School and Integration in Multi-Ethnic Classes: School and Family Relations

Giuseppe Monteduro[1]

ABSTRACT

This research aims to study the integration between national and foreign students in schools with a significant presence of foreign students. The analysis focuses on the relationship - both in school and out of school - among students and between their families. The analysis measures both the capital of the students in primary school that the share capital of the families. The fields of study are both the school context that family relationships. The social network analysis allows us to grasp the essential elements and the form of social relations. They were used - two different questionnaires - one for students and one for the families in order to measure social capital school and the family and their connection. The reference sample covers 34 classes of primary schools in the Italian province of Trento, where foreign students are at least 25%. Students who were involved in the survey were 618, 210 of whom were foreigners. As for integration not noticed significant differences between Italian students and foreign students. The low integration is not exclusively linked to the nationality of pupil. The significant difference is found in family relationships: Italian families have many interfaces with other class families of their children, particularly with the families of students Italians; foreign families have little or no relation to the other families of the class of their child. In addition, it is noted that there is a relationship between the increased popularity of the child in the classroom and the social capital of the same class.

[1] Department of Sociology and Business Law, University of Bologna, Italy, Email: giuseppe.monteduro@unibo.it.

1.0   Introduction

This research, funded by IPRASE (Provincial Institute for Research, the survey is funded by IPRASE (Provincial Institute for searching, updating and testing of teaching Trento) was conducted by a team of four. The research, which has also attended by the writer, was conducted by Prof. Ivo Colozzi (University of Bologna), while the methodology was prepared by Prof. Luigi Tronca (University of Verona). All results are the fruit of a joint effort and shared thoughts. The focus of this research is to assess the level of integration in Italy with regard to immigrant children and their families. This research study of integration between Italian students and foreign students in the 5th grade classes of an elementary school in the province Trento, where there are many foreign students. Integration is a significant problem especially for the West (Ambrosini, 2001) covers many aspects of social life and inevitably involves the children and the school that is responsible for the problems and opportunities that until 20 years ago, concerned mainly the scope of employment (Campomori, 2008). In our document it is assumed that a child with a greater number of social relations, that is, the capital, is more likely to be integrated to a greater extent, as well as research studies of Windzio and Bruegel (Bruegel, 2006; Windzio, 2012). Similarly, a family with a higher capital also favors the inclusion of the child in school and is favored by capital school son. The paper is divided into four sections: the first of them concerns the regulatory guidelines on the concept of integration, both at European and national level, with reference also to the instruments chosen to attend the trial; the second section is devoted to a presentation of the research in the field of education, with particular reference to those that have elements similar to our work. The second paragraph is also meant to illustrate the main results achieved by other activities and then suggest clues to the data of our research. The third and the fourth section method and results are present: in particular, it was decided to use the network analysis, with two questionnaires (one for students and one for families) with the purpose of measuring, through the reports in class, and the family, the social captale. The type of relationship, the number and frequency are indices that express, in short, our concept of social capital. Because of its special nature, the capital, identifies all the elements (resources) that connote positive relationships, regenerate and confirm their "meaning" human and social. (Donati, 2007). Were interviewed through questionnaires 618 pupils and 618 families, of which 210 non-Italians. Research shows that the school is a positive place for the integration of students of different ethnicity: schools can become, under certain conditions, a decisive factor for the development of the social fabric of Italian society, where the favors (also) the emergence of relations between Italian and non-Italian families.

2.0   Legal context

2.01   European laws

Relation between school and immigration as well as new multiethnic contexts are significant issues for the European Union. Europe has increasingly dealt with issues concerning the integration of migrants and mostly it focused on child integration and education[2].

In 2007 the Council Directive 77/486/EEC on the education of the children of migrant workers was enacted. In 2008, the Green Paper *"Migration & mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems"*[3] was published. Its purpose is to support ways and practices of integration of migrants' children in the education systems of Member States through processes of learning and education on a multicultural level. The Green Paper is part of a greater framework of the European project for cultural integration that started with the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008). In conjunction with

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[2] One of the most important documents on this theme is the one published by Eurydice in 2004. It was later updated, since 2008 was the European year for the integration of foreign citizens.

[3] It is available here: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0423:FIN:EN:PDF.

this initiative, the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "Living Together as Equals in Dignity"[4] was published, in which Europe expresses its idea regarding integration processes.

The document shows a significant change in the approach to the issue of integration – also meaning "social cohesion" in the document - between different cultures. The document does not offer policies with assimilation and community approaches. Instead, it offers the model of "intercultural dialogue" as a policy of integration and coexistence. Dialogue is an essential element: on the one hand, it can safeguard and develop human rights, as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights. On the other hand, it recognizes democratic citizenship's right and therefore the active participation in democratic life (p. 5). In the White Paper on integration, intercultural dialogue "is understood as a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic background and heritage. (…) It requires (…) the willingness and capacity to listen to the views of others"[5].

The aim of intercultural dialogue is to promote the birth of a new shared identity based on the universal values enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights (1950); a new identity also based on the later agreements and on European and international acknowledgments, that follows a two-way process to help increase people's attitude about living together, in the total respect of dignity, common good and pluralism. This model wants to recognize the value of citizenship principle, as a necessary instrument for integration and dialogue. "*Everybody different; everybody equal*" is the motto. According to this logic, the first step that qualifies the inclusion of different groups is the recognition of citizenship for migrants; it is a necessary component of integration to allow the full participation in public and democratic life. Democratic participation is an essential requirement to promote dialogue between people in order to overcome the unfair dynamics of a dialogue between a majority and a minority group. Intercultural dialogue as model of integration requires "the adoption by member states of procedures in order to help migrants achieve the status of national citizens".

As described in the White Paper, Enlightenment philosophy is the foundation and serves as a point of reference for the EU model. The goal of intercultural approach is to create a shared public space through dialogue between cultures and to give a new definition of shared values inspired by the Charter of Fundamental Right of the European Union, "overcoming the model of a predominance of a culture on other cultures". This model, according to his promoters, must be accompanied by "a system of democratic *governance* formed by an impartial public authority and based on the primacy of the right to participate". The White Paper also assumes a change in the competencies of schools; higher importance is given to cross-curricular teachings, in which a "multi-cultural approach" towards different subjects is the key prerogative for the integration process as well as for overcoming the majority/minority group division. Therefore, in subjects like history, arts, or cultural customs, students must be provided with plenty of perspectives, not only the ones of the host society.

The approach proposed by the European Union follows the pluralist ideas of multiculturalism, despite some changes. The core issue is not only the tolerance principle – which is the basis for reconstruction of public space -, but also dialogue. It is "a powerful instrument of mediation and reconciliation. (…) It addresses real concerns about social fragmentation and insecurity while fostering integration and social cohesion"[6].

In the model proposed by the European Union, it is presumed that integration is a direct consequence of citizenship right. This model conceives integration as a factor firstly correlated to political sphere and that has a later influence on the social sphere. The integration model intended as a two-way process overcomes previous versions and represents a step forward for the political sphere to fully enhance

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[4] http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/source/white%20paper_final_revised_en.pdf

[5] White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "Living together as Equals in Dignity", page 17.

[6] White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "Living together as Equals in Dignity", page 17.

mechanisms in favor of social cohesion. Claiming that the integration is a two-way process means overcoming both the assimilation process – that implies the adjustment of migrants to the host society – and multicultural processes in which different culture coexist but they do not necessarily interact. Instead, two-way processes imply relations between migrants and natives.

At the same time, this step can present some limitations, especially in the tools that will provide and promote mechanisms to ensure dual-way integration: it remains a preferential channel to ensure access to the status of citizen but does not show yet innovative ways they can connect to the new way of integration, namely the shift from one-way processes in nature to those with bi-directional.

2.02   The Italian legal context

The "Intercultura" section of the Ministry of Education in Italy has provided some documents on the topic such as the circular letter in 1994 and another significant document in 2007. In the main documents comes to light the hypothesis of an Italian model for foreign student integration at school, with an explicit reference to intercultural dialogue and to the values mentioned in the European documents.

The Italian circular letter adopted in 1994 can be considered the most significant evidence of a new stance by public authorities on the issue of school integration between different cultures. The document mainly refers to intercultural dialogue; it is defined as "an educational path preparing us to become citizens of Europe and of the world".

The document written in 2007[7] by the "Osservatorio Nazionale per l'Integrazione degli alunni stranieri e per l'educazione interculturale", the National Observatory for Integration of Foreign Students and for Intercultural Education, enhances the concept of intercultural perspective. Its main feature is "considering diversity as a paradigm of the identity of school, therefore it becomes a great chance to be open to all differences" (p. 4). This definition of intercultural model has its roots in the European Union: this *liaison* is "an essential element of the Italian model". However, the Italian model shows differences compared to the model of the European Union. It considers the methods proposed in the European intercultural model, but at the same time it deals with the psychological element of the model. This aspect is not considered in the EU models. In fact, it is claimed that it is necessary to create educational processes "based on the biographical and relational uniqueness of the student" (page 8). Moreover, "the relational element of the student can help avoid an exacerbated individualistic approach as well as help schools become aware of the context in which the student lives" (p. 8).

With regards to the relational dimension and the specificity of school environment, the 2010 document *"Indicazioni e raccomandazioni per l'integrazione di alunni con cittadinanza non italiana"* (*"Indications and recommendations for the integration of non-Italian students"*) stresses the importance of balancing the formation of classes in order to achieve a full implementation of diversity within the classroom experience. As a consequence, the document is firmly against the possibility of creating classes made up of foreign students only, since learning Italian language should be stimulated by school context as well. As Favaro (Favaro & Napoli 2004: 332) says, "the Italian school experience, the steps took over the last years and other countries choices recommend that we start integrating foreign students in normal classes, as well as offering back-up facilities in order to stimulate language apprenticeship". As a matter of fact, language apprenticeship in one of the factors that allows a full integration of foreign students.

In the Italian document the biggest news is how the role of families is considered. In the European texts, especially in the Eurydice report of 2009, family is intended as a factor to be considered for a deeper comprehension of school dynamics. This should be done through language courses. This is an

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[7]http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/cecf0709-e9dc-4387-a922-eb5e63c5bab5/documento_di_indirizzo.pdf

aspect that must be promoted and enhanced since in most cases language it is the greatest obstacle for a full integration of families. The Italian model analyzes the need for developing new forms of relations between *school* (intended as institution) and *family* (intended as subject). It gives significant importance to the participation of families when students first arrive at school, since it is believed that children integration "goes hand in hand with family integration" (p. 14). It is important to notice that family role is enhanced in the Italian model only, which considers integration process as something that "facilitates the integration of foreign minors in cities and communities; school and local powers must work together so that shared environments can be available to everyone" (p. 19).

3.0 Multiethnic school: Various aspects of research

Legal documents show that school is one of the fields in which immigration and ethnic diversity have a strong influence (2002). Indeed, "the places in which an attempt to a trustworthy relationship between migrant and native student can be tested are those in which educational challenge is the starting point for building future society" (Rossi, 2001: 15). School – or educational environment – is an institutional place in which children and families coexist. The way society address integration challenge and what solutions they find define the substrate of the society itself. Touraine wrote: "the structure and the spirit of a society are clearly represented by its legal and educational systems" (2010: 20). Esser also expresses the same concept (2004, 2010).

Maggioni and Vincenti (2007: 22) wrote: "school is a special place to be observed since it is a common ground open to everybody". Over the last few years "schools, and especially compulsory schools are at the center of a severe demographic transformation that affects every aspect of educational institutes" (Colombo, 2012: 149). In school context people are forced to coexist. Therefore, schools significantly show the need for students and teachers to interact with other people more than in any other environment: inclusion, exclusion, tolerance and intolerance are dynamics that usually arise in school environment.

As a matter of fact, Italian school has plenty of multiethnic students. Along with the arrival of new generations primary schools must answer the question that arises: how to promote integration? The Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) presents the following record: Italian classes of every educational environment are inevitably multiethnic. The total number of pupils with foreign citizenship sums up to 1 million people – in 2012, they were more than 800. Moreover, the 80% of classes has at least one pupil with foreign citizenship. Also, in primary schools 1 out of 10 pupils has foreign citizenship. 193 different nationalities were found.

The new configuration of schools brings to the surface new problems. Schools are increasing their potential while new difficulties arise. There is no old solution to these new challenges. Socialization and integration processes never end, since they are constantly evolving and changing. To foreign families, schools represent a significant opportunity for social advance and for improving their conditions – e.g. by providing their children with education in the new country of residence. However, schools can also be a threat for the cultural identity of foreign children. Instead, foreign parents are willing to relinquish that cultural identity so that it can be a form of education as well as defense of their origins and of their habits. In the school environment, completely different expectations, desires, future hopes, as well as feelings, anxieties and habits are mixed together. School is the first gathering space of those miscellaneous cultures and languages to the eyes of society.

Favaro (2004: 332) wrote that "the new multicultural school has the duty of bringing together people and of mediating different and heterogeneous experiences; such experiences claim to be recognized and acknowledged, shared and interchanged". As a matter of fact, school has an essential duty within society, not only with regards to the transfer of knowledge, but also with regards to improving lives of people.

Multiethnic schools became the subject of research in Italy starting from the middle of the 1990s. During those years some pioneer studies started to correlate immigration issues with educational contexts (Favaro & Genovese, 1996; Giovannini, 1996; Ismu Foundation;[8] Queirolo Palmas & Giovannini, 2002).

In the field of studies on school relations between Italian and foreign students many variables must be considered, as well as factors that might influence integration process[9]. Such variables are: teachers culture, cultural capital of families, being born in Italy or not; the number of students in class, school context, social and economic status of the family; type of school, culture of foreign students, family expectations.

Literature moved along many research fields, while dealing with different aspects of educational environment relating to nationality and integration issue[10]. Recently, Santagati published a working paper aimed at classifying three different periods of research in this field. I will now describe Santagati's work, I will then suggest my own classification, in order to observe from a different point of view history of research in this field.

Santagati divided Italian research on the basis of historic periods of publication. This shows how during time focuses of research have changed:
1. 1990-2002: sociology discovers multicultural schools and starts researching on the consequences of immigrants in the "new shared school";
2. 2003-2008: research on educational processes for pupils with foreign citizenship in different school levels;
3. 2008-2012: consolidation of research on school and immigration especially in secondary schools.

However, I would like to classify Italian research according to the issues at stake, by showing the most significant of them:

- **Research on student choices and on student performance.** Studies in this field tried to explain why Italian pupils are more likely to choose high schools while foreign pupils are more likely to choose vocational institutes (Besozzi & Colombo, 2009; Besozzi, Colombo & Santagati, 2010; Martini, 2011; Ricucci, 2010). Studies higly considered student performance as well; the introduction of national data on school evaluation allowed a comparison between pupils, not only within one class, but also at a national level (OECD – Pisa data, Anvur Institute data).

- **The role of teachers.** Teachers and their professional attitude have a significant meaning as for the relation between school and multiethnic classes. Giovannini firstly carried out research on this issue (1996); his data showed that the teacher might both affect the attitude of Italian pupils towards foreign pupils – i.e. acceptance or refusal of immigrants, and promoting forms of positive contacts among pupils in the new social context. Therefore, role of teachers is crucial for "new didactic experimentations and new ways of relating to classes. Both indicators show to what extent teachers should think about themselves and about their preconceptions; they also show the chance to establish a democratic and pluralist conception of school institution" (Santagati, 2012: 50).

- **The role of families.** A large body of literature focused on the role of families compared with student performances and school functions. It is clear that other elements that are not limited to school context must be considered: school is inevitably affected by elements such as the role of families, and

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[8]Research carried out by Ismu Foundation (Multiethnic Initiatives and Studies, 1991) can be available here: http://www.ismu.org/area-scuolae-educazione/

[9] Recent research by Santagati (2012) discussed the state of the art by indicating three parts in which data on the issue can be divided.

[10]The classification is aimed at stressing the key aspects of research in multiethnic schools, by giving examples of specific research for each field of study.

their influence on the relational processes of pupils, the incidence of their economic and social status (Besozzi, 2002).

- **First and second generations.** Another significant aspect is whether pupils with foreign citizenship are born in Italy or not. Ambrosini (2004: 18) wrote: "due to family reunifications, to the arrival of new foreign minors, and to the socialization of children born in the country of establishment, some key aspects of social integration have come into the limelight. Those aspects were first hidden and not considered: the first generation of immigrants was thought to be likely to return home in the near future". Research shows that first generations present common critical elements, both considering families and children (Ambrosini & Caneva, 2009; Barbagli, 2006; Colombo, 2004). Second generation presents different critical elements. This is firstly due to the fact that children have improved linguistic competence compared to their families – therefore families are requested even more urgently to learn Italian; secondly, school is an environment full of difficulties for foreign students, and for their families as well.

3.01   Contacts among pupils: Key elements of research

Over the last period, research focusing on contacts in multiethnic classes has been carried out in Italy as well in order to estimate their level of integration. This is the reason why significant importance was given to research that presented similar aspects – both for elements and for purposes – to the ones that were considered in this paper. A key aspect of research on multiethnic schools was aimed at understanding to what exent family influence and its bonds have an influence on contacts among pupils in class. This type of analysis is broadly reflected in sociological literature (Ballarino & Checchi, 2006; Bastianoni, 2001; Besozzi, 1999; Bruegele, 2006; Christopoulou & De Leuw, 2004; Colozzi, 2011; Favaro & Napoli, 2004; Giovannini & Queirolo Palmas, 2002; Pattaro, 2011; Santagati, 2004; Vardanega, 2003; Windzio, 2012). It is focused on the observation of contacts among pupils, trying to understand what relational processes occur between pupils of different nationalities. In regards to the Italian context, researchers introduced a network for the understanding of school relations in multiethnic classes. Moreover, research started to analyze how much family context does affect school relations.

An example is the research of Martini who analyzes the context of interethnic friendships in classes in the province of Trento, with reference to the school year 2005/2006, deals with peer relationships and using socioeconomic status family to explain the differences: by administering two questionnaires, he tried to build a framework of contacts among 1300 pupils in the first 3 years of secondary schools and vocational institutes. Martini's research used network analysis mechanisms in order to analyze school relations in multiethnic contexts. Network analysis mechanisms started to be used in Italy after being introduced in British and American research. Martini's research shows some of the most important "dynamics of patterning of friendships in a closed system such as classes at school" (Martini, 2001: 260).

Research showed the following data. As far as Italian students are concerned, homophily affects the patterning of friendship. Students want similar pupils to be their friends; these choices are based on similarity, equality, nationality and friendship. As far as foreign students are concerned, homophily is not quite noticed. Moreover, as for the extra-school environment, which is analyzed in this paper as well, Italian pupils have different circles of friendship, depending on school relations and on the neighborhood. On the contrary, foreign students have a net of contacts mainly made up of people belonging to the school context. This difference can be explained by looking at the fact that being born in Italy supports the embedding in a specific context – considering the time factor, the duration of the stay. Moreover, in network analysis considering "most popular" students and "isolated" students in a class, the variable with higher incidence is gender and not nationality. It is therefore reasonable to say that the duration of stay in Italy deeply affects the popularity of pupils in class. This is true both for school context and for the integration in an enlarged circle of friendship - "enlarged" as considering

friendship contacts with young people who do not belong to the same school context. In fact, it is observed that the longer the stay, the higher the level of popularity. It is conversely true as well.

Apart from Martini's research, other significant works focus on the influence between family and school context, even though they do not use network analysis. In this respect, Chiara Pattaro offers the first contribution in the field of multiethnic contexts (*Scuola & migranti. Generazioni di migranti nella scuola e processi di integrazione informale – School & migrants. Migrants generations in school and processes of informal integration*). She carried out a survey in primary and secondary schools in the Northern Italian region of Veneto. The aim was to "explore contacts between immigrant parents and children taking into account relational space stimulated by school in the everyday lives of the subjects" (p. 54). Research used both methodological and quantitative instruments, such as questionnaires, and qualitative instruments such as semi-structured interviews to families. Results showed that:

- As far as student performances expectations are concerned, both pupils and parents consider teachers' evaluations adequate and satisfying compared to their hypothesis;

- Differences and dynamics of success or difficulties are not imputable to an ethnic and cultural element only;

- Pupils mainly consider school as an occasion to "be with other pupils"; therefore, "school is considered as a context with an extremely important social role for immigrant pupils, more than it is for Italian pupils" (p. 66);

- As far as the relation between school and family is concerned, is it clear that it is a very complex issue. It was already shown in other studies; at the same time, "the acknowledging of the value of education and the desire of many parents for their children to be at school" has a great value, because "families think that in this way children might have better future perspectives" (p. 73);

- Afternoon activities of pupils – such as studying with other pupils at home – are considered as positive both by parents and children. Pattaro writes: "this proves that school can undertake a linking role between family and enlarged society" (p. 78).

Pattaro's research shows how processes of contacts among pupils can be promoted by families and how such contacts can be, in turn, a positive factor to give birth to processes to widen bonds of families, especially immigrant families.

The Orim Group School, in the paper *Misurare l'integrazione nelle classi multietniche – Measuring integration in multiethnic classes* – aimed at understanding integration processes in secondary schools in a two-year period (2010-2012). Research firstly used qualitative instruments – such as focus group for teachers; secondly, quantitative instruments were used – such as questionnaires to samples of foreign and Italian pupils in 1st and 2nd grade of secondary schools in the Italian region of Lombardia. The general hypothesis was the following: "an environment is conducive to multiethnic relations if presents high levels of foreigners integration, high levels of student performance and high satisfaction with educational experience by all users, both native and immigrants"; (Besozzi, 2011: 11).

First, research shows that interviewed people are fully aware of "integration" concept and conceive it as a mix of elements such as acceptation, sense of belonging, openness, as well as willingness to communication and dialogue. This data shows that integration has particular importance and relevance to interviewed people. Research also shows significant data on conditions of foreign students: the time they spent in Italy and language comprehension positively and constantly affect student performances and their achievement of high levels of learning. This is also confirmed by the OECD Pisa data.

To measure the level of integration, a multivariate analysis and specific indicators were used[11]. For example, research used family indicators, i.e. cultural capital, economic and social status, orientation and satisfaction from schools, or class relation indicators, i.e. internal relationship, patterning of friendship, among others[12]. Integration was therefore defined as follows:

a. *Lack of integration.* It is connected to low social and economic status, as well as to difficulties of interaction, both between pupils and between pupil and teachers. It is also due to a strong interethnic tension, to insufficient linguistic competences and to a lack of the presence of family in the "school environment". This group accounts for the 15.4% of total subjects, which were 160. This section sees as highly predominant the presence of foreign pupils and of Italian and foreign pupils that belong to significantly multiethnic classes.

b. *Partial integration.* It is related to low social and economic status as well as to low family cultural level; it is also related to low pupils interaction in the class, to an average number of interethnic tensions, and to low levels of interaction with teachers. This group includes 365 pupils, who account for the 35.09% of total subjects. A prevalence of male pupils in classes with higher presence of foreign students can be observed.

c. *Full integration.* This group accounts for almost the 50% of total subjects, for a total of 515 students. Students have medium-high social and economic status, high levels of cultural capital, good levels of interaction both horizontal-type (among students) and vertical-type (student-teacher), high levels of success at school. In this section there is a prevalence of female subjects, Italian pupils and classes in which the presence of foreign students is extremely low.

Therefore, it can be claimed that good interaction among pupils and positive achievements in school are directly proportional: positive relations and a trusty environment (e.g. due to few interethnic tensions) are factors that give birth to a better implementation of school activities. Similarly, it is clear that family has an influence in both success in school and in pupils relations, as well as in contacts between pupils and teachers, as the socio-economic status and the opening of relations within each family affects both the relationships in the classroom performance. Finally, class percentage of foreign pupils affects class internal relations, and therefore affects the density of relational networks in class.

Contini carried out a significant study regarding the relationship between class composition and performance at school. The goal was to explain why positive performances of Italian pupils at school are negatively affected by the presence of foreign pupils in class. This is an issue that many have raised. The author used standardized indexes of school performances: the so-called questionnaires of INVALSI 2010 (National Institute for the evaluation of the Italian Educational System). According to these data, the relation between interethnic classes and negative school performances is not a constant. Or better, it is not true for every pupil. Firstly, according to the author, it seems to be an Italian-type issue: as a matter of fact, in countries with strong presence of immigrants it is noted that multiethnic classes do not necessarily mean low level of school performance. Especially in the United States and in the Anglo-Saxon countries, children of immigrants present higher levels of school performance than native students.

The author used the two INVALSI tests (i.e. math and Italian language) as independent variables. Influential variables were: first-generation or second-generation immigrants and social and economic family status.

Results show that there is no connection between a significant number of immigrants in classes and school performances of Italian pupils. In the Italian language test, difficulties arose mostly for foreign

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[11] The explanatory table is the number 6.

[12] All the indicators can be found in the third section of this paper.

pupils. Similarly, Italian students with lower social and economic status are affected by the presence of foreign students, while Italian students with higher social and economic status benefit from being in multiethnic school contexts.

The author believes that it is necessary and urgent to implement school policies in order to promote a fair and accurate class composition. In this way, social cohesion and school performances might be improved, especially for those pupils who present a disadvantage that might be due for example to citizenship – therefore, to language knowledge – or to the economic and social status to which they belong.

A wide body of literature analyzed influence between school and family. At an international level, it has been studied if there exists a connection between family bonds – also called "social family capital" – and school integration dynamics – "social school capital". Network analysis have been carried out, with the hypothesis that the two types of capitals affect each other and therefore are relevant to the understanding of relational processes; school becomes therefore an illustrative field for understanding integration dynamics in the society. A significant example is the study carried out by Bruegel in 2006: "*Social Capital, Diversity and Education Policy*". The author analyzed relational dynamics in multiethnic classes of some London schools. It shows that school is an environment with significant potential in terms of promotion of integration processes.

In fact, research shows that daily contact among pupils can be fundamental in breaking down cultural barriers between different communities. It reduces segregation processes, which might be due to different choices in school curricula. As described above, they represent a mechanism of selection and separation among students. It is important to notice that it is confirmed that relational dynamics of pupils are simultaneously interconnected with the familial ones: children integration in school is not independent from family integration. The two kinds of integration affect one another. This data has also been confirmed by a research carried out by Windzio in April 2008 in the schools of Bremen, Germany, that involved 263 students of different ethnic groups. The most prevalent ethnic group was Turkish (9% of the sample). Pupils were asked to fill a network questionnaire concerning their networks of friendship, in order to understand if their parents' networks had somehow an influence. Quality of friendship was highly considered, in order to understand if the networks of parents could be a coercive factor affecting the behavior and relations of their children. In particular, the purpose of the survey was to understand to what extent social bonds of parents affect the type of friendships of their children; in other words, the survey aimed at understanding if children friendships were intra-ethnic or inter-ethnic.

Birthday parties were used as a variable in order to evaluate contacts among pupils. On the wake of other ethnographic studies, the author takes into account the assumption that these kinds of events significantly affect social integration process of children, as well as the one of their parents.

From the onset of Coleman's studies (1990), according to whom social actors are rational and interact by interchanging mutual agreements and by constantly monitoring relations, Windzio divides two types of relations:
   a. Inter-generational openness, in which parents have no social bonds with the parents of their children friends;
   b. Inter-generational closure, in which parents have social bonds with the parents of their children friends.
In this respect, parents with social bonds with other parents will mutually exchange control on their children.

Since second generation children have well-established inter-ethnic relations with their classmates, inter-generational openness is predominant if dyad networks are inter-ethnic: as a consequence, influence and control by parents is reduced.

Windzio's research is based on the following assumptions:
- Firstly, friendship networks of children (i.e. preferences of friendship) do not depend on ethnic homogeneity or heterogeneity;
- Secondly, inter-generational closure is stronger in networks between Turkish than in networks between Germans;
- Thirdly, networks between native and migrant pupils have an increasing inter-generational openness if one of the members of the dyad is Turkish (i.e. Turkish parents have less bonds with the parents of their children friends);
- Lastly, inter-generational openness is linked to the fact that children are less likely to participate in birthday parties, since, as described above, birthday parties are affected by the networks of parents.

In his research, Windzio confirms many of the assumptions:
a. Children's networks tend to show a moderate ethnic segregation, whereas Turkish children's networks present a higher ethnic segregation. This is due to the fact that their parents present a high rate of inter-generational openness (i.e. Turkish parents have few networks with the parents of their children's friends). The rate of segregation is explained by Windzio through the analysis of birthday parties, in which Turkish children are less likely to participate. This is due to the lack of networks of their parents, since participating in birthday parties implies parents' engagement and a level of confidence between families.
b. The inter-ethnic element of dyad networks depends on the inter-generational openness.
c. High rate of inter-generational closure is a key element of Turkish community, since it is a more cohesive community in which children's networks are constantly under control.

In particular, the analysis of participation in birthday parties shows that the "birthday party" is a uniting factor and it fits higher rates of inter-generational closure. Consequently, a strong correlation between children integration and family integration can be observed. According to Windzio, this correlation cannot be overlooked. In fact, it shows that the integration process of parents affect the integration process of children, and vice versa.

4.0 Our research: An analysis of 5th grade classes of a primary school in the Province of Trento

4.01   Goals and methodology

This survey aims at studying features of pupils' networks in 5th grade classes of the primary school in the Province of Trento. Classes were made up of students with foreign citizenship (they accounted at least for the 25% of total students). It also aimed at studying family bonds, both within family itself and related to school environment.

The following objectives were set:
a. To assess the level of integration between Italian pupils and pupils with foreign citizenship in classes;
b. To assess the social capital of families;
c. Social capital

Research involved 618 pupils, 210 of whom were foreigners, and they were divided in 34 classes. The methodology used the model of whole network analysis. Two questionnaires were administered in order to collect data: a questionnaire for students and the other for families. Pupil questionnaire aimed at collecting network data on 11 different types of networks with classmates. The first 7 networks concerned class context and they were instrumental or expressive. They were: works carried out in class, game choice at recess, game at recess; dialogue between pupils, desk mate choice, presence of best friends in class and choice of desk rows (one choice). The last 4 networks concerned extra-school contexts and they were instrumental or expressive. They were: doing homework together at home,

playing together at home, friendships outside of school and sharing extra-curricular activities, such as sports, playing instruments, etcetera.

On the other hand, family questionnaire was divided in two parts. The first part aimed at collecting information on characteristics of the members of family, or of the family considered as a whole. The second part of the questionnaire aimed at collecting information on social family capital; the indicators were the following:
- Number of times families receive or pay visits to parents in a month (ordered categories);
- Number of times families receive or pay visits to friends in a month (ordered categories);
- Number of friends family usually see in a month;
- Nationality of family's friends;
- Number of times in which families take part in meetings or informal gatherings (ordered categories);
- Type of gatherings families participate in. For example, religious community, parish meetings, parties, union trade, migrants association, Italian associations;
- Daily hours parents – or other relatives - spend in order to help their child do his homework.

The second section of family questionnaire was aimed at collecting relational data on the presence of relations between families of pupils belonging to the same class; the indicators were the following:
- Personal acquaintance;
- Acquaintance in school context;
- Help through resources such as money, goods, etc.;
- Social credentials and reputation circulation;
- Sharing useful contacts in case of necessity;
- Moral or psychological support.

Such indicators, as the tables will show, are similar to the AGIL paradigm re-elaborate by Donati's relational sociology[13].

Some indexes were used in order to analyze collected data[14]. Indexes were considered as indicators of school social capital[15]. Social capital can be defined as to what extent people who belong to a network use it as a resource. It is related not only to relation contents that involve individuals, but also to forms, i.e. the structural morphology of net intended as a whole and made up of the identified networks[16].

4.02   Results

Results are presented considering classes as a whole. The objective is to focus on differences between Italian and foreign pupils, and to better understand the influence of social capital and its connection to school capital.

Research results prove the presence of differentiation in the studied classes, in which significant differences in the level of integration among pupils arise, both in school context and in extra school context (e.g. afternoon activities).

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[13] See P. Donati, *Teoria relazionale della società,* Milano, FrancoAngeli, 1991.

[14] Results were obtained by using Ucinet 6 software (S.P. Borgatti, M.G. Everett e L.C. Freeman, Ucinet 6 for Windows: Software for Social Network Analysis, Harvard, Analytic Technologies, 2002). Graphic representation of relational data, that goes with the analytic presentation of networks identified in each class, was obtained by using NetDraw 2.137 software (S.P. Borgatti, NetDraw: Graph Visualization Software, Harvard, Analytic Technologies, 2002).

[15] For more information on this concept, see Tronca, L. (2011). *Il capitale sociale scolastico.* In I. Colozzi (ed.by) *Scuola e capital sociale. Un'indagine nelle scuole secondarie di secondo grado della Provincia di Trento (pp.75-110).* Trento: Erickson.

[16] For more information on the definition of social capital concept, see: Forsé, M. (1997). Capital social et emploi, L'Année sociologique, 47, 1, 143-181; Forsé, M. & Tronca, L. (2005). Interazionismo strutturale e capitale sociale, Sociologia e politiche sociali, 8, 1, 2005, 7-22; Tronca, L. (2007).L'analisi del capitale sociale. Padova: Cedam.

As far as the analysis of school relations is concerned, Italian pupils and foreign pupils have the same capacity to bond with other pupils, considering the average of bonds in each class related to the class to which every pupil belongs.

However, citizenship factor has an influence when considering to what extent the expressed bonds (i.e. bonds towards other pupils) are reciprocated. Reciprocity index shows a persistent and constant difference between natives and migrants in the totality of bonds: in this respect, it is shown that the level of reciprocity is higher for the Italian pupils than in pupils with other citizenship. In other words, foreign students are less "reciprocated" than Italian students (see tables 4 and 5).

Table 4: Network 1_1 "Working together and cooperating in class": structural indicators of reciprocity for Italian pupils and foreign pupils.

Citizenship (dichotomy)		Rec_dyad_based_1_1 Students network: Classroom work	Rec_symmetric_1_1 Students network: Classroom work	Rec_non_symmetric_1_1 Students network: Classroom work
Italian	Average	.4857	.5009	.4991
	N	408	408	408
	Standard deviation.	.1139	.2054	.2054
Non-Italian	Average	.4686	.4154	.5846
	N	210	210	210
	Standard deviation	.1093	.20740	.20739
Total	Average	.4799	.4718	.5282
	N	618	618	618
	Standard deviation	.1126	.2099	.2098

Table 5: Network 1_3 "Playing together during recess": structural indicators of reciprocity for Italian pupils and foreign pupils.

Citizenship (dichotomy)		Rec_dyad_based_1_3 Students' network: Playing at recess	Rec_symmetric_1_3 Students' network: Playing at recess	Rec_non_symmetric_1_3 Students' network: Playing at recess
Italian	Average	.5567	.5742	.4258
	N	408	408	408
	Standard deviation	.1073	.2042	.2042
Non-Italian	Average	.5462	.5017	.4983
	N	210	210	210
	Standard deviation	.1060	.2371	.2371
Total	Average	.5531	.5496	.4505
	N	618	618	618
	Standard deviation	.1069	.2185	.2185

Results are the same also when considering extra-school relations. In such case, foreign students are less considered than Italian classmates. This can be due to various factors. However, this research wants to stress that there is not a big difference to justify a definition of "fractured classes" between pupils with Italian citizenship and pupils with foreign citizenship. The citizenship factor has an incidence; still, it is not a factor that necessarily leads to the social exclusion of pupils.

However, as regards the analysis of family networks, a greater difference between Italian families and families with foreign citizenship can be noted. In this respect, the factor of citizenship has a greater importance:

- Italian parents are more willing to participate in gatherings organized by bodies, parishes, associations, than parents with foreign citizenship;
- Italian parents have a broader network of contacts with other parents of their child's class; foreign parents have contacts with the half of the parents known by Italian parents. Italian parents have acquaintance with the 50% of other parents thanks to school environment. Foreign parents have acquaintance with the 28.8% of them.

As regards general data related to individual bonds analyzed and to social capital in school environment, the following table shows bonds analyzed by administering the questionnaire (table 6). The index of networks reciprocity was particularly significant – i.e. the level of "reciprocation" of bonds.

Data refer to the values of density of networks for every bond. Density is intended as the level of cohesion in a class, i.e. the percentage of declared bonds in relation to every potential bond.

Research team chose to use density as a proxy index for determining the level of integration in class. Primarily, substantial differences between classes can be observed: each bond shows a constant substantial difference between maximum grade and minimum grade (0.5). Such difference is also found both in the in-class bonds (from 1.1 to 1.7) and in extra-school bonds (from 2.1 to 2.4). At the same time, networks of bonds related to school activities show greater density compared to networks of bonds related to extra-school activities. Consequently, it can be claimed that class activities stimulate the opening of new spaces conducive to networks between students, more than extra-school activities do. The latter suffer indeed from external factors, (e.g. neighborhood, family's hospitality).

Tab 6: Statistical data of classes

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
% non Italian	34	25.00	55.60	33.4676	8,07
Density 1.1	34	.32	.78	.5057	.12043
Density 1.2	34	.28	.67	.4150	.09080
Density 1.3	34	.32	.97	.5024	.12107
Density 1.4	34	.19	.57	.3221	.07996
Density 1.5	34	.20	.53	.3746	.08085
Density 1.6	34	.07	.40	.1210	.05677
Density 1.7	34	.04	.17	.0616	.02422
Density 2.1	34	.02	.31	.0894	.07058
Density 2.2	34	.07	.43	.1662	.07953
Density 2.3	34	.09	.67	.2489	.12379
Density 2.4	34	.04	.51	.1753	.11139
Reciprocity 1.1	34	.30	.76	.4860	.11216
Reciprocity 1.3	34	.39	.93	.5651	.12452
In-class density average from 1.1 to 1.5	34	.30	.63	.4240	.07874
Outside of class density average from 2.1 to 2.4	34	.07	.46	.1700	.08798
Outside of school and in-school density average	34	.20	.52	.2970	.07467
Average reciprocity 1.1 e 1.3	34	.35	.79	.5255	.10288
Cases considered	34				

In particular, the analysis of density values of networks of each class shows that density in class bonds is directly proportional to density in external bonds, i.e. the lower the density in class, the lower the density outside of class, and vice versa. At the same time, a significant element that arose in the survey is related to the numbers of components of each class: this factor has a "negative" incidence on network density. In other words, density of networks is inversely proportional to the number of pupils in class. Conversely, the higher the number of pupils with foreign citizenship in class, the lower the density of networks.

Citizenship factor has a "negative" incidence on the density of networks and incidence is higher if the number of pupils in class is high.

As far as the reciprocity index is concerned, two types of bonds were considered. They were: instrumental bonds (1.1 bonds) and expressive bonds (1.3 bonds). In expressive bonds, an increase in density can be observed. However, density decreases if the number of elements in class is higher and if the percentage of pupils with foreign citizenship in class is higher. It must be stressed how citizenship factor has a greater impact on instrumental bonds, e.g. doing homework together, and it has a lower impact on expressive bonds.

On the one hand, it can be observed that density is inversely proportional to the number of pupils in class and to the number of foreign pupils. On the other hand, available data does not allow us to assess a "correct" number of pupils for creating a class. Neither does it suggest us the "maximum" number of pupils with foreign citizenship to be included in a class in order to keep levels of density high and in order to support reciprocity bonds. At the same time, available data suggest a new way of "thinking" to class formation and therefore they provide school institutions with significant elements in order to promote good practices of integration. In fact, one of the goals of research is to become an instrument at school's disposal in order to better understand processes and practices.

In most cases, data related to foreign students show that they are integrated and belong to the network. However, they have fewer reciprocity bonds and they suffer from a lack of integration especially as far as extra-school activities are concerned.

Our research was also aimed at understanding whether family social capital and interaction among pupils are related. To this purpose, family social capital was compared to popularity level of each pupil in class, both considering school bonds (from 1.1 to 1.5) and extra-school activities (from 2.1 to 2.4). It is observed that pupil popularity and family social capital are directly proportional. Incoming bonds, i.e. preferences that are not necessarily reciprocated, measure the level of popularity of pupils. In this respect, family social capital can be considered a positive factor that increases social capital made up of school bonds. These findings confirm previous research by Bruegel and Windzio, according to which children integration goes hand in hand with family integration, so they influence one another.

Statistical data show a significant correlation between family social capital and pupil integration in school relational network. This data provides school institutions with a significant help for carrying out their work, both from a formal and a substantial point of view.

Likewise, the acknowledgment of a relation between family social capital and children social capital as well as the acknowledgment of a lower family social capital in foreign citizens urge schools to further action for promoting networks for foreign families.

5.0   Conclusions

This research was aimed at stressing significant factors for a better comprehension of integration processes in school policies.

It is shown that there is no clear difference between Italian pupils and non-Italian pupils as for school relations. The Italian citizenship factor has a bearing; however, this is not the only significant factor and – most of all – it does not hinder relationships among peers. At primary school level, relationships among peers are fundamental, both during school time and in afternoon activities (where the family has an even more important role). In a context that is getting more and more multi-ethnic, the role of the school acquires a greater importance, beyond the sole duty of passing on knowledge. Indeed, not only the knowledge of the language and/or the learning of school subject, but also the relational cohabitation represents a remarkable process within the broader path toward integration for the foreign pupils together with their Italians mates. If integration is a bidirectional process, the reciprocal relations become the necessary space of verification and development. As a recent research on the integration in the school environment reports: "in this perspective, school is a key sphere to observe how the relationship at school and in the classrooms acquire an evident centrality, especially for the development of the experience of an already present diversity" (Besozzi &Colombo, 2011: 21).

Hence, the different ethnic belonging does not represent, overall, a hindrance to the emergence and the development of relations; on the contrary, these same relations are the ideal space to convey integration.

However, the factor of Italian citizenship has significant importance when considering instrumental bonds (for which Italian language knowledge is very likely to be an extremely significant factor) and density of class. In particular, the level of integration – i.e. network density – in each class is deteriorated by two factors: the number of pupils and the number of pupils with foreign citizenship. Network density is inversely proportional to the two factors.

This practical evidence revealed by the research gives school managers useful indications on the ways to assemble classes: classes with too many students and with a high percentage of foreign students may hinder the development of a social cohesion of the class, making the integration process of the class as a whole all the more difficult. As "inter-ethnic relations tends to reduce with time and growth in age" – as a research by Di Pentima shows (2006:105) – the role of educational policies on class composition becomes all the more important.

Moreover, family social capital is the engine for a greater integration of children in school. This is shown by the fact that pupil popularity and family social capital are directly proportional. It is determined by family social capital instead: the greater the family capital, the greater integration of children in school networks. Therefore, school social capital can be considered another engine for social capital, as Windzio suggested in his research. Social capital has a multiplying and conveying effect: it is a significant factor for integration and integration must be the first goal for school. Schools can therefore also become a factor for the creation of social capital and can also become an engine for external relations. Moreover, it can be claimed that external activities promote relations as well that are then used in school environment. This "simultaneousness" shows that network logic can be the most efficient way of promoting durable and integrating bonds, both inside and outside of school.

Moreover, the analysis of family social capital offers schools other food for thought: family must become an active subject, not only for children school performances and participation, but also as inevitably correlated to the integration of children in school. Schools can therefore become an engine of integration even in extra-school environments, through the cooperation of other bodies (associations, religious aggregations). Research wants to enhance a careful consideration of school integration policies in order to promote networks between families whose children belong to the same class. Integration of the whole society can be improved by promoting networks between families, i.e. creating social capital between families, or by increasing social capital of school and of contacts between pupils.

On the one hand, school is given a responsibility not directly related to curricular activities. On the other hand, school "owns" relations that have the potential to change other environments for everyday life as well.

The official documents of Italian ministry still have not dealt with issues like the social capital role in school environment, the role of family relations in school and school relation with family integration. This is true both for national documents on integration and for documents related to school integration. As Favaro wrote (2004), there is still a wide gap between official documents and measures that are actually taken. The title of her research well expresses the idea: *"Tra il dire e il fare.."* (*"It is easier said than done"*). According to Favaro, measures to promote a full integration have not been taken yet. In fact, even though Italy is very clear about which models are not to be implemented, there is still a lack of suggestions on how to actually build interaction processes.

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