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The second generation in the context of the Italian education system:

a critical assessment

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PRESENTAZIONE DELLA DISSERTAZIONE

INTRODUZIONE

La scrittura di questa tesi è stata motivata dalla volontà di fare luce sulle dinamiche che riguardano la condizione dei giovani di seconda generazione nelle scuole italiane. La scelta del soggetto è il risultato dell'intersezione tra gli ambiti che più mi stanno a cuore: la gestione della multiculturalità e del pluralismo che inevitabilmente caratterizzeranno sempre più le nostre società e l'importanza dell'educazione come strumento di ricerca continua, quindi di realizzazione accademica, ma soprattutto umana, dell'individuo e della collettività.

Le seconde generazioni sono una parte emergente rilevante nella popolazione nazionale. La loro realtà va portata all'attenzione di tutti in quanto, sotto vari aspetti, presentano peculiarità inedite che fanno di loro una categoria non assimilabile ai propri genitori né ai loro coetanei italiani. La riflessione del filosofo Homi K. Bhabha sull'esistenza di uno spazio terzo che vada oltre l'atavica struttura binaria del pensiero si incarna perfettamente nella realtà delle seconde generazioni: ragazze e ragazzi cresciuti sul territorio italiano ma che trovano spesso difficile appartenervi. Le ragioni sono radicate sia nella natura stessa della propria identità che nei comportamenti e (mancati) riconoscimenti sociali, culturali e giuridici da parte della società italiana. Nel primo caso, crescere in un ambiente familiare culturalmente e spesso linguisticamente differente da ciò che è generalmente accettato come standard porta inevitabilmente ad un'identità "terza" che si nutre di entrambi i modelli, per identificazione o per opposizione. Nel secondo caso si tratta di analizzare le responsabilità della società nei confronti delle minoranze, se così possono essere definiti gruppi di individui che presentano comuni e significative discrepanze rispetto alla presunta normalità. Il ruolo di responsabilità della maggioranza nei loro riguardi è quindi fondamentale, sia da parte della collettività che delle istituzioni. Per questo motivo l'oggetto di questa tesi è l'istituzione scolastica, considerata uno degli attori principali all'interno di questo quadro, in virtù del ruolo educativo che riveste. Le scuole sono uno spazio privilegiato di incontro tra giovani, in quanto tappa obbligatoria e "protetta", dove veicolare messaggi e *modi operandi* attraverso l'insegnamento. La dissertazione verte sull'individuazione di incongruenze e debolezze del sistema educativo italiano in merito al trattamento di studenti di seconda generazione, al fine di individuare proposte per la costruzione di un ambiente scolastico che valorizzi il dialogo tra più alterità.

CAPITOLO PRIMO – Le seconde generazioni e i modelli di integrazione

Nella stesura della tesi si è rivelato particolarmente difficile adottare un linguaggio coerente e appropriato. Se si parte dal presupposto che l'essere umano non potrà mai esprimere a pieno il proprio pensiero con le parole neanche a sé stesso, si conclude che esisterà persino un ulteriore margine di incomunicabilità tra due o più esseri umani. Per questo è necessario chiarire fin da subito i significati storici e attuali dei concetti di "seconda generazione" e di "integrazione". La prima espressione si riferisce al soggetto stesso della dissertazione e tradizionalmente denotava i figli di genitori immigrati nati nel paese di destinazione. Con il tempo alcuni intellettuali e ricercatori hanno cercato di includere un più vasto campione di popolazione. Il tentativo di classificazione che ha forse avuto più successo è quello elaborato dal sociologo Rumbaut (1997), che vede prime e seconde generazioni intervallate da uno spettro di possibilità altre a seconda dell'età di arrivo nel nuovo paese. Nonostante la diffusione accademica del modello elaborato da Rumbaut, la problematicità del termine "seconde generazioni" continua ad essere evidenziata da più voci. In Italia, per esempio, il CoNNGI (Coordinamento Nazionale Nuove Generazioni Italiane), un'associazione che unisce ragazze e ragazzi di seconda generazione, ha deciso di utilizzare il termine nuove generazioni al posto di seconde generazioni, in quanto coglie con maggiore completezza la molteplicità di giovani che si riconoscono accomunati da simili situazioni e criticità.

Il secondo elemento da comprendere a fondo è quello di integrazione, termine che indica il frutto di relazioni e interazioni tra due soggetti: la comunità ricevente e la comunità immigrata. Comprendere quale piano di azione meglio si adatta alle esigenze comuni è fondamentale per dare forma all'azione educativa desiderata. Negli Stati Uniti degli anni '20 è stato elaborato il modello assimilazionista come il più adatto a descrivere la realtà dell'epoca. Secondo questa teoria la comunità di recente immigrazione perderebbe inevitabilmente, nel tempo, i suoi tratti caratteristici per assimilarsi a quella ospitante. Un secondo modello è quello dell'assimilazione segmentata, che vede la comunità ospitante compartimentalizzata in diversi settori, ai quali il gruppo di immigrati si adatterebbe in diversa misura a seconda del singolo ambito. Il modello assimilazionista è stato poi rivalutato negli ultimi venti anni, valorizzando il significato di assimilazione come divenire reciprocamente simili. Infine, la teoria dell'integrazione intergenerazionale prevede risultati diversi a seconda delle scelte della comunità di recente immigrazione. Il modello si rifà a sua volta alla teoria economica dell'utilità attesa, secondo la quale l'individuo, in questo caso il migrante, si troverà di fronte ad una serie di opzioni, tra le quali sceglierà quella che massimizzerà la propria soddisfazione. Se le opzioni scelte sono maggiormente legate alla comunità ospitante, allora nel lungo termine la comunità immigrata si omologherà a quella ospitante, mentre se queste sono a favore del proprio gruppo etnico, l'assimilazione segmentata meglio rappresenta il futuro della comunità immigrata. Dal momento che la parola assimilazione ha subito diverse connotazioni nel corso degli anni, nel dibattito europeo la

parola integrazione, reputata più neutrale, è stata preferita, a patto che questa indicasse un duplice movimento, sia da parte della comunità immigrata che da parte di quella ricevente, verso la ricerca di un terreno condiviso e condivisibile. Resta da discutere dove si debba fissare lo spazio del compromesso.

CAPITOLO SECONDO – Riflessioni critiche sulla scuola: revisione della letteratura

Il secondo capitolo inserisce la tesi all'interno di una più ampia riflessione critica sul ruolo della scuola attraverso la discussione di tre opere che, partendo da differenti prospettive, evidenziano come l'educazione possa avere tanto un potenziale emancipatorio, quanto costituire uno strumento di riproduzione di un ordine dominante. Le tre opere prese in considerazione e messe in dialogo tra loro sono: "La riproduzione" di Pierre Bourdieu e Jean Claude Passeron, "La pedagogia degli oppressi" di Paulo Freire e "Lettera ad una professoressa" di Don Lorenzo Milani.

Nonostante le opere appartengano a contesti geografici e culturali completamente diversi, sono unite dalla vocazione a rivoluzionare la struttura della società a partire dall'educazione. Secondo gli autori, la scuola, nascondendosi dietro alle pretese di neutralità e alle promesse di emancipazione, altro non fa che riprodurre e rafforzare le disuguaglianze strutturali proprie delle società, riassumibili nella composizione binaria che vede contrapporsi la classe dominante da una parte e quella dominata dall'altra. Quest'ultima è vittima di esclusione sistematica, privata della possibilità stessa di acquisire coscienza della propria condizione, quindi impossibilitata ad esprimere la propria identità. La scuola, riproducendo i valori e i modi di pensare della classe dominante, è complice del mantenimento dello *status quo* che castra la maggior parte della popolazione. La posizione che l'individuo occuperà all'interno della società dipende essenzialmente dal capitale culturale, ovvero dall'eredità materiale e immateriale lasciata dalla famiglia di appartenenza.

Un ripensamento radicale dell'educazione veicolata nelle scuole è l'unico mezzo per l'emancipazione di coloro che per ora sono privati dei mezzi conoscitivi ed espressivi. L'educazione è da intendersi come un dialogo in divenire tra insegnanti e studenti dove essi possano comunicare attraverso la mediazione del mondo. La conoscenza delle dinamiche globali e locali è l'unico pretesto per acquisire consapevolezza profonda del sé e dell'altro, che definisce anche limiti e affinità. Il pensiero rivoluzionario proposto dai quattro autori fornisce una chiave di lettura ben definita per la comprensione della posizione marginalizzata delle seconde generazioni nelle istituzioni scolastiche. L'insegnamento di Bourdieu e Passeron, di Freire e di Milani dimostra che l'azione riformatrice deve necessariamente partire dalle esigenze materiali di coloro che per ora non hanno mai beneficiato di privilegi. Il capitolo successivo illustra quali sono i bisogni delle seconde generazioni non ancora soddisfatti dal sistema educativo italiano.

CAPITOLO TERZO – Studenti di seconda generazione: le sfide dell'integrazione scolastica

La costituzione italiana garantisce il rispetto del principio di uguaglianza all'interno della sfera pubblica, di cui fa parte la scuola. Garantire borse di studio non basta affinché il principio di pari opportunità vada oltre il puro formalismo. Come sottolineato nel capitolo precedente, è necessario che la scuola riesca ad essere un'alternativa alle opzioni offerte dal solo ambito familiare di appartenenza, svolgendo il ruolo di "grande equalizzatrice sociale" (Colombo, 2014). Questa deve mettere a disposizione di studenti e insegnanti uno spazio di condivisione e conoscenza reciproca dove essi si educhino reciprocamente alla diversità. Un'azione riformatrice risulta ancora più urgente se si considerano i dati statistici nazionali degli studenti di seconda generazione. Gli alunni stranieri nelle scuole sono in aumento, rappresentando il 9.7% della popolazione scolastica. Tra questi, più della metà è costituito dalle seconde generazioni, aumentate di quasi il 30% negli ultimi 5 anni. Eppure, sono diversi gli indici di disparità in merito alla scelta della scuola superiore, ai ritardi, all'abbandono scolastico e alle votazioni conseguite in funzione del possesso o meno della cittadinanza italiana. Molteplici sono le analisi e le interpretazioni fornite dalla sociologia. Come premessa, è fondamentale tenere a mente che la ricca eterogeneità dei soggetti complica gli sforzi di classificazione e identificazione di percorsi comuni, così come la comprensione dei loro agenti determinanti.

La prima analisi critica riguarda l'uso della bocciatura. Don Lorenzo Milani già negli anni '60 denunciava la bocciatura come imposizione di un limite spazio-temporale sulla mente e sul corpo di un giovane in crescita, generalmente inadatto alla monotona ripetizione e desideroso di continuare il percorso scolastico iniziato con i suoi coetanei. Adottando un'ottica simile, la pratica generalizzata che vedrebbe l'inserimento del bambino o del ragazzo neoarrivato in classi anagraficamente inferiori è da abbandonare, in quanto il ritardo scolastico è spesso alla radice del distaccamento fisico e mentale del soggetto dalla scuola. Non a caso il più alto tasso di ritardi registrato per gli studenti stranieri si rispecchia in quello dell'abbandono scolastico.

In merito al rendimento scolastico, è interessante notare come, anche a parità di status socioeconomico tra italiani e non, la differenza di risultati rimane visibile, seppur ridotta, evidenziando la sussistenza di fattori di svantaggio legati nello specifico al background migratorio. Inoltre, considerando la classificazione decimale proposta da Rumbaut, i risultati delle prove INVALSI seguono lo stesso ordine progressivo, dove le prime generazioni si collocano nell'estremità in basso e le seconde generazioni in quella in alto. Numerose cause concorrono alla determinazione delle disparità sopra evidenziate. La storia personale e le scelte delle famiglie ricoprono sicuramente un ruolo determinante nel futuro scolastico del figlio.

Utile all'analisi è l'individuazione e la classificazione delle barriere che ostacolano l'attiva partecipazione alla vita scolastica, nello specifico *hard barriers*, prevalentemente economiche e *soft barriers*, tra cui lo scarso capitale sociale, culturale e simbolico (Bozzetti, 2018). Il peggior scenario che potrebbe realizzarsi consiste in una spirale negativa di esclusione, in cui povertà, isolamento e autoisolamento, etichette ricevute dai coetanei, segregazione e una crescente condizione di deprivazione materiale e psicologica si alimenterebbero, creando una catena degenerativa potenzialmente senza fine (Colombo, 2014). Il fenomeno può essere arginato grazie alle interazioni e relazioni interpersonali costruite quotidianamente a scuola, come pure alle direttive centrali volte all'inclusione di studenti con background migratorio.

Altri due elementi da coltivare soprattutto tra gli studenti di seconda e di prima generazione sono le abilità linguistiche, prima tra tutte la narrazione. La possibilità di poter esprimere pensieri che vanno oltre l'esigenza di soddisfare i bisogni primari è fondamentale per la piena realizzazione della persona.

CAPITOLO QUARTO – L'inserimento nelle classi: ricerca qualitativa sugli studenti di seconda generazione

La ricerca qualitativa presentata in questo capitolo è nata dalla volontà di esplorare la realtà di ragazze e ragazzi di seconda generazione, attraverso la realizzazione di dieci interviste. In fondo lo stesso Paulo Freire sosteneva che l'educazione consiste in un dialogo partecipato in cui le parti conoscono sé stesse e l'altro attraverso la mediazione del mondo. Da un certo punto di vista, l'intervista è un modo per conoscere l'altro attraverso il tema che si sta studiando, in questo caso l'esperienza scolastica dei diretti interessati.

La ricerca ha coinvolto dieci ragazze/i di seconda generazione che stanno frequentando o hanno già frequentato un ciclo d'istruzione in Italia. Per la scelta del campione è stata adottata una delle definizioni più inclusive di seconde generazioni, che comprende i figli di almeno un genitore immigrato, indipendentemente dal paese di nascita (Ambrosini, 2005).

Le interviste sono state svolte in videochiamata, a causa dell'impossibilità di movimento imposta dall'emergenza sanitaria causata dal Covid-19. Queste sono state strutturate in quattro momenti principali: in primo luogo sono state poste delle domande in forma di questionario, che includevano dati sul soggetto e sulla sua famiglia. Poi è stato proposto uno stimolo, dove veniva chiesto di parlare liberamente della propria esperienza nelle scuole italiane, focalizzandosi su criticità ed opportunità. Tre dimensioni sono state tenute sotto controllo: la valutazione del proprio percorso scolastico e l'esistenza di figure di riferimento, così come di fattori che hanno influenzato le scelte e i risultati scolastici. Se uno degli elementi non veniva nominato dall'intervistata/o, questo veniva esplicitamente richiesto nella terza parte. Infine, è stato chiesto quali fossero i progetti futuri.

L'obiettivo principale della ricerca è stato indentificare e descrivere eventuali dinamiche di esclusione vissute dagli intervistati nelle scuole. Effettivamente, sette degli intervistati hanno testimoniato di esserne stati vittime. In tre casi si è trattato di episodi, ben vividi nei ricordi di ognuno, di violenze verbali e/o fisiche da parte di compagni di scuola e in un caso di un'insegnante. Gli altri quattro intervistati hanno invece subito forme di esclusione più generiche a causa del paese di origine, della differenza linguistica e di uno status socioeconomico meno abbiente. È interessante notare che gli unici tre intervistati nati in Italia non abbiano registrato forme di discriminazione, se non nel caso di Habiba, una ragazza che ha a lungo parlato del fenomeno opposto, ovvero di certi favoritismi da parte delle insegnanti nei suoi riguardi, secondo lei non giustificati da alcun merito, che hanno sortito effetti negativi su di lei e sulla classe. Questa dinamica è stata forse una delle scoperte più sorprendenti e va a confermare la necessità di preparare gli inseganti ad una formazione dedicata al multiculturalismo e alla diversità in generale. Secondo diversi accademici e ricercatori i progressi scolastici registrati tra i ragazzi di seconda generazione sarebbero infatti adducibili in larga misura alla buona volontà di insegnanti, presidi e personale scolastico piuttosto che ad indicazioni istituzionali. L'esperienza di Habiba è un'ulteriore conferma del fatto che la sola dedizione non basta.

Un altro elemento da sottolineare riguarda la tipologia di risposte date alle varie domande sull'esperienza scolastica: tutti gli intervistati hanno parlato a lungo del clima scolastico e soprattutto delle relazioni interpersonali e quasi per nulla della qualità dell'insegnamento in sé. Inoltre, alcuni hanno esplicitamente denunciato un fallimento sistemico nella realizzazione di un'inclusione genuina da parte della scuola, indisposta a "fermarsi" ad ascoltare problematiche che sono spesso erroneamente considerate proprie del singolo. Questo attesta che la scuola, prima ancora di veicolare contenuti, debba creare un ambiente favorevole all'apprendimento, in cui ogni studente sia incoraggiato ad imparare e, attraverso la conoscenza del mondo, a scoprire sé stesso. Così come diversi studenti intervistati si sono sentiti tagliati fuori dalla classe, molti vivono con sofferenza il mancato riconoscimento da parte della più ampia società. Nove intervistati su dieci infatti si sentono italiani, sebbene si tratti di un'italianità diversa da quella tradizionalmente riconosciuta come tale. Nonostante ciò, solo la metà degli intervistati possiede la cittadinanza. Al mancato riconoscimento giuridico, si aggiunge quello sociale, a riprova che istituzioni e società rivestono ruoli importantissimi nella definizione dell'identità dell'individuo.

In linea con i dati nazionali, le interviste hanno confermato le condizioni familiari spesso umili, e soprattutto le occupazioni non specializzate delle mamme, così come la preoccupazione genitoriale per l'istruzione dei propri figli, in funzione dei quali il progetto migratorio viene spesso concepito. Più della metà delle conversazioni si sono concluse con la possibilità presentata dall'intervistata/o di potersi trasferire all'estero. Sebbene la scelta della propria posizione nel mondo spesso dipenda

dall'offerta lavorativa, e non sia quindi appannaggio dell'istituzione scolastica in sé, il ruolo della scuola non è da sottovalutare alla luce di quanto dimostrato fino ad ora.

CAPITOLO QUINTO – Conclusioni: strade percorribili e proposte

La scrittura di questa tesi è stata guidata dalla volontà di approfondire la realtà degli studenti italiani di seconda generazione, nella convinzione che solo attraverso la conoscenza dell'alterità si acquisiscono i mezzi per la comprensione di sé stessi e del mondo. Le voci di Bourdieu e Passeron, di Freire e di Milani confermano l'esigenza di adottare un approccio critico, in quanto solo la problematizzazione della realtà è strumento di sviluppo del pensiero. Gli autori hanno aperto la strada all'illustrazione dei dati relativi agli studenti di seconda generazione e alla conseguente discussione descrittiva e analitica di questi. Infine, la ricerca si conclude dando la voce ai protagonisti dell'elaborato. Come scriveva Paulo Freire, la rivoluzione nascerà solo dall'unione corale di oppressi e oppressori guidati da una vocazione comune: divenire esseri umani.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation aims at providing an overview of the peculiarities of second-generation students within the Italian territory, focusing on key challenges and difficulties. The subject has been chosen as a result of the exigency to draw the public attention to the features of this reality, who is relatively new to the Italian context. The second generation is one of the multiple minorities deserving a larger space of attention and expression, as all the subjects that have been historically and recently excluded from the core of the country's activities. This statement refers to the political, cultural, social, and economic aspect. It is here believed that the institutions have the duty to represent their citizens and to listen to the people living within the territory of their jurisdiction, trying to accommodate diversity. The increasing number of mixed marriages, children of mixed and non-Italian couples, and naturalizations demonstrate that the second generation is a reality that is going to last. Thus, they deserve to be observed and listened by the institutions and by the people. For what concerns the latter, it is only through direct experience and information that they will learn how to deal with diversity. People and institutions are two actors of the same processes. Their action is complementary, in that the institutions are legitimized by the people to set the frame and guidelines of their behaviours. As far as the second generation is concerned, similarly to all the subjects who do not fit into the pre-conceived, traditional images of "normality", the most powerful instruments to encourage general acceptance and respect is the willingness of the people to educate and to be educated and a clear stance of the institutions. Education has to be conceived as a bilateral process where two subjects interact on the basis of mutual listening aiming at the understanding of themselves and of the other through the medium of the world, as Paulo Freire would have said. Here we come to the importance of the educational institutions, the physical and metaphorical places where the minds of the people are trained, among other things, to understand the value of education to finally be ready to educate and be educated. School is deemed an essential space of firsts and durable encounters between people, in charge of the formation of the person. These are the reasons why this dissertation aims at critically reflect on the debate over second-generation students within the education system. Adopting an interest-based approach, the reality of the second-generation youth is studied also to test the effectiveness of policies elaborated for the first generation and at the same time to reflect on the development of long-term integration policies.

Although in Italy the debate over durable integration arose in recent times, the phenomenon of migration *per se* is less recent than what is believed. It is here attempted to provide an overlook of the Italian migratory situation through the words of Michele Colucci (2020), historian and researcher at the ISMed (the Institute for studies on the Mediterranean). He detected four main periods of migratory flows to Italy, diversified for numbers and composition. The first strand follows the Second World War conflicts and is mainly composed of displaced people and people coming from the ex-

colonies of East Africa (Somali, Ethiopia and Eritrea). The second migration period started from the "economic miracle" of the 60s, when Italy started receiving migrant workers, especially in the bordering regions. Numbers were still limited: in 1979 for the first time the Censis (Centre of Studies on Social Investments) published a report on foreign workers, counting 300/400 thousand people. The historical landmark of the fall of the Berlin Wall corresponds to the year of the murder of Jerry Essan Masslo, the South African refugee killed at the end of one of his working day of tomato harvesting in the countryside of Villa Literno, in the province of Caserta. The murder symbolically initiated the third period, mobilizing the first strike of migrant seasonal labourers and sparking an intense public debate over migration issues that resulted in the issuance of the first law regulating immigration, in 1990 (Colucci, 2019). The following year, the so called "landings of the Albanians", who were welcomed with solidarity by the local population, but not supported by a structured intervention from the state apparatus, opened the season of a more consistent immigration flows coming mainly from Eastern Europe and Eastern Africa, following the fragmentation of the ex-Yugoslavia and the Somali war. The multiethnic composition of Italy starts being characterized by a certain degree of pluralism and the debate over the second generation finally starts. Lastly, the 2008 economic crisis significantly changed the features of the migratory flows. Italy became the forced intermediate step towards the settlement in wealthier countries. At the same time, political closure and the debate over the lack of legal accesses to the Fortress Europe became the focus of the Italian media. It now remains to see future developments. The historical overlook was provided in order to contextualize the debate over the second generation within the Italian territory. It started only in the 90s, following the public awareness of the first consistent migrants' arrivals. From this brief review it emerges that the issue of migration has been managed through an emergency approach rather than adopting a structured program aimed at long-term integration. Second-generation migrants bring in to light the need for a long-sighting plan able to accommodate the diverseness that characterises multiculturalism.

This dissertation is organized in five chapters, namely two introducing chapters, a core, an empirical research, and the conclusions. It begins by providing an overview of two essential issues for a full understanding of the subject matter.

The first one concerns the debate over the term "second generation", a category that is still hard to define due to the heterogeneity of its composition, while the second topic is about theories and models describing the interactions and eventually integration of migrant groups within the receiving society. The countries of older immigration, chiefly the US, led the debate until relatively recent times, when European countries started experiencing the presence of sizeable foreign groups of people.

The second chapter deals with three of the main criticisms of the school system, devised by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron, Paulo Freire, and Lorenzo Milani. Their works have been chosen as starting points to introduce the reader to the systemic fallacies of the educational institution. It is here believed that the above-mentioned authors offer to the reader peculiar patterns of thinking that can be applied to various fields and actualized to multiple situations. Second-generation students would then be one among the weakest sections of the binary society's structure detected by the authors.

The third chapter is the core of the dissertation, since it deals with the second generation within Italian schools. It first defines the school's mission and objectives, starting from the exigences outlined in the second chapter. It then goes on describing the situation of second-generation students within schools, with the support quantitative data (secondary analysis), focusing on key criticisms. The third part aims at providing a qualitative evaluation of the reported data, through hypothesis and conclusions of academics and researchers belonging to the sociological field.

Finally, in order to test the difficulties experienced by second-generation students, an empirical research has been conducted, whose results are presented in the fourth chapter. Following the ideas coming from the literature and sociological reviews, the primary objective has been the identification of dynamics of exclusion experienced by ten interviewees. Despite the astounding diversity of the personal histories, which are always richer than any research's report, commonalities and relevant traits have been identified, summarized, and discussed. These refer mainly to the direct experience of dynamics of exclusions, the relatively low familial socio-economic status, and the influence of the perception and consideration of the Other on the individual.

The last chapter draws the main conclusions, suggesting recommendations based on the systemic deficiencies and weaknesses of schools with regards to multiculturalism and diversity management. The final aim would be the construction of a new idea of education that valorises each student in multicultural classes in order to promote a myriad of personal "third spaces" that disrupt the ancestral binary thought structure opposing "us" to "them".

CHAPTER 1 - **Setting the context: second generation migrants and models of integration**

One of the biggest efforts in writing this dissertation has revolved around the difficulty to use a univocal lexicon, due to the multiple connotations attached to concepts through their usage. The first chapter is devised to inform the reader about the debate over definitions and paradigms. More specifically, once a specific word has been attached to a model which subsequently became obsolete, the term tends to be either discarded or revalued with new meanings. For instance, as the first significate of the assimilationist model started being criticized because of the disproportionately demanding efforts required by the migrant compared to the native population, on the one hand the word "assimilation" fell in disuse in the semantic area of migration, while on the other it has been revalued emphasizing the reciprocal movement of the two parts "of becoming alike". Similarly, the expression "second-generation migrants" traditionally stands for the children of migrant parents, but due to the protracted debate over the inclusion of a larger population, the expression "new generations" has been deemed more appropriate by some stances. This chapter aims at clarifying the possible ambiguity of the language, while setting the stage for the development of the subject-matter.

1.1 The problems with the concept of "second-generation migrants"

The term "second generation" was introduced when it became evident that it was necessary to develop a new mindset in dealing with the children of migrants. The expression "the offspring of migration" used by Molina (2012) is particularly significant for being able to grasp the key characteristics of those who experience the consequences of migration. This implies that the theoretical approach developed in dealing with migrants, grounded on emergency management, must be revised in the light of the acknowledgement of discontinuities with the first generation (Demarie & Molina, 2004). Indeed, when classifications and definitions are elaborated, one must be careful to avoid denying the agency of the subjects, for instance by enacting a "forced ethnicization" and limiting the subject's possibilities to act to the ones attached to her/his group (Lagomarsino & Ravecca, 2014).

Adopting a strict definition, second-generation defines the children of migrants, born in the receiving country. But according to such definition, those who moved from one country to another together with their parents would be assimilated to the first-generation category, neglecting that fact that their experience of migration significantly differs from that of their parents, precisely because they are children (Landale & Oropesa, 1997). Following this line of thought, while scholars such as Thernstrom (1973) decided to solve the dilemma by considering immigrant children as *de facto* second generation, others started to see the distance between first generation and second generation in a progressive scale. Rumbaut (1997) theorized the existence of other three classes: the "1.75 generation" refers to children arrived in the new country as pre-schoolers, the "1.5 generation" are those arrived between 6 and 12 years old, and finally, teenagers arrived in the hosting country between

12 and 17 years old make up the "1.25 generation". Applying the paradigm to the Italian case, what would connect the second generation with the other three classes is the family history and the juridical status of foreigners, since the Italian legal system does not recognize *ius soli*. Indeed, the "1.75 generation" would have more in common with the first generation than the other two decimal classes, in that the former lived migration as a more conscious process (Molina, 2012). In fact, they left their country during adolescence, a period where emotional and affective ties are particularly relevant, leaving behind part of their family, friends and possibly partners. It is duty of the researchers to verify whether the decimal classes could be assimilated to the second generation or not.

Other experts prefer using parameters of classification other than the age of arrival into the country. Ambrosini (2005) suggests using the status of the parents, thus including under the second-generation category all those children born from an immigrant parent, regardless of the place of birth, in order to include a wider range of population. Or again, Favaro (2000) distinguishes foreign students according to the means and the conditions of arrival in Italy, dividing them into:

- Italian minors
- reunited minors
- unaccompanied foreign minors
- refugee minors
- adopted minors
- children of mixed couples.

By focusing on the first two categories, the most represented groups in Italy, Favaro (2012) describes them in terms of linguistic skills. To the first category, the minors who are born in Italy, Italian is an "adoptive language", defined also a "filial language", since it is brought and developed through the oral usage into the family by the children, rather than by the parents, as one would normally expect. To the second category, the minors arrived in Italy through family reunification, Italian is, instead, a foreign language and they are consequently in need of a thorough linguistic intervention (ibid.).

It is important to keep in mind that classifications are instrumental to the research itself, therefore a definition may be more appropriate to a certain kind of research and less suitable for another. For instance, in researching second-generation students in higher education, Bozzetti (2017) decided to consider as second generation all those students without the Italian citizenship who obtained the Italian high school diploma. In this way non-citizen students were included, but since official statistics published by MIUR do not consider citizenship nor the place of birth of the parents, second-generation students who lately got the Italian citizenship were excluded from the research.

It was attempted to report the key definitions of the "second generation". It emerges that the debate is complex because of the multi-layered nature of the phenomenon under study. By acknowledging this complexity, the CoNNGI (the National Coordination of the Italian New Generations) decided to

opt for a new term: the "new Italian generation" in place of the Italian second generation (Bozzetti, 2017). In the updated version of CoNNGI's Manifesto, conceived in 2019, this concept is reaffirmed. This definition better represents the heterogenous nature of the children of migration that the concept of "second generation" is unable to grasp. For this reason, it is here believed that new generation is the term which approaches most closely the reality under study.

1.2 General perspective on migrants' integration

The aim of this work is to provide an overlook of second-generation students within the Italian education system and to suggest possible school policies. To do so, first it is necessary to clarify the relationship between the receiving society and the newcomers, thus specifying in which way the State intends to reach a constructive coexistence. Policies and interventions are designed consequently. As for the previous paragraph, it is here attempted to provide an account of the international debate over definitions and models, being aware of two main difficulties: to find common definitions detached from the attributions that these assumed with time and to find the ideal theoretical model of coexistence that takes into account the complexity of the reality under investigation (Demarie & Molina, 2004). Four are the main theories detected: classical assimilation theory, segmented assimilation theory, new assimilation theory, and the inter-generational integration model.

Indeed, the first model came from a classical immigration country, the US, and was developed by The Chicago School in the 1920s, after having studied the immigrant population coming to the country. It is foreseen that the migrant population would gradually assimilate into the receiving culture, losing the connotation of their original culture. The process is seen as a straight-line convergence, where the longer is the time of residence in the country, the more the group is assimilated by it (Brown & Bean, 2006). Therefore, second and third generation would end up being very similar to the average citizen of the arrival country, if not identical. One of the main criticisms of this model is that it aims at neutralizing the differences between the destination society and the migrants, often at the expenses of the latter. This argument was upheld by the supporters of multiculturalism: "previously excluded groups (…) demand a more inclusive conception of citizenship which recognizes (rather than stigmatizes) their identities, and which accommodates (rather than exclude) their differences" (Kymlicka, 2002). When applied to the migrant population and its offspring, this statement translates into the request for the respect for their original culture and for the recognition of their identity, as a process of hybridization of the old and the new. However, the risks of this last conception are to categorize individuals into preconceived schemes based on nationality and the consequent possible self-identification of the subjects with these patterns (Bozzetti, 2017). More than a theory coming of empirical evidence, multiculturalism was born as a legitimate claim for recognition by minorities.

Portes, Rumbaut, and Zhou are the main theorizers of the segmented assimilation theory. They studied the American situation and widened the spectre of the possible trajectories of migrants and their offspring, assuming that they may be assimilated into different segments of society. They may, in fact, take the way of upward assimilation, downward assimilation or selective acculturation (Portes & Zhou, 1993). The first option – upward assimilation - consists in what was foreseen by the classical assimilation theory, namely the total integration into society, eventually to the middle-classes, while the second option - downward assimilation - is the assimilation into the lower socio-economic classes (ibid.). There are two views on the latter option: according to some authors, the youth would either assume the same behaviours as their native counterpart while remaining economically excluded, or, as sustained by Portes and al., they would adopt reactive behaviours opposing to the receiving society, resulting as not only economically but also socially excluded (Ambrosini, 2004). Finally, selective acculturation would imply the maintenance of immigrant community's culture while integrating into the receiving country's economic system (Portes & Zhou, 1993). There are four main factors influencing the final outcome: the history of the first generation, the pace of acculturation between parents and children, referring to the times and rhythms of the knowledges acquired, cultural and economic barriers of second-generation students, and finally family resources in dealing with these barriers (Portes and al. 2004). More specifically, the barriers may take the form of inequalities in the economic structure of the country, of racial discrimination, and of the consolidation of marginal population into the inner cities (ibid.). In Italy, the challenges posed by the world-wide increase in the divide between the rich and poor have serious consequences, further hindering the possibility for migrants to be assimilated to the middle class. Racial discrimination is also a reality in the Italian territory, while the third variable, namely the concentration of foreigners within the inner cities is less pronounced, since Italy did not experience the formation of urban ghettos as the US has (Ambrosini, 2004).

Recently, within the last twenty years, the classical assimilation theory was revised, and the new assimilation theory has been formulated. Alba & Nee (1997) postulated that in the long run ethnic and racial distinction would disappear. They moved from Gordon's definition of structural assimilation, defined as "the entrance of the minority group into the social cliques, clubs, and institutions of the core society at the primary group level (Gordon, 1964)." (ibid.). According to them, at the group level, assimilation is not necessarily a unilateral process, but it may imply a change in society itself, and particularly it may involve specific aspects of society at different degrees. For instance, in the US, language acculturation can be defined one-sided, while cuisine acculturation is rather mutual. This is the same idea advocated by Brubaker (2001) when emphasising that assimilation is a neutral process of becoming alike (to each other).

Assimilation on one hand and segmentation on the other are defined by Esser (2010) as both viable outcomes of the relationship between the destination society and the immigrant population and their descendants. To endorse just one of them is a generalization. Esser developed a model of inter-generational assimilation, which "consists, in principle, of three components: the specification of the basic options immigrants have and the corresponding selection rules; the connection between options and empirical conditions via a few basic functions; and the definition of the explanandum – i.e., various structural outcomes of the process of intergenerational integration – as an aggregated result of (among other things) individual choices between certain alternatives" (Esser, 2010). At the core of the model there is the expected utility theory, according to which the individual weights the aggregated positive and negative returns of each option and chooses the one with the highest expected value (ibid.). The options can be related to the receiving country or to the ethnic context, while the main ancillary determinants of the choice are the group size and the ethnic boundaries of the immigrant population. According to Esser, if the immigrant population chooses options connected to the receiving society, assimilation will take place, while if they choose options related to the ethnic group, segmentation will happen. In this way, the two main theories are operationalized into possible outcomes of the inter-generational assimilation model.

From this review of the main literature on migrants' integration, it appears that the US has largely dominated the international debate over this topic. Only recently Europe has raised its voice, as demonstrated by the model of inter-generational assimilation, theorized by Esser, a German scholar. By and large, the term "integration" has been preferred in the European macro-region, but assimilation and integration can be used interchangeably, since they have not yet been connoted by certain additional meanings as in the US (Bozzetti, 2017). Nevertheless, Europe has not proved to have a common experience of migration, and each country kept its own peculiarities in this field. It is often referred to the German functionalist model, the French assimilationist model, the Anglo-Saxon multicultural model, but Southern European countries have not yet developed their own theories, although Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Italy have experienced relevant migration flows over the last thirty years. What is certain within the Italian debate is that the complex process of integration involves a twofold movement, one from the receiving society and the other from the individual. This conception emerged since the beginning of the research in this field, as it is demonstrated by the words of Alberoni and Baglioni (1965): "Integration must be a reciprocal exchange of experiences on the psychological level, it must be a cultural exchange that gives birth to a wider and more mature perspective, and it must consist in the placement of the migrant person in the new social structure as a vital, functional part, able to enrich the whole picture". And if integration surely involves a reciprocal rapprochement of the parts towards a negotiated common ground, it is still under debate where the compromise must be located.

CHAPTER 2 - Selected critical reflections on school: a literature review

In this section it is provided an overview of some significant criticisms of the school system, discussed in three works published at the end of the 1960s. The theories and opinions that have been selected are then the basis of the criticisms that will be applied at the end of the chapter to the more specific subject under study, namely second-generation students. The core critical point is the systematization of dynamics of exclusion by the school system. This approach has its origin within the conflict theories, and hinges upon the awareness that the system is built to serve the interests of a segment of the population. There may be different points of view about the aims and dynamics of this process. The process of exclusion may either be a side effect of the system, who struggles to accommodate conflicting interests and needs, or, as it is upheld by the selected authors, it constitutes the covert aim of the system itself. The second query is about the victims of exclusion and whether they are a minority or alternatively the majority. Again, it is believed by the authors that indeed they are the majority, being called the dominated classes, the poor, or the oppressed.

The chapter starts first by reporting the theory developed by Bourdieu and Passeron in "Reproduction in education, society and culture", published in 1970. The publication constitutes one of the main attempts to describe the essence of the school system in a scientific way under a critical approach. It then goes on presenting "Pedagogy of the oppressed" by Paulo Freire, one of the most famous educators of the XX century, who was able to alphabetize and educate Brazilian workers. The third paragraph is about the opinions presented in "Letter to a teacher" by eight students and their teacher, Lorenzo Milani, the Italian priest who revolutionised the methodologies and the contents taught in the classes of the school of Barbiana, a small village in the Florentine countryside. The three publications have been chosen because they stand out for the deepness of the arguments against the school system, and because they incredibly resemble to each other despite the different backgrounds, methodologies, and styles. At the end of the section common contents and the applicability of the theories to second-generation students will be debated.

2.1 Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron: "Reproduction in education, society and culture"

During more than ten years of analysis of the French education system, in 1970 Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron published a book: "Reproduction in education, society and culture". They developed a theory able to describe the structure and the functioning of the whole education system, starting from the theoretical approaches of Durkheim, Weber, and Marx and the empirical research carried out in first person. The object of the analysis is the cultural field, intended as the market of symbolic goods or the market of cultural messages (Bechelloni, 1972). In line with Gramsci's though, Bourdieu and Passeron consider it the core of their work, in contrast to Marxist theories that undervalue the importance of the cultural capital, by relegating it to the role of superstructure

dependent on the economic substructure. The cultural capital is a crucial determinant of the individual's position within society and of the subsequent structural inequalities. It consists in the familiarity with the dominant/legitimate culture, and it is primarily inherited by the family of origin. The value of the cultural goods given by the family to the offspring depends on how close they resemble those of the dominant culture. According to the two scholars, any pedagogic action is a form of symbolic violence in that it imposes the values of the dominant culture deceiving the fact that this culture is completely arbitrary, not being defined by any universal principle. In other words, the education system reproduces the pre-existent structure of the distribution of cultural capital among groups or classes, enacting a social reproduction of the cultural reproduction. This statement is particularly powerful in that it overturns the modern conception of school as a social equalizer spread since the French revolution. It is widely accepted that the strength of the public school lies in the equal opportunities given to each pupil, regardless of the cultural capital she/he has been endowed with, and that the commitment to study is rewarded with the possibility to go on studying and eventually to find a better job. Bourdieu and Passeron challenge the very essence of this conception, claiming that reality is different from theory, since the education system reproduces the structural inequalities on which it is grounded, instead of defeating them.

The education system succeeds thanks to the authority automatically conferred on it by the public, following the same mechanism according to which a prophet is considered as such because his followers allow him to. The authority gives legitimacy to the education system, who does not have to justify its own position. Indeed, the pedagogic action can only be carried out within the limits conferred by the cultural arbitrary, that is within the limits established by the dominant culture. The pedagogic action implies a process of inculcation through the pedagogic work, whose aim is the (re)production of a habitus compliant with the principles of the dominant culture. The habitus produced by the pedagogic work is durable in time but is not totally irreversible. Indeed, there are multiple possible pedagogic actions other than the primary one, although their degree of productivity depends on the distance between the habitus they want to reproduce and the primary habitus - ranging from maintenance to conversion.

The pedagogical work is conceived as the legitimiser of both the product and the legitimate need of the product craved by the legitimate consumer. In this way, the education system creates the contents, the addressees, the means, and the time of the process of inculcation. The evidence is that everyone within a society, regardless of their social position, has an analogous conception of the cultured man. The aim of the pedagogic work is the maintenance of the order through inculcation and most notably through exclusion, since it imposes on the dominated classes the recognition of the legitimacy of their exclusion, making them interiorize censorship. The most successful form of censorship is the self-censorship. This line of thought will be confirmed by "Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison",

where Michel Foucault (1976) holds that the finest form of discipline is self-discipline, enacted when the bodies interiorize instead of suffer from the behaviours desired by the system. Consequently, according to Bourdieu and Passeron, the pedagogic work makes those relegated to secondary kinds of instruction recognize the inferiority of their teachings, by devaluing the know-how acquired by them because it differs from the dominant one. Indeed, the more the cultural arbitrary is dominated by the legitimate addressees and the less they will explicitly proclaim their principles, since they have been already interiorized. Moreover, the practical mastery characterizing the pedagogical work can be either oriented to the manipulation of things or to the manipulation of words, and since the latter is preferred by the dominant cultural arbitrary, it produces a further exclusion of the possible recipients. The dynamics of exclusion are often justified indirectly by mechanisms external to the pedagogic work, such as the economic market, but at times they are justified by overt functions of selection within the school system, examinations for instance.

The agents in charge of the reproduction of the intellectual and moral integration of the legitimate addressees receive a homogeneous education aimed at the maintenance of the orthodoxy of the schoolwork against the individual heresies. In a similar way, the school culture is unitary, thanks to processes of mechanisation such as repetitive exercises. In the long run, a perfect self-reproduction is reached, also called inertia, since the agents of the system spread the same values they received, ensuring the reproduction of their own value by guaranteeing the reproduction of the symbolic market that gives them that value. Agents are conferred the same authority that the pedagogic action automatically has. It is particularly relevant here the analogy with the Church, inspired by Durkheim: despite the fact that the school has emerged from the secularization of ecclesiastic institutions, the role of the teacher, such as that of the priest, is perceived as legitimate because of the authority publicly conferred to the institutions to which they belong.

To summarize the heart of the theory, Bourdieu and Passeron claim that the great lie of the education system is the deception of its own truth, namely the exercise of a symbolic violence based on the power relationship among classes or groups. An empirical declination of this is the claim of neutrality, given as the answer to the dilemma over the contents to be included within school curricula, even strengthened by the fact that the school is public. Indeed, the presumption of neutrality is an illusion since the aim of the education system is the reproduction of the pre-existent patterns of dominance and submission.

Bourdieu's and Passeron's ambition is the production of a comprehensive theory on the education system, and this is evident in both the organization and the vocabulary of the work. It is structured into numbered sentences, linked by a causal relationship. Furthermore, the authors codified a highly specialized lexicon, that is consistently used without resorting to synonyms. For instance, what is

normally called formation here becomes inculcation, the dominant culture is called the cultural arbitrary, the educators become the agents, integration is intended as the absorption into the system ruled by the legitimate addressees, the basis on which the pedagogic action is carried out are the power relationships, and the essence as well as the result of the pedagogic action is the failure to recognize the objective truth of the cultural arbitrary. Thus, each element is designated with its proper name, without resorting to synonyms to avoid repetitions. This significant stylistic choice highlights the necessity to use a univocal language able to convey the desired message effectively. By the same token, Paulo Freire elaborated a systemic criticism of society's structure, that reflects itself within the education system.

2.2 Paulo Freire: "Pedagogy of the oppressed"

"Pedagogy of the oppressed" is a work aiming at describing and disrupting the current structure of society through the revolution of education. To Paulo Freire societies and education are characterized by a parallel binary structure, where a group dominates over the others. In the first case he speaks of dominant versus dominated classes, in the second case he refers to the dichotomy between the teacher, she/he who knows, and the students, those who do not. In both cases, the contradiction between the two categories must be overcome to allow men and women to truly become human beings. Although the subdued people have gone through a process of dehumanization due to the exploitation by the oppressors, they have an intrinsic propensity "to be more", which pushes them to fight in order to win their freedom. Before describing the ways through which the oppressed can free themselves, it is important to further describe the characteristics of the relationship of oppression, highly influenced by the Hegelian dialectic, especially on the master-slave dichotomy and on the link between risk, freedom and independent conscience.

The oppressors are described through Erich Fromm's terminology and concept of necrophilia: they are necrophiliacs because they love death. By suppressing the other human beings, they devalue them and transform them into objects, driven by a materialistic conception of the existence according to which to be is to have. The oppressed are considered the objects of the oppressors' unbridled anxiety of possession. Under this point of view, generous actions by the oppressors towards the oppressed are deemed hypocritical since they are instrumental in the strengthening of the binary division of societies. On the other hand, the material condition of the oppressed belongs to most of the people. When they are not yet conscious of their status of oppressed, they assume a fatalist perspective that entails a sense of impotence and frustration that sometimes causes forms of horizontal violence against their companions. Moreover, they tend to see themselves with the eyes of the oppressors, as miserable and devalued while at the same time considering the oppressors invincible. Indeed, one of the main barriers to freedom is the adherence to the oppressors, who embody the only examples of

humanity for the oppressed. Therefore, while a part of them strives to break free, another part tends to identify with the oppressors, and by doing so the subject is prevented from having full consciousness of her/his condition, since she/he cannot objectify the oppressor outside herself/himself. Bourdieu and Passeron described an analogous process, where the dominant class covertly impose its reading of the world on the dominated classes. The second main obstacle to the awareness of their own position of oppression is that the communication between oppressors and oppressed takes the form of a prescription. This consists in a unilateral choice imposed by a part on the others, hence alienating the latter by contaminating their consciences with those of the oppressors.

The only solution to eliminate the contradiction between oppressors and oppressed is the freedom of the oppressed. Freedom is the only requirement for human beings to be as such, since it is the only condition enabling humans to carry out their existential research which is denied to the oppressed. Nevertheless, the oppressed fear freedom because they are terrified by the void that would be left by the disappearance of the oppressors, that must be filled either with autonomy or with personal responsibility. Following Hegel's thought, Freire believes that freedom is obtained only when risking one's own life, an act that would affirm the recognition of her/his own autonomous conscience. Thus, the oppressed are prevented from fighting for freedom because they are afraid of the consequences of taking that risk. The obtainment of freedom is a long and painful process, compared to a childbirth. The final aim is to stop the oppressed conscience "being for the other" and make it "being for itself", as Hegel would have framed it. The first step is the awareness of the existence of oppressors and oppressed, which must be followed by the praxis, defined as reflexion and action together. Since the oppression is visible in material circumstances, critical thinking and a concrete reaction are two faces of the same phenomenon. To Freire no one can free herself/himself without any help, thus, to make the liberation process begin it is necessary to stimulate the reflexion of the oppressed through dialogue. Dialogue, education and praxis have the same meaning. This is why liberation is a cultural revolution. "The fight is not justified solely by the purpose of having the freedom to eat, but also the freedom to create and to build, to admire and to risk" (p. 54). The existential, political, and educative aspect intertwine, making up different sides of the same underlying structure.

The education of the oppressed is the main topic of the book. As Bourdieu and Passeron, Paulo Freire believes that school as it is structured is a channel of domination, reproducing the same mechanisms that characterize the wider society. He harshly criticizes the principles of the contemporary education system, that he calls the "banking" conception of school, where the role of the teacher and that of the student are sharply divided. The former is the holder of the truth and her/his task is the narration of the knowledges acquired, while the latter is the ignorant and must be treated as a recipient to be filled in with teachings. The student's merit is recognised according to his ability to adapt to the system instead of transforming it. The same criticism is made by the previously mentioned analysis by

Foucault (1976) on discipline and self-discipline, aiming at a final acceptance of the mechanisms imposed by the system. School as it is currently organized is defined necrophiliac since it privileges mechanisation and adaptation, denying students creativity and active research and therefore preventing them from be fully humans. According to Freire the solution is a revolutionary conception of education, that he calls "problematizing" since the school should allow students to critically think of the world and of themselves as challenges and not as given facts. Human beings should reciprocally educate themselves in communion, through dialogue and thanks to the mediation of the world. This entails the suppression of the barriers dividing teachers from students and the fulfilment of a bilateral communication. The lesson must be mutually agreed and built on the common willingness of teachers and students to investigate reality, and the constant research they carry out enables them to develop their potential and to follow their propensity "to be more". For all these reasons the educator and the politician have the same role, that is to help men in the process of self-affirmation. Hence, they are the same person.

The new "problematizing" education will form human beings able to critically reflect and act to shape the surrounding reality. Only when the oppressed will be eventually free, and the category of oppressors will disappear, the pedagogy of the oppressed will become the pedagogy of the humankind. Although in a very different geographical area and working with the youth instead of the grown-ups, Lorenzo Milani, as Paulo Freire, dedicated his life to the education of the poor, believing that an alternative education provides the solution to the visible and covert structural disparities embedded in societies.

2.3 Lorenzo Milani: "Letter to a teacher"

Lorenzo Milani was an educator who in 1954 gave birth to an experimental educative experience in Barbiana, a village in the Florentine countryside. "Letter to a teacher" is a choral work written by eight students of the school with the collaboration of a multi-disciplinary team, under Milani's supervision. The publication of the book was led by the urgency to denounce the essence and the functioning of the Italian school system of those times. In the 50s most of the Italian families lived in the countryside as farmers. Even though the Italian demography as well as many aspects of the school have changed, the core messages given by the book are still relevant. The main charge against the school is that it leaves behind many students. As a dysfunctional hospital, it has not been able to heal the most severe cases. The school should be the place where the students who did not grow up in a cultured family are given the opportunity to learn, and through knowledge to improve their original conditions. But the experience of the authors and the gathered data demonstrate the opposite.

The main predictors of the future of a student are still factors inherited by the family rather than the tools provided by the school, who is accused of classism, both because it is conceived by the elites,

and because in practice it excludes those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Data of the time show that rejections and dropout rates are incredibly higher for the daughters and the sons of farmers and blue collars. Against those professors that defend the neutrality of their judgements, it is stated that "nothing is more unjust than making equal parts among unequal people" (p.11). This statement resembles to the basic principle at the heart of distributive justice theories, according to which people cannot be treated as equals as long as social and material resources are not redistributed in order to enable each one to begin from the same starting point. In this case, the education system should provide each student with the cultural resources she/he needs. Therefore, the school is deemed responsible for not being able to see the risks of each rejection and to develop a program workable for all the students. The authors of "Letter to a teacher" claim that the type of culture being taught and welcomed by schools belongs to the elites, ignoring that of the masses. When considering everyone's needs, it becomes clear that the priority is neither Latin nor archaic Italian, but rather the possibility to communicate any kind of content to as many people as possible. The focus should be on the Italian language, both in the oral and written form, and on foreign languages. Language is the expression of thought and only through communication human beings can emancipate themselves from any form of material and mental submission.

Milani and his students list the subjects that are taught in public schools, pointing out why the contents and the methodologies adopted by teachers are unsuccessful or successful only for a limited section of the students. The underlying idea is that school should not only give information, but also prepare the students to the life outside the classrooms. While acknowledging the failure of the education system to do so, Milani and his students put forward possible solutions to the fallacies of the system. First, rejection should be abolished, since it is a way to facilitate the job of the teacher and to accelerate the learning pace of the class by eliminating the lowest performers, while their scholastic achievements should become the yardstick to assess the overall results. Secondly, school should be full-time. National curricula are regarded as cages that constrain the possible teachings to pre-defined programs, without leaving space to personal expression. With more time available, a true dialogue may finally take place between students and teachers, where everyone is given the time to satisfy her/his intellectual appetite. It is also a way to keep the students from lower socio-economic classes within the stimulating environment offered by the school. Finally, students must be given a final aim, a reward for their studies and this must not be the diploma or whatsoever certificate but the ability to communicate. "It is the language alone that makes men equal. That man is an equal who can express himself and can understand the words of others. Rich or poor, it makes no difference. But he must speak." (p. 21). If full expression and comprehension are presented as final objectives to be reached by everyone at the end of the school years, the whole structuring of the lessons as well as the students'

attitude would change. For instance, oral tests would not be feared by the person being tested and ignored by the other students but would become an important moment of in-depth analysis.

The centrality of the language is explicitly claimed by the authors and confirmed by the style and lexicon chosen in the book, who aim at simplicity and comprehensibility. The metaphors between the school and the language of the health are frequent: not only the current school is defined as a dysfunctional hospital, but the terms "infection" and "disinfection" are recurring in the text and are chosen as titles of two paragraphs.

2.4 Relevance to the debate on the second generation

As stated before, the three masterpieces belong to diverse contexts. Nevertheless, the contents and ideas about school have much in common. They harshly denounce the education system for reproducing the wider dominant structure of society, where a few cultured people designed a system to their own measure, ignoring the multiple, diverse exigencies of the majority. Contrarily to common believes, instead of promoting social mobility, the school proved to be the reproducer of the same inequalities that characterize the "outside world". The elites have institutionalised their values, that have become part of the school as universal or superior values while considering those of the dominated classes as inferior, without recognizing that what is called inferiority is just diversity. Two of the three publications also share a common view on the main determinants of the disadvantages experienced by people, namely the social, cultural, and economic conditions inherited by their parents. Bourdieu and Passeron call them the cultural capital, Milani and his students simply call it "being poor". Freire's analysis is more interdisciplinary than the other two and thus analyses the origins of the opposition between oppressors and oppressed under an existential point of view rather than a more socio-cultural one. All of them agree on the need to revolutionize the education system and, since the it reflects the overall structure of the society, the society itself should be rearranged.

The three publications have been presented in order to provide a strong theoretical basement for the subsequent analysis of second-generation students in the following section. The above-mentioned authors have been able to deconstruct societies they live in and to identify a binary contradiction between those who can/have and those who cannot/do not have, but each of the two groups comprises an heterogeneous population. The tremendous work of synthesis that has been done by the authors must be complemented by more specific and limited studies on the narrower components of the dominated class. Following the reflexion opening the first chapter, it is here believed that every single event deserves to be called with his proper name and assessed accordingly. Acknowledging the fact that two categories are made of many different sub-groups does not invalidate the broader description provided, on the contrary it underlines the need to investigate the peculiarities of each group in order to become aware of real dynamics. The aim of this dissertation is to provide an overview of second-

generation students, one of many excluded groups, within the Italian education system. The school is the main institution designated to educate the youth, and it must be reformed starting from the exigences of those who cannot fully benefit from it.

CHAPTER 3 – Second-generation students: the challenges of educational integration

"All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions. It is the duty of the Republic to remove those obstacles of an economic or social nature which constrain the freedom and equality of citizens, thereby impeding the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organisation of the country".

"Schools are open to everyone. (…) Capable and deserving pupils, including those lacking financial resources, have the right to attain the highest levels of education. The Republic renders this right effective through scholarships, allowances to families and other benefits, which shall be assigned through competitive examinations".

Article 3 and article 34 of the Italian Constitution are the bedrocks on which the principles governing the education institution hinge. The public nature of school and the granting of scholarships are not sufficient requirements to satisfy the principle of equality. John Rawls, when illustrating the basic requests of distributive justice, underlines that in order to treat women and men equally, formal equal treatment is not enough, since it must be complemented by the state's commitment to fill in the gaps caused by the structural disparities embedded in current societies. As Maddalena Colombo (2014) underlines, school is among the major institutions traditionally held responsible for the implementation of the equality principle, being often defined the "big social equalizer". At the same time, the presence of migrant and second-generation students reveals a rising number of inequalities based on the cultural, juridical, and socio-economic status that intersects crating a further formative inequality (ibid.).

Already in the late 60s and early 70s, the authors cited in the literature review expressed the urgency to act in order to reform the education system, and their request is corroborated by the needs of this relatively new segment of the school population. In practice, schools may play a key role in the integration of the young foreign students. It is interesting to consider the school as a public place where students meet, serving multiple purposes. Firstly, it provides a common ideal space where foreigners and Italians interact on the ground of a neutral common status, that of being students (Santero, 2020). Secondly, it is also the main place where foreigners can develop the tools to express themselves while getting to know a context in a way that is new in their whole family history. Moreover, as Lorenzo Milani remarked (1967), for some hours every day, schools keeps the students away from eventual degrading family and social contexts. At the same time multicultural classes provide a stimulating formative environment not only for foreigners but also for Italian students and teachers, who would gradually get used to deal with diversity.

3.1 Second-generation migrants in the Italian school system: a glance to statistics

This section aims at providing data on second-generation students in the schools, focusing on uneven trends within the population under analysis and on disparities between foreign and Italian students. In chapter 3 are then provided some of the interpretations made by researchers and scholars about the possible causes of such numbers and phenomena. In this section the strict definition of second-generation is adopted, referring to the children born in Italy from migrant parents, but in the light of the debate about definitions, data on non-Italian students are also reported, thus giving a more complete picture of this reality. The main source is the report on non-Italian citizen students referred to the school year 2017/2018, edited by Carla Borrini and Gemma De Sanctis and published in July 2019 by MIUR, the Italian Ministry for education, university, and research. Further sources are expressly mentioned.

Before moving on with the analysis it is necessary to summarise the general traits of the Italian educational system. Education in Italy is divided into five cycles: kindergarten (organized locally by city authorities) lasts 3 years and is attended by children from 3 to 6 years old; primary school lasts 5 years, and students are usually from 6 to 11 years old; middle school lasts 3 years, from 11 to 14 years old; finally upper secondary school or high school, lasting 5 years, offers three typologies of formation: lyceum, technical schools and professional schools. The last category releases a professional certificate after 3 years. Once accomplished the 5 years high school, the student may choose to enrol in a university class. Indeed, university is the almost natural continuum of lyceum. Italy recognizes ten years of compulsory education, from the age of 6 to the age of 16. The obligation may be fulfilled by public schools and state-recognized private schools, by professional education institutes authorized by the regional authorities, and by parental education. Minors also have the right/duty to formation, that is valid until the age of majority.

A growing phenomenon

The number of non-Italian citizens within schools is 842.000 over a total of 8.664.000, corresponding to the 9.7% of the overall school population. While the number of Italian students has slowly diminished during the last few decades, the amount of non-Italian students has increased (although recently at a slower pace): it increased by 500% in the decade 1998/1999 – 2007/2008, and only by 33.7% in the following ten years, from 2008/2009 to 2017/2018 (fig. 1). Considering the school year 2008/2009 as starting point, in the following ten years the number of students with a foreign citizenship increased by 32% in kindergarten, by 31% in primary school, by 24% in middle school and by 50% in secondary school. The increase in foreign students within education cycles is due to the rise of foreign residents on the Italian territory, who reached the symbolic number of 6 million in

2018, making up one-tenth of the total population (Santagati & Colussi, 2019). The recent slowdown in the rise of the foreign school population is attributed to multiple factors, such as the decrease in migratory flows, the presence of minors who do not get access to the educational system, low participation of foreign students in kindergartens, dropouts and possibly the increasing number of students who obtain the Italian citizenship before the completion of education (ibid.).
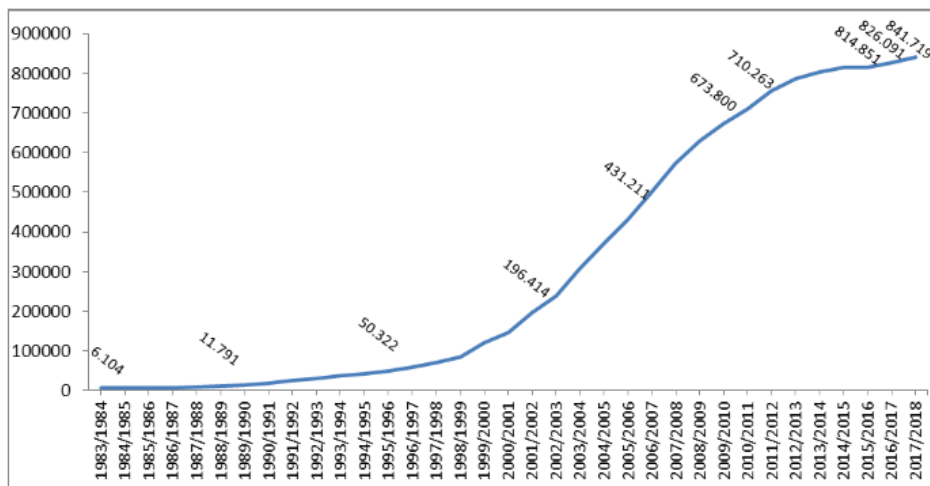

Figure 1. Number of students not having the Italian citizenship from school year 1983/84 to 2017/18.

An increasing number of foreign students is represented by the second generation, which have increased by 28% in the last 5 years, exceeding 500.000 units in the academic year 2016/2017 (fig.2). It combines for 6.1% of the total number of students and 63% of non-Italian students.
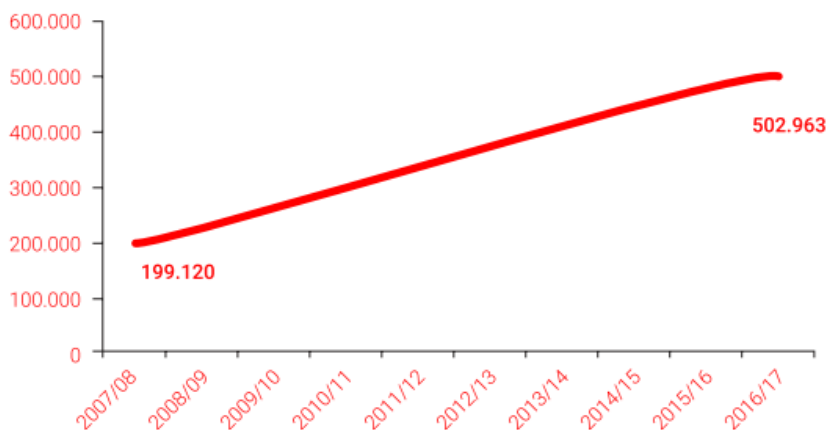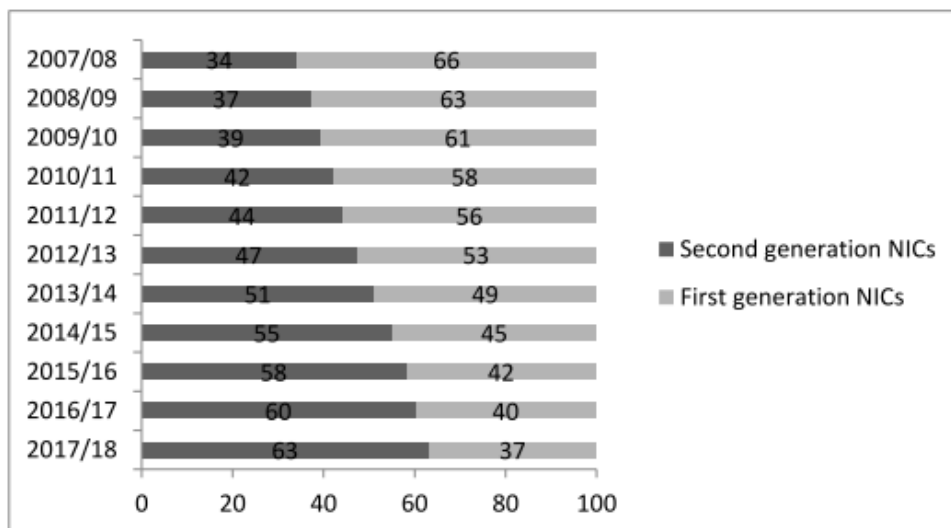

Figure 2. Number of second-generation students from school year 2007/08 to 2017/18 (from Santagati, 2019).

Within the time span of 10 years, first generation (G1) and second generation (G2) seem to have exchanged their tendencies: while in 2007/2008 the so called G1 was the 66% of the foreign school population and G2 represented the 34%, in 2017/2018 G2 made up the 63% and only the 37% is represented by the G1 (fig. 3) (Santagati, 2019).

Source: ISMU analysis on MIUR data

Figure 3. Percentage of first and second generation of non-Italian citizens from schoolyear 2007/08 to 2017/18 (from Santagati, 2019).

High school is the only school cycle where second-generation students are still a minority compared to foreign-born students, amounting to 31.8% of the total of foreign students. Nevertheless, considering the actual trends, it is predictable that in the next years they will turn into the majority. In 2017/2018, Italian and foreign-born students have diminished compared to the previous school year, while second-generation students have grown by more than 28.000 units, reducing the general drop in school population (fig. 4).
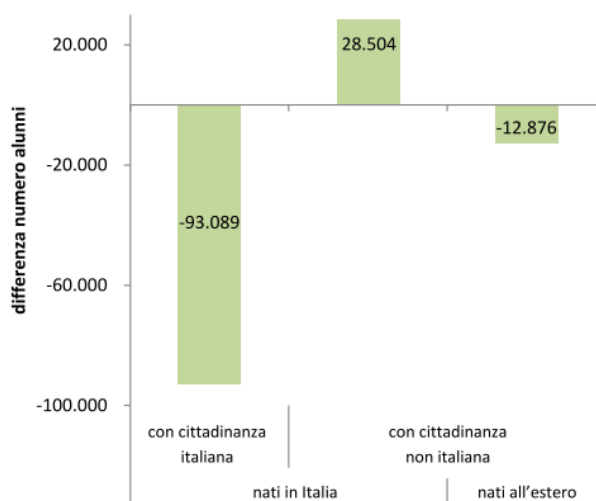

Figure 4. Variation of Italian citizenship students and not-Italian citizenship students (further separated between born in Italy and born in foreign country) in schoolyear 2017/18 compared to 2016/17.

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Countries of origins

Although one must always pay attention to not oversimplify the general picture by fossilizing foreign students within their origins, data on citizenship may be useful to analysis and intervention. The most frequent citizenships of foreign students generally reflect the presence of foreign communities in the country, namely Romanian (more than 158 000 students), Albanian (114 000 students), Moroccan (103 000 units) and Chinese (53 000 units). Almost half of the foreign students in Italian schools have European origins (47.2%), one-fourth has African origins (25.4%) and one-fifth has Asian roots (19.6%), followed by Americans (7.8%) and Oceanians (0.03%). Considering second-generation students only, they are the most represented within the Chinese community, where they combine for 82.3% of the students, followed by Moroccans and Albanians (Tab. 1). It is interesting to note that while the average of students who enrol into the upper secondary cycle among non-Italian citizens is 23%, Filipino, Moldovan and Ukrainian students are more than 30%.

Paesi	Totale CNI	Nati in Italia	
	v.a.	v.a.	% sul totale
Cina	52.928	43.552	82,3
Marocco	100.702	76.978	76,4
Albania	112.022	85.144	76,0
Filippine	26.472	17.738	67,0
India	26.172	15.403	58,9
Romania	155.747	91.389	58,7
Egitto	22.777	12.635	55,5
Moldavia	25.105	12.213	48,6
Pakistan	19.022	8.091	42,5
Ucraina	19.778	7.927	40,1
Subtotale	560.725	371.070	66,2
Altri paesi	268.163	157.301	58,7
Totale [a]	828.888	528.371	63,7

Fonte: ANS (Anagrafe Nazionale Studenti)
(a) I valori di questa tavola differiscono lievemente da quelli riportati nelle tavole precedenti poiché, per aggregare i nati in Italia per Paese, è necessario utilizzare i dati dell'ANS e non quelli della Rilevazione "Dati generali".

Table 1. First column: country of citizenship; second column: total number of not-Italian citizenship students, third column: number of second-generation students; fourth column; percentage of the latter ones on the total number. Data referred to schoolyear 2017/18 (from Santagati, 2019)

Concentration in schools and classes

Ministerial provisions require that the number of non-Italian citizens having a poor knowledge of Italian language must be less than 30% of students in each class and in each school. Without considering the linguistic level, data show a rising trend in the number of the "over 30%" schools, especially in Lombardia, Emilia Romagna and Veneto. The patterns of single classes' composition confirm the trend: there has been a slight but constant increase in the percentage of classes with more than 30% of foreign students, from 5% in 2015/2016 to 5.3% in 2016/2017 reaching 5.6% in

2017/2018, especially due to second-generation students. Referring to students' distribution among school cycles, although kindergartens have the highest percentage of schools without any foreign student, it is especially there that schools with foreign students making up the majority of the pupils is on the rise. The low presence of foreign students in kindergartens may be justified by the tuition costs, not due for primary, secondary and high schools and by the fact that women in some migrant communities do not work, due to patriarchal models of the family, where the adult male is the breadwinner. Primary schools have the highest number of classes composed by more than 30% of foreign students. The lowest percentage of classes "over 30%" is registered within high schools, but they hold the highest percentages of second-generation students.

A research conducted by ORIM (Lombardia's Regional Observatory for Integration and Multi-ethnicity) on middle school classes in Lombardia where foreign students represented more than 30% of the class population demonstrates that high concentration of foreign students does not necessarily lead to negative results. It emerges that situations of discomfort are determined by the concentration of male students and of students with low socio-economic conditions rather than by the variable "concentration of foreign students", although this may intersect with the economic status. Furthermore, a higher presence of foreign students in the class positively influences the index on immigration acceptance, confirming that daily interactions with foreign students promotes tolerance and multiculturalism (Colombo, 2014).

Geographical distribution

Data on foreign students are uneven in many respects. First, the geographical distribution of foreign student is not homogenous within the Italian territory. The regions with the highest number of non-Italian students are Lombardia, Emilia Romagna, Lazio and Piemonte. When incidence is considered Emilia Romagna takes the lead, with 16% of students with a foreign citizenship, followed by Lombardia, Toscana, Umbria, Veneto and Piemonte. All the southern regions register an incidence below the national average of 9.7% (fig.5). Ten provinces alone register 41.4% of the total number of foreign students (Milano, Roma, Torino, Brescia, Bergamo, Firenze, Bologna, Modena, Verona, Treviso).
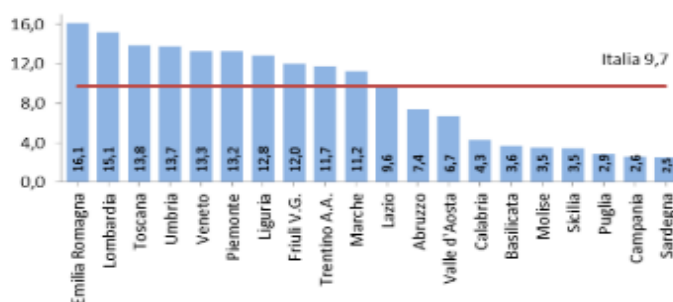

Figure 5. Percentage of non-Italian students on regional basis for school year 2017/18.

Second-generation students make up most of foreign students in 13 regions out of 20. The 7 regions where the first generation is more represented are the Southern ones and the islands (Sicilia and Sardegna). More specifically, the regions where the second generation exceeds the national average of 63% are in the North and in the Centre of the country (fig.6).
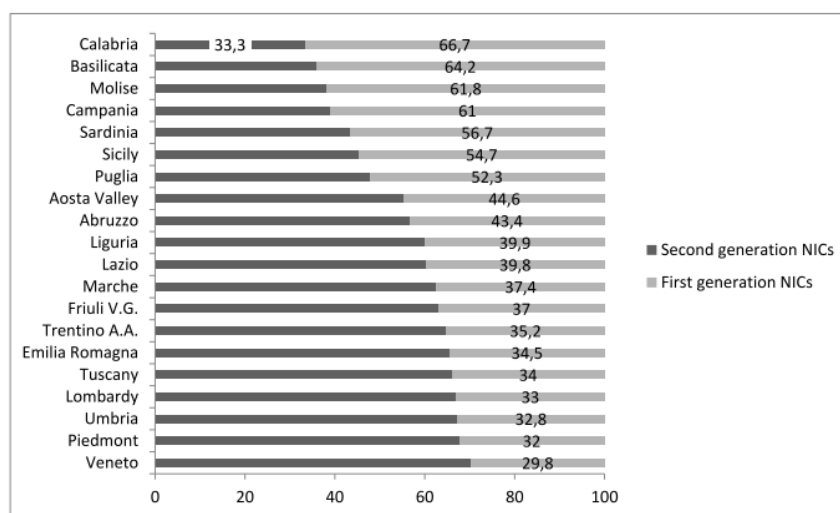
Source: ISMU analysis on MIUR data

Figure 6. Percentage of first (dark grey) and second (light grey) generation students on regional basis for school year 2017/18.

Presence in different educational cycles

Another uneven data is the schooling rate: while that of students who are in the compulsory education age-range is similar to that of their Italian counterparts (close to 100% for the 6-13 age-range and 90% for the 14-16 years-olds), the schooling rate before and after that age range is consistently inferior for foreign students in comparison with Italian students. In the 3-5 age range, the former group is more than three times less represented (Santagati, 2019), and only 65.8% of non-Italian 17- and18-years-old citizens is still part of the education system, compared to 79.7% of the Italian students. This means that one-third of foreign students drop off during the last two years of high school, before completing the expected formation.

Altogether, an increasing number of students with a foreign citizenship attends high school. In 2017/2018, 82.1% of qualified students enrolled in upper secondary school, and 9.1% enrolled in schools of professional formation accredited by the regions. As for the Italian peers, the lower is the final score obtained at the end of middle school and the highest is the probability of enrolment in a professional school, on the contrary the highest is the score, the highest is the probability of choosing a lyceum. The difference between Italian citizens and non-Italian citizens lies in the final score: the majority of the formers' final score is equal or more than 8/10, while for the latter is 6 or 7/10. The highest the score, the greater is the number of students who opt for a technical school or a lyceum

rather than a professional school. A positive trend is registered among second-generation students, who choose academic trajectories considered more challenging and less frequently professional schools. They are mostly represented in technical schools and in lyceums, while foreign-born students opt for professional and technical schools (fig. 7).
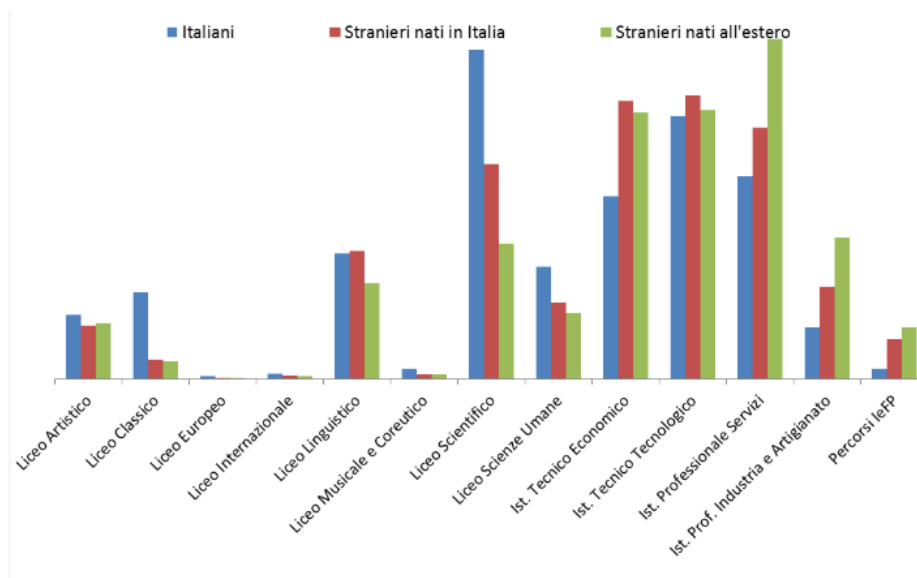

Figure 7. Distribution of Italian (blue), second-generation (red) and foreign-born non-Italian students (green) among high schools for school year 2017/2018

Delays and dropouts

Another critical point is the high percentage of delays, determined by the almost systematic placement of non-Italian citizen students in lower classes and by the repetition of the same school year. In 2017/2018, 9.6% of Italian students registered a school delay, in contrast to 30.7% of foreign students. The percentage of delays of the latter is approximately six times higher than that of Italians in primary and middle school, and three times higher in high school (fig. 8). During the first year of high school, 57% of foreign students are in a class correspondent to their age, while during the last year of high school the percentage goes down to 34%. Data confirms that the first two years of high school are crucial in determining school delays.
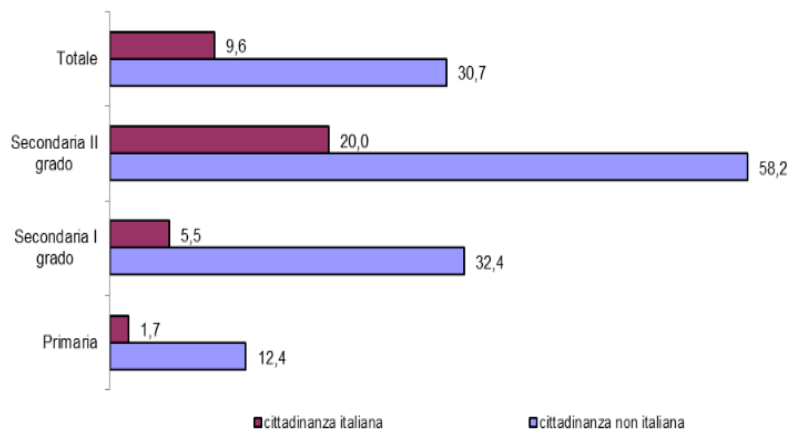
Figure 8. Percentage of Italian (purple) and non-Italian students (light purple) who have school delays by school cycle for school year 2017/2018. From top: total, high, middle and primary school.

Delays are often related to dropouts. Again, foreign students have different percentages compared to Italian students. The European index ELET (Early Leaving from Education and Training) points out that the national average of dropouts is 14%, and that of non-Italian citizens is 33.1%, numbers that are significantly higher than the European 2017 average drop-out rate of 10% for native students and 19% for foreign students. Italy is one of the European countries with the biggest gap between Italian and foreign students (Santagati, 2019) (fig. 9). Moreover, as expected, the gap is wider in Southern regions (Tab. 2).
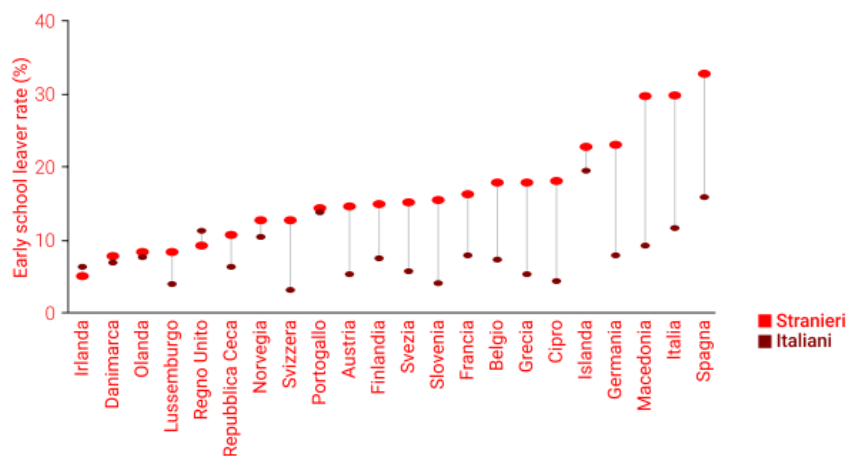
Fonte: Eurostat

Figure 9. Percentage of early leavers among 18 to 24-years-olds in European countries in 2017 (from Santagati, 2019).

Area Geografica	Genere	Cittadinanza		
		Italiana	Non italiana	Totale
Nord	Maschi	11,2	29,3	13,4
	Femmine	6,0	29,6	8,9
	Maschi e femmine	8,7	29,5	11,3
Centro	Maschi	10,8	33,4	13,3
	Femmine	5,6	26,9	8,0
	Maschi e femmine	8,3	30,2	10,7
Mezzogiorno	Maschi	20,1	58,3	21,5
	Femmine	14,1	43,1	15,2
	Maschi e femmine	17,2	50,8	18,5
Italia	Maschi	14,8	35,0	16,6
	Femmine	9,3	31,2	11,2
	Maschi e femmine	12,1	33,1	14,0
				Fonte: Istat

Table 2. Percentages of 18 to 24-years old early leavers by geographical area and gender. First column: geographical area; second column: gender, third column: citizenship (Italian, non-Italian, total).

Performances

Another index of disparities concerns the performance of students evaluated by the INVALSI tests. The number of the so-called low performers, those who do not reach the passing grade, is higher for foreign students, particularly for those who are born abroad, while second-generation students place themselves halfway between them two. This may be considered as a positive index of integration, but the difference in the results based on the nationality is still significant, at least in the test measuring the knowledge of Italian language (Santagati, 2019) (fig. 10).
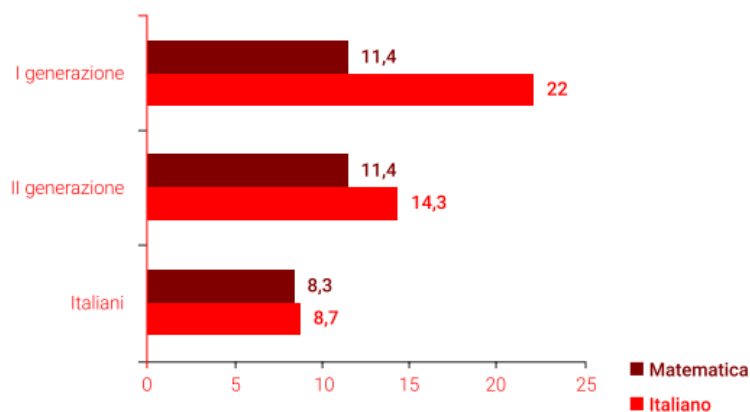

Figure 10. Percentage of low performers in Math (brown) and Italian language (red) according to 2016 INVALSI data. From top to down: first-generation, second-generation and Italian students (from Santagati, 2019).

Gender differences

A significative variable to be considered is gender. Schooling rates, the distribution within upper secondary schools, delays and dropouts significantly change when data on female students are analysed separately from data on male students. In fact, generally the former register more positive statistics. Except for the kindergarten, female students' schooling rates are higher, especially for the 17-years-olds, when a consistent number of foreign students drop out of school: the female schooling rate goes down from 93.8% to 75.9%, while the male rate goes from 91.7% to 58.2%. Female students are more present in lyceums compared to their male counterparts: while 27% of foreign students enrol in a lyceum, the percentage increases for female students by more than 10%. Female students also have generally less delay than male students: at 14 years old, 34% of the former ones are not in the first year of high school as they should have and at 18 years 60% of them have a school delay, while males go from 46% at 14 years old to 72% at 18 years old (fig. 11). Consequently, also the dropout rate is slightly inferior for females than for males (31.2% against 35%).
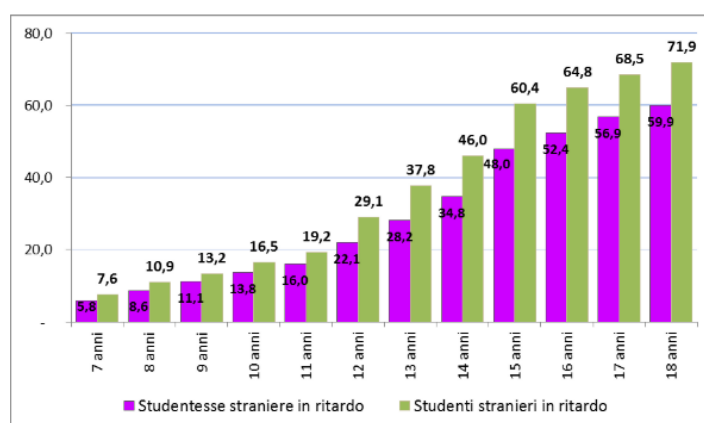
Figure 11. Percentage of foreign students having school delays by age and gender (female students in purple, male students in green)

A worrying phenomenon to be highlighted in relation to gender is the number of Italian NEET young people (Neither in Employment nor in Education or Training), the highest in the EU. According to ISTAT data, the NEET people aged 15-29 years amount to 23.4% of the population, while the EU average is 14.4%. Non-Italian citizens have an even highest incidence of NEET, amounting to the 34.4%; while for males the gap between Italian and foreign youngsters is irrelevant, there is a difference of 20% between Italian and non-Italian women (Santagati, 2019).

3.2 Inside and outside schools: perspectives on second generation students' integration in sociological literature

In the first chapter it was attempted to provide an overlook of the discussion on second-generation students, including the reasons behind the choice to assign a new term to the children of migration. The ongoing debate over the definition of this relatively new sociological category is a further demonstration of the complexity of the subject under study, characterized by a highly heterogenous population. Indeed, the urgency to adopt a new approach when dealing with the second-generation youth has emerged when it became unquestionable that under many aspects the children differed significantly from their parents. Not only their presence in the receiving country is not fully determined by their own project, but under many aspects they have more in common with their Italian peers than with their parents. Ambrosini (2004) underlines the fact that they often do not accept the subordinate integration of their parents, refusing low-skilled employments. Moreover, they are frequently opposed or indifferent to the cultural models of their countries of origin. This is particularly true when considering gender issues, especially in those countries where women are perceived as endowed with less rights and possibilities than men (Ambrosini, 2004; Bozzetti, 2018). Furthermore, a "role-reversal" may take place between parents and their offspring since the latter often learns the Italian language better and more quickly, and because she/he is able to build more stable relationships within the receiving country. The loss of parental authority is generally worsened by the parents' weak or inexistent social networks following the reconfiguration of the social relations due to the transfer in the new country (Eve, 2013). While studying the dynamics within the classes in a school in Turin, Arianna Santero (2020) found out that it was not rare that students born abroad accused their parents for being responsible of their eradication from the native environment. The resentment often results into the exacerbation of the natural parent-child conflicts linked to pre-adolescence and adolescence, aggravated by the migratory project. Another crucial determinant of the necessity to separate children from the parents for the purpose of conducting research is the perception of the public. As it will be confirmed by the empirical study in chapter 4, society's recognition or, on the contrary, denigration is a key factor shaping the identity of the individual. Ceravolo and Molina (2013) dedicated a paragraph of their analysis of the second generation to the relatively positive reputation that they enjoy compared to that of their parents in the eyes of the receiving society. Indeed, a novelty is more easily perceived with suspicion compared to recurring phenomena. As it is confirmed by those who believe in the natural integration of the immigrant population in the long run, the routinization of any event fosters a positive public attention to it, or at least his perception as an habitual matter of fact.

Another peculiar phenomenon belonging to the second generation is the associationism which has increased in recent years (Caritas, 2019). While generally the impact of migrant associations is much

more effective and visible at the local level, in 2016 second-generation youngsters managed to form a cohesive national network regrouping more than 20 associations under the name of CoNNGI (the National Coordination of the Italian New Generation). The CoNNGI, who officially became an association in 2017, was born from the will of their members to react to the absence of political recognition and juridical rights clashing with their shared sense of belonging to the nation. The main campaign sponsored by the CoNNGI concerns the obtainment of a facilitated access to citizenship, where the school attendance and the obtainment of school certificates was one of the main arguments used to show the injustice of the Italian State's denial of the citizenship rights. Italy is currently one of the European countries adopting the most restrictive measures in this regard. Individuals who are born on the Italian soil from foreign parents cannot be Italian Citizens until reaching the age of 18, and after having demonstrated that they have been residing into the country uninterruptedly for at least ten years. The debate over reforming the requirements to have access to Italian citizenship have been going through an intense debate, but no consistent change has been registered so far.

Behind the school benches

It must be acknowledged that the rising number of students behind the school benches, especially within tertiary education, point to the direction of an increasingly more consistent presence of multicultural classes. Within this framework, improvements of foreign students within schools are undeniable under many aspects, especially for those students who are born and raised in Italy, who benefit from the early socialisation which has taken place in the receiving country (Molina, 2010). Some has also pointed to the positive skills developed through the migratory background: the greater challenges faced by those students would increase their flexibility and adaptability compared to their Italian counterparts (Santagati, 2019). In some cases, the advantages of multicultural classes may be experienced by the Italian students, who would easily accept migration as part of their daily life and embrace democratic and pluralistic values (Colombo, 2014). Furthermore, progresses are confirmed by the raising presence of foreign students within lyceums and universities. On the other hand, there is almost a 30% gap in the obtainment of a lyceum diploma between foreigners and Italian students, and tertiary education attainment in Italy is still the lowest of the OECD countries (Bozzetti, 2018). Moreover, it is often recognized that the improvements made are more ascribed to the goodwill of students, teachers and deans, as well as to the capacity of some teachers to be trusted by their students rather than by the effects of ministerial directives (Molina, 2012; Ceravolo & Molina, 2013; Bozzetti, 2018). It is imperative that the Italian education system is updated to take into consideration an increasingly more heterogenous population. The lesson taught by Bourdieu and Passeron, Freire, and Milani should teach both educators and politicians to listen to the urgencies coming from different groups instead of accommodating those of the "standard" population. Indeed, the persistence of many

indicators of disparities points to the necessary to put an end the system's inability or unwillingness to end its immobilism.

Before reviewing the indicators of disparities between non-Italian and Italian students, it is important to keep in mind that, at least for the moment, there lacks a unitary categorization able to grasp the essential characteristics of the second generation. This is possibly so because the personal and school trajectories have not proven to be univocal among foreign students. Although many different factors intersect and result into material disadvantages, individual life stories play a major role in determining the options and the choices of the individual (Bozzetti, 2018). As reported in the section dedicated to statistics, data gathered at the national level highlight a significative delay of foreign students in comparison with Italian students, determined by rejections and by what has been recognized by many authors as a process of institutional systemization of delays, since foreign students just arrived into the country are often located in classes with younger students. According to Santagati (2019) the delays are a significant cause of disengagement from education and training. It is not coincidental that dropout rates of foreign students are, once again, larger than those of Italians. Indeed, when Milani wrote about the elimination of the possibility to reject as one of the main school reforms to be implemented, he referred precisely to the causal relationship between rejections and dropouts. According to him, the most probable effect of the school failure is the mental and eventually physical departure of the student from the school since this procedure disregards the real needs of a growing person. Data on second generation students seem to confirm his reflexions.

A further factor that was already mentioned in the previous section are school performances. On the one hand, authors highlight the reduction of the performance gap between foreigners and Italians. For instance, Colombo (2014) points out that when low-performers' results are assessed considering equal social factors (income, occupational class, school qualifications of the parents) the difference between foreign and Italian students is reduced by 6%. Moreover, Molina (2012) stresses the fact that foreign students perform systematically worse than the Italians at the INVALSI tests, but when considering the middle-range classification theorized by Rumbaut (1997), second generation's and 1.75 generation's results are significantly better than those of 1.5 and 1.25 generation. On the other hand, when the socio-economic status variable is considered, disparities still remain (ibid.). Colombo (2014) enlarges the focus, including further groups of people other than first generations deserving further attentions, such as students without or with a weak parental support, students with high geographical mobility, and those with scarce popularity among their group of peers. Bozzetti (2019) while assessing the determinants of the achievement gap underlines that the gender variable has recently become less relevant compared to ethnic group belonging, cultural context, values and prejudices of the receiving society, historical periods, and notably personal features. A further, controversial element affecting school performances is, according to some, the concentration of

foreign students within the same class, favoured indeed by the possibility offered to family to select the school they prefer based on the offers made on the school market rather than by geographical proximity (Santero, 2020). This option is either deemed positive since it allows students to choose the school more adapt to their needs (or rather to meet the parents' expectations about them), or it is condemned for the creation of schools with less and less Italian students. The assessment of the high concentration of foreign students may have different interpretations too. Following the arguments who condemn the "segregation" in US schools, concentration has been traditionally considered detrimental to students, but on the other hand, as demonstrated in the previous section, it may promote a major awareness of diversity and fosters adaptability skills (Colombo, 2014).

The disparities that have been reviewed are determined by multiple comprehensive factors belonging to socio-demographic, cultural, and temporal aspects, who refer to the degree of permanence of the migrants into the territory, the duration of the new composition of the classes and the presence of critical events (Colombo, 2014). Another classification may be the presence of hard and soft barriers hindering the access to education of the foreign population. Bozzetti (2018) writes about economics as a hard barrier, and the lack of social, symbolic and cultural capital, lack of support and low linguistic skills as soft barriers to the access to higher education. Often the different components intersect worsening the situation potentially without any end stopping the process. Maddalena Colombo (2014) describes this dynamic as a negative spiral of exclusion comprising poverty, isolation and self-isolation, labelling by the group of peers, segregations, rise in material and psychological deprivation, that may be determined by the institutional context and/or by the micro-interactions within the classrooms. For what concern the latter, it is widely accepted that the types of personal relations are key determinants of the individual and collective wellbeing or, on the contrary, discomfort. An interesting consideration concerns the teachers' attachment to the theory of cultural deprivation, according to which foreign students automatically lack the requirements of the schooling programs, thus making of paramount importance to compulsively fill in the voids with additional knowledges. To Santero (2020), this approach totally devalues the real meaning of interculturality and pluralism, viewed with superficiality instead of realizing the real need of a reform of the school system. This analysis recalls that of Bourdieu and Passeron, Freire and Milani, when pointing out the necessity to re-shape the system by starting from the requirements of those who have been excluded until contemporary times. Although the relevance of personal exchanges is essential to the development of foreign students, at the same time it is necessary to recognize, again, that the system must take his own responsibility in giving comprehensive guidelines and recommendations.

The role played by the family history and behaviours is particularly relevant, both intentionally and unintentionally, especially because the students are often very young. Unfortunately, Italy is one of the OECD countries where the parents' socio-economic status is among the main determinant of the

child's school performance. Colombo (2014) underlines this dramatic data to stress the fact that schools should be the institution in charge of levelling inequalities, instead of reproducing them. Left aside the socio-economic data, many authors recognize the importance of parents in influencing their children's trajectories. What emerges from data is that parents still invest thoroughly in the education of their offspring. The fact that the migratory project is often enacted to offer a better future to daughters and sons reinforces the motivations to encourage their education. Nevertheless, as demonstrated by a study on parental involvement in school-related activities, migrant parents face both general and specific barriers to participation in the school life of their children (Gasperoni & Mantovani, 2018). The first type of impediment refers to all those variables negatively affecting Italian and foreign parents, such as a low level of education, a low socio-economic status, working time constraints and poor knowledge of the education system; while the obstacles linked to the migratory background are linguistic and cultural aspects (ibid.). Moreover, it should be remembered that general barriers are very likely to intersect with specific barriers.

Language and narration

The importance of the language and thus dialogue has been highlighted in the previous chapter, through the words of Paulo Freire and Lorenzo Milani. This paragraph is designed to give space to an issue that has not been thoroughly explored yet in relation to second-generation students, in this dissertation. The linguistic competences of migrant parents and children is probably the most visible barrier to full participation, both in public and school life. As it was already mentioned, national results obtained by the evaluation of Italian competences within the INVALSI test confirm the existence of a visible gap between first generation, second generation and Italian students. Different initiatives have been designed in order to deepen the mastery of the Italian language of foreign students. Among them, "Italian to study" was a project implemented in the school year 2011/2012 in schools in Turin aiming at reinforcing the competences in written Italian to facilitate foreign students' ability to read and study (Molina, 2012). Another interesting and less known potential is the student's possibility and ability to narrate, which has proved to be relevant from the early stages of life to the adulthood. This statement in grounded on Paulo Freire's condemnation of the monopoly of narration in the hands of the teachers. In fact, the means and the tools for full expression should belong to both teachers and students, in order to fully develop their inwardness and potential capabilities. Graziella Favaro (2010) carried out a research in multicultural kindergartens classes in Modena and Milan to test language competences and suggest good practices in this regard. She identified three linguistic levels within the classes: basic, post- basic and advanced interlanguage, relevant to better understand the oral competences of foreign students the year before the entrance into primary school, on the eve of the teaching of the written Italian. Second-generation children often can express their basic needs, but they require words enabling them to shape more complex

thought' structures. She suggests adopting inter-discourses, a middle way between the oral and the written form of Italian.

Another pivotal element is the narration. Teachers should select at least two stories to work on every month, reading them, giving children the space to interpret them, and putting them on stage, developing activities of description (ibid.). The attention to the possibility to narrate the self has recently been applied to adult migrants too, through the Human Library methodology. Since 2020, the HLO (Human Libraries Organization) organizes events in more than 80 countries where people/books are willing to narrate themselves to other people eager to listen or intrigued by their cover. The rationale behind these encounters is, indeed, the saying "never judge a book by his cover" and the aim is the annihilation of prejudices and stereotypes through active dialogue. Migrants and refugees, disabled people, LGBTQ+ people are some of the genre offered by the human books. The narration of the self is not only beneficial to the reader/listener but also to the subject, who can finally give voice to the forms of oppression she/he has lived.

CHAPTER 4 - "Fitting in the class": a qualitative research on second generation students

4.1 Focus of the research

This intention that motivated the research is the will to explore the opinions of a sample of second-generation students about their experiences within the Italian educational system. As reported in the previous chapter, despite the improvement in the overall conditions, several critical points remain. The high dropout rates, the systemic delay, the concentration in technical and professional schools, and the lower performances compared to their Italian peers are indicators of exclusion and inequality in access to education. These facts clash with the rights enshrined in the Italian Constitution, that guarantee equal social dignity and the full development of the human person through the removal of those obstacles of an economic or social nature which constrain freedom and equality. This research arises from the will to investigate the reasons behind the divide between theory and practice. Although literature provides different relevant answers, it is complemented by the qualitative research made in first person.

The definition of second-generation students is subject to ongoing debate (cfr. Chapter 1). There are multiple classifications and different indicators highlighted by the literature. While the strict definition of second-generation refers to children born on the Italian territory from foreign parents, the definition adopted in this research is broader, and refers to the parental status, including all those children born from at least an immigrant parent, regardless of the place of birth (Ambrosini, 2005). Therefore, students having direct migratory experiences have been included into the analysis. Indeed, this choice extensively increases the number of possible variables able to shape the educational trajectories of students, but at the same time it well-represents the heterogenous nature of the phenomenon under analysis.

4.2 Methodology

The methodology chosen is that of a semi-structured interview with a sample of ten second-generation students, carried out via video-call, due to the current Covid-19 sanitary emergency that imposes severe limitations to movements. This technique of interviewing has unexpectedly shown positive sides. In fact, it has enabled the participation of interviewees from different geographical areas and it has allowed to complete the interviews in a relatively short time without any economic expense. Furthermore, the possibility to do interviews online overcomes the spatial barriers by creating a virtual common space that facilitates the communication in terms of space and time, but not only, since some interviewees felt at ease knowing that her/his physical presence was not required. On the other hand, the same denial of the physical encounter has a negative side. Indeed, the trivial fact that the camera represents a bidimensional (it can at best simulate the third dimension) rather than a 4D world debilitates human interactions and makes the interview incomplete. Consequently, the

nonverbal language is impeded from full expression, both because of the audio-visual limits of the camera itself and because its presence changes the attitudes of the interviewee.

The interview has been organized in four main parts. In the first part, the interviewees are asked questions in a questionnaire-like form, that includes all the variables requiring short answers, both on the interviewee in first person, (sex, age, residence, country of origins, time spent in Italy, qualification obtained, delays, occupational status, juridical status, religiosity), and variables concerning the family (country of origin, socio-economic, educational and juridical status of the parents). Then a stimulus is provided, where the interviewees are asked to freely describe their own educational path, focusing on difficulties and opportunities. Three main dimensions are kept under control: a) educational path evaluation, b) the presence of role models in influencing the educational path, c) the influence of other elements on the educational path (such as knowledge of the Italian language, perception of being Italian, perception of dynamics of exclusion or prejudices). In the third part, if some of the above-mentioned information is missing, the interviewer asks explicitly for them. The interview ends with the interviewees' plans and dreams. After each interview, considerations and impressions have been noted down.

The sample is formed by ten interviewees who have been selected through a network of contacts, by asking people personally known to mention someone that suited the required characteristics. The sample is made of four female and six male second-generation youngsters, from 17 to 27 years old. Three have Moroccan origins, two Romanian origins, two Peruvian, one Indian, one Nigerian and one Tunisian. Only three of them are identifiable as second-generation in the strict sense, while the other seven moved in Italy later on, between the age of 6 and 14. Six respondents attended the Italian school from the first year of elementary school, two of them from the first year of the middle school and one at the beginning of the upper secondary cycle; while only one student joined the Italian school system in the middle of a cycle, since she arrived in Italy when she was 8 years old.

The main criteria in evaluating a social research are precision, accuracy, reliability, and validity. The research methodology satisfies the first two criteria, while the degree of reliability and validity depends on the direct experience, memory, and disposition of the interviewees, preventing the possibility of any test. Ten instances would not have been enough to conduct a significative study on a certain territory. Thus, even though the importance of environmental conditions such as country of origin and cities and neighbourhoods of residence are considered to play a key role in determining the experience of students, the research did not take into consideration these variables. Under the lights of these considerations, the empirical research cannot be defined as an exhaustive study on second-generation students, but rather an exploratory study aimed at providing insights on the category under analysis.

4.3 Main results

Educational paths: choices, dropouts, and rejections

For what concerns the type of school chosen, four interviewees over the total of ten attended a lyceum, among which two chose the scientific studies while the other half chose human sciences; other four interviewees attended a technical school, and two a professional institute. It is interesting to note that three quarters of the female chose a lyceum, while five out of six males the professional or technical schools. Both the slight prevalent collocation of the sample in professional and technical schools and the correlation between the gender variable and the type of school is confirmed by official data, although in different percentages.

Half of the interviewees is not part anymore of the school system. Four of them left school before the completion of the upper secondary education cycle, while the fifth, a girl, the only among them enrolled in a lyceum, took the diploma and was constrained by family circumstances not to continue her formation attending the university as she would have desired. She is also the only of those five who is currently unemployed. Considering the four who are working, two are sincerely satisfied with their job, but one of them found a satisfactory work in London after having left the studies in Italy and after the completion of formation as a personal trainer in the UK. Only one person is doing a job consistent with his studies, but he would like to change work and possibly field because of the low degree of social mobility. Hence, the four people working received a professional/technical formation, but only one reached the personal and professional fulfilment in Italy. This may suggest that for different reasons professional and technical schools did not manage to meet the expectations of the majority of those active in the job market.

None of the five being into the education system has been rejected, while four of those that are not studying anymore have been, confirming the positive correlation between repetition of the same school year and the interruption of the studies. Of course, the two variables may constitute a spurious relationship, but the result still testifies to the failure of the rejection in producing positive effects on the student. In fact, the possibility to be rejected exists in order to possibly help the individual to better acquire the contents that they have missed, due to poor evaluations or too many absences, with the final aim to be better integrated into the school system. This theoretical function contrasts with the evidence of reality.

Dynamics of exclusion

One of the main objectives of the research is the identification and the analysis of the dynamics of exclusion that each of the interviewees found during their educational formation. It is important to point out that these processes happen mostly during the lower and the first years of the upper secondary school, when the person goes through an important period of transition involving biological, social, and educative aspects. It may be assumed that in such period the students are easily led by their points of reference's opinions rather than by their own, not yet well-shaped due to a superficial knowledge of certain phenomena. For instance, George, a 22-year-old man from Romania tells about the impossibility to establish a relationship of friendship with his classmates because of the prohibition of their parents to go out with him.

"Since they were children, I cannot talk of a genuine racism (...). I remember that parents used to judge me a lot. When I asked other students to go out, many of them used to tell me "No because my parents don't want to"". (George, 22 years old, male, born in Romania)

It is thus vital to highlight the key role played by schools, the second most important educative institution, in providing students with the analytical tools and positive examples to deal with a multicultural world.

It is interesting to note that the three interviewees born in Italy are the only that have never experienced nor have ever perceived any dynamic of exclusion on any ground by any agent. The experiences made by one respondent are worth to be reported. Habiba is 21 years old and her parents are Tunisians. She is the only girl born in Italy and the only who is enrolled at the university. She reports two singular episodes, demonstrating that the opposite of discrimination is not always inclusion. Her teacher during elementary school used to give her old clothes and food, embarrassing her in front of the class, while the Italian teacher at the lyceum used to assign her higher marks because of what she called "the regression of her personal records", referring to the Tunisian origin of the girl. Consequences have been a damage in the first case and an injustice in the second case. These instances are of relevance in that they show the dangers of actions led by good intensions but not grounded on the certainty of knowledge. They prove the necessity for teachers to receive an appropriate formation on the possible approaches to intercultural classes, as well as the importance of communication between teachers and parents at the early stages of life of the pupils, and between teachers and students themselves afterwards, during the upper secondary cycle.

The seven students born abroad all experienced different forms of exclusion. It is here attempted to classify them according to the degree of violence perceived and the impact on the individual. For three of them, these episodes have a name and a face. Two of these are bullying episodes of racism that involved the use of physical violence. It is interesting to analyse the different impact that they

had on the two victims. Vlad, a 22-year-old university student of Romanian origins, states that the violence did not affect his love for studying and constitutes an isolated episode, but for sure it did not contribute to increase the already low personal involvement of the student into the school settings.

"Since I was foreigner I have been victim of bullying, they got their hands on me, it is not something fun but it happened; but I have to say that this didn't affect my love for studying. I have always been a person that loves learning on his own. (…) I have never loved the school environment, but I knew that it was necessary [to go to school], first because it was compulsory and then because it was the right thing to do." (Vlad, 22 years old, male, born in Romania)

On the other hand, Kadija, a 27-year-old woman born in Morocco, denounces a situation that profoundly affected her, delaying her decision to wear the hijab. According to her, too often bullying episodes take place and too often the victims remain silent due to the conspiracy of silence of peers and professors. It is on the latter that the burden of responsibilities weights the most, due to their institutional role.

"You are a teacher, an educator, you have the duty to arrive where the parents cannot or do not want to arrive." (Kadija, 27 years old, female, Morocco)

The third respondent's experience differs from the previous ones in that he was victim of verbal violence on the parts of his teacher. Natan is a 23-year-old man of Nigerian origins. He records the Italian teacher making fun of him in front of the class due to his slower comprehension of grammar rules. Her comments prevented the establishment of an equal relationship between the class and the victim, contributing to his isolation and sense of inappropriateness.

"There was a teacher who fuelled the hatred of my classmates, she taught grammar. When I did not understand something, she made fun of me and my classmates laughed, I am sure they did not laugh at me to be nasty, they laughed because it was probably funny to them. Still, they isolated me, I turned in on myself, and my classmates saw the weakness, the flaw in me". (Natan, 23 years old, male, born in the Netherlands from a Nigerian mother)

The other respondents have witnessed more general forms of exclusion grounded on of their migratory background. Three main root-causes can be identified: discrimination based on the origin, discrimination based on the language and discrimination based on the socio-economic status. The first category has the most direct relation with the migratory background. In practice, the pupils report of insults from the Italian peers, sometimes backed by their parents. Judgements based on appearances such as the colour of the skin and the different way of dressing, as well as verbal violence are vivid memories.

"I think that S. and J. particularly affected me (...) I still remember that they used to say "you have to take the boat and come back where you come from!"." (George, 22 years old, male, born in Romania)

"At school I met some people that discriminated me or judged me, because they always see that you are a foreigner or that you are dressed in a different way". (Yassine, 21 years old, male, born in Morocco)

Natan, who is also the only interviewee of sub-Saharan origins, made the harshest criticism of what he calls "passive racism". He thinks that the majority of people in a certain environment, school included, builds around the agent an "invisible cage" where they can only act within the limits of what is expected and allowed from the community itself. This means that the agent often does not even realize to be constrained in such boundaries. As Bourdieu and Passeron and Focault theorised, the most effective form of censorship is reached when the system imposes self-censorship on the excluded groups of people, in such a way that they do not perceive the forced boundaries. Natan spoke for a long time about a bilateral mechanism of exclusion that comes both from the newly installed population and the receiving society.

"A city of 100 thousand inhabitants finds itself hosting an African population, people from every corner of Africa, that doesn't seem to be willing to learn its culture, but on the other hand the city is not allowing them to, because it places them in the invisible cage." (Natan, 23 years old, male, born in the Netherlands from a Nigerian mother)

Forms of discrimination based on the language are detected by the two interviewees who arrived in Italy relatively late compared to the others, one at 12 and the other at 14. They both mention the irritation coming from their classmates and teachers when they realized they had to slow down to wait for them. This is among the reasons that contributed to the decision by one of them to change school and to the sense of inappropriateness of the other. The remaining interviewees, who arrived in Italy when they were 6 or 8 years old, learnt the language quickly, with a positive influence on their experiences at school. Language confirms itself as a key factor in the creation of positive relationships within the class. The fact that none of the respondents speak Italian with the family, except two of them that speak a melange of different languages, confirms the relevance of the school as the main space of encounter between the child and the receiving culture.

The third and last form of discrimination is related to the socio-economic status. Maria, a 24-year-old woman born in Peru, stated that the perception of her poorer economic condition compared to the classmates is the worst memory of the school years. Even though she did not receive unpleasant comments about her status, she always perceived it as a condition of inferiority.

"At the beginning and at the end of my school career I have always felt the difference in the socio-economic class between me and the others". (Maria, 24 years old, female, born in Perù)

Indeed, the concept of intersectionality, developed by the activist and legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, provides a widely accepted framework in dealing with this sort of issues. It refers to the fact that a status of inequality and disadvantage lived by an individual is sometimes determined by multiple factors whose union exacerbates the situation. Having a migratory background and belonging to a low socio-economic class are both likely to determine a low degree of social recognition on the parts of the receiving society.

Family background: socio-economic status and parenting style

Despite the causal relationship between the migratory background and the social class is less obvious than in the other two cases, it still exists. The mothers of the interviewees do and did mainly low-skilled jobs relegated to the domestic sphere, often in the informal sector, such as caretaker, baby-sitter, private assistant of disabled children. Two are housewives and one is currently unemployed. The only mother doing a higher-skill job (hotel supervisor) works in London. The range of professional occupation of the fathers is wider but information is incomplete. Four of the interviewees do not know the job of their fathers, either because they are not in touch or because they are not sure (anyway two are not in Italy), one is unemployed and the others do not do skilled labours. Overall, four of ten respondents live in family receiving just one income. One of them had to temporarily renounce to the university career because her mother could not afford the costs of higher education. The six years she spent in high school have been very difficult, since she could hardly reconcile the role of student and that of a second mother for her younger brothers. This case is an example of an extreme situation where the older child must assist the genitor in taking care of the family.

Half of the respondents mention that their parents, mothers especially, really cared about the offspring's education. Four of them have been guided by their parents in crucial moments of their educational path, either through motivational support, encouragement, or concrete assistance in the learning of specific topics. One was even prevented by his mother to choose a professional high school because she thought it would not have educated him properly. The attention of non-Italian parents towards the education of their children is natural since the relocation of the family is often led by the willingness to offer their offspring a better future, facilitated by the obtainment of qualifications. This is particularly true when considering that often the degrees issued in the countries of origin are not recognized by the Italian legal system. This limited research confirms the theory: the degrees got by two mothers are not deemed valid in Italy, preventing them from finding a job consistent with their formation and compelling them to find jobs into the domestic informal sector.

In some cases, the beginning of the school career in Italy for the student corresponds to that of the parents, who learn Italian together with the child. One respondent, Habiba, says that her mother helped her with the homework, and by doing so she learnt Italian. Often the children know the language and certain mechanisms typical of the receiving country better than their parents, and they substitute for them in the accomplishment of specific tasks. Sometimes the authority of the parents turns out to be undermined. For instance, a respondent says that now that he "made it", the mother let him take decisions concerning the future instruction of his younger sister.

Beyond notions: school as a space of relationships

While in common discourses school is often depicted as just a place where students go be educated, it is interesting to note that when discussing their personal experience of the school, all the respondents talked more often about aspects related to socialization (school climate and relationships) than discussing issues directly related to education, such as contents and pedagogical methods. More specifically, friendships and affective ties are the most common answers to the question about the best elements of school. Five interviewees explicitly mention friendship, three respondents appreciate students, professors and parents who tried to understand their situation and to help them, two liked the welcoming and inclusive environment the most. On the other hand, three interviewees mention racism, judgement, and exclusion as the worst memories of school, while other three harshly criticised certain mechanisms enacted by the teachers. This last strand of criticisms has to do with a gap that the students perceive between certain functions to be performed by teachers and the failure to carry them out.

"Teachers should pay special attention to students who are shier, who speak less, who are closed in on themselves. During group activities, how can you not notice that there is always that girl or that boy that no one considers, of course you notice him, you cannot say you don't, of course you see that there is a pupil that no one looks at, that no one picks. I think that it's all about small things, small details that one is supposed to notice." (Kadija, 27 years old, female, born in Morocco)

"The failure to enact a genuine, original integration by teachers produces at times serious consequences on the student." (Natan, 23 years old, male, born in the Netherlands from a Nigerian mother)

As stated in the two opinions, school systematically fails to identify and include emarginated students. In the dedicated paragraph, three possible patterns of exclusion have been described. It is the school's duty to detect the vulnerable subjects and elaborate strategies to include them. The perception of being part of a community enormously helps the individuals in discovering themselves and the receiving environment. The fact that all respondents identify as the most positive factors about school the creation of stable social relations support this point. George Herbert Mead, the founder of

interactionist sociology, proved that the sense of the self is constructed also in relation to what the surrounding environment makes us perceive. The interviewees themselves admit that an important element in their experience in Italy has been determined by the explicit and implicit messages sent by the receiving society, and this is true both for small and larger communities.

"The thing I liked the most is that I fit in the classes, I have always felt the welcoming environment coming from my classmates" (Maria, 24 years old, female, born in Peru)

Of course, the sense of inclusiveness does not depend solely on the teachers. Most of the interviewees changed class a relevant number of times, more than what has been required by the passage from one cycle of instruction to another, and only three of them followed the scheduled path. This is due to different reasons: rejection, relocation with the family and, in high school, difficulties encountered at the chosen school. Indeed, the multiple changes had different effects, according to the person. Two respondents felt them as a burden on their shoulders (Maria and George).

"Every time I had to change school or change school cycle, I had to start all over again, that's why at the beginning it was complicated… I had the strength to succeed despite being shy, to succeed in integrating after a while, but in a relative manner." (Maria, 24 years old, female, born in Peru)

Also for Vlad the experience was not always positive, since the months following the beginning of a new cycle or class have been characterized by difficult times and a sense of detachment from the school, with a low degree of involvement in contents and context. Other respondents did not give weight to the changes, while others positively dealt with them: Gianluca, a 22-year-old man of Peruvian origins and Aksa, a young 17-year-old girl from India voluntarily decided to go to other schools in order to improve their learning conditions, and Kadija seized the opportunity to take an important decision in a moment of transition from one country to another, namely that of wearing the hijab. Regardless of the individual perception of the shake-ups, these may hinder the establishment of relationships, thus the creation of an inclusive environment. As more interviewees acknowledged, it is by knowing each other for what they are that stereotypes are defeated, and a genuine inclusion is realized.

A different Italianness

The above-mentioned interactionist theory advanced by Mead according to which self-perception is influenced by how the subject thinks she/he is viewed by the community is applicable to the macro-community of the nation. An interviewee, Habiba, never questioned the fact of being Italian since people around her have always considered her as such, while, on the contrary, a tough criticism comes from a student who cannot define himself Italian because the generalized Other never perceived him as a co-national due to the colour of his skin, causing a profound sense of frustration.

"I cannot wake up in the morning and consider myself an Italian just because I've been here for ten years, in theory yes, I can cook carbonara, I eat pizza, I do everything, I know by heart the Italian stereotypes, I study the masterpieces, I read, (…) probably I know Italian words better than the Italians, still, I cannot say that I'm Italian. I love the country, I love the culture, but I am not Italian, also because the Italian will never consider me an Italian. To see oneself as Italian the recognition of the other is vital, if you do not have it you cannot define yourself as such, here is the difficulty".
(Natan, 23 years old, male, born in the Netherlands form a Nigerian mother)

Apart from this last case, nine respondents recognize that they feel Italians, although only half of them can see this status juridically recognized. A respondent defined her identity as a new form of citizenship, that subvert the traditional parameters attached to it, thus destabilizing some people. Hence, the hatred would be sometimes the reaction of the average Italian to a phenomenon that subvert his reality.

"[mine is] a different Italianness compared to the normal one, if there exists a unique Italianness. I don't believe it's true, one can be Italian in different forms, in different ways." (Kadija, 27 years old, female, Morocco)

Of those who do not have the citizenship, two do not care about it since they plan to live abroad in the future, while the remaining three would like to obtain it. This issue is of great concern particularly for two of them, Maria and Yassine, who are irritated by the lack of recognition.

"I don't have the citizenship, I couldn't vote, and this upsets me, but I feel that this is my home." (Maria, 24 years old, female, born in Peru)

The sense of feeling Italian is associated to three main elements: food, habits, and culture. Only one interviewee, Maria, also reported in the last quotation, mentioned the issue of the vote, that has become particularly relevant in the last years.

4.3 Discussion of the results

The final question addressed to the interviewees is about their plans. One of the variables under investigation is whether the respondent' plans are viable in Italy or not. One of them didn't express any opinion about future geographical position, three expressly stated that they will remain in Italy, one would prefer staying in Italy but if she would not find a job she should leave, four think that their expectations about their future may be more easily met in another country and one already lives in another country. Thus, six of ten people are considering moving abroad. More specifically, four of the five interviewees that are still part of the Italian education system belong to this last category.

"I want to study medicine in the UK because there are prestigious universities such as Oxford. I do not want to live in Italy because of the language and because there are not many job opportunities for foreigners, all those that I know are caregivers or nurses". (Aksa, 17 years old, female, born in India)

The actual concern is that second generation students may follow the trends of their Italian counterparts in seeking for a job abroad, unsatisfied by the possibilities offered by the Italian job market or, even worse, unable to find any possibility at all. The results of the research confirm the national trends showing an increasing number of qualified young people looking for a job behind the national borders. According to ISTAT data, in 2018, 117 thousands Italians and 30 thousands graduates left the country, but an inquiry by the newspaper "L'Espresso" demonstrated that the number of graduates may be actually double, since the Registry Office used by ISTAT underestimated the amount of people by half (Van der Esch & Cariati, 2019). In 2018, the number of people aged 18-34 moving abroad has increased, while the older age groups have diminished, contributing to the aging of the Italian population (ibid.). Indeed, preferences of this kind are often influenced by economic variables more than by education variables, but the two systems must cooperate in finding workable combinations.

In this research, it was attempted to regroup common experiences and provide useful insights, aware of the fact that each person has a unique story. First, results on the sample and on school distribution, dropouts and rejections have been provided. Then, a deeper analysis has been presented that included considerations on dynamics of exclusions, on parents' role, both as involuntary imposers of a socio-economic status and as active contributors to the academic life of their children and, finally, it was attempted to present the most relevant mechanisms working at the micro and macro level.

CHAPTER 5 – Conclusions: practices and recommendations

The data and the analysis provided in the dissertation aim at describing the multifaceted reality of second-generation students within the Italian education system. Aware of the undeniable improvements towards the recognition of multiculturalism made by both the community and the institutions, critical approaches have been the core of the dissertation in order to clearly highlight the challenges that have to be faced. The insights on the literature review, including Bourdieu and Passeron, Freire and Milani were devised to familiarize with the criticisms of the school system's malfunctioning, within a broad framework. They paved the way to the presentation of the data and the subsequent interpretation of the experiences lived by second-generation students behind the school benches. The educational institution should be responsible for the creation of an inclusive environment, where diversity is not stigmatized and isolated but rather valorised, deemed as the springboard for the development of further skills by students and teachers. Hence, although micro-dynamics within each class are of paramount importance for the formation of the individuals, the focus of the dissertation has been the individuation of systemic fallacies to be reformed.

According to Molina (2004) a constructive coexistence of native and newly arrived population is finally reached only when the cultural, socio-political, and economic aspects follow an organic synchronised development, otherwise one of the possible risks is well-illustrated by the down-ward assimilationist model. It is thus essential to exit from an institutional approach grounded on emergency and market trends to tackle the issue of migration and integration with a far-sighted programme. One of the first and the last events regarding the matter under debate are clear examples of the criticality denounced. In Italy, the word "migrant" was included for the first time in an legal text in the law 943 from the ILO (the International Labour Organization) and migrants' significance within the public debate has often been led by the needs of unskilled labourers to carry out those jobs denigrated by the native population. Recently, the Italian law decree n. 18 published on the 17th of March 2020 offers the possibility to legalize foreign labourers' illegal contracts. The law indeed represents a landmark of the migration history of the country, but it remains grounded on the management of the Covid-19 sanitary emergency and addresses only workers. These instances corroborate the criticism of the Italian institutional approach. Schools would be the starting point of structured reforms within a new comprehensive migration agenda valorising durable results.

The comparative report published by Eurydice on the EU member states (2019) highlights three main macro-areas to be kept under control to foster a positive inclusion of migrant population within schools: access to education and formation, linguistic support in environments characterized by linguistic and cultural diversity, and a comprehensive approach to teaching that considers the general wellbeing of the student. The focus is on the main deficiencies of the Italian education system in order

to suggest possible ways forward. The first criterium includes not only the recognition of the universal right to education, often granted in Western countries, but also that of quality education. It was previously demonstrated that in Italy this in not necessarily the case, where most of foreign students choose professional and technical formations, registering at the same time high dropout rates. The second focal issue pertains to the accentuated difficulties of those students who speak another language different from Italian at home, thus facing a higher risk of disaffection from schools. It involves three main sub-fields. The first is about taking measures for the teaching of the language of instruction, and unfortunately Italy lacks the criteria "numbers of migrants in need of linguistic support" for the systematic assignment of funds. The second micro-area concerns the teaching of the languages spoken at home within the official education system. This rarely constitutes a right within the countries' legal system, but Italy has official recommendations and directives on the matter. Moreover, Italy should assume mother tongue teachers rather than Italian teachers. The last sub-category regards intercultural education, and Italy regrettably occupies the last position in the ranking. Adopting the thought pattern elaborated by Chandra Mohanty (2012), the Indian sociologist, on the discussion on feminism, teaching about diversity and multiculturalism as a subject is different than respecting it truly as a concrete reality within schools. The third and last field concerns the global development of the individual, that goes beyond the academic requirements. In Italy, as well as in many European countries, the attention is still mainly devoted to the acquisition of the linguistic competences instead of improving socio-emotional aspects. The figure of the didactic assistant and intercultural mediator should be employed and valorised more extensively than what is currently done. Parental involvement would play a positive role within this field. A reforming plan becomes even more urgent in the light of the results of the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), updated in 2015. The variables are assessed on a scale going from "critically unfavourable" to "favourable". While Italy scores either "favourable" or "slightly favourable" on seven over eight indicators, the education variable is the only resulting as "slightly unfavourable". The MIPEX reiterates that Italy needs to adopt "a comprehensive integration policy at school".

All these recommendations are to be adopted to start a reforming action of the Italian schools. Indeed, changes must be experimented to verify whether they can bring about the expected positive effects. The dream of Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, Paulo Freire, and Lorenzo Milani to finally obtain a school where teachers and students reciprocally educate themselves, benefit from equal opportunities and have the possibility to get to know global mechanisms and their local application regardless of the personal history can be materialised only through collective and institutional commitment.

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