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EDUCATION AND POST-DEMOCRACY

5-8 June 2019 Cagliari Italy

VOLUME I

Politics, Citizenship, Diversity and Inclusion

ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"

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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 inter-disciplinary discussion on urgent topics; to foster debates among experts and professionals; to diffuse research findings all over international scientific networks and practitioners' mainstreams; to launch further strategies and networking alliances on local, national and international scale; to provide a new space for

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

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Premise

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

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

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

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

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Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

3) The dissemination and the promotion of a 'Sicilian model' for intercultural dialogue and inclusion at a local, regional and EU level in order to contribute to spread the motto of the European Union 'United in Diversity'.

The project looks at the access and quality of education for unaccompanied minors and migrant, minority minors in three locations of Sicily: Syracuse, Catania and Palermo. These urban areas are all interested in the landing operations following the rescue of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. In these project areas, the schools in contact with migrant minors are of different types: primary, secondary and the CPIA schools (*Centro per l'Istruzione degli Adulti*, responsible for unaccompanied minors over 16 years).

In this geographical context, the project aims to produce a wider and paradigmatic cultural change, as the title of the project suggests. In fact, the project wants to invert the linguistic process that many centuries ago led the Roman society to adduce a negative meaning to the archaic Latin/Indo-European word 'Hostis', transforming its meaning in 'enemy', 'hostility'. Indeed, the Indo-European linguistic root 'ghostis' of this word did not originally have a negative connotation. The hostis, at that time, was simply a foreign citizen with the same rights of Roman citizens. However, the concept of 'exclusion' gradually prevailed on the value of 'inclusion' and an attitude of closure, distrust, hostility and conflict were affirmed. It is mainly for this reason that the Latin language introduced the new term 'Hospes' (with the same semantic root of 'Hostis'), with the positive meaning of 'hosting' and 'host'.

The project addresses the need to reaffirm a cultural model in the European society where the hostis is not an individual who should be excluded from the majoritarian 'civilization', but its opposite, the hospes, the stranger to whom we recognize equal rights. And the double meaning of the term hospes, 'guest', stands as a warning to remind us that those who now hosts tomorrow may need to be hosted, that the alien is simply one who, far from his homeland and its security, has the natural need to be accepted and understood, because everyone may need to live as a foreigner.

With the aim of documenting the intercultural practices of multicultural schools, the research adopts a multimethod methodology and targets 21 schools in the provinces of Catania, Palermo e Enna, and 21 in Barcelona (Spain). Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focus groups are the means of gathering the data for this research. To complement the obtained information, an analysis of official school documents (curriculum and policy

documents) is carried out. Based on the systematization of the good practices and lessons learnt from the Sicilian experience (the 'Sicilian Model'), the Italian NGO will start the experimental part by putting the approaches and methodologies identified by the analysis of the results into practise. An 'Intercultural Toolkit' will be developed for this purpose containing both theoretical frame and practical exercises to be done by teachers during the lessons. The experimentation of the model will be implemented through different actions: training for teachers and operators; a specific non-formal education program for the schools (interactive exhibition and laboratories for the students); a twinning program between schools and hosting centres as well as workshops and seminars.

Within this broader research project, the purpose of the study reported here and carried out by the research group of the University of Catania was to explore the mindset and attitudes that school leaders and teachers have towards cultural diversity and intercultural education, as well as the actions they take in this area. In addition, in relation to the teacher's role, this study discusses different pedagogical strategies in multicultural classrooms.

2. Research methodology

The general purpose of this study was to contribute to the knowledge and the understanding of the narratives and perceptions of the school leaders and teachers about cultural diversity, intercultural education and the main actions taken in this area. For this reason, a multiple case study design was chosen as it provides a holistic understanding of complex situations (Yin, 2017) by obtaining data in a natural environment and describing practical experiences of the participants. This qualitative research used a naturalistic approach and sought to understand facts in specific settings. This study was carried out in 8 state schools (primary, secondary and CPIAs), which have been selected based on the highest enrolment of non -Italian students within the province of Catania (Sicily). This study used multiple data collection methods, including a total of 80 semi-structured interviews with school leaders (n= 8) and teachers (n= 72). In fact, Bryman (2004) argues that semi-structured interviews permit flexibility and enable respondents to project their own ways of defining the world (Cohen *et al*., 2003: 146-47).

Also, observations and analysis of official school documents were carried out. The basic interview questions were wide-ranging in order to allow school leaders and teachers to feel free to express their views. Interviews started with general introductory questions about cultural diversity and intercultural education and how the issue was given consideration in the school. They also covered the leadership and teaching experience with immigrant pupils as well as the implemented educational practices to address intercultural education issues.

To analyse the qualitative data, a thematic analytic procedure was adopted. This is a widely used qualitative data analysis method for identifying, evaluating, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun, Clarke, 2006). More specifically, a grounded method approach (Mortari, 2007; Tarozzi, 2008) was used to identify themes and to synthesise the information gathered. Finally, a cross-case thematic analysis of the qualitative data was undertaken to explore differences within and between cases.

3. Findings

For the purpose of this paper, the following three preliminary themes are being explored, namely intercultural education, the chameleon teacher and ethics of hospitality.

3.1. Intercultural education? A blurred photography

«It's a liquid concept… which is not attributable to a 'standard education'». It could be metaphorically represented as the image of a blurred photograph, which struggles to stop that moment that cannot be captured. In fact, the intercultural phenomenon encompasses a plurality of heterogeneous situations which may vary across time and space, even within the same institution.

According to the teachers, the conception of intercultural education is closely linked to cultural diversity and to a sort of intercultural '*couscous'* (Santarone, 2012), in other words, a kind of melting pot of different cultures. In other cases, intercultural education is conceived from the standpoint of compensation (compensatory education, i.e., programmes for the acquisition of basic communication and language skills). However, the majority of teachers and school leaders express in their definition the pedagogical and universal contents of an inclusive approach

> If we talk about interculturality, we have to refer to it in a broader sense ... that is … my culture is different from yours ... so we don't have to talk about interculturality in terms of other ethnicities or other countries, but in terms of other people, even within the districts of Catania, or in our classroom» (School leader, CPIA).

3.2. The Chameleon Teacher

The attitude of teachers towards intercultural teaching seems positive. The greatest challenge is given by what could be called a 'chameleon teaching strategy'. Teachers need to adapt their practices and continuously revise their strategies to respond to the dynamic presence of migrant students.

Cultural diversity seems to be included in the contents, integrated in the subject matter and is not treated as an isolated issue and separated from class activities. However, this issue has been loaded onto teachers' shoulders alone. In fact, because of the lack of resources, there is no presence of specialist educational professionals or cultural mediators, both from inside and outside the school to work with immigrant students and families. In this sense, teachers in the selected schools are doing their job without a professional knowledge base concerning multicultural education. Also, they have not received specific training in intercultural educations issues, although some teachers acknowledge the need to develop a knowledge base on multicultural education issues.

Some teachers have carried out different activities to educate themselves in this sense on their own, through their own resources, occasional seminars with outside specialists in intercultural education, but these are isolated cases and not representative of the teaching body as a whole. Also, they would like to see more support from the education authorities in this sense.

According to the teachers' opinion, the most problems associated with immigrant students are related to communication issues (absent Italian language skills) or low academic level (knowledge) of immigrant pupils upon arrival. In addition, the schools have limited funds and lack resources (i.e., specialists working with migrants, educators or cultural mediators).

3.3. Ethics of hospitality

> If you have 25 students in your classroom, how can you do it? I also have some children with special needs. Teachers should personalize the student' s education…absolutely right...but how hard is it that? We do not have classes with six students ... and it is even more difficult when they do not speak the same language. Plus, Italian children have the same right» (Teacher, primary school).

The quote seems to indicate an actual pedagogical dilemma that is posed to teachers: to choose whether they should educate one-to-one or everyone? The quote is distant from the latest contributions concerning the *Universal Design for Learning* approach, which provides a blueprint for designing a curriculum that addresses the diverse needs of all learners.

Also, according to an interviewed teacher, there are two kinds of educators:

> those who believe that their role is to welcome the student where he/she is and lead him/her to educational success, and those who go to work to transfer their notions and the subject alone. In other words, if the students follow me well, otherwise… doesn't matter (Teacher, secondary school).

Some interviewed teachers buy cakes and fruit juices for immigrant pupils who cannot afford it. In another school, they pay for bus tickets, donate clothing, showing such a strong 'ethic of hospitality' (Derrida, Dufourmantelle, 2000) that a school leader refers to them as «social missionaries».

Conclusions

The analysis of this preliminary gathered data showed the heterogeneity and the dynamism which characterize the selected schools. In this sense, it is really complex to identify a common model or systematic intercultural practices. Some schools developed positive and innovative strategies; in other schools, teachers decided to train themselves in order to identify creative didactical solutions to address a changing environment. Some schools don't apply any change in their administrative and didactical policies. Also, there is a lack of resources to be allocated for intercultural issues and no incentive for intercultural teacher training.

Teachers and school leaders need to re-reconsider their role and have the right skills to be able to foster and sustain inclusive practices. In many cases, they were responsible for ensuring not only the schooling of immigrant pupils but also, and especially, the process of their social and academic integration from intercultural standpoints. In fact, the reality is characterized by a difficult social integration of migrants. In this sense, the school becomes one of the most meaningful educational agencies trough which immigrant pupils experience welcoming and cooperation as well as dynamics of inclusion. Finally, it is necessary to overcome the emergency approach applied so far in the reception of migrant minors and their inclusion processes.

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