic enterprises of scientific division and organizational opacity.

With direct reference to school leadership, there has thus emerged a tendency to develop standardized and 'normalized' practices, models, and functions, expressed by 'standards' or professional models or by 'competence frameworks' to be certified, in order to guarantee the principles of efficiency and effectiveness in the management of school organizations.

To be fair, tactical mediations and negotiations have taken place at national and local levels; however, EMAL-inspired intervention principles have almost always resulted in constant pressure on managers, teachers, and practitioners to improve their performance and student learning outcomes. There is also the cultural filter that has traditionally characterized international research on educational leadership, which is often ethnocentric and dominated by paradigmatic models and visions pertaining to specific geographical contexts (the USA, the UK, and Australia, to name but a few). Indeed, the spread of hegemonic

characteristics (Samier, 2016), dominant narratives, and leadership practices has conveyed a particular conception of school leadership that has promoted cultural uniformity. The specificity of educational contexts, the uniqueness of situations and educational relationships, and social culture and its influence on educational theories and practices appear to be constantly absent from many current debates, with an inclination toward presentism or the search for leadership models and theories that tend to describe decontextualized practices or traits with claims of universality. All of this could result in cultural colonization by paradigms and models of reality interpretation characterized by linear and instrumental thinking, as well as economicist views of education. In fact, research on educational leadership has primarily focused on determining what functions in various contexts, spaces, and cultures (Courtney et al., 2021).

From a pedagogical standpoint, it is therefore necessary to question any tendency toward generalization, because a variety of latent factors and dimensions operate and act in each specific and unique educational relationship. However, the theories and models of educational leadership discussed above appear to assume that leadership exists as something objective that goes beyond idiosyncratic, historically and culturally determined contexts and spaces. It is possible, and even desirable, to identify essential traits and attributes using a still popular and influential positivist research tradition, according to this objectivist viewpoint.

Most narratives about educational leadership appear to assume that the lemma *leadership* corresponds to an objectively real and stable social phenomenon, materially embodied in the figure of the educational leader (the school manager, the teacher, the educator) as a named subject, or in educational and social dynamics that take the form of practices or actions. Furthermore, as previously stated, leadership is typically positioned in relation to the object of leadership itself, i.e., the so-

called followers, who are assumed to be tangibly visible, observed, and influenced by the leader. Within this horizon, the researcher appears as a detached observer who employs rigorous scientific methods of observation and measurement to identify and isolate the fundamental qualities that characterize a good leader, as well as the various activities that could be identified as best practices.

This is not to say that the search for what works should be abandoned, but rather that the uncritical acceptance of any axiomatic or ideological position is problematic. In the same way that naive forms of relativism seduce, the tendency to seek single frameworks of meaning and interpretation in the field of educational processes is problematic due to the narrowing of the field of dialog and debate.

Important critical research perspectives from the sociological and pedagogical traditions are required to create a theoretical and political commitment to re-read and re-interpret the field of educational leadership. The term *critique* is used here in a broader and more general sense, referring to a mode of inquiry concerned with thinking about and proposing an open, social, democratic education capable of problematizing social issues and questions in times of commodification (Granese, 1993; Mayo, Vittoria, 2017).

Beyond the ambiguities that still characterize the critical pedagogy debate, a cultural and intellectual commitment is gaining traction, aimed at exposing the existing power structures in the field of education and offering alternative ways of thinking and acting in relation to the dominant discourses that characterize current school policies and the so-called functionalist mainstream (McGinity, Heffernan, Courtney, 2021).

With this critical perspective, the field of EMAL has been rethought and reinterpreted as a transactional field of inquiry, characterized primarily by instrumental and functionalist models of educational intervention, conceived within the manage-

rial sciences and dropped in the school context through research on the behaviors and salient characteristics of educational leaders and leadership practices. These approaches are theoretically "weak" (Gunter, 2010), frequently reduced to formulae and models that are nearly identical, and lack a problematic relationship between leadership, education, and philosophy, i.e., between practical activity and theoretical knowledge of educational practice (Eacott, 2011; Thomson, 2011).

Because of the reservations stated above, a critical and problematizing pedagogical perspective can profoundly shape the fate of educational leadership, opening up spaces for reflection and rethinking on the relationship between education, subjectivity, and the leading of school contexts. This is an effort that begins with acknowledging the historical and cultural nature of educational and training processes, as well as the need to examine the material and social conditions under which both practice and reflection on education develop and take shape; it is a critical commitment that allows us to take an alternative approach to the normative and regulatory orientation of a tradition. Indeed, the critical pedagogical approach is inextricably linked to the categories of autonomy and emancipation (Margiotta, 2014), as it raises the issue of the basic material conditions of society within which pedagogical relationships are inscribed: modes of production, society, and issues related to power, domination, and hegemony become the central categories that allow for the establishment of a critical analysis of pedagogical relationships.

The potential of this approach is expressed by the ability to think the unthinkable, to move beyond the boundary, and consider modes of thinking and thought formation (the *how* rather than the *what*). This is precisely where their strength lies: in their capacity as counter-tensile ideas, capable of rousing consciences from the slumber of the new conformism that has enveloped our time, which claims to be the single thought of our

age, placing it under the sign of systemic efficiency imperatives (Baldacci, 2017).

The deconstructive dimension and the prospective-planning dimension characterize the critical and philosophical identity of pedagogy, i.e., knowledge that constantly rethinks itself by detecting its regulatory model. These two aspects should be emphasized in order to critically rethink leadership. This entails tracing some fundamental interpretive categories in order to relaunch a meta-theoretical investigation in the field of educational leadership capable of considering its object not "only in its ostensible dimensions, but also in its more implicit, hidden, problematic, and elusive dimensions" (Mariani, 2008, p. 12).

Language is understood not only as a system of signs, but also as an expression of a specific economic and cultural power. The term *world-economies* was coined by historian Fernard Braudel (1987; 1992) to describe the poles of economic concentration that have characterized human history: great blocks of power that have become centers for the elaboration and dissemination of culture—the same social culture that shapes educational systems and policies in schools. But which culture are we talking about? Globalization and neoliberalism as a culture? A culture that masked differences and made the planet homogeneous, at least on the surface? Neoliberal globalization takes over the world's contextuality, that is, it grants itself the power to shape the contours of cultures; indeed, it excludes the concept of culture entirely, in favor of a particular design of the world that corresponds to the demands of a single possible future (Gunter, 2016).

Any investigation into educational leadership should be based on an understanding of the leadership processes that take place and are exercised not in a social vacuum, but within the context of a larger cultural, economic, and political context of reference. The connections between the school and the larger social context define the very physiognomy of educational lead-

ership as well as the educational leader's identity traits (Grace, 2000). As a result, it is impossible to ignore direct knowledge of the history of educational institutions and educational policies that represent, on the one hand, the possibilities and limits within which leadership is exercised and, on the other hand, the definition of the roles and responsibilities that condition and shape educational experiences and educational relationships within them (Thomas, 2004).

Educational leadership that is not founded on an understanding of the mechanisms, dynamics, and actual processes of learning and training loses its sense and meaning.

In the field of education, a first element appears to emerge clearly: the existence of a Babel of definitions, which provides a first glimpse of the intricate complexity that characterizes the field of educational leadership. Because of this semantic and interpretative polysemy, this field of study is particularly "crowded" (Gunter, 2001). On the one hand, this represents a source of strength because it allows for intersections and contamination between different disciplines; on the other hand, it represents a source of criticality because the perimeter of this body of knowledge appears undefined and becomes a space that is occupied by other disciplines that are historically and traditionally stronger within the scientific context.

In Foucauldian terms, educational leadership could be considered a real "discourse" (Trentini, 2004): a socially constructed, contingent, provisional, and fallible reality, which in turn is part of a larger set of discourses—such as the medical one, the economic one, and so on—that form themselves and build the reality they speak of while "at war with each other" (Serpieri, 2008). By interpreting leadership "as a discourse" (Serpieri, 2009), it is possible to avoid the debate over "truth in itself," and instead focus on the materiality of existence, or on the effects and causes of power, of which discourses themselves are bearers.

In this direction, when focusing on educational leadership, complexity and multi-planarity become keys to reading, which do not limit—reductivistically—the analysis (and thus people) to one dimension, but rather open views that are not naive or approximate but are supported by engagement and theoretical and empirical research. All of this appears to be necessary because the so-called *leadership*, which many see as the best solution to educational problems, necessitates constant problematization and deconstruction (see Niesche 2014; Gobby 2017; Courtney et al., 2021). The task of pedagogical reflection thus becomes to critically and problematically examine the very essence of educational leadership—its language, the identity of its discourse, and strategic articulations—in order to rethink how leadership can be conceptualized and rethought (Gunter, 2016).

Leadership is clearly a social process that, regardless of how it is conceptualized, involves inherently social interactions, connections, and relationships between individuals and groups. If leadership is inherently constructed and woven into a social system, it cannot be attributed solely to the initiative or actions of a leader who has been formally legitimized in his or her role (e.g., a school leader). The complex network and changing possible relational configurations that develop or emerge in a given socially and historically determined context ensure the very existence of leadership. As a result, the constitutive connotations of leadership must be identified in the processualities and practices that emerge between various social actors as a result of communicative and relational entanglements, as well as in the emergent linkages between the subjectivities involved and the contexts in which they operate (Uhl-Bien, 2006; Wilkinson, 2017; 2020)

A pedagogical discourse on educational leadership enables the category *leadership* to be anchored in the Latin roots of *educere* and *cum-ducere*. This is a feature that allows leadership research to be 'liberated' from the exclusive topic of school lead-

ership or those in formal positions of power—the thematic level to which it is usually referred—in order to initiate a reflection on the nature of human action and enhance the complexity of pedagogical thinking and/or acting, which is increasingly loaded with tensions, fragmentations, and ambiguities.

As a result, the concept of leadership appears to be inextricably linked to that of education. Even before it is presented as a constitutive element of psychological dynamics, the function of leadership is presented in our culture as a distinct element and a way of being that develops within each specific educational relationship. It can be defined as the ability to influence others as well as the ability to perform actions or behaviors in accordance with goals that are explicit to some extent. Leadership has become an anthropological and existential feature of the very nature of education, which manifests itself as an asymmetrical and vertical relationship. The freedom-authority dichotomy has become an inherent component of the educational relationship. The educational relationship contains a dynamic relationship of influence and, thus, leadership within which the various educational figures have historically been placed: the teacher, the adult, and the educator. In the educational moment, freedom, autonomy, and heteronomy coexist in an antinomic way. Similarly, in processes of leadership, centralization and decentralization, center and periphery, democracy and authority exist concurrently and antinomically. Indeed, the most widely accepted definitions in the literature are based on the assumption that leadership, in general, entails a process of influence, and that this is exercised by one person (or group) over others (or groups of people).

When one connects the leadership process to the nature of the educational relationship, one can consider its primary element of direction and guidance (*ducere*).

The educational relationship can be directed in a dirigiste, coercive, and authoritarian manner (consider the persistence of

"black pedagogy" in training and educational practices), but it can also be directed in a humanizing and authentically pedagogical way. The genuine nature of accompaniment and guidance can thus be emphasized, as suggested by the particle *cum* (*cum-ducer*e).

Situationist and transformationalist leadership theories attribute to the leader competencies that are manifested in ways that aim to inform while also convincing and persuading through testimony and example. Linking leadership processes to outcomes (Dewey, 1951) allows for the enhancement of the social and political dimension of education, which becomes an element of promoting processes of social transformation, but also awareness and human models of relationships (Corbi, Sirignano, 2009). Indeed, leadership, by definition, cannot be neutral. Neutrality shapes our perception of reality, but it is merely an illusion (Agostinone-Wilson, 2005). Choosing, stating, and acting are not neutral activities; they are influenced by ideas, beliefs, acting and thinking rules, and thus influence decisions and paths to take. Taking a neutral stance in a debate or conflict does not guarantee the correctness or objectivity of any other position and may indicate a lack of knowledge about the issues at hand. Leaders must therefore engage, accept responsibility, and not be afraid to address today's major social, economic, political, and cultural issues. As Counts (1932) pointed out, "neutrality [...], if theoretically possible, is tantamount to favoring conservative forces" (p.54).

This dimension refers to the deliberate nature of leadership, which enhances its subjective and artistic components (Fullan, 2003). While the conception of leadership as a science may appear to be easier to indulge, present, and then evaluate, for example, through procedures, guidelines, and scorecards, the art of leadership is based on ethical principles that return educational discourse to a personal, social, and political domain, as well as the intricate relationship between ends and means. The

artistic and generative component of leadership implies that one should not limit oneself to existing ends and means, but rather devise new means, distinct from the perfected use of already available ends, in order to achieve qualitatively different goals and objectives (Dewey, 1951).

The dimension of values is another aspect that distinguishes leadership. "The school is a crux of values and for values," write Greenfield and Ribbings (1993, p.213). Educational institutions, as communities of people, become the focal point for the development and dissemination of a specific professional and educational culture, which is developed internally by the various actors who animate the school community (Deal, Peterson, 2016). As a result, educational leadership must include an anthropological dimension and, in this case, values that influence explicit and implicit beliefs, internal representations, the universe of meanings associated with education, and the main leadership practices. This aspect cannot, or should not, take away the invisible human dimension, based on care and emotional and psychic intelligence.

Educational leadership is a process of determining which values are worthy of consideration and should be pursued as goals. Leaving aside a semantic analysis of the terms *values*, *ethics*, or *morals*, the term *value* is used broadly here and includes various, multiple, and specialized forms and meanings. The meaning of value can be traced back to what is pedagogically desirable and influences decision-making processes, daily choices, practices, and educational actions implemented by school leaders. This horizon refers to the more intrinsic plane of subjectivity, but it also has a more relational and social dimension that refers to the professional or social community in which the leader operates.

There has been a *theory turn* in educational leadership, the results of which are ongoing and may not be realized for some time.

A common objectivist viewpoint holds that leadership is a real and universal phenomenon, the essence of which can be known by a neutral observer and conveyed through language, which is defined here as a device capable of reflecting, representing, and verbalizing reality. Hermeneutic approaches, on the other hand, result in partial and changing interpretations, implying that leadership can be configured as the result of signification and intersubjective construction of the meaning attributed to human experiences.

In the modern era, the *post* of many movements and conditions—think of the post-human condition (Erbetta, 2007; Pulcini, 2014; Ferrante, Orsenigo, 2018), the post-modern, and the post-truth—implies a continuous process of dissolution from which no philosophy can escape at the moment it reaches consciousness and concept. Leadership is not immune to this process of reconstruction, which has only recently become the focus of a thematization and an explicit assumption in theory. The contributions from the post-structuralist movement offer significant leads and paths of methodological investigation in this speculative itinerary of re-visitation of the theme of leadership in education, with various contaminations and enrichments. In particular, the deconstructionist approach seeks to identify contradictions, paradoxes, and logical aporias within the discourse. It enables the deconstruction of fabricated truths and tired clichés in leadership discourses. The deconstructionist approach evolves into a pedagogical research method that complements hermeneutic/comprehensive and critical/transformative research paradigms (Isidori, 2005; Thomson, 2011; Vaccarelli, 2019). A deconstructionist approach to studying educational leadership is a favored path for the development of meta-critical thinking in education professionals (Kincheloe, 2001; 2005). It is also defined as a dialectical-transformative strategy with a strong critical value toward society and the institutions that make up the system (Isidori, 2005). Embracing the decon-

structionist path explicitly and programmatically entails being wary of simplicity, not because of a taste for complication as an end in itself, but because simplicity can often be misleading, deceptive, and ideological. However, destroying logocentrism is not enough (and thus leader centrism, understood as the leader of presence, is embodied, reified, and objectified).

At this point, it is useful to mention Stiegler's rediscovery of the pharmakon (Stiegler, 2012; 2014; 2019). *Phamakon* has an ambiguous root, a *vox media* that includes the meanings of both *remedy* and *poison*. Leadership transforms into pharmakon, a cure and a remedy. The Derridean approach is extended by Stiegler's perspective. In pedagogy, the deconstructionist path has been directed toward verbalizing the unthought of, demystifying the real, and bringing out a plural and varied truth. However, this is insufficient. The epistemological endeavor of deconstructionism must take another path: the "pharmacological route," in Stieglerian terms, which allows for the invention of new answers, not to resist, but to raise questions to a higher level. As a result, it is a process that is not limited to a minute and punctual review and critical interpretation of the reality of educational leadership, but one that helps us to think differently and invent new ways of acting. It goes without saying that the foundations and categories of leadership must be re-configured rather than simply left to explode; they must be launched into a continuous projectuality that looks to the future—the best possible future for the human being. It is a question of going beyond the processes of observation, analysis, and description in order to develop situated pedagogical knowledge that looks at reality in an unprecedented way; a pedagogical practice should not be imprisoned in criticism as an end in itself, in demonization or, conversely, in sacralization, but solicited with care and attention. On the one hand, the person is made structurally irresponsible and a follower of contemporary capitalist society; on the other hand, the same person will invent new ways of orga-

nizing human relationships through care and intelligence. On the one hand, leadership is designed to be a poison for leaders; on the other hand, leaders will be the remedy through which a new concept of leadership can be re-imagined, regenerated, and re-conceived.

Chapter 5
Rethinking Educational Leadership in Intercultural Contexts: a Social Justice Perspective

Leadership in educational institutions occurs in contexts characterized by diverse populations whose actions are motivated by varied cultural beliefs and assumptive frameworks (Collard, Wang, 2005; Frawley, Fasoli, 2012; Collard, 2017); this constitutes a multicultural challenge.

There is a growing tendency worldwide to recognize the benefits that cultural, linguistic, religious, and social diversity can bring to schools and society; however, diversity is still seen as a disadvantage in many countries. Diversity is a broad term that is understood and interpreted in various ways. It is closely related to the concept of inclusion, "a process of responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 13).

When we turn our attention to various international organizations, such as UNICEF, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the United Nations, and the European Union, concepts of inclusion have several common ideal elements (Hardy, Woodcock, 2015); while these elements are diverse and ambiguous, inclusion requires a process of reforming and changing the school as a whole in order to ensure that all students have access to a range of educational opportunities (Mittler, 2012). The values of inclusion revolve around fellowship, participa-

tion, democratization, equal access, quality, equity, and justice. These are clear and widely accepted ethical ideals attributed to inclusion, while Haug (2017) refers to them as "a masterpiece of rhetoric, easy to accept and difficult to be against or even criticize" (p. 207). In this sense, the socio-political and moral arguments for inclusion have been well established, while inclusion is strongly based on value and ideology, in the same category as other similar concepts such as democracy and social justice.

Educators have always been expected to handle the demands of society that has become and is becoming more complex and diverse. In schools, teachers and administrators have had to adapt their instructional and pedagogical frameworks to cater for the learning needs of their students (Coulby, 2006).

Recent scholars in the field of leadership have alerted us to the links between cultural values and leadership practice and prompted us to move beyond monocultural frameworks (Frawley, Fasoli, 2012; Moss, O'Mara, McCandless, 2017; Gómez-Hurtado, González-Falcón, Coronel, 2018; Angelle, Torrance, 2019; Barakat, Reames, Kensler, 2019; Barakat et. al., 2020; Sellars, Imig, 2021). In fact, leadership is centrally concerned with the interpretation and enactment of the values and cultural beliefs which inform a leader's practice and decisions. Moreover, there are continuous debates about the existence and extent of the influence of culture on leadership, as well as the influence of leadership on culture in institutional settings (Walker, Shuangye, 2007). This dualistic perspective represents an oversimplified understanding of culture—and of the ways that cultures and sub-cultures interact in schools. In fact, the influence of cultural values on leadership is a complex issue, one which has not been resolved and probably never will be; however, in essence, even though cultural values exist within a complex and vibrant broader context, they continue to exert a strong influence on people's lives. As such, cultural values form a key ele-

ment of the hybrid environment for leaders in multicultural schools.

The label *intercultural schools* can take any number of configurations. Here the term is used in a broader sense, to incorporate all cultural diversities which are not only related to racial, linguistic or cultural background diversities. In fact, the intercultural phenomenon requires a precise project aimed at acquiring and developing an open, flexible, critical way of thinking: a thought capable of "migrating" (Pinto Minerva, 2002) to other cultures, understood in a broad sense, to recognize and understand differences and/or analogies. Intercultural education is not the pedagogy for or the pedagogy of foreigners, but the common educational requirement of anyone living in complex and heterogeneous contexts.

The school's intercultural project should characterize the normal being and doing of school of today. As society shifts, individual and collective identities—that are not monolithic, stable or of a binary nature—are negotiated and renegotiated in a process of cultural syncretism (Banks, McGee Banks, 2009). Concepts such as *identity* and *culture* cannot be considered as fixed categories but are constantly evolving, while *otherness* and *immigration* are not seen as threats, but as opportunities for personal development and collective growth (Portera, Grant, 2017). In this sense, a more sophisticated perspective of culture emerges as one that is dynamic, ever changing, multi-layered, and constantly subject to internal and external changes.

This approach is more in line with the postmodern view of learning and teaching, which sees individuals as active constructors of their own values and knowledge (Cottard, 2007), which characterizes their interactions with others. As such, simplistic, ethnic, national cultural understandings of interculturality should be avoided. The Darwinian position of the environment constraining the organism has been superseded. According to constructivist viewpoints, it makes no sense to speak of an envi-

ronment that exists before the organism that will inhabit it, or of an organism that exists before the environment in which it will develop. There are as many different kinds of environments as there are different kinds of organisms. Culture, defined as the articulated system of values, myths, and rituals that characterize society at any given historical moment, undoubtedly influences the behavior of individuals and groups. However, this influence cannot be a causal and univocal relationship; culture is a system of meaning that informs—in the dual sense of shaping and attributing meaning—the sense that an individual gives to his or her behavior (Munari, 2013).

More recently, the field of educational leadership has been marked by a tendency to disregard spatial and even cultural barriers in favor of cultural homogenization, standardization, and transnational and comparative comparisons in education. Neoliberal globalization, which has also affected the world of education, has taken possession of the world's contextuality, that is, it has given itself the power to shape the contours of cultures; indeed, it excludes the very concept of culture, in favor of a certain design of the world that corresponds to the demands of a single possible future.

In this context, the technical-rational understanding of the work and role of educational leaders is favored in policy and public discourse, while current initiatives appear to recast the agency of leaders in terms of performativity, thereby reducing the right of educators (school leaders, teachers or other educational agents) to think and make judgments on what is educationally desirable (Smyth, 2000). Following that, cross-cultural studies show that Western leadership assumption and beliefs do not provide a normative discourse for other cultures (Bush, Qiang, 2000). When we consider inter-cultural aspects such as different conceptions of human nature, learning, and knowledge, this assumption becomes more complicated. In fact, educational leaders may bring a heterogeneous mixture of assumed

and explicit values to their praxis. Interculturality refers to a dynamic concept dealing with relationships between cultural groups and individuals. It has been defined as "the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialog and mutual respect" (UNESCO, 2005).

With regard to the school context, when working with children and parents from different cultures, educational leaders face new challenges as a result of increased cultural diversity. These difficulties are shaped by the various contexts in which they occur, while a variety of contextual factors affect schools, such as their vision and mission, leadership structure, latent curricula, staff competency skills, demographic shifts in student population, parental relationships, and school culture (Bush, Middlewood 2013; Vassallo, 2015). Leaders are also cultural agents who bring values into decision-making and policy decisions (Leithwood et al., 1999). They are the heirs of long-held traditions of core values within nations, societies, organizations, and families. This issue is fundamental to our understanding of leadership in intercultural contexts. Educational leaders cannot be viewed as passive transmitters of prevailing leadership cultures and practices; rather, they should be seen as learners constantly developing and reconstructing a responsive repertoire, in which there is room for innovation and change. They may be sensitive to cultural nuances and develop leadership styles to bridge divides and satisfy the needs of diverse students (Merchant, 2004). School leaders' values and conceptualizations of intercultural education form the basis of a school's philosophy, needs and priorities and, by extension, the school's culture (Zembylas and Iasonos, 2010). In fact, as Leeman (2003, p. 31) asserts, "if schools want to give intercultural education a chance, they must opt for a focused development of vision and direct and guide intercultural education as a part of school policy."

The discourse on the link between educational leadership and interculturality can be seen as a two-pronged conceptualization (Vassallo, 2015). On one hand there is the prevailing discourse on managing multiculturalism and diversity, hovering around individual and group achievement (Alsubaie, 2015), while on the other hand lies the dominant discourse on social justice issues (Pittman, 2009) which emphasises the need for critical transformative pedagogies to be placed at the very heart of educational leadership processes. This distinction could be seen as simplification, but it is important to contextualize our reflection on intercultural leadership in education.

It is not our intention to reiterate the list of competences and skills that are required to lead intercultural educational organizations. Within this approach, intercultural competence can be defined as the capability to function effectively across cultures, to reflect and act accordingly, and to collaborate with other individuals from different cultural backgrounds, both locally and abroad. Individuals with intercultural competences are able to engage, collaborate, and communicate in a global society (Perry, Southwell, 2011, p. 453), where they are more likely to interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, who manifest different beliefs, experiences, and values (Deardorff, 2006). This line of inquiry has produced few meaningful advances in research or practice about the ability of educational leaders to "shape" or "change" a school's culture (Brooks, Miles, 2010). According to Fraise and Brooks (2015), this could be due in part to the following mistaken (implicit and explicit) assumptions:

– The schools exists as a separate entity from society. Many ostensibly cultural studies take nothing into account outside the school. In some circles, this is referred to as "doing sociology without society."
– Culture is a difference-blind construct, which means that as-

pects such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation simply do not matter or are not included in the concept of culture in any way.
– Cultural diversity is detrimental to the work of a school since success is frequently regarded as a normative construct based on masculine whiteness.
– There is a monolithic school culture, which has an equal meaning for all participants; rather, teachers and students should understand that there are multiple cultures and subcultures flowing into and out of the school, and that each individual interprets the significance of these in a unique way (Brooks, Normore, 2010; Brooks, Jean-Marie, 2007).
– Culturally relevant leadership is a general disposition rather than a practice paradigm that necessitates non-traditional out-of-school actions such as building bridges and bridging borders between school and community.

Given these premises, more emphatic criticism of the way culture is mis-conceptualized in educational leadership literature should be made. Educational leaders are expected not to restrict their focus to school transformation, but they should also seek to restructure the cultural and political contexts of schooling (Leeman, 2007; Banks and McGee Banks, 2009). Intercultural school leaders may adopt a wider spectrum of socially driven and social-activist school policies and practices. Such policies include an anti-bias educational agenda, recruitment of minority teachers for mainstream schools, and the development of inclusive and collaborative school cultures. This will allow for a cultural shift that prioritizes the need to protect everyone's life.

Without this cultural shift, we will always be confronted with the "migration problem," with invisible minors, emergency migration policies, partial and disorganized interventions, and the paradox of increasingly detailed and restrictive legisla-

tive measures referring to a figure defined in an increasingly unclear and ambiguous manner.

In this context, do educational leaders promote and practice intercultural education as long as it does not disrupt the current socio-political order? Can teachers and school leaders practice intercultural education without first and foremost insisting on social reconstruction for equity and justice without becoming complicit with existing inequities and injustices?

While one of the most dangerous dimensions of educational hegemony is a culture of pragmatism—exacerbated by educational policies requiring evaluation of student and teacher performance—some insight by Gorski (2008) can be relevant to prepare for a wider shift from colonization to intercultural education:

– Cultural awareness is not sufficient and educational leaders need to demonstrate the hegemonic meaning of difference (as compared to the 'norm' appointed by hegemony) and how it informs their worldview.
– The 'deficit' theory, which attributes values or worldviews to anyone based on one dimension of identity, should be rejected.
– Neutrality = status quo; the very act of claiming neutrality is, in and of itself, political. Intercultural work, therefore, must be explicitly political: against domination and for liberation; against hegemony and for critical conscience; and against marginalization and for justice.
– Putting decolonizing intercultural education into practice requires educators to speak the truth to the authorities, challenging hegemony and hierarchy and risking unpopularity.

These elements of reflection are very much in line with our work, which is oriented along the 'social justice' perspective and the mission of the educational leader in promoting justice principles in education.

According to research, educational leadership faces significant challenges in multicultural societies (Angelle, 2017; Bertrand, Rodela 2018; Dimmock, Walker, 2005). School leaders are tasked with creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for students of all backgrounds, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, or culture. Social justice leadership means that school leaders make the issues of social inclusion and multiculturalism (race, class, gender, disability, and other historically marginalized conditions) central to their leadership practice and vision (Theoharis, 2009).

According to Kowalchuk (2019), two critical scholars—Freire (1998) and Foster (1986)—have influenced the theoretical underpinnings of social justice leadership in this line of inquiry. Freire (1998) describes his view of leadership as "critical pedagogy" in which social justice, like education, is a deliberate intervention that requires the moral use of power. Foster's (1989) four criteria for thinking about leadership comprise a working definition and conceptualization of educational leadership from a critical perspective, claiming it must involve critical, transformative, educative, and ethical practice.

Taking the social justice approach for leadership enables questions to be asked about how social, political, and economic realities within a particular society influence the organizational structures and cultures of a school (Berkovich, 2014). Educational leaders should be trained in the context of critical pedagogy, with the dual aim of being both good critical thinkers and political educators (Corbi, Sirignano, 2009). This dual goal also underlines and expresses the ambition to reinforce the role played by critical thinking in the entire field of education (Davies, Barnett, 2015). Schools need to encourage critical and political thinking and action (Brookfield, 2020).

The aim calls for intellectual action by teachers and educational leaders. This approach recognizes on the one hand the existential condition of the individual student with his/her needs

and differences and, on the other hand, the development of a collective social project that links the individual and social aspects as well as the public and private spheres.

However, contemporary educational and social issues seem to have been expropriated by their political-educational dimensions, as the focus is on the regime of performativity, where schools have come to operate in competitive markets, according to the principles of efficiency and effectiveness, while students have to reach high standards (Apple 2004). In fact, education scholars have historically been more interested in exploring and identifying the practices of leadership in making schools more efficient and productive than in explicitly addressing issues of social justice, diversity, and equality. Education is suffering as a result of the consequences of neoliberal policies that impose an education model that serves the interests of the hegemonic economic system (Aguado-Odina, Mata-Benito, Gil-Jaurena, 2017). This may lead to an educational system that passively accepts the current economic, social, and cultural conditions, while views that seek to focus more on inclusive and equitable schooling have been overshadowed.

Leaders should attempt to bridge the gap between school and society and play a significant role in the regeneration of social forces; they should not remain indifferent or feel that their professional duties do not extend to this. One consequence of this approach is that social justice should be promoted in schools, since scholars claim that this intention often remains in the realm of rhetorical declarations (DeMatthews et al., 2021; Fraise, Brooks, 2015) instead of genuinely dealing with injustices such as discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization—subjects that are often politically loaded and have diverse interpretations. Leaders should avoid the so-called ideology of neutrality.

According to critical theorists, education is never neutral. Instead of thinking of students and teachers as passive recipients

of curricula, state mandates, and standards, school leaders should guide their students and teachers through critical thinking, active questioning, local participation, and the promotion of diversity inclusion. However, teachers and educators often openly refuse to adhere to political ideals or ideological arrangements for teaching, which are labeled as unprofessional or improper behaviours or attitudes that divert from commands such as "Stick to the facts/rules," "Beware of Prejudices," and "Keep Neutrality," often referred to as key elements for learning success. From this perspective, the role of teachers and school leaders is essential in ensuring that students are taught how to function in society in a non-disruptive way. As a result, this "impartial" or "neutral" position is considered to be a desirable objective, partly because teachers and educational leaders are prepared to adapt to the status quo in schools (Ross, 2018). Many educators view their work in schools as apolitical, a matter of effectively covering the curriculum, teaching academic skills, and preparing students for the challenges they may face in the future. The ideology of neutrality, which dominates current thought and practice in schools, seems to shape our sense of reality under the guise of common sense and creates an aura of legitimacy (Agostinone-Wilson, 2005). An example of this is the presentation of ratings, ranking, or grades relating to educational outcomes or learning levels identified by government officials or other agencies. In this case, the public often does not have the slightest idea of the meaning of these statistics, which are often decontextualized and deparameterized. As Ross (2018) explains, the ideology of neutrality contributes to the creation of a passive or spectator-driven citizenship, aimed at maintaining the status quo. In this sense, educational leaders who challenge the status quo are perceived as almost a direct threat to the ruling class (Hill, 2004).

Even if it is referred to teachers, it could be relevant to cite a quote of Freire (1998, p. 93) in which he states his stance

against neutrality: "I cannot be a teacher if I do not perceive with ever greater clarity that my practice demands of me a definition about where I stand: a break with what is not right ethically. I must choose between one thing and another thing. I cannot be a teacher and be in favor of everyone and everything."

The teaching (and leading) process thus conceived presents the risk of a certain amount of openness (Smith, 2000), which could in itself become a particularly useful strategy for the construction of "anti-hegemonic common sense" (Apple, 2005, p. 226). Instead of assuming that students and teachers are passive beneficiaries, school leaders can lead them through critical thinking and constructive inquiry. This approach would enable leaders to educate students and teachers to build a broader perspective on social issues by encouraging them to try to situate a problem in an historical and social context, and thus examine the relationship between wider historical, economic, and social systems and local circumstances (Lash, Kroeger, 2018). In fact, schools are social systems, and now, more than ever before, very complex ones. The human relation dimension among students, teachers and leaders plays a crucial role in school life as much as the curriculum does, and indeed has a powerful effect not only on the learning and teaching that take place but also in promoting a climate of cultural inclusion.

When we apply the concept of community to schools, the focus shifts from school structure to school culture, from ways of organizing the school to ways of being, and from brick and mortar to ideals and relationships. Fullan (2007) argues that school reform fails because the focus tends to remain on restructuring schools, that is, changing the ways schools are organized to improve teaching and learning. Instead, Fullan (2010) says that in order for schools and school systems to improve, they need to build their collective capacity, and he advises us to consider the reculturing process—i.e., changing the norms, values, and relationships in schools—as a more expedient way to im-

prove teaching and learning. Like other authors and researchers, he believes that nurturing a more collaborative, collegial work ethic among teachers will positively affect student outcomes.

From a social justice standpoint, schools are frequently perceived as reinforcing and perpetuating disadvantage and stereotyped understandings of diversity. In this sense, social justice refers to the notion that injustices are not natural or acceptable, and that education will either reinforce or reveal the dominant ideology.

The role of educational leaders is critical here. According to North (2008), schools face difficulty in coping with societal injustice and should strive to become spaces of justice, inclusivity, and compassion. Educational leaders are expected to develop critical awareness of the various forms of oppression and exclusion in schools (Khalifa, 2018) and to analyze the impact of existing resource distribution, which disseminates power in the educational organization, often favoring one group over others. In the light of these premises, the main concept of social justice leadership is conceived as a praxis, in the Freireian sense, involving both reflection and action. Social justice leaders are those who understand and actively challenge the structural nature of racism and other inequities in school practices, while demonstrating strong commitment to inclusive practices.

Effective leadership in intercultural schools requires authentic understanding and related action (Walker, Shuangye, 2007). The term *authentic* derives from the Greek aphorism "Know thyself" which was inscribed on the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. *Authenon* (to have authority and act on one's own behalf) indicates the possibility of living an existence that reflects the true inner life of an individual, with an unmistakable personal character. Knowing oneself and acting accordingly, expressing one's beliefs and thoughts, is what it means to be authentic. Students and learners have a rich, diverse and articulate autonomous life, which is frequently overlooked. Neither the school nor the

teacher can 'own' them and regard them as automatons to be programmed with the correct answers, and to be integrated into a broader system. Each of them has the right to live their own destiny, to make a life for themselves in relation to their community, or, more precisely, in relation to something that can be negotiated, constructed, and improvised within one's own community. Taylor (1991) provides one of the most lucid philosophical analyses of such an ethic when he says: "There is a certain way of being human that is my way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else's life" (p. 21). In this sense, leader learning in intercultural contexts entails engaging in self-directed learning, discovery, and reflection while interacting with people from various cultural backgrounds. Working in intercultural schools has major implications for leaders seeking authenticity in that they must recognize that diverse groups—whether students, teachers, or others—may have very different values and expectations, which can present barriers to advancing social justice. Authentic leadership in any environment must be built within the school's micro and macro contexts. Authentic leadership in intercultural schools must be particularly sensitive to the values, beliefs, and behaviors of the community's children, teachers, and other actors. In other words, leaders should seek to develop intercultural awareness and then apply that understanding to leadership ideas and practices (Walker, Haiyan, Shuangye, 2007). In this sense, the first step toward culturally relevant and authentic leadership is to recognize and then embrace the distinctive culture of each student and educator. This will necessitate a rethinking of how educational leaders are trained, as well as how they conceptualize and carry out their role in practice. This rethinking must be grounded in an acceptance of the complexities of a culture, rather than an attempt to reduce it to a few basic stereotypes or assumptions about individuals and peoples (Brooks, Miles, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

As a way of concluding, in the European context two concepts have generally been distinguished: multiculturalism, which "has to do with the politics of difference and the emerging social struggles of racialized, sexualized, and class societies" (Torres, 2009, p. 99), and interculturalism, i.e., an attempt to create an intercultural mediation rooted in a flexible conception of culture, in search of a new idea of citizenship (Allemann-Ghionda, 2009). In the European tradition, a re-evaluation of multiculturalism started to become prominent in the early 2000s, whilst the idea of interculturalism started to make an appearance as a more effective approach to social cohesion as difference and inclusion are both given prominence, in addition to cross-cultural dialog.

Considering the two perspectives as an attempted solution to the problems posed by increasingly diverse school populations, the intercultural approach is distinguished by its particular sensitivity to the reception of new arrivals and the management of emergencies. Based on the reflection above, these valuable elements should, however, be complemented by the concept of education that also includes a political dimension, related to a vision of social justice, considering that multicultural education is in itself education for social justice (Nieto, Bode, 2008). It seems likely that the construction of educational processes in schools aimed at promoting academic success for all could also benefit from these multiple perspectives (Tarozzi, 2015; 2017; Malusà, 2017).

Leaders must become transformative cultural agents in order to establish reflexive institutions and systems, letting go of long-held traditions and challenging unquestioned assumptions. They have a responsibility to mediate between groups, to assist them in identifying the social and even transcendental good that bridges divisive difference, and to advocate for new cultural norms that embrace diversity and rectify disempowerment. As transformative cultural advocates, leaders should also under-

stand how to harness the various forms of cultural capital that students, teachers, and communities offer to educational activities. This means evaluating various epistemologies and recognizing that there are numerous culturally based and authentic learning and teaching techniques. Living in a multicultural community requires engagement, dialog, and the ability to deal with moral dilemmas. These could include core values like the right to autonomy, the right to freedom of choice (what pupils wear, for example), and freedom of expression. Thinking critically about things that are taken for granted and being aware of what is going on are essential for an effective educational climate in an ethnically diverse school (Leeman, 2003). Moreover, Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005, p. 201) invite school leaders to "critically inquire into the structures and norms that result in inequitable schooling for many students and take on an advocacy role to influence educational policies to achieve social justice." In their political role, educational leaders should identify the institutional barriers, structural inequalities, and power dynamics that influence students' inclusion within the school settings (Banks, McGee Banks, 2009). However, efforts to establish more intercultural leadership practice through professional development for school leaders are generally discouraging, as such programs typically focus on the efficacy and efficiency of schools. According to Riehl (2000) and Hajisoteriou and Angelides (2014), school leader training programs should instead empower them to nurture new notions of diversity, design and implement inclusive practices in their schools, and build connections between their schools and communities.

Chapter 6
Lead the Change: Teacher Leadership for Inclusion

Human history has been marked by a continuous and constant mobility of people who have settled in new places in search of better living conditions. Cultures, languages, traditions, beliefs, knowledge, faiths, and value and belief systems have all moved with the people. Migration has undoubtedly enriched the pluralism of our societies, which has embraced the characteristics of a structural and dynamic multiculturalism, resulting in unprecedented forms of cultural hybridity; at the same time, it has raised profound questions and suggested new areas of reflection for the promotion of dialog and cultural exchange.

Because of recent wars, religious conflicts, and cultural conflicts in the Mediterranean geopolitical region, the characteristics of the migration path have significantly changed compared to the past (Bacci, 2014; Corti, 2011), assuming features of complexity due to the problematic scope and nature of a new phenomenon that forces men and women to move and seek protection, safety, and refuge.

The arrival of people from other countries has presented our societies with new challenges that go beyond the political and economic spheres—much more is now at stake. Social policies, as well as education and training policies, are being called into question for the democratic stability of the countries involved, particularly in Europe, where child migration has increased sig-

nificantly in recent decades. Children and adolescents are now among the protagonists of migration processes; they are the new subjects of care and law (Tomarchio, Ulivieri, 2015) to be framed within an ethical-civil pedagogical commitment that questions issues of democratic citizenship, justice, equality of opportunity (Silva, 2015), and social and educational inclusion (Polenghi, Fiorucci, Agostinetto, 2018).

Reflection is now required to develop interpretative keys and action strategies that highlight the irreplaceable role of changing culture in educational research. This will ease the transition from multiculturalism, which is defined by the cohabitation and more or less peaceful coexistence of people from different cultures in the same place/context/territory, as if it were a sort of "condominium" (Portera, 2013), to an effective and authentic intercultural project.

From this viewpoint, pedagogical commitment to the development of intercultural dialog and the promotion of new civic spaces is crucial. Living in the same land does not guarantee dialog or harmonious individual and collective growth. Unease, or worse, irreparable conflicts frequently exacerbate relationships with multiple cultural affiliations. As a micro-society and educational institution, the school must serve as a springboard for the development of new relational and dialog skills that value all differences (gender, social class, cultural background, etc.).

It should be noted that, until recently, intercultural orientation in our school context was limited to a commitment to special compensatory measures to counter the socio-cultural disadvantages of migrant students and to promote school integration (Poletti, 1992). Intercultural reflection and practice had a clear starting point: it arose as an emergency response to the presence of foreign students in our classrooms. To paraphrase Michel de Certeau (2010), for years there has been an attempt to trap differences within a *network of leveling rationalities*, ignoring the innumerable qualitative dimensions of identities, otherness, and

belonging. Intercultural education was originally envisioned as a ministerial and institutional solution (circulars, proposals, and reception protocols) required for the new demands for welcoming and coexistence that emerged in the Italian educational context.

Inclusion is only possible if man's thinking is rehumanized (Morin, 2000) and fundamental values like listening, respect, and concern for the Other can be rediscovered. The intercultural issue is not a subject for specialists and experts, nor is it just one of many school issues to be addressed alongside the others: it calls into question the entire educational system and promotes a commitment to change (Damiano, 1998).

Integration in schools is an important path to cultural and civil growth, and attention must be paid not only to different cultures and their mutual exchange, but also to the human being, the driving force behind historical and social development. Individuals must continue to grow intellectually, emotionally, and relationally as a result of their education in difference and pluralism.

In this regard, educational and training practices are crucial for the promotion of transformation processes on a larger scale (context and community) in order to change human models of growth and relationships with others, thus paving the way for widespread solidarity and collaboration. As a result, schools face an unavoidable cultural challenge as protected social and relational spaces for the construction of educational destinies, as well as privileged spaces for promoting encounters between differences and attesting to the ethical principles of otherness. It is therefore essential to invest more in intercultural training for teachers so that they acquire intercultural knowledge and skills for the creation of a dialog space in the school and the design of educational learning/teaching paths from an inclusive perspective.

The Italian school has not only changed its configuration in

recent years, but it has also committed itself to intercultural education with a rich and appreciable wealth of experience, experimentation, projects, and good practices (Santerini, 2017; Fiorucci 2020; Macinai 2020; Stillo, 2020).

"We must recognize that in Italy, as in other countries, schools were the first to take action as soon as the multi-ethnic society appeared," says Franco Cambi (2006, pp. 109 110). "Indeed, it has moved with dedication, passion, and responsibility, both theoretical and strategic. The intercultural work carried out in schools is now organized and well-developed, and it is frequently of excellent quality. It is no longer influenced solely by the reception principle but includes more subtle and complex aspects of intercultural work." Today, the intercultural approach to education is at the heart of a radical conceptual and cultural shift involving a true reform of thought, with a revolutionary impact on pedagogy and school studies. The intercultural issue is now framed as an emergency (Sirignano, 2019) to which pedagogy must respond by implementing educational strategies that can meet the needs of all the people involved.

According to this viewpoint, the school should become a training space for intercultural mediation for teachers (Fiorucci, 2015), parents, and students, in order to promote the right to difference, a necessary prerogative for developing democratic citizenship and social cohesion (Santerini, 2010; 2017).

In this regard, intercultural training for teachers, school administrators, and all school personnel is essential for raising awareness about the importance of dialog as an educational paradigm and ethical reference value. One of the most recent documents pertaining to the intercultural school perspective states: "A good school must rely on competent teachers and administrators who understand how to involve all school personnel [...]. To move from the buzz-phrase 'good practices' to a strong and shared voice, it is necessary to develop a capillary, rather than sporadic, training of school administrators and

teachers, led first and foremost by those who have been trained in the field" (MIUR, 2005). This is not a short-term goal: teachers must question their conceptual maps, deconstructing ethnocentric prejudices, stereotypes, and dominant narratives (Nanni, Fucecchi, 2018) and adopt a perspective of cognitive, affective, and existential decentralization capable of favoring an education to difference. Unfortunately, the increasing demand for intercultural training has not yet been met by a fully structured and systematic professional response. On the one hand, the field of school reception of foreign students is being investigated; on the other hand, the formal education practices required to manage complex intercultural situations, such as identity construction of the second generation of migrants, intergenerational dialog, and the prevention of radicalism, have not been activated yet. In this context, it is necessary to focus on issues of school success while also delving deeply into issues of identity construction, cultural and gender identities (Ulivieri, 2017), individual fragility, forms of conflict—often latent—that constitute risk factors, and identity drift (D'Aprile, 2018). However, teachers lack specific training in these issues. Furthermore, recent theoretical and normative developments in intercultural education have not been accompanied by a systematic investment in adequate resources to deal with a broad institutional rethinking, which includes updating school personnel, curricula, and teaching methods (Bolognesi, 2019). Teachers also complain about a lack of intercultural skills that are required to promote inclusive processes and deal with critical issues that arise as a result of the presence of students from different cultures in the classroom (Portera, 2019). Furthermore, many of today's field staff were educated during a historical and cultural period when intercultural pedagogy was in its infancy. As a result, the doubts, concerns, and fears of the teaching profession in response to ministerial proposals on intercultural inclusion are understandable.

Teachers' pedagogical culture—the didactic approaches they have been trained to adopt, their teaching style, their attitudes toward diversity, the quality of their lesson planning, and classroom experience—all have a significant impact on the reception, participation, and school inclusion practices of students from migrant backgrounds. This issue is inextricably linked to the ethics of educational action, not only from a methodological-disciplinary standpoint, but also in reference to the more invisible and unconscious sphere of the educational relationship (Bonetta, 2016; 2017). To promote equity and sensitivity to differences, teachers must rediscover their valuable role as spreaders of intercultural knowledge in the community and as generative agents of change for an inclusive school. As a result, their profile will gain a new educational task which is utopian and propellant. In this regard, their commitment should be addressed not only to the curriculum—in which the intentions and operational strategies to be implemented are made explicit—but also to an "intercultural reinterpretation" of the integral learning experience. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that it is not only the domain of knowledge and know-how that is at stake: knowing how to respect each individual pupil's identity and otherness is also required. Teachers work on the level of existential planning, promoting future destinies and hopes. As a result, they bear a great deal of responsibility for bringing out the best in each student in accordance with Freire's "ontology of being more" (2002). To summarize the preceding reflections in question form, we may ask: What are the competence profiles required of teachers in order to implement educational guidance devices for reception, school integration/inclusion, support, and mediation in multicultural classrooms? Which educational leadership model can provide an opportunity to improve intercultural teaching and training practices?

Although structural reforms, regulations, and ministerial directives on integration and inclusion school policies are config-

ured as driving agents of innovation and change processes, they run the risk of producing superficial transformations if they are not based on a genuine paradigmatic and cultural shift. The institutional-organizational and didactic structure may have undergone a radical transformation; nevertheless, this does not necessarily resolve issues concerning the inclusive dimension of the entire school context (Bocci, 2015). In other words, rather than *re-structuring*, it is necessary to initiate processes of *re-culturing* (Lynn, 2002) that lead to a redefinition of the meanings of *inclusion* and *interculture* in more specifically pedagogical and universal terms. As a result, a reflection on the teaching profession from an inclusive and intercultural perspective cannot overlook the need for the development of a dynamic network of integrated skills, abilities, and knowledge, which is the basis of the versatility of professional action (Baldacci, 2013). When confronted with the reality of educational contexts that are highly complex from a social perspective, it is common to consider the teaching profession on an individual level. Indeed, the constitutive complexity that distinguishes this function must account for the need for continuous adaptation to changing demands arising from the broader social and economic context, laying the groundwork for a competence capable of managing organizational and community dynamics, as well as pedagogical and disciplinary dynamics (Ellerani, 2010, Alessandrini, 2007). According to the MIUR 2016-2019 working document *Professional Development and Quality of In-Service Training*, the definition of an inclusive and intercultural teacher requires the consideration of several areas of competence regarding the indicators and possible operational descriptors that should be declined: personal, relational, psycho-pedagogical, didactic, organizational, and epistemological.

According to these premises, as recalled by the aforementioned document *La via italiana per la scuola interculturale e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri* ("The Italian Way for Intercul-

tural Schools and the Integration of Foreign Students"), there is a need for "recognized and authoritative leadership capable of promoting an ethos based on openness and mutual recognition and a collective assumption of responsibility with respect to the themes of integration, intercultural education, and democracy" (MIUR, 2007 pp. 19-20). According to this viewpoint, and based on recent international literature, we believe that teacher leadership can provide a new vision and meaning to the quality of teaching and in-service training. The discourse on teacher educational leadership, particularly within a multicultural school context where the educational goal is to educate for difference, is becoming increasingly compelling (Bezzina, Bufalino, 2019; Harris, 2004a; 2014; Crowther, Ferguson, Hann, 2009; Bufalino, 2018; Katzenmeyer Moller 2001; Snoek, 2014).

The first impediment to providing a definition of teacher leadership is the Babel of expressions with overlapping terminology and concepts. In an attempt to provide a theoretical and operational definition applicable to the Italian context, we define teacher leadership as the exercise of formal leadership roles that teachers assume when they hold specific roles of coordination or responsibility, or, more broadly, informal leadership roles aimed at promoting processes of innovation and change. In fact, the teacher leadership model defines and outlines a paradigmatic model of relationships and responsibilities in which teachers have a specific position within the school because they can influence and direct decision-making processes, affect students' learning processes, and promote change in school culture. In a broader sense, the teacher leadership model refers to the process by which teachers influence their colleagues, school leaders, and other members of the school community to improve teaching and learning practices, both individually and collectively (Lambert, 2013). This definition allows the complex school system to be envisioned as a professional community comprising a large number of highly connected agents, in which all teachers have

the potential, but not the obligation, to be leaders. In other words, leadership is an attitude, a disposition that is not solely associated with formal assignment; it may or may not coincide with formal recognition of tasks and responsibilities. However, the teacher leader is concerned not only with the learning and development of students, but also with the education of his/her colleagues and the development of the entire school community. Teacher leaders have some special qualities: they are motivated by a strong ethical tension and drive; they are respected by their colleagues; they are constantly learning; they are available and open to continuous challenge; they use their interpersonal skills to influence and improve educational practices; and they support collaboration. To use the metaphor coined by Katzenmeyer and Molle (2001), within each school there is a "sleeping giant" that can be a powerful catalyst for change; that is, there is unexpressed, implicit, inactivated potential and knowledge that sometimes struggle to emerge.

The development and enhancement of educational leadership requires a significant shift in school culture. The fundamental prerequisites are that the role of teacher leader be recognized by the entire school community, and that forms of educational isolation be replaced by new norms of collaboration and teamwork. All of this necessitates a clear articulation of school objectives, as well as the formation of a new mindset that recognizes and values the significant contribution that teacher leaders can make in meeting the needs of all students in the school and the school community. The objectives are lofty: to transform schools into true professional and intercultural learning communities through the deep development and promotion of a culture of collaboration, listening, and dialog in order to improve processes of democratization of school structures and school inclusion.

According to international research (Carpenter, 2015; Allen, Grigsby, Peters, 2015), high-performing schools are those that

foster a strong culture of collaboration. Indeed, teachers have the skills and knowledge required to consolidate reform and school improvement processes, as well as to embrace cultural diversity as the new paradigm of the school, which requires intercultural, continuous, and structured planning that is no longer temporary or of an emergency nature. As an educational leader, the head teacher must recognize his or her responsibility and authority, as well as provide spaces and structures that promote collaborative, networked, and supportive work, and the assumption of responsibility and leadership by teachers.

The literature identifies a number of impediments to the full and authentic development of teacher leadership (Alexandrou, Swaffield, 2016); thus, preconditions are required to enable the development of actions, strategies, and interventions that improve teacher educational leadership. Conflicts or incompatibilities with dominant belief, power, and practice systems in school organizations may contribute to failure and impede the development of teacher leadership processes. For example, teachers can be an impediment because egalitarian values may discourage some colleagues from presenting themselves as leaders and present open forms of leadership ostracism. According to Smylie and Denny's research (2018), the position of teacher leader created status differences that threatened professional fairness and labor relations, resulting in an elitist organization in which teachers competed for that position. A negative attitude toward participation in the educational institution, combined with the fear that one's own contribution may be ineffective, as well as a competitive and hostile climate among colleagues characterized by jealousy and envy, are among the various barriers to the development of educational leadership. This culture is exemplified by the so-called 'crab bucket' culture, i.e., the mentality summed up in the sentence: "if I can't have it, neither can you." The metaphor refers to crabs in a bucket that, in an attempt to free themselves and escape, climb over the other crabs but are

pulled down and prevented from escaping. Other teachers may be concerned that taking on a leadership role and, as a result, becoming more involved with school administration will jeopardize relationships with their colleagues. In other cases, school leaders may be an impediment to effective leadership development, particularly when it comes to delegating power and involving teachers in decision-making processes. Indeed, they may be unwilling to share their responsibilities, not least because of their increasing legal responsibilities.

From an inclusive and intercultural standpoint, we will attempt to reconfigure the field of teacher leadership. This is one of the emerging and future challenges in defining teacher professionalism in multicultural and heterogeneous school settings. We do not intend to refer to a specific profile of teachers (e.g., the specialized support teacher), because this professional and pedagogical reinterpretation is concerned with each teacher's ability to overcome the limits of his/her own disciplinary knowledge and to deal with the complex and constantly changing reality which each teacher is careful to build and reconstruct, renewing personal theoretical reflections and the plurality of tools and operational strategies.

In this sense, by adapting the teacher leadership model in an inclusive and intercultural perspective, we could identify and specify a profile of teacher/leader-for-inclusion—one who is capable of creating shared meanings of inclusion within the school community and activating collaborative practices based on a critique of reality and a militant pedagogical action aimed at removing various types of cultural and social obstacles (McGlynn, London, 2013). Another subject closely related to inclusion leadership is *leading by learning* (Collinson, 2012) which refers to a teacher leader who is constantly engaged in reflective action aimed at sustaining inclusive teaching, learning, and research practices within the school community, that is a professional learning community (Wenger, 2006; Nicoli, 2016). The pres-

ence of students of foreign origin or from different backgrounds provides an excellent opportunity to rethink and question one's educational and relational models. Teacher leadership can be declined in four different areas and levels of relationships at the level of pedagogical practices: 1) in the classroom; 2) with colleagues; 3) with the school community; and 4) with the local community.

Teacher leadership for inclusion in the classroom refers to approaches of planning and organizing one's teaching work in an inclusive and intercultural manner, rethinking the curriculum subjects, and caring for the growth of individual students, activating teaching paths based on Universal Design for Learning (Tobin Behling, 2018). This term refers to teaching practices that reach out to different learners while respecting human diversity and uniqueness, aiming at the challenge of achieving education for all.

Teacher leadership for inclusion also refers to a concern for the relational dimension of the teacher (mediator and facilitator) who is dedicated to promoting fruitful processes of encounter with otherness and diversity, transforming the classroom into a laboratory for experimenting with inclusive practices. A teacher leader can promote a sense of belonging, recognize differences, practice listening to others, manage conflicts, promote participation, establish rules, and build an authentically intercultural community within his or her own classroom.

Another aspect of the teacher leader's commitment to inclusion is his/her relationship with colleagues, specifically the activation of collaborative practices and leadership actions within his/her own work group and toward other members of the educational institution in support of cultural diversity. Teacher leaders value and share inclusive teaching and learning practices, and they commit to sharing them with their colleagues. This type of commitment may also include specific tasks in class councils, teacher boards, or departmental meet-

ings, as well as tutoring functions with coaching and mentoring activities for teachers or coaching and mentoring activities for new teachers (induction).

In this way, the teacher leader can influence the school manager and colleagues so that they improve their practices and decisions, and, ultimately, improve the quality of their work in order to foster an inclusive culture.

Another level of influence of the teacher leader relates to the school institution as a whole, such as when he or she demonstrates willingness and participation in the growth of the school institution by being an active participant in and driver of inclusive and intercultural initiatives and opportunities.

Such a teacher leader may participate in the drafting of major school documents (for example, by implementing specific protocols for inclusive and intercultural education, specific protocols for reception, or specific plans for inclusion), design and develop new educational projects and extra-curricular activities in an intercultural and inclusive direction, and participate in processes of organizational improvement and/or school evaluation procedures. Another level of teacher leadership is concerned with mediation and coordination with the research community, that is, the assumption of roles and functions of mediation between bodies, institutions, and the local region (e.g., universities, municipalities, and associations). The teacher leader becomes a promoter and activator of networks within a true integrated training system, participating in professional associations, specific research or training initiatives in the field of intercultural and inclusive education; he or she acts as a privileged interlocutor for sharing good practices within a network of schools and plans initiatives for the development of the community in an inclusive sense, also through active participation in professional associations.

In conclusion, the model of teacher leadership for inclusion can provide interesting suggestions for promoting a new culture

of inclusion, as well as renewed reflection on the profile of professionalism required of teachers. The training of teachers from the perspective of intercultural leadership becomes an essential basis for the full development of the competencies required to face the current challenges of the new multicultural educational contexts. It is in this direction that the model of teacher leadership for inclusion can represent a new intercultural training frontier in order to allow teachers to face the current challenges of the new multicultural educational context and to enable them to become agents of mediation and authentic cultural actors.

Chapter 7
Archipelagic Thinking.
For a Poetics of Intercultural Leadership in Education

Educational leadership has recently had to take up the significant challenges of interculturality, school inclusion, and the fight against educational poverty and cultural inequalities (Tomarchio, Ulivieri, 2015). However, the academic debate on educational leadership has traditionally focused on enhancing the role of leadership in making schools more efficient and productive, rather than explicitly addressing issues of social justice, diversity, and equity (Turhan, 2010, Rivera-McCutchen, 2014).

An authentic reception project cannot be carried out solely in terms of ministerial obligations. A bureaucratic and technical vision of the concept of inclusion (checklists, inclusion plans, and personalized learning plans) is insufficient; the entire educational axis of the school must be deconstructed, reconsidered, and rebuilt. It cannot be assumed that teachers or school leaders are ready to accept or adapt to the changes brought about by these new configurations; one cannot ignore the "invisible" universe made up of beliefs and personal attitudes.

According to these premises, diversity, whatever its nature—cultural, physical, or psychic—cannot be considered as something to be "managed" (Wilkinson, 2008), but rather a specificity to be understood and welcomed, reconfigured, rethought, and deconstructed. The term *management* refers to the logic of control, regulation, and thus dirigisme. In reality, a

pedagogical approach should focus on the *how* rather than the *what* to promote an inclusive and collective leadership approach in schools.

The concept of intercultural and inclusive leadership should be deconstructed, rethought, and relaunched (Blackmore, 2006). Most people believe that difference is represented in ethnocentric ways that are derived from Western culture. In the case of intercultural education, this notion is still very much linked to cultural diversity and frequently risks leading to a culturalist and folkloristic drift, or even a compensatory conception of intercultural education (Portera, 2020). The intercultural approach promoted at various levels suffers from an underlying flaw, which is most visible in an "essentialist" and reductionist paradigm in which culture is objectified, abstracted from context and interaction, and consists of one or more defining characteristics that shape and characterize members of a national or ethnic group, as if they were all the same. As a result, it is crucial to attempt to deconstruct such discourses beginning with the imaginary, or rather the dominant imaginaries, and the dangers of "Euro-centric prejudice" (Fiorucci, 2000). Interculture requires a specific project aimed at the acquisition and development of open, flexible, critical thinking—thinking capable of "migrating" to other cultures to recognize and understand differences and similarities.

One of the first deconstructive operations is to overturn one of the most unquestioned hypotheses that is assumed as an almost dogmatic foundation of all current discourse on educational leadership: the asymmetrical, vertical, and thus unequal relationship between leader and follower (Nieche, 2013). Recent educational reforms have strengthened the pedagogical and relational centrality of school leadership—the traditional area of reference for educational leadership—especially its managerial and leadership function. The central role of the educational leader has been enhanced; the educational leader, whether a

manager, a teacher, a parent, or an educator, has taken center stage. The term *follower*, on the other hand, has not received the same level of esteem. Educational relationships have traditionally insisted on a principle of educational authority based on the bond between the strong and the weak within an asymmetrical and vertical relationship in which different figures are traditionally placed: the teacher in relation to the learner, the one who knows in relation to the one who does not know, the adult in relation to the child, and the educator in relation to the student (Cambi et al., 2008). The term *leader*, on the other hand, has traditionally been constructed and configured through logocentric forms such as "being as presence" (Derridda, 1997)[1], the reality underlying the history of metaphysics; the *follower*, on the other hand, has generally been thought of as being less important than the leader. Deconstructing this relationship entails breaking the leader-centrism, i.e., seeing the world through the leader's eyes. A deconstructive approach could be useful for upending the traditional dichotomies of culture/nature and inclusion/exclusion that have been so prevalent in Western thought throughout history. To address the phenomena of exclusion and discrimination that persist in our schools, we must deconstruct the current conceptions of inclusive and intercultural leadership, which are still characterized by discourses such as adaptation, adjustment, categorization, and resource re-distribution.

The metaphor of the archipelago (Baldacchino, 2007) assists us in questioning the field of leadership, as it becomes a physical, material, but also symbolic and metaphorical place to fully express the potential and semantic richness of an intercultural and inclusive educational leadership.

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1   Jacques Derrida devoted a great deal of attention to "being as presence," the reality that underpins the history of metaphysics. The "metaphysics of presence" is a persistent feature of Western thought. Truths are eternal, but in temporal human existence, the eternal manifests itself as presence.

We live in an archipelago world, not on isolated islands. The Caribbean and the Philippines are obvious examples, but also Canada and Australia, which in the popular imagination are represented by unitary land masses, are actually made up of archipelagos with thousands of islands. Australia has at least 8,000 and possibly up to 12,000 islands, islets, and rocky out-crops (Pugh, 2013) So, how can archipelagic thinking—i.e., thinking with and through archipelagos—change the way we see the world and our place in it? How can archipelago thinking define and contribute to the field of intercultural leadership in education? Within this discourse, the concept of Archipelagic Studies is still relatively new; for example, in the 2011 issue of the Island Studies Journal (ISJ), a group of prominent Island Studies scholars called for more attention to be paid to Archipelago Studies. Archipelagic thinking denaturalizes space by emphasizing more fluid spaces of assemblages (Tsai, 2003), mobility, and multiplicity associated with the island-island movement of the archipelago.

We have focused too often on boundaries and dichotomies when thinking about islands: land and sea, island and main-land, and the surrounding sea. The modes of being, ontologies, and epistemologies that illuminate the interconnected, mutual-ly constituted, and co-constructed island spaces are largely ab-sent or silent. The concept of the archipelago challenges the cat-egories of singularity, isolation, reliance, and peripherality. The archipelago is more than just a collection of islands; the empha-sis is on how the individual islands—geographically diverse, small, and extended—act in concert, or as Deleuze and Guattari (1986) would say, through constellations.

It is necessary to develop a new poetics of the educational re-lationship as a training model and intercultural pedagogical banner, one that looks not at "the islands of the world"—imply-ing cultural differences harnessed to cultural clichés in which competitiveness and protectionism reign—but at "a world of is-

lands," which make up an archipelago, offering new ideas, experiences, and voices.

Unsurprisingly, some of the key categories of the archipelago are network, connective tissue, mobility, and multiplicity. These categories emphasize the "power of cross-currents and connections" between islands, as well as how "movement creates an archipelago's relationship." Rather than reified stasis, the archipelago provides a model of "a world in process."

Archipelagic relations serve as an antidote to the rhetoric of simplification, as well as a means of addressing the limitations and prejudices of dominant land-island relations. The concept of the archipelago provides a new cultural geography for alternative representations and experiences of islands. As a result, an appeal is made to territorialization (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986) and a re-mapping of island-island connectivity. We seek relational paradigms that transcend rather than simply reproduce current classifications by overturning the imperial binomials of land and water, island and continent/mainland. Each component of an archipelago appears to be an isolated island, and it is only by analyzing how the currents move between them, and by locating the various points of view that offer a wider horizon, that the model implying an archipelago is revealed.

Glissant (1977) emphasizes how archipelagic thinking is an important tool for challenging colonial legacies and their spatial legacies. The book *Poetics of Relation* represents the theoretical synthesis of the thought of Édouard Glissant, a poet and essayist originally from Martinique, where traditional European-style metaphysics has always considered the *relationship* to show a reductive approach. Instead, the relationship is thought to begin with a completely different model, one that stems from the scattered and decentralized reality of the Caribbean archipelagos. According to Glissant, the Caribbean culture, with its "spreading sea," offers a model of a relationship that does not seek to comprehend the other through metaphysical violence, but

rather to maintain a lively and complex opacity with neighboring cultures, in a fertile extraneousness that must be recognized as such. This, in my opinion, is the essence of intercultural leadership: a collective form of leadership that connects the various islands.

"Wandering is a principle that applies to all areas of life, including writing. Every reality is an archipelago; living and writing means wandering from one island to another, each of which becomes a little bit of our homeland. Human truth is not that of the absolute but that of the relationship. Every identity exists in the relationship; it is only in the relationship with the other that I grow, changing without denaturing myself. Every story refers to another and leads to another. The source of your Danube is different from that of the Mississippi, of a small stream or of my Lézarde (the Martinique river after which one of your novels is named), but it acquires its meaning in the reference to them, in the enrichment it gives and receives. There are many roots; if one proclaims itself to be unique or exclusive, it destroys life, whether it is a small root jealously enclosed within its own particularity, or a large and powerful one, such as the universal civilization claimed by colonialism."

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Intercultural leadership in education is a new and innova-
tive pedagogical theme that addresses the challenges of
today's multicultural societies as well as multiform and
heterogenous educational contexts. Interculturality is
about pushing thought beyond the boundary, to use a
symbolic term that also serves as a metaphor to orient the
reflections in this book. Interculturality is a way of
thinking and feeling about otherness, human relation-
ships, and a profound, existential anthropological sense
in which diversity is welcomed as a source of enrichment
for the human condition.

This awareness has prompted us to delve deeper into the
topic of educational leadership, moving beyond the
interpretative *clichés* of traditional management and
organizational models in the educational sphere. The
goal is to provide a different reading of leadership that is
intrinsically relational and *inter*cultural, because it is
precisely in the relationship—in that prefix inter, in that
being *between*, and being *with*—that we encounter the
other. Finally, to fully express the potential and semantic
richness of an intercultural and inclusive leadership, a
new poetics of the educational relationship must be
developed, one that looks at "a world of islands," in
which the archipelago becomes a physical, material,
symbolic, and metaphorical place.