

Scuola
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First
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Proceedings of the 1st International Conference of the Journal Scuola Democratica

EDUCATION AND POST-DEMOCRACY

5-8 June 2019 Cagliari Italy

VOLUME I

Politics, Citizenship, Diversity and Inclusion

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**ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA
DEMOCRATICA"**

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

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

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

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

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

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Premise

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

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

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

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Intercultural Teachers Training: Process, Product and Impact Assessments of the Master *Organizzazione e gestione delle istituzioni scolastiche in contesti multiculturali* at the University of Catania

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Keywords: *Interculturalism, Inclusion, Teachers training, School management, Formative assessment*

1. State of the art and context of the research

Since about ten years, in Italy, there has been intense debate on issues related to the cultural diversity in school contexts, with three methodological focuses at least: qualitative and quantitative studies (Santerini, 2010; Ongini, 2011; Santagati, Ongini, 2016); theoretical models and policies (Catarci, Fiorucci, 2013; Fiorucci, 2015; D'Aprile, 2017); proposals for educational pathways (Zoletto, 2007; Catarci, Fiorucci, 2015; Tobagi, 2016),

The interest in multiculturalism is growing as the impact of immigration in Italian society increases (Fiorucci et al., 2017). Actually, despite the noisy silence of the last Italian school reform (L. n.107/2015) about the 850,000 foreign students (10% of the total), national educational policies did not neglected the problem of an inclusive multicultural coexistence, as proved by two recent ministerial directives: Ministero della PI (2007) and MIUR (2014). The first one still represents, according to Fiorucci (2015: 283), «a comprehensive proposal to rethink the school», because it is aimed at all students and school levels (curricula, disciplines, teaching, relational aspects), taking charge of all differences (not only ethnic-linguistic ones) and identifying the possible misunderstandings or distortions of intercultural education (culturalism, trivialization, folklorization, homologation, eradication of differences),

On this point, both the cited policies and scientific literature underline the importance of training the teachers, especially on psycho-pedagogical, socio-anthropological and linguistic topics. The Master *Organizzazione e gestione delle istituzioni scolastiche in contesti multiculturali* (Schools organization and management in multicultural contexts) – funded by the EU AMIF (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund) and carried out at 23 Italian universities in collaboration with MIUR (Ministry of Instruction, University and Research) – was conceived directly referring to the above-mentioned knowledge fields. Addressed to teachers and headmasters, it was based conceiving intercultural education as equal opportunities, i.e., «predisposition of the conditions to ensure that all subjects (indigenous and immigrants) obtain the same academic success rates» (Fiorucci, 2015: 280),

Furthermore, the Master was endowed with strong experimental imprint, dedicating almost half of the scheduled hours to laboratory (80) and to internship inside schools (110): both were addressed to design, implement and assess intercultural educational interventions. The remaining time was spent in lectures (132) and e-learning (84),

2. Research questions and methodologies.

This paper focuses on the Master recently closed at the University of Catania (academic years 2016-17 and 2017-18), with the aim of assessing its main results through the answers to the following research questions (RQ), which are interpretable as assessment of process (a, b, c, d), product (d) and impact (d, e),

- a) Who are they and where do the Master students come from? What were the attendance and the drop-out rate?
- b) What was the satisfaction towards the Master activities? What problems were perceived?
- c) Which of the factors investigated mainly influence overall satisfaction? in other words, does the questionnaire capture the most important reasons for satisfaction?
- d) What were the main broached topics and used methodologies in the internship?
- e) What was the short-term impact in the involved schools?

We adopted different methodologies for each RQ, as detailed below.

- a) Report on the main data about students and their attendance.
- b) Analysis of the satisfaction survey results.
- c) Correlation analysis to identify satisfaction-stimulating elements.
- d) Basic qualitative and quantitative analysis of participants' papers that describe the internship carried out.
- e) Report on dissemination and follow-up actions.

3. Outcomes and discussion

3.1. RQ a: Master students and their attendance

In Catania the Master has reached the maximum number of enrolled persons, amounting to 100. Of these, 6 have given up ex-ante and one ongoing. The 93 graduates, which present a fairly high average age (50.4; min.: 30; max.: 64), are 72 females (77%) and 21 males (23%), largely from the provinces of Catania (63) and, secondly, Siracusa (22).

Despite the consistent group of headmasters (16), the majority of graduates is teacher staff (77), mostly on curriculum subjects (58), but there are also a substantial group of support teachers (13) and 6 teachers seconded. Furthermore, 14 teachers are persons in charge of interculturalism and 2 of inclusion and special needs (referents). Among the teachers, 34 work in the upper secondary school, 24 in the middle secondary, 16 in the primary and only 3 in the nursery school.

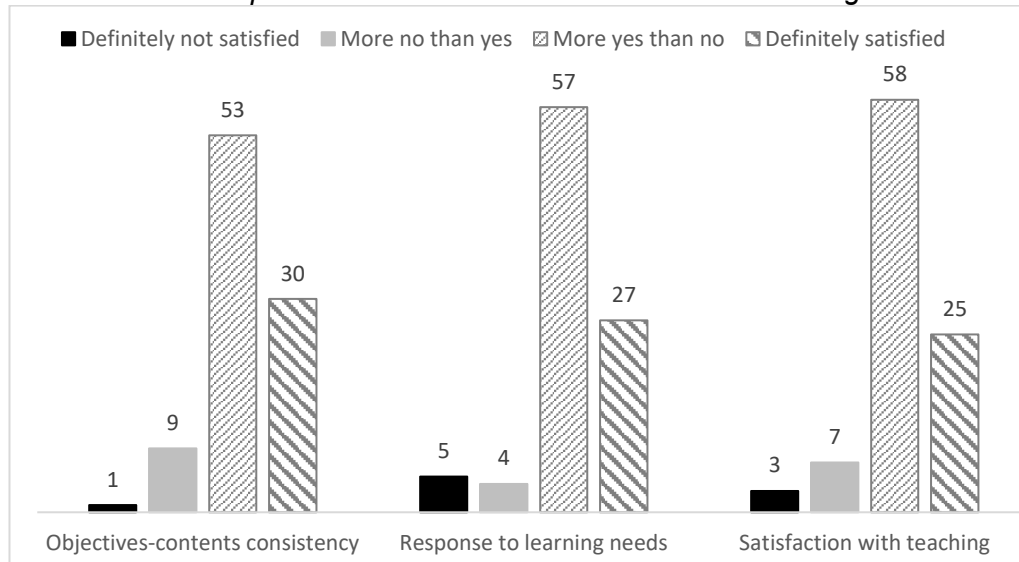
The average attendance at lectures and laboratorial meetings remains rather high throughout the course (78.3 people), flexing a little more consistently only during the third and final module (72.5),

3.2. RQ b: participants' satisfaction, perceived problems and suggestions

The questionnaire – completed anonymously at the end of the training (October-November 2018) by 100% of graduates – is the same as that circulated by MIUR and AMIF at the other Master locations. It consists of 27 items with 4-steps Likert scale responses, another 6 closed-ended items and 2 open questions. Its dimensions can be summarized in three categories: contents and teaching; internship experience; organization.

About the first dimension (Figure 1), all three considered items show a substantial satisfaction, however the objectives-contents consistency presents the wider range of definitely satisfied and the smaller one of definitely not satisfied.

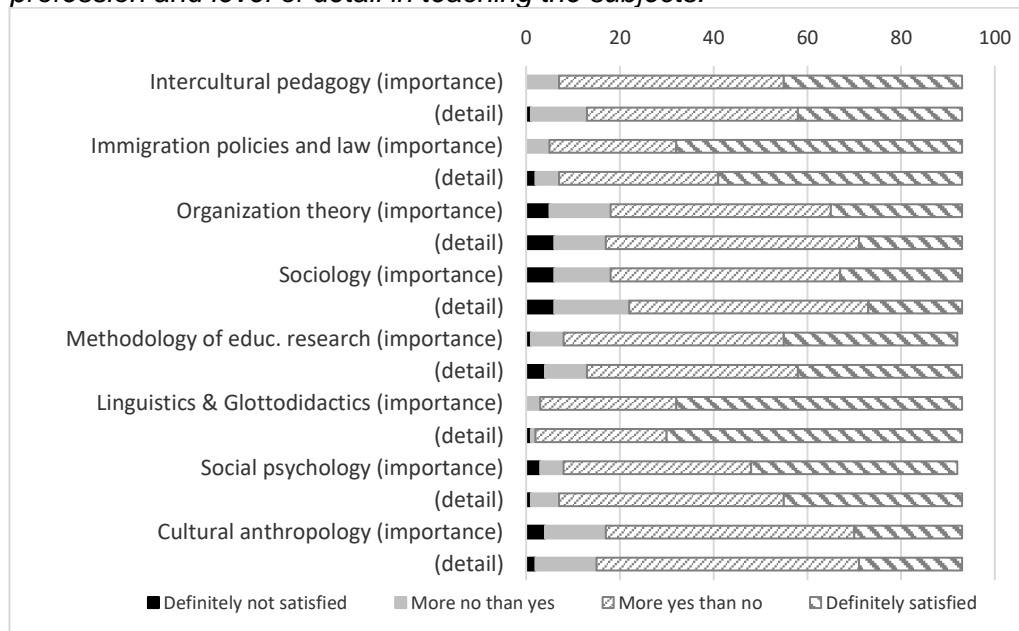
FIGURE. 1. *Participants' satisfaction about contents and teaching.*



Source: our elaboration on original data.

The most appreciated subjects were primarily the more technical ones (Linguistics & Glottodidactics and Immigration policies and law), secondarily the psycho-pedagogical ones (Figure 2).

FIGURE. 2. *Participants' evaluation about importance of the subjects for the profession and level of detail in teaching the subjects.*



Source: our elaboration on original data.

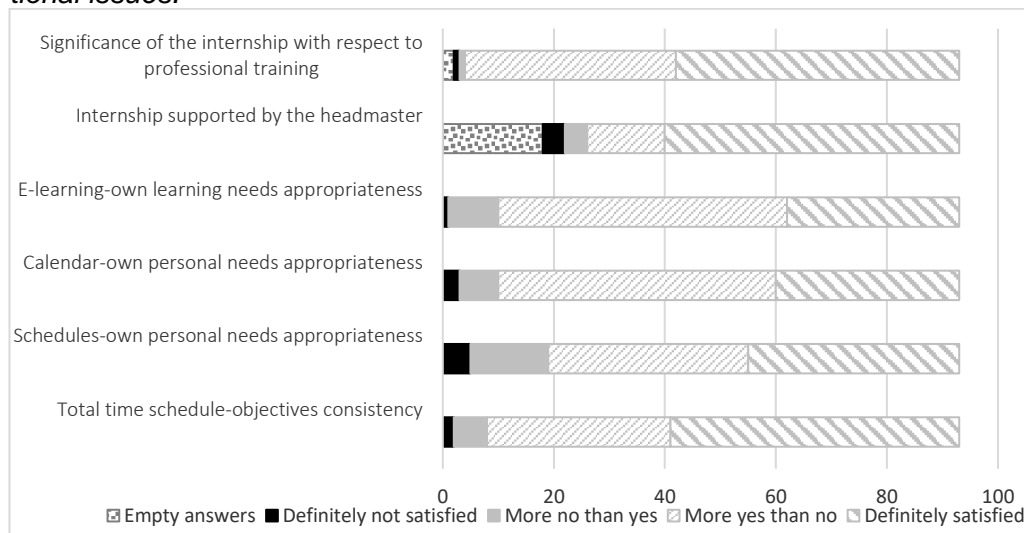
The categorization of the 41 answers to the first open question (topics to explore further in future) confirms the participants' interest in Glottodidactics, Methodology of research and assessment, but also in Sociology and Geography; in addition, it suggests that education to the citizenship, emotions and relationships

could be developed. However, it highlights firstly a need of learning about practical aspects involved in an innovative and intercultural idea of the classroom and school management: e.g., the role of the environment and that one of ICT (Information and Communication Technology); pioneering teaching methods; the sharing of good practices and protocols.

The second dimension explored by survey refers to the internship, carried out mainly inside the same school where the participants work (69 cases over 93). The two main related questions (first two bars in Figure. 3) reveal its high significance with respect to professional training and a good degree of headmasters' collaboration. Nevertheless, this last question (addressed only to teachers), highlights some fairly or totally negative experiences, suggesting the need to pay close attention to the internship and to strengthen its organizational aspects, including a better care of collaborative relationships with the involved schools, especially when the headmaster is not a Master student.

Finally, regarding the organization (last four items in Figure 3), a significant slice of critical opinions emerges only in the question concerning the compatibility between one's own needs and the schedules of the activities.

FIGURE 3. *Participants' satisfaction about internship experience and organizational issues.*

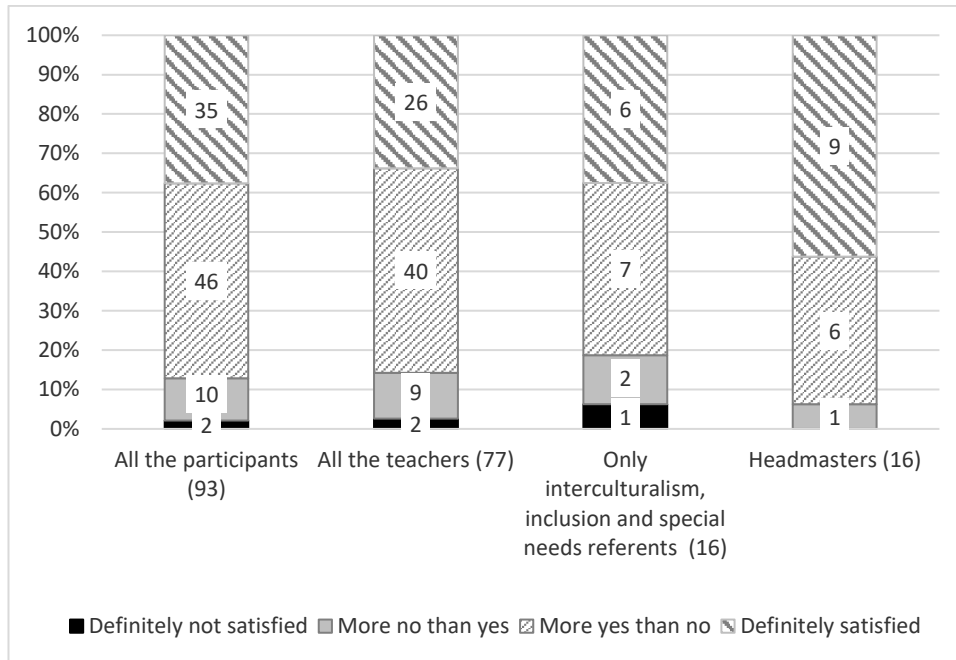


Source: our elaboration on original data.

Summarizing, the analysis shows very good satisfaction, with particularly positive evaluations in the internship related items. We point out, however, a not large but rather constant slice of moderate (4-9 respondents) or heavy (1-5) dissatisfaction, particularly in some items and about some subjects. The critical attitude is widespread mainly among the teachers and especially among the referents, probably already skilled with respect to some or all the training objectives.

The item about the general degree of satisfaction, confirms the observations done so far, also about slight differences depending on the professional role: in principle, the referents a little more critical, the headmasters a little more enthusiastic (Figure 4),

FIGURE 4. *Participants' overall satisfaction (charts in percentual and frequencies as numbers),*



Source: our elaboration on original data.

Finally, also referring to the second open question (free comments), two main issues emerge: an organizational one (greater coordination, networking stimulation, sharing of practices, attention to the internship) and a methodological one (more technical subjects, applicative-illustrative focus, debate and interaction),

3.3. RQ-c: Relationships between overall satisfaction and other variables

To answer the third RQ, we have explored the correlations between overall satisfaction (assumed as dependent variable) and the other variables (considered as independent and, in some cases, manipulated by calculating the median value or dichotomizing both the dependent and the independent),

As illustrated in tab. 1, we used Somers' coefficient (D_{yx}), specifically designed for exploring unidirectional relations between dichotomic variables, and a comparison among Kendall's tau b (t_b), Spearman's rank correlation (r_s) and Pearson's (r) coefficients for the ordinal variables.

The results lead to the conclusions that: *i*) the overall satisfaction is mainly influenced by the teaching and the response to learning needs; *ii*) the objectives-contents consistency, the importance of the subjects for the profession and the level of detail in teaching play a more modest but significant role, as well as the influence of own participation on trainers-trainees interaction, some organizational issues and the significance of the internship; *iii*) on the contrary, both place of internship and headmaster's collaboration do not affect the overall satisfaction (probably due to a perception of continuity between this experience and the daily working life), likewise the school level where respondents work and (unlike what found in the univariate analysis) their role.

Other significant correlations were found between the response to learning needs and: the objectives-contents consistency ($r_s=0.61$), the median importance of the subjects for the profession ($r_s=0.62$), the median level of detail in teaching ($r_s=0.66$) and, mainly, the teaching ($r_s=0.71$). The latter, moreover, is weakly correlated to the median of the level of detail ($r_s=0.61$),

TABLE 1. Correlation analysis between overall satisfaction and other variables.

Factors of overall satisfaction (independent variables)	D_{yx}	t_b	r_s	r
School level where the respondent works	-	0,188	0,212	0,225
To be headmaster	0,080	-	-	-
To be intercultural, inclusion or special needs referents (respondents: only the teachers)	-0,056	-	-	-
Objectives-contents consistency	-	0,539	0,568	0,569
Satisfaction in teaching	-	0,666	0,692	0,736
Response to learning needs	-	0,638	0,663	0,720
Importance of the subjects for the profession (median of the responses about the single subjects)	-	0,531	0,553	0,610
Level of detail in teaching the subjects (median of the responses about the single subjects)	-	0,538	0,560	0,640
Influence of own participation on trainers-trainees interaction		0,471	0,499	0,456
Place of the internship (dichotomized: own school or other places)	-0,034	-	-	-
Degree of collaboration of the headmaster to the internship (respondents: only the teachers)	-	0,010	0,011	-0,073
Significance of the internship with respect to professional training	-	0,437	0,458	0,378
Total time scheduled-objectives consistency	-	0,392	0,418	0,452
Schedules-own personal needs appropriateness	-	0,45	0,488	0,497
Calendar-own personal needs appropriateness	-	0,35	0,377	0,364
E-learning-own learning needs appropriateness	-	0,282	0,309	0,262

Source: our elaboration on original data.

In conclusion, we can affirm that the proposed questionnaire has taken sufficient factors that determine the satisfaction, nevertheless, some aspects – e.g., the perspectives emerged from the open questions – could be profitably taken into consideration to further develop this instrument.

3.4. RQ-d: products, topics and methodologies of the internships

About the papers resuming each participants' internship experience, we analysed two dimensions: structure and contents, intra-institutional and external networking.

About the first one, the papers are usually divided into the following sections.

1. Context analysis: almost all of them present a first chapter consisting of a research (document analysis, interviews, surveys, observation...), conducted during the first 30 hours of internship and aimed at studying the context (territory, city, neighbourhood, school), identifying the main multicultural issues and useful resources.

2. Educational design: a simple textual analysis on the Keywords assigned to each paper (up to a maximum of 5: a total of 59 Keywords and 372 entries) reveals the most common topics and methods. Among the first, in order of frequency: teaching of Italian as L2 (30), intercultural education (27), IRP - Institute Reception Protocol (21), teachers training (18), reception of single cases (18), socialization (12), reflection on citizenship (11) and identity (11), Among the most common methods, in order: laboratory (23), creativity stimulation (15), reflexivity (13), guidance (11), storytelling (11), ICT (11), collaboration (10).

3. Activity evaluation: almost always based on an unstructured qualitative approach.

4. Attachments: numerous works contain interesting annexes, e.g., learning unit projects, logbooks, tests, students' feedbacks, questionnaires and databases, photos, institutional documents, etc.

Regarding the second dimension, we point out that the experimentations nearly always involved groups of colleagues. Besides, numerous projects about refresher courses took the form of self-training, peer education, sharing of experiences, collaboration and co-design of teaching within a community of practices. Even more, the design and evaluation of IRP, e.g., are frequently based on the dialoguing involvement of the entire school community: the headmaster, the collegiate bodies, teachers with specific tasks and students' families too. Lastly, the internship frequently represented an opportunity to plan (and often to activate) networks between school and external subjects: educational institutions, local authorities (social and health services, police), non-profit organizations, migrants' management networks.

3.5. RQ-e: Dissemination and follow-up

As this paper demonstrates, the Master attended in Catania activated a series of processes (research, auto-training, documentation writing, intercultural events, laboratories, etc.) aimed at enabling the involved schools to manage the cultural diversity at various levels: didactics, reception organization, inclusion, education to diversity, families and territory links.

The conference *Scuola e Territorio. Prospettive e prassi per l'interculturalità*, held at University of Catania on November 30, 2018, broadened the perspective on the results achieved by the 3 twin Masters in Sicily (Universities of Palermo, Messina, Enna), confirming its generative effect on the school contexts as well as the sensitivity of the Sicilian schools to multicultural issues.

In that place, 197 pre-enrolments were collected for a follow-up course, addressed to teachers who collaborated in Master participants' internships. The course – offered free of charge – took place from February to June 2019, during 25 hours (of which 20 in e-learning mode), in addition to the design and experimentation of an intercultural activity inside their own school. It involved 23 Master alumni as tutors and was completed by 169 teachers. Further data is being analysed thanks to a related research grant funded by AMIF.

Conclusions

The Master held in Catania showed excellent results in enrolled/graduated students' ratio, attendance and satisfaction. The latter appears particularly related to contents and teaching, in spite of a request of more practice-oriented subjects. In this direction, the need to take better care and provide greater emphasis to the internship emerges clearly. The relationships between the variables considered in the satisfaction survey allow to outline a consistent pattern, both to better read the satisfaction construct and to guide the improvement of this tool. The analysis of the papers traces the rich panorama of educational activities carried out in the involved schools, offering a reflection on the main topics and methodologies.

Finally, the high level of participation in the follow-up course can be seen as further confirmation of the approval won by the proposed intercultural training, which appears to respond to the needs actually felt by the teachers.

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