

# Inclusion as Social Justice. A research project in Italian middle schools

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## **Inclusione come giustizia sociale. Una ricerca nella scuola secondaria di primo grado in Italia**

In un clima di crescente razzismo, xenofobia, intolleranza e paura della diversità, anche la scuola è posta di fronte a profonde sfide. Assumendo in modo non neutrale il successo formativo degli studenti di origine migrante come parametro di valutazione dell'efficacia dei percorsi educativi, permangono profonde criticità nel nostro sistema scolastico, che richiederebbero all'Educazione di assumere una intenzionale funzione politica di equalizzatore sociale. Attraverso una *Grounded Theory* critica, parte di un complesso mixed-method study, si sono analizzati i processi di (in)successo degli alunni/e di origine migrante, con l'intento di elaborare un modello teorico di riferimento per pianificare percorsi formativi efficaci per tutti. La ricerca ha coinvolto – attraverso osservazioni etnografiche, interviste e questionari – dirigenti, docenti e studenti di 5 Istituti secondari di primo grado della provincia di Trento e Torino. Il modello multidimensionale emergente evidenzia l'importanza di un'azione collettiva che comprenda una serie di relazioni tra scuola-politica-territorio, nel solco delle tradizioni di Lorenzo Milani e Paulo Freire.

In an atmosphere of growing racism, xenophobia, intolerance and fear of diversity, schools, too, are faced with serious challenges. Taking—from a non-neutral perspective—the educational achievement of students of migrant origin as a parameter by which to evaluate the effectiveness of learning paths, we find that huge problems remain in our school system, which require the education system to be given the explicit function of a social equalizer. Through a Grounded Theory critique—part of a complex mixed-method study—the processes of (non-)success of students from migrant backgrounds are analysed, with the aim of developing a theoretical model for planning learning paths that work for all students. The research involved—through ethnographic observation, interviews and questionnaires—principals, teachers and students from five middle schools in the provinces of Trento and Turin. The multidimensional model which emerges demonstrates the importance of collective action which involves multiple links between schools, the political arena and the territory, following in the footsteps of both Lorenzo Milani and Paulo Freire.

**Keywords:** Academic Success; Migrant Origin Students; Equity; Italian Middle School; Critical Grounded Theory.

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## 1. Introduction

We are living through a dark period for democracy, both in Europe and across the Atlantic (Giroux, 2018). The socio-political climate is increasingly closed, and pervaded by fear of difference, sentiments skilfully exploited by the new right (Tarozzi, 2019), whose binary *us* (natives) and *them* (immigrants) vision tends more and more to blame everything on *them*. In Italy, where immigrant numbers are currently falling (UNHCR, n.d.), the popular impression is of an ongoing *invasion*, a phenomenon which is, in fact, almost entirely media-manufactured (IDOS, 2018). The situation has been described as a “*cultural crisis*” (Caritas-Migrantes, 2018) which requires a “*new grammar of communication that sticks to the facts and is respectful of people*” (*ibidem*, p. 1). In the “*political market place*” (Sebastiani, 2017, p. 292) representations of the other that are still all too often “*denigrating*” persist (*ibidem*, p. 287), involving negation or persuasion strategies that legitimize episodes of hate and racism: as the most recent Census report (2018) reveals, opinions and behaviours which would have been “*unspeakable*” until recently are now considered normal.

And D.L. n. 113/2018 *Immigrazione e sicurezza* (Decree-Law on Immigration and Security) includes “*many manifestly unconstitutional norms*” (ASGI, 2018, p. 1); these norms have since been reaffirmed, in the recent D.L. n. 53/2019—the so-called *Decreto sicurezza bis* (*Security Decree bis*)—which explicitly contradicts international refugee and human rights law, as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has actually pointed out (UNHCR, 2019). “*But a democracy dies without mature citizens, who understand universal values. Our fellow humans come before Italians,*” as Roberta De Monticelli reminds us (2019).

The subject of immigration, used as a “*weapon of mass distraction*” (Schlein, 2018), is systematically correlated with events which threaten security and public order (Caritas-Migrantes, 2018), while, in actual fact, persistent inequality between rich and poor, alongside widespread political disengagement and the literal, ongoing, *dis-integration* of good practice—in the name of a nativist ideology which openly promotes restrictive policies against immigrants—is the reality we face.

Nor are schools spared this uncontrolled wave of suspicion and racism. The global increase in refugees and the complex educational needs of “*post-migrants*” (Zoletto, 2012) represent one of the biggest challenges for intercultural education today in Europe (Catarci & Fiorucci, 2015), since:

[...] migration and displacement require education systems to accommodate the needs of those who move and those left behind. Countries need to recognize migrants’ and refugees’ right to education in law and fulfil this right in practice. They need to tailor education for those cramming into slums, living nomadically or awaiting refugee status. Education systems need to be inclusive and fulfil the commitment to equity (UNESCO, 2018, p. 12).

The good practices currently in place can no longer be taken for granted and are becoming increasingly inadequate. Even the terminology being adopted reflects mechanisms of over-simplification, reductionism and over-generalization, all precursors to discrimination (Tarozzi, 2015).

National and international statistics clearly demonstrate that weak performance, academic failure and school dropout rates continue to be unresolved problems, in both Italy and many other European countries (IEA, 2017; ISTAT, 2018; OECD, 2015; UNESCO, 2018), calling attention to the urgent need for an intercultural education which gives due weight not only to the values of dialogue but also to policies rooted in a broader vision of social justice (Malusà, 2017a; Tarozzi & Torres, 2016), based on the more radical approaches of *critical pedagogy* and the tradition of Italian liberatory pedagogy (Mayo, 2007, 2013). Looking beyond the emergency, a medium and long term pedagogical and political plan needs to be put in place for Italian schools—which are *de facto* multicultural—(Tarozzi, 2015), which would enable migrant origin children, too, to acquire the more complex competences, necessary for success at high school, rather than pressurizing them into attending vocational courses (Malusà, 2018). Indeed, *foreigners* sometimes do not make it onto even the latter, increasing the school dropout rate—already high in Italy, particularly among non-Italian citizen students—although the new generations of immigrant origin are starting to achieve academic success (ISMU-MIUR, 2019).

But how can we foster educational success for everyone? What might the role of teachers, principals, and education policies be? These are the questions tackled in this study, which, adopting a non-neutral position, attempts to identify a possible pedagogical model to support academic success paths

for even the most fragile students, especially those from immigrant backgrounds. The study explores the phenomenon in middle schools, a critical link between the first and second cycles of education, because this is the period during which students begin to make choices about the future—short or long term—direction of their studies, and here, too, the reasons for dropping out also start to manifest, as the literature clearly shows (Azzolini, Mantovani & Santagati, 2019; Checchi, 2010; Malusà, forthcoming).

## 2. A qualitative research project in secondary schools<sup>1</sup>

The project is part of a complex *Sequential explanatory design* (Creswell, 2013) quant→QUAL (QUAL emphasized) (Malusà, 2017b). In the second phase, which I present here, I have adopted a constructivist critical Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2014), because it is most consistent with the socio-political dimensions of Social Justice Education (Levy, 2015) in which I have positioned my generative research question, since it enables me to attempt a critical and transformative reading of educational practices (Charmaz, 2017).

The following is just an *ex post* synthesis of the mountain of data upon which I have based my analyses, presented in greater detail elsewhere (Malusà, 2019b). I took into account:

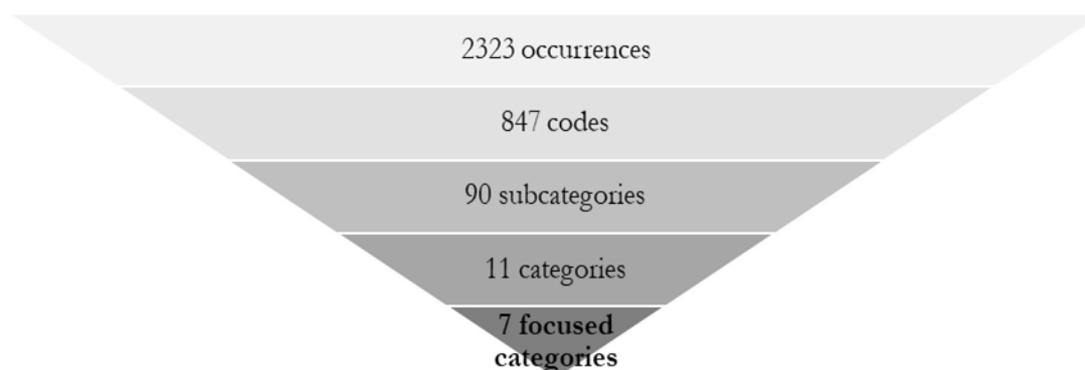
- (a) recursive and intersubjective *ethnographic observations*, then transcribed;
- (b) 19 hours of *in-depth and focused interviews* (recorded and transcribed *verbatim*) with *key informants* (teachers, principals, external experts);
- (c) numerous *informal conversations*;
- (d) *documentary analysis* (93 files) of extant texts and teaching materials;
- (e) *questionnaires*;
- (f) *statistical analysis*;
- (g) *memos*, as a meta-cognitive tool, to keep track of important research steps.

I collected and, step by step, analysed all the material between June 2014 and November 2016, following a *theoretical sampling* (Morse, 2007), which brought me to five middle schools in the north of Italy, four in Trentino and one in Piemonte (Turin), involving a total of 23 classes and more than 80 teachers. Further ethnographical observations, from some urban schools in Los Angeles (CA) and in a school in Odense (DK), were integrated with these findings.

Adopting typical Grounded Theory procedures (Tarozzi, 2008), I progressively analysed all the material (transformed into text)—first with *open coding*, to analytically explore the collected data step by step and to assign descriptive labels referring to short word strings; then with *focused coding*—to synthesize, using the most significant or frequent conceptual codes—organised progressively and hierarchically; and, lastly, with *theoretical coding*, to build a theoretical model. The procedure involved the use of the qualitative dedicated data analysis software QSRNVivo10 (Richards, 2010).

A total of 847 codes, and 2,323 occurrences referring to them, emerged (Fig. 1). In the focused coding the conceptual codes progressively diminished, on the basis of the occurrences with the highest density of meaning or frequency, and I identified 90 subcategories, divided into 11 interpretative categories, which were then reduced to 7 (Table 1).

1. Only some of the research results are presented here. Further details can be found in G. Malusà (2019a) *Riuscire a farcela. Pianificare percorsi di successo scolastico per studenti di origine migrante*, soon to be published by FrancoAngeli (Milan), based on a PhD thesis defended at the Doctoral School in Psychological Sciences and Education at the University of Trento in 2017.



**Figure 1** – Volume reduction focused coding

**Table 1** – Categories and properties in a virtuous process

<i>CATEGORY</i>	<i>PROPERTY</i>
<i>Motivation to change</i>	Motivation to change (to increase equality), ethical choices that foster solidarity
<i>Building meaningful relationships</i>	Being authoritative, encouraging, enthusiastic and motivating, ‘hooking’ the students, assertive communication, self-care, giving individual help, building trust, awakening students’ sense of responsibility, motivating them to study, involving families
<i>Facilitative teaching strategies</i>	Sensitivity to difference, project/lab learning, dedicating time, adopting diverse teaching strategies and active methodologies, being flexible and gradual
<i>Planning learning path strategies</i>	Organizing activities in small groups, co-presence, finding resources, agreeing with colleagues (collaborating effectively), networking, flexibility in organizing, preparing for the ‘terza media’ exam
<i>Consistent strategic choices</i>	Adopting strategies to tackle dropout rates, effective resource allocation, principals as enabler, helping students to choose their high school, the role of teacher training
<i>Decisional evaluation processes and belief systems</i>	Establish differentiated criteria, adopt personalized learning paths, agree on grading, valorise available resources, openly discuss educational problems. Willingness to give second chances, believing in students’ abilities, recognizing their needs, empathetic attitude
<i>Being able to make it?</i>	Showing willingness to learn, losing interest, provocative or rebellious behaviours, becoming invisible, experiencing precarity

Socio-economic factors and government/educational policies were considered as background factors (Table 2).

Table 2 – Background conditions

CATEGORY	PROPERTY
<i>Socio-economic contexts</i>	Motivating families, residential areas, well organized infrastructure Fragile families, marginalized areas, substandard infrastructure, seriously disadvantaged students
<i>Territorial and educational policies</i>	Supportive policies, tackling non-completion, prioritizing other goals, viewing immigrants as a problem

By investigating the relationships and reciprocal influences between the different categories and their properties, I have been able to construct a *functional pedagogical model* (Fig. 2) of the process of planning successful learning paths in complex situations, identifying 5 stages of a virtuous process in which teachers and principals are called upon to plan high quality pathways for all.

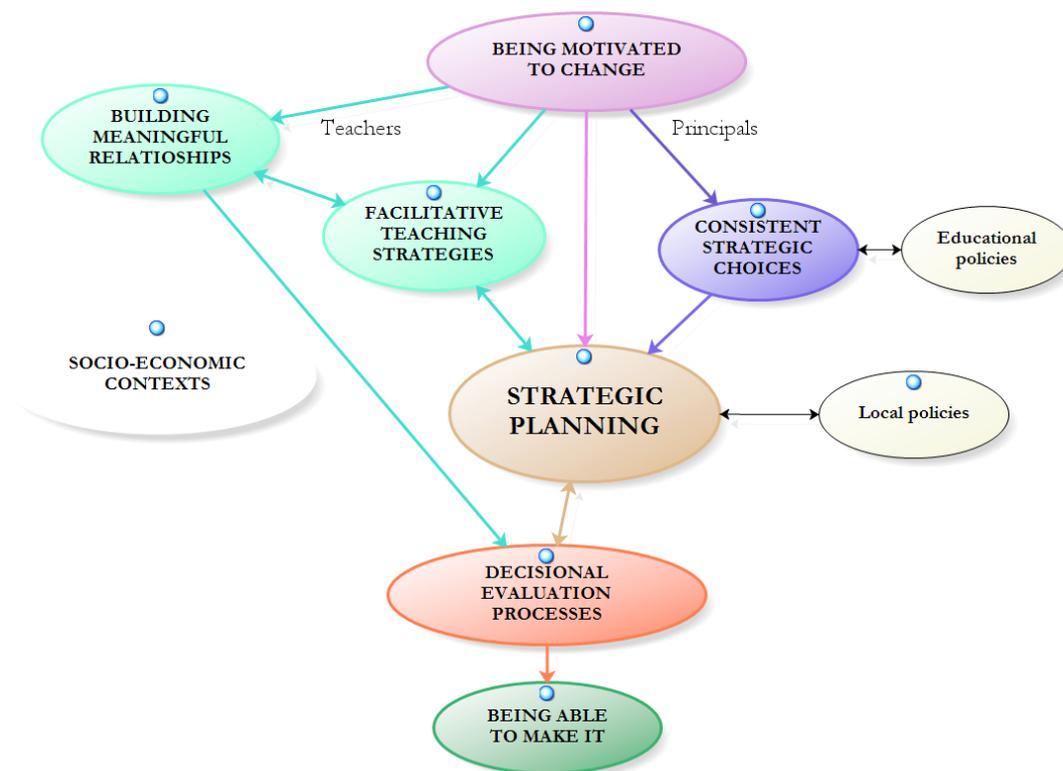


Figure 2 – Planning successful learning paths in complex situations

### 3. The stages of a virtuous path<sup>2</sup>

#### 1) Being motivated to change

*In order that the dream of equality does not remain just a dream.*

(Scuola di Barbiana, 1967, p. 80)

This core tenet underpins the entire process and allows those involved to act *as if what they wanted to realize was already a reality*, identifying appropriate strategies that enable people to overcome difficulties or a lack of resources in order to foster a particular vision of social justice. The “*Ethos*” (Tarozzi, 2014) manifested by some—but, sadly, not very many—of the teachers and principals interviewed, who describe themselves as *teachers by choice* or *committed* to their role, resembles the motivations which become a political belief in the possibility of change—utopian but still worth striving for—characteristic of the figure of the “*transformative teacher*” in *critical pedagogy* (Giroux, 1988).

The belief systems of the *key* teachers and principals described in this study are future-oriented: deeply idealistic, they recognize and understand their students—both their needs and their inner resources. These elements are the starting point for the journey upon which such teachers embark, full of passionate conviction, guiding their students towards progressively greater competences, in order to *make people free through their schooling*, supporting students so that they can become capable not only of “*knowing, knowing how to do, knowing how to be,*” but, above all, “*knowing how to think*” (Dallari, 2018).

#### 2) Building meaningful relationships

*You have to hook the students in!*

(Teacher coordinator)

It is immediately evident that the second stage of the process—consciously setting out to build meaningful relationships with the students and their families—is a paradigmatic context for success, a dynamic factor which can create *an atmosphere of trust, listening and the responsabilization of each person*. Fostering relationships helps to rekindle (particularly the most fragile) students’ motivation to learn, nurturing their existing (inner) resources, boosting their self-esteem and facilitating conflict mediation through clear and—if necessary—firm authority.

This category involves actions, verbal and nonverbal postures and attitudes, which Mortari (2006) has described as key components of the process of “*taking care*”: listening, cognitive and emotional presence, receptivity, responsivity, empathy, attention, passive empathy, reflexivity, a sense of care, technical competence and—last but not least—self-care; modalities which enable the building of meaningful relationships with students, as emerges clearly in the stories of young migrants’ achievements recounted by Sadowski (2013), in the research findings of the Californian team of Suárez-Orozco (2016), and by Ventura (2012).

#### 3) Facilitating learning

*As well as in the lab, the real work is done in class!*

(Intercultura member)

The building of relationships with the students can often be correlated with teaching methods which facilitate the attainment of increasingly high goals. This, however, should not be a sterile, impersonal sequence of efficient strategies and techniques, but rather a pedagogy imbued with a passion for educating and grounded in the reciprocal relationships which the teachers have built with their students. The numerous codes describe active methodologies and very interactive frontal teaching, including pair and (small) group work; careful explanations with progressively more challenging questions that stimulate the students to think carefully; straightforward explanations, metaphors and reconstructions; engaging topics presented through flexible, personalized activities; carefully phrased discussions; a choice

2. In italics, in this paragraph, are some labels which were codified in-vivo.

of activities at any one time, in different spaces and with different groups, and—among these—L2 labs and in-depth study of the language used as the medium of instruction. The path is more important than the final result (although a result does need to be achieved); different learning paces are respected and appropriate strategies used to facilitate them, with collaboration rather than competition between the students being encouraged.

#### 4) Planning and coordinating interventions

*Creating an education plan together!*

(External expert)

The fourth stage of the virtuous process, this is the “*core category*” (Charmaz, 2014) in which the motivational, relational and methodological aspects of the approach adopted by the teaching team and the strategic choices adopted by the principals and shaped by the territorial and educational policies come together. In fact, *complexity leads the school to get involved in the territory*, in search of collaboration and potential resources: in my research I came across L2 courses for mothers; *street learning* initiatives for young people through role model projects; cooperatives and social centres which offer help with homework, particularly for primary children; territorial teams with social workers, teachers and psychologists in an effort to deal with the most problematic cases in a holistic way.

#### 5) Supporting the building of a new life plan

*We are not here to punish or reward, but to offer possibilities!*

(Principal)

The state exam which children have to pass to move from the first to the second education cycle includes not only processes connected to the direction and evaluation of students’ pathways, but also more wide-scale decisional dynamics. Without wanting to engage in the debate on the value and purpose of evaluation (Capperucci, 2011; Vannini, 2011), this step focuses on observations of the teachers’ formal and informal (*staff room chat*) decisional processes, in order to understand the non-static, *future-oriented* visions which have a positive impact on students’ pathways and on their development of a sense of self-efficacy and resilience.

Evaluation, understood in the deepest sense of “*to give value*” (Dewey, 1960), becomes a real opportunity for reflection and self-evaluation for the teachers, too, who are asked to personalize their teaching activities, and to adapt them whenever necessary, in order to allow their students to develop the necessary competences for the realization of *an audacious life plan*, in accordance with a pact which they make with their families.

#### 6) Being able to make it?

*Anyway, she’s going to become a hairdresser!*

(Teacher, before a grading meeting)

The final result of this virtuous process, the category of who *makes it* hides many sadly predictable failures: there are the students *in precarity*, who are felt to be *struggling up a glass wall* and whom the teachers only reluctantly pass (thereby entitling them to go up a year); others—their attitudes permanently provocative—who *wreck the class*; and those who—in contrast—seem to be *invisible* and/or completely uninterested in what is going on around them; others—but few, unfortunately—do *show a desire to learn*, even though their progress is slow and effortful, and often without family support.

For this last group, according to our results, a meaningful relationship with at least one teacher who (within an inclusive class group) *books the student in* by offering motivating, slow-paced and clearly planned learning activities: their initial competence level must be clearly established, progress is monitored; first their linguistic competence, and then their competence in the language of instruction, is supported; teaching methods are flexible; and—importantly—the teachers coordinate their activities

and are supported by school policies which dedicate time and resources to the provision of the support which families are unable to offer, always setting high standards.

In contexts like this, we do find classes in which the students participate, raise their hands: they are learning how to ask for help, can accept responsibility, are collaborating enthusiastically and developing the ability to think independently and critically about their own lives.

And then, sometimes, at school—they make it!

#### 4. Towards a multidimensional intervention model

Planning and supporting successful learning pathways through the years of compulsory schooling for all young people, of all origins and socio-economic backgrounds, clearly presents a huge challenge in our current educational system, still plagued by a high dropout rate and a considerable gap between the academic attainments of autochthonous and migrant origin students, whose trajectories are “*fragmentary*” (Malusà, Pisanu & Tarozzi, 2016; Tarozzi, 2017) and a large majority of whom is often funnelled<sup>3</sup> into vocational schools, as Boudon (1974)<sup>3</sup>’s critical account revealed many years ago, and is still the case today (ISMU-MIUR, 2019).

The urgent need to personalize interventions clashes with current school procedures, which often involve biased strategic choices, a rigid adherence to outdated teaching methods and ineffective planning modalities (Table 3), which seem to lead, through inertia, to the academic failure (instead of success) of the most fragile students. The stages we have described, typical of a virtuous process, are, in fact, increasingly derailed by criticism (vicious circles) which individual teachers cannot counteract, and which cannot be dealt with through over-simplified mechanisms.

Table 3 – The categories and properties of a vicious circle

<i>CATEGORY</i>	<i>PROPERTY</i>
<i>Lack of motivation</i>	Inertia, resignation
<i>Avoiding relationships</i>	Giving up, abusing power, being inconsistent/irregular
<i>Rigid teaching methods</i>	Frontal and/or directive teaching, lack of time management, having favourites, incompetence, no personalization, avoiding explanations
<i>Ineffective planning</i>	Failing to coordinate interventions, creating obstacles (for the students), saying one thing and doing another, inability to adapt, inability to recognize difficulties, tendency to muddle through, scapegoating, over-emphasis on the superficial, difficulties in collaborating with colleagues
<i>Biased (strategic) choices</i>	Prioritizing other areas
<i>Decisional evaluation processes and belief systems</i>	Lowering expectations, contradictory evaluations Scapegoating, passing students just for the sake of it, self-righteousness, failure to establish authority, awarding/punishing

3. In terms of the reproduction of predestined outcomes.

The research results indicate the urgent need for a systemic approach that involves all stakeholders, adopting a multidimensional intervention model which encompasses the (closely interconnected) relational, methodological, planning/organizational, economic and political and ethical dimensions.

a) **The relational dimension**

Too often still forgotten in current pedagogy, this dimension is, in fact, its very foundation, since “*education is impossible without relationship, reciprocity, recognition, genuine connection*” (Ciotti, 2014): building relationships with and among students, responding to their needs and guiding them in their discovery of potential new horizons is a crucial part of the process here observed (teaching). This, however, requires motivated, appropriately trained teachers, capable of understanding students’ needs and overcoming stereotypes and prejudice (Gorski, 2012), welcoming synchronicities and educational opportunities for their pupils, with open minds and optimistic hearts. Their attitude must be free of preconceptions and alive to the present, open and responsive to the students’ needs and ready to respond to them, in a relationship which can “*find appropriate balance in relationship to the other*” (Mortari, 2006, p. 111), who is “*consciously*” welcomed (Bertolini, 1965; Bertolini & Caronia, 1993) into the learning space so that “*they themselves (the learners) can gain awareness of themselves and of the world around them, learning not ‘just to exist unthinkingly’ but to feel themselves, in as far as is possible, directly responsible for their own personal development, and destinies*” (Bertolini, 2005, p. 134). This relational dimension should also permeate progressively wider areas of interaction, not only between the teacher and her students, but also with students’ families and other teachers, colleagues more generally and even the surrounding territory, as proposed by John Dewey, Lorenzo Milani, Martin Buber (1923/1991) and Paulo Freire. Dialogue thus becomes an emancipatory educational tool, which can generate new forms of collaboration between school and community (Green, 2017b) and set in motion a process of circular communication (Stutzman Amstutz & Mullet, 2015), in which all the interlocutors can offer elements for shared critical analysis (Catarci, 2016).

Knowing how to build alliances, and to design and plan collaboratively, requires the ability to manage relations and communicate coherently, with genuine personal involvement, in order to build new mutually enriching school-family-school relationships. The above requires that (paid) time be allocated for the experiential training (Kolb, 1984) that enables teachers and heads to actually gain those relational and intercultural competences vital for effective work in complex educational contexts (Gorski & Pothini, 2018). When this dimension still has to be pursued by individuals in their own time, or is considered merely a personal quality, the inevitable result is that staff will lack commitment, or risk burnout.

b) **The methodological dimension**

The (lack of) appropriate teacher training is also a key cause of the methodological weaknesses observed in many classes. The gap is still much too wide between the declared good practices and the reality on the ground in schools, which frequently depend too heavily on individual teachers working with little support from immediate colleagues. Although the validity of active, experiential methodologies has now been firmly established by pedagogical research, these practices, unfortunately, are still only rarely adopted in schools.

Unsituated, abstract lessons particularly penalize students who struggle in the language of instruction (and this includes some Italian children). The growing number of students—whether Italo-phones or not—with learning difficulties cannot simply be attributed to our increased awareness of the issue: it is imperative to examine the teaching and evaluation methods used in classrooms, which often serve to further entrench social inequalities (Batruch, Autin, Bataillard & Butera, 2019). Controversial as it may seem, I would suggest that some of the so-called *Specific Learning Disabilities* (SLDs) would sometimes be better defined as *Specific Teaching Difficulties*: outdated teaching methods, prepackaged and only purportedly individualized, which exacerbate any potential problems the students may have, rather than fostering their strengths and resilience (Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017).

### c) The planning/organizational dimension

The etymology of *to project* (a synonym, in Italian, for *to plan*) is found in the Latin *pro*—forward, towards the front—and *iacere*—to throw—and the word can thus mean “*to throw forward*,” in the sense of “*to think of something and study it in relation to its possibilities and the ways in which it might be realised*” (Devoto & Oli, 2012), implying aspects connected to the present (the formation of the idea), to the future (its realization) and to the past (the experience out of which a particular action arises) (Brandani & Tomisich, 2012). These factors were found to be sadly lacking in the schools—not only among the teaching staff (whether in the smaller groups made up of the teachers of each specific class or in the staff body as a whole)—but also in the schools’ relations with the surrounding community: only when confronted by urgent problems did the two unite and work together, instead of building a stable, collaborative, network (Colombo, 2011, 2015), such as is—now more than ever—necessary, if the problem of school non-completion is to be tackled effectively.

And such networks *can* work, if people—steering a steady course between naive optimism and sterile cynicism—create a genuine meeting space where mutual educational and political responsibilities are assumed, in order to transfer good practices between the various areas of life, inviting the territory into the school and allowing the school to explore the territory (Green, 2017a; Tarozzi, 2015), thereby bridging the opportunity gap and providing a high quality education to all (Gorski, 2013).

### d) The political, economic and ethical dimension

Promoting the *ius-scholae*, taking long term steps to make structural, stable changes to improve the quality of public schools, directing resources to support projects in high risk situations, and to reduce class sizes... these are some of the many interventions congruent with a vision of social justice. If Italy continues to trail the other OECD countries in terms of spending on education (clearly not one of the country’s main priorities: Italy’s education budget is lower than the OECD (2018) average), it will be difficult to face the new challenges posed by complex school environments.

Most strikingly, however, what emerges from the research is an ethical-political void which gives no support to those processes defined by Freire as conscientization (“*conscientização*”) (Freire, 1968/2011), which are intended to foster both social change and inner personal transformation. Although the source of motivation (see Figure 2) in our model can serve as the starting motor for an effective process, this journey seems to have been embarked upon without a critical, emancipatory vision, and to be propelled by individual—often intermittent or uncoordinated—choices. Many questions remain on how policy and institutions can make positive choices that benefit planning processes and favour academic success, in order to enable the intentional, collective construction of a global citizenship which is based on social justice and can offer new spaces for hope.

In conclusion, if the inevitable complexity of any effective model partly explains the failure (so far) to implement one, this fact should—instead of merely evoking a fruitless sense of guilt—inspire us to shoulder the numerous responsibilities required for its realization (Motti-Stefanidi, 2019; Suárez-Orozco, Motti-Stefanidi, Marks & Katsiaficas, 2018). It would be over-simplistic to blame teachers—who are, in fact, the last links in the chain—for a failure which has actually been brought about by an entire society’s shirking of its responsibilities. Indeed, while some factors are clearly pedagogical, others are rooted in broader social and political issues. And those who work in the field of education are called upon to take up the vital role of “*Human rights intellectual*” (Tarozzi, 2012)—in the Gramsci’s sense—the midwife for an educational *utopia*, so urgently needed in this climate of pedagogical and political obscurantism (Giroux, 2015). Because it is not enough just to network—a network needs to be imbued with deeply shared, co-constructed human values of solidarity which enable us to foster a genuine global social cohesion, since

[...] it is not enough to be outraged. Outrage must be handled with dignity, devoting ourselves to democracy, to education. We must all feel worthy of accepting the greatest responsibility that life presents us with: to dedicate our freedom to the liberation of those who are still unfree! (Ciotti, 2014).

And to create a democratic, equitable school system is our shared duty.  
Leaving nobody out.

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