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and policies**

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Who is disadvantaged? Immigrant children in Italy between school and city policies¹

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Abstract

Based on first results coming from the international research project GOETE (Governance of Educational Trajectories in Europe, www.goete.eu), this paper will analyse policies targeting immigrant children in three towns in Italy: Bologna (North), Ancona (Centre) and Catania (South).

In particular, the paper will focus on policies targeting lower secondary school pupils, and actions directly and indirectly aimed at supporting their transition to following education paths.

The paper will describe the role taken by schools not only as an education agency, but as a local welfare agency, networked (more or less successfully) with local institutions. Thus, we will focus on environmental dimensions concerning schools, families, peers and services useful to define and cope with immigrant difficulties (school failure and deviance in particular).

How different discourses on immigrant youth find their way in targeted policies? Which space for local discretion, which strengths and weaknesses in the frame of a poor discourse on immigrant integration, school support, and an ambiguous discourse on local autonomy? How schools and local institutions interact with immigrant parents to help them in adult monitoring and parental tasks? How are they involved in mainstream activities?

¹ This paper is based on the results of research activities and analyses done jointly by the authors. However, § 1 was written by Federica Taddia, § 2 and 3 by Eduardo Barberis and Federica Taddia, § 4, 5 and 7 by Eduardo Barberis, § 6 by Silvia Demozzi.

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To achieve these aims, we will use a mixed-method approach, triangulating first results of GOETE working packages, in particular using dimensions focusing on targeting of disadvantage and local governance networks coming from:

- surveys with parents, principals and pupils;
- focus groups with students and teachers
- interviews with parents, principals, pupils and local stakeholders and experts.

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1. Introduction²

Disadvantages in education and transition from education to work are often associated with ethnicity and migration. We have a large and growing body of literature on this and, even if we see exceptions for such a statement (e.g. the school performance of Asian minorities in the U.S.), this trend seems confirmed in many countries.

Though, why this happens is more controversial: the causal direction between educational disadvantage, parental education, language deficits, precarious living conditions, institutional arrangements and the anticipation of lacking career opportunities remains unclear.

Heckmann (2008) maintains that both ethnicisation of social disadvantage and discrimination are outcomes of a lack of appropriate support for migrant children and youth. Actually, PISA studies suggest that migrant and ethnic minority youth disadvantage needs to be primarily addressed due to the failure of European schools in dealing with diversity (not only the ethnic one), more than due to diversity itself (Dupriez et al. 2008; Gewirtz & Cribb 2008; Mørch et al. 2008; OECD 2008).

This engenders a “ripple effect” affecting the following trajectories in education, society and labour market. Migrant pupils are disadvantaged in terms of enrollment by type of school, duration of education, achievement, drop-out, and thus in life and labour chances...

The degree of such disadvantage is connected to national education systems (e.g. selective vs. comprehensive ones) and to the contexts their embedded in, framing how difference is treated: usually, the educational attainment of pupils with migration background (CMB) is comparatively higher in countries with lower levels of economic inequality, high investments in childcare and a well-developed system of preschool education (Parreira do Amaral *et al.* 2011).

Thus, the interaction between ascriptive features and institutional arrangements is object of research on educational inequality in many countries, also to see how migration and ethnicity are interwoven with other features, both cultural (e.g. parents' education styles) and structural (e.g. socio-economic status, citizenship rights, coping institutions).

From this point of view, it seems quite clear that disadvantages accumulate: CMB with lower socio-economic background are more likely to face a double disadvantage – and these two disadvantages are often closely intertwined as many migrant groups experience higher levels of poverty than the mainstream population, linked with various types of discrimination (Lelkes 2007).

This also means that young people with low socioeconomic background and minority background are more at risk of failing in school, and thus of reproducing their disadvantaged condition from an intra- and intergenerational point of view. As a consequence, breaking this vicious circle is vital to broaden life chances and reduce CMB's risk of poverty.

² As an introduction to the project as a whole, this part is based on Parreira do Amaral *et al.* (2011).

Even though this is not the whole story, since discrimination can hit also top-performing minority pupils, especially in their transition trajectories, since they can experience glass ceiling effects, as a consequence of direct or indirect discrimination: norms on citizenship and recruitment, ethnic profiling, statistical discrimination can hit also the cream of the crop, especially if minorities are perceived as competitors in labour market and welfare positions.

Thus, we can see here a dangerous gap between expectations, based on formal discourses, and actual school and labour market insertion, depending on practices that can be highly inconsistent. Not by chance, very different integration models, like the French assimilationism and the British pluralism, both showed failures and violent backlashes exactly in the opening gap between institutionally supported expectation on equality and chances and daily experience of their deceitfulness (Modood & Werbner 1997).

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2. The Italian case

Even though it is now hard to define Italy as a “new” immigration country – since it has been experiencing more immigration than out-migration for more than thirty years now, it is anyway clear that immigration has reached significant numbers and become a political and policy issue decades later than in most of Continental Europe.

In this respect, Italy is fully within a “Mediterranean” model of migration (King 2002; Baldwin-Edwards 2005), characterized by:

- specific migration processes:
 - late, usually started in a post-Fordist socio-economic stage;
 - as a consequence, with a destandardized access to the labour market, in mature industries, traditional sectors and low tiers of post-Fordist secondary and tertiary sectors;
 - fast-growing, including a fast shift to mature stages of migration processes with the settlement of families;
 - not (only) post-colonial, and hence plural, origin countries;
- a treatment of migration consistent with its welfare state model (residual, family-based with passive subsidiarity, fragmented, category-based) and its nation- and state-making (weak and evolving territorial unbalances; weak rule of the law).

So, since the growth of migration peaked just in the last 15 years, a new cycle of migration made of family reunification, children and pressure on welfare institutions is quite recent.

And, within the increase of resident foreign population, one of the most rapidly growing element is undoubtedly represented by children (net of regularizations, that in the short term increases the share of adults) – both born abroad and, more and more, born in Italy.

Tab. 1 Demographic indicators (resident population) – Italy 2006-2009

Indicator / Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	Delta 06/09
Total population	59.131.287	59.619.290	60.045.068	60.340.328	2,05
Population < 18 y.o.	10.088.141	10.149.827	10.198.955	10.227.625	1,38
% of < 18 on total population	17,06	17,02	16,99	16,95	-0,64
Total births	560.010	563.933	576.659	568.857	1,58
Resident foreigners	2.938.922	3.432.651	3.891.295	4.235.059	44,10
Resident foreigners < 18	665.625	767.060	862.453	932.675	40,12
<i>Whose: born in Italy</i>	398.205	457.345	518.700	572.720	43,83
Births by both foreigner parents	57.765	64.049	72.427	77.109	33,49
% of foreigners on total population	4,97	5,76	6,48	7,02	41,24
% of foreigners < 18 on total population < 18	6,60	7,56	8,46	9,12	38,18

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% of < 18 on resident foreigners	22,65	22,35	22,16	22,02	-2,78
% of born in Italy on < 18 resident foreigners	59,82	59,62	60,14	61,41	2,66
% of births by both foreign parents on total births	10,31	11,36	12,57	13,56	31,52

Source: own processing on data from demo.istat.it

As a consequence, in the last decade the school system has been strongly involved in the new trends, with an increasing share of minority pupils (Taddia 2011).

Tab. 2. Share of non-Italian pupils in Italian schools

School year / School type	01_02	02_03	03_04	04_05	05_06	06_07	07_08	08_09		Delta 05_06 / 08_09 ³
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	Whose: born in Italy (%)		
Total	2,2	2,7	3,5	4,2	4,8	5,6	6,4	7,0	37,0	45,8
Pre-Primary	2,5	3,0	3,6	4,5	5,0	5,7	6,7	7,6	73,3	52,0
Primary	3,0	3,7	4,5	5,3	5,9	6,8	7,7	8,3	45,0	40,7
Lower secondary	2,5	3,1	4,0	4,7	5,6	6,5	7,3	8,0	18,8	42,9
Upper secondary	1,1	1,3	2,0	2,4	3,1	3,8	4,3	4,8	7,5	54,8

Source: own processing on MIUR 2009a

The strong rise of a new generation more and more born and educated in Italy started challenging some assumptions of the Italian nation-making and welfare – starting from citizenship rules (law n. 91/1992), since strongly grounded on *ius sanguinis* principles, with an ethnic idea of citizenship.

The above-mentioned law establishes that only children having a parent with Italian citizenship can achieve automatically Italian citizenship at birth. On the other hand, those born in Italy by foreign parents, must demonstrate that they have been living continuously in Italy since birth and they can achieve Italian citizenship when 18: though, on their own instance (to be filed just between their 18th and 19th birthday) and on a discretionary basis (Marchetti 2010).

Even though citizenship doesn't mean lower discrimination barriers on its own, it can be anyway maintained that such a restriction cumulates in profiling disadvantaged conditions of immigrant youth, since in Italy disadvantage seems to accumulate frequently in a context of weak social mobility, both for traditional categories of disadvantage (e. g. social class) and for more recent ones (e. g. international immigration) (Kazepov & Barberis 2005).

This is a traditional feature of Italian fragmentation, that doesn't hit just new international immigration waves: recent studies also noted that the descendant of mass internal migration that took place more than 40 years ago still suffer from a

³ Delta was calculated just on last four years to have comparative data with Tab. 1.

relevant disadvantage in the access to tertiary education and social mobility (Eve 2010)

Given this background, we can wonder if Italy has a model of integration for its immigrants. If we think about grand narratives that, besides their successes and failures, characterize the debate in many European immigration countries – the Dutch multiculturalism, the English race relations, or the French *intègration républicaine* – the answer is probably: no, it hasn't. And this is probably tied to the lack of a grand nation-making narrative itself (Triandafyllidou 2002; Melotti 2008).

Though, we can see a mode – if not properly a model – quite consistent with its political culture and welfare state-making, whose main features are:

- an emergency coping of the issue (Ambrosini 1999), with the lack of planning and vision;
- the gap between formal rules and actual practices, that grounds a contradictory discourse on migration where security issues intertwine utilitarian discourses, with mass regularization of undocumented migrants, and with pro-immigrant coalitions (Caponio & Graziano 2011; Zincone 2006);
- the delegation to Third Sector;
- the localism (Caponio 2008), engendering a postcode lottery of social rights in context-based mixes and degrees of denizenship: available rights are likely more tied to local cultures and resources than to national rules.

As a whole, scholars in Italy variously defined this “mode” as indirect, implicit, subaltern, unplanned... we prefer here to define it as a “micro-regulation” model lacking a state paradigm – an issue strongly consistent with other policy areas (Kazepov 2008).

In the field of immigrant policies, the main trend resulting from this mode is toward a so-called “intercultural” paradigm, that basically means a local declension of something blurred, in-between assimilation and multiculturalism, that scholars think as positively flexible (Chaloff 2006), but also inconsequential, lacking policy tools to achieve assimilation (e.g. equal treatment) and multiculturalism (e.g. formal acknowledgment of diversity) (Saint-Blancat & Perocco 2005; Liddicoat & Diaz 2008).

The education system is no exception in this: compared analyses on parents and children educational career shows that it is part of the intergenerational reproduction of disadvantage (Checchi & Flabbi 2007; Barberis *et al.* 2010), and also policies show a relevant weakness.

Actually, according to the benchmarking exercise on migration integration policy produced by the British Council and the Migration Policy Group, Mipex, in Italy education is the weakest area, with a score of 40/100 (while the average is 60: Italy ranks 10th among the 31 countries considered, and 8th just considering European ones, while it is 19th for education policy), mainly because “newcomers risk being placed at the wrong level, with few measures to catch up” and because “the Italian education system is not actively supporting new opportunities and intercultural education” (Huddleston *et al.* 2011, 113).

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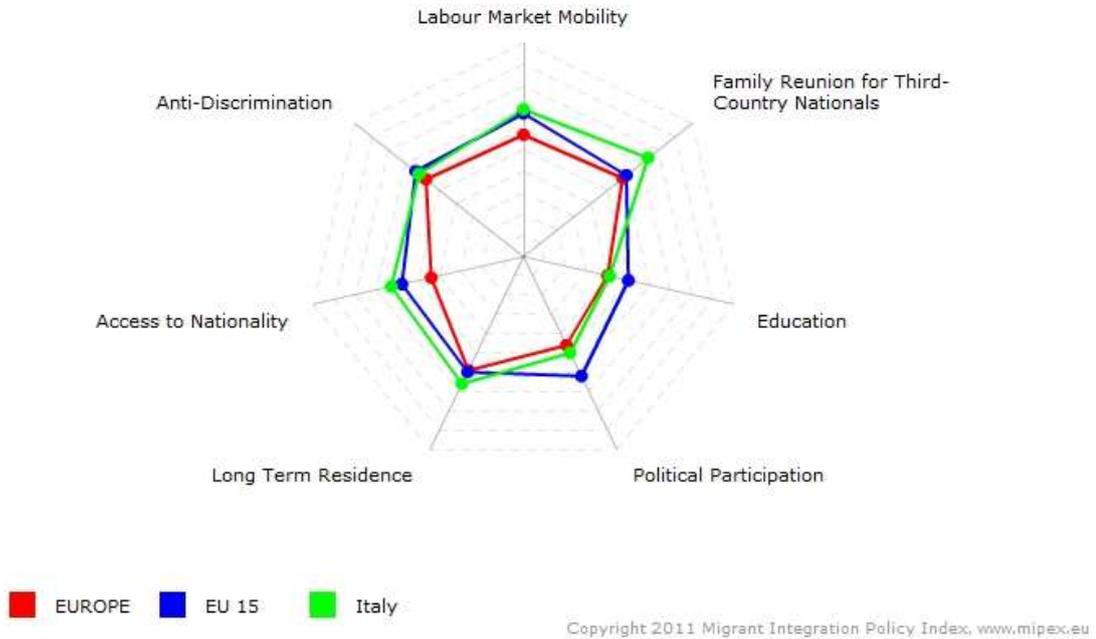
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Fig. 1 MIPEX scores per policy area

MIPEX Results: 2010



Source: www.mipex.eu

The issue is becoming clearer and clearer also for CMB's careers, as far as drop-outs, late accomplishments and segregated choices of upper secondary schools are concerned (FGA, forthcoming), as the tables below show.

Tab. 3 Distribution of students per type of upper secondary school (school year 2008/09)

School	Non-Italian pupils	Total pupils
General – Classical studies	3,3	9,8
General – Scientific studies	9,8	21,5
General – Language studies	0,3	1,6
General – Education and social studies	5,1	7,8
Technical	38,0	34,0
Professional	40,6	23,2
Art	2,9	2,1

Source: own processing on MIUR 2009a, MIUR 2009b

Tab. 4 Share of non-Italian pupils per school career position by age (school year 2008/09)

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Age	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	> 20
On time	-	94,7	83,8	78,7	74,6	71,6	67,7	55,1	47,4	35,7	25,5	22,3	20,4	18,8	-	-	-
Early	100,0	5,3	5,4	4,4	3,5	2,7	0,7	0,6	0,6	0,4	0,4	0,5	0,5	-	-	-	-
Late	-	-	10,8	16,9	21,9	25,7	31,6	44,3	52,0	63,9	74,1	77,2	79,1	81,2	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: own processing on MIUR 2009a

Tab. 5 Share of late career students per citizenship and school level (school year 2008/09)

	Italians	Non-Italians
Primary	1,8	20,4
Lower secondary	7,1	50,2
Upper secondary	25,1	71,8
Total	11,9	41,9

Source: own processing on MIUR 2009a

The professional courses, and – even more – vocational paths (usually regionally based) are attended mainly by lower class students with unsuccessful schooling careers. Professional/Vocational qualifications are more and more likely to produce disadvantaged future workers, as far as the risk of unemployment, the duration of the first job search and the jobs achieved are concerned (Pisati & Schizzerotto 2004). It is easy to figure what kind of problems disadvantaged families with even lower integration in the education system and in the labour market have to face. For the less integrated (Roma minorities, immigrants, inhabitants of underprivileged neighborhoods with high levels of unemployment, criminality and family problems) school drop-outs and early school leaving is more likely to be endemic (Barberis *et al.* 2010).

3. The Italian education policy and the disadvantage

First of all, it should be highlighted that the Italian school system is comprehensive: disadvantaged groups are not taught separately from mainstream school population, and the schools offer a universal education setting, through with specific projects and professionals to address specific problems. Since the 1970s, after a long and rich debate, there aren't special schools for physically or mentally impaired pupils (but for very rare and specific cases), and all following comprehensive choices started from there.

Though, we could state that a comprehensive approach to emerging social questions – like immigration – have been much less object of a real debate, and have been sustained by school without adequate skills and resources – in a context where also the protection and support for “traditional” categories of disadvantage were hit by retrenchment in last years.

Thus, schools and local authorities built up their know-how incrementally within local public-private partnerships... and individual goodwill, given the actual problems in teacher training (blocked for three years now) and retraining. And this became more and more true starting from late 1990s/early 2000s, when decentralization and regionalization became a keystone of new institutional reforms: school autonomy and the federal constitutional reform redistributed competences, power and responsibility, though with inconsequential resources, paving the way to a “decentralization of penury” and blame-avoiding strategies in the State retrenchment (Kazepov 2010).

As a consequence the relief network can be very variable, and including many different actors: schools, welfare agencies, peers, but also sport clubs, religious associations, volunteering and other Third Sector bodies (Filippini, Genovese, Zannoni, 2010).

So, since 2001, social policy is a regional matter, including school assistance, both for cash (scholarships, grants, contributions) and in-kind measures (transportations, meals, textbooks and teaching materials, etc.), variously implemented together with Provinces and Municipalities.

In this context, emerging risks, like the ones concerning the integration of CMB, found fragmented answers: support teachers are not foreseen (unless pupils are disabled), and more or less professionalized and institutionalized intercultural and linguistic mediators became relevant to help teachers and school staff communicating with pupils and their families. They are often provided by local authorities as well as by associations and organizations working at local level, though the continuity of the service is often challenged by funding usually coming from temporary projects and by the lack of clear national professional rules and practices.

As we will see later, this has an influence on immigrant pupils' trajectories, building unsecured and wavering careers, where expectations are curbed by an obtrusive denizenship that cuts life chances.

As a consequence, coping strategies CMB put into practice can be different, like, among the others:

- mimetic strategies (“behave as an Italian would”), doomed to failures when clashing with daily and institutional discrimination;

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- downward assimilation and reactive identities, finding a shelter in deviant subcultures;
- selective acculturation, trying to exploit own skills (and positive effects of statistical discrimination) to find a way in specific fields.

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4. Methodology

In this paper, we are going to start working on the relationship between individual trajectories and institutional coping, as emerging from first results of an FP7-funded research programme, GOETE (Governance of Educational Trajectories in Europe).⁴ The leading hypothesis is that individual life courses are influenced by the regulation of how education systems interact with social integration agencies.

We investigated this issue in three areas in Italy, centred in the cities of Bologna (Region Emilia-Romagna, Northern Italy), Ancona (Region Marche, Central Italy) and Catania (Region Sicily, Southern Italy), to mirror territorial differences in social problems, social needs and institutional answers. The focus is on pupils attending the last grade of lower secondary schools – especially those institutes located in poor neighbourhoods and/or facing a larger number of disadvantages in their pupils' profile – since this is a crucial year, when they have to make a relevant choice for their future: choosing the upper secondary school which is likely to affect their future professional career.

To address the issue, the project used a mixed-method approach. In § 5 we will account for a survey with pupils and parents' on individual education trajectories and well-being, to identify profiles of disadvantage, while § 6 will analyse interviews and focus groups on coping and governance with actors included in a school-centred network (principals, teachers, pupils, parents, experts and professional of other services working in harness with schools). We will especially focus on their definition of disadvantage and following coping strategies.

5. Immigrant youth and conditions of disadvantage in Italy: some hints from the GOETE survey

In this section we will analyse first results from the dataset collected for the GOETE project in the three cities mentioned above. Questionnaires were administered in last grade classes of six lower secondary schools per city (usually 13 y.o. pupils) and to their parents. The resulting students' dataset includes 1388 cases, and the parents' dataset 1074.

The dataset is extremely rich with more than 250 variables concerning well-being, relationships, school results and career, attitudes and behaviours. We will analyse here just main differences between immigrant and local population, using various indicators of “settlement diversity”:

- years lived in the country (8,8% of students and 12,8% of parents migrated to Italy, half of whom have been living in Italy for less than 5 years);
- citizenship (8,4% of students and 9,2% of parents aren't Italian citizens);
- place of birth (8,9% of pupils and 13,4% of parents were born abroad)

We have to use them all, since we have cross-cutting groups: among those born abroad, for example, 21,3% are Italian citizens, while 17,4% of those living in Italy since birth aren't Italian citizens.

⁴ For further information, see www.goete.eu

Obviously these data are quite differentiated by city, since immigration is an issue mainly in Centre and Northern Italy: non-Italian pupils in our dataset are 12,6% in Bologna, 9,1% in Ancona and just 2,3% in Catania sample.⁵ We will hint to differences between Bologna and Ancona when relevant.

5.1. Irregular careers

We have seen above official data on school regularity and drop-out, showing that CMB are on average by far late in their education career. Our datasets confirms this information: 48,2% of non-Italian pupils aren't regular in their career – a share skyrocketing to 67,3% for those living in Italy for less than 5 years – while “late” Italians in our sample are 7,6%.

Though, this is just partly due to bad achieving, and it is also as a consequence of the institutional coping of migration (e.g. grades, classes and age groups were newcomers are placed): actually, non-Italians repeating at least one year in their school career are 16,4% vs. 7,2% of Italians. So, while the share of “late” Italian is similar to the share of those repeating a year (7,6 vs. 7,2), the gap for non-Italian citizens is wide (48,2 vs. 16,4), showing that failure affects more CMB, but this isn't the only reason for a slow career.⁶

Actually, 42,2% of non-Italian pupils, especially those living in Italy for less than 5 years, changed primary school (vs. 13% of Italians), and 16,5% changed lower secondary school (vs. 4,6%),⁷ thus it is likely that class insertion after moves is a relevant factor.

As for gender, notwithstanding similar move patterns, female are more regular than males: there's anyway a gap between immigrant and national female pupils, but smaller than the one between immigrant and national male pupils. Such a difference can be seen on expected school results, years repeated and time spent studying (where immigrant female pupils are those studying on average more than any other group).

5.2. Satisfaction, motivation and well-being: the exclusion of newcomers

Bad achievements are tied to a situation of “broken networks” that negatively affects attitudes and satisfaction and can magnify disadvantage.⁸ CMB are less satisfied by their school choice and – as Italian bad achievers state too – they would have preferred another one: they had no tool to choose (usually parents do), and they are dropped in an unfamiliar context.

⁵ Data are consistent with distribution according to secondary data, available at provincial level: non-Italian citizens attending lower secondary school in school year 2008/09 (the last available) were 13,1% in Bologna, 12,2% in Ancona, 1,6% in Catania.

⁶ We can see also an additional effect mixing class and ethnicity: lower class pupils fail more than upper class ones, but lower class immigrants even more.

⁷ With a peak of 23% in Bologna. Furthermore, 7,7% of them changed both schools vs. 2,3% of Italians, a proxy of territorial mobility also within the immigration country.

⁸ Actually, literature shows that neighbourhood and school effects are stronger for immigrants' children (Pong & Hao 2007) – likely also because of coping resources to deal with disadvantage.

Tab. 6 Answers to the Kidscreen-10 questions (“Over the last week I:”), mean by nationality

		Felt fit and well	Got on well at school	Felt full of energy	Felt sad	Felt lonely	Able to pay attention	Had enough time for yourself	Parents treated fairly	Had fun with your friends	Done things I wanted in free time
Italian	Mean	3,88	3,68	3,51	3,86	4,34	3,58	3,4	4,32	4,31	3,72
	N	1259	1247	1249	1246	1242	1246	1244	1249	1245	1252
	σ	0,97	0,94	1,05	1,11	1,04	0,99	1,1	1,02	1,01	1,14
Non-Italian	Mean	3,7	3,47	3,41	3,7	4,03	3,3	3,45	4,18	4,03	3,53
	N	115	113	114	114	113	113	112	114	114	114
	σ	1,02	0,92	1,02	1,15	1,24	1,09	1,18	1,01	1,24	1,23

Also, considering a set of questions on pupils' well-being (Kidscreen-10), all in all we can see lower levels for almost every item, and the gap is wider exactly for those items referring to satisfaction for relations: non-Italians pupils feel more lonely and to spend less good time with friends.⁹ In this area, we have also a wider standard deviation, showing large differences among immigrant pupils: actually, sadness, loneliness and isolation are felt especially by those living in Italy for less than 5 years.

Though, as other studies show (FGA, forthcoming), CMB are pleased by the school setting as an experience of peer relationship and especially newcomers love to go to school more than Italians, notwithstanding they are bad achievers (an issue usually depressing satisfaction for school experience), likely because it is a “safe environment” where positive relations are more likely (they can enjoy richer relationships with peers and adults – while outside school they are more isolated), and in some cases (especially for recent migrants) because education is still seen as an investment for social mobility.

5.3. Poor relations

Though, we should not overstate this issue: in a set of questions on relationships with teachers and pupils at school, bot Italians and foreigners have same mean values, but newcomers rate a bit less peer group solidarity, and more teachers' help – showing a need for reference persons, since they feel more lonely, awkward and outsiders than their peers.

Other variables confirm this trend:

- non-Italian pupils have less friends than Nationals, both in school and outside school (with the partial exception of new arrived, that invest much in relationships outside school);

⁹ The other area with wider gap concerns school: get on well at school and paying attention.

- in the set of question concerning relevant others to cope with general and school-related problems, newcomers show a very limited support network for most of the persons indicated there (family members and friends, for example), while many seek advice on the internet (38,1% of newcomers vs. 31,4% of long-staying migrants and 24% of those born in Italy).¹⁰

Thus, a rebalancing is needed with the role of institutions, visible with a higher share of newcomers seeking advice by some professionals (especially in Bologna, where institutional response seems stronger), like psychologists, youth workers, school counsellors.

5.4. Family background

In a context of weak but sought relations, the role of family is also quite ambivalent. On the one hand, it is more binding: immigrant pupils, especially newcomers and females, spend more time than their colleagues in activities like helping at home and looking after younger siblings¹¹ – and spend also more time in activities usually done at home (watching TV, playing computer, reading).

Though, this also means that they spend less time doing external outside (e.g. attending school or non-school related clubs), thus curbing their relational chances.¹²

Furthermore, immigrant families often have poor tools to support their children in a frail period of their life: in the set of question concerning relevant others to cope with general and school-related problems, non-Italian pupils refer less than Nationals to parents, and more to peers (including siblings and friends, especially for school-related problems), to the internet (up to 39% in Bologna, vs. a general average of 25% for non-school related problems), and partly to professionals. Answers to another questions show that they don't feel like having someone to talk about their problems.

This also means that CMB could feel more and more distant from their parents, with parental role losing authority, guidance and relevance in their children's life. And this could be truer in the Italian school system, where homework and parental help is highly esteemed and pushed, making things difficult for pupils enjoying poor family capital in the destination country (Dalla Zuanna *et al.* 2009).¹³

Another side of this ambivalence concerns expectations and the gap between desired social mobility and support for it. On the one hand, it seems that immigrant parents obsessively repeat their children that it is important to do well at school (also because

¹⁰ The lack of significant peer relations it's truer for male, while female pupils with an immigrant background are much closer to Italians, with thicker and wider support networks.

¹¹ Partly due also to the fact that non-Italian pupils usually live in larger families.

¹² With the partial exception of Ancona, where some school are very active in afternoon activities, thus with more time spent there both for Italians and non-Italians, and (what is more) with similar participation rates for both the groups.

¹³ Other studies, especially in the US, show differences in parenting style according to ethnic background. Our national dataset is too tiny to look for evidence on this, but the weight of various factors (including ethnic and cultural ones) could be an issue when merging GOETE national datasets.

they are overrepresented among the underachievers),¹⁴ though their score is clearly under average as for actual interests in school progress (0,6 vs. 3,2), support listening their needs (2,0 vs. 2,5).¹⁵ Thus, there's a poorer family dialogue, also on general issues like future, current political issues and the like.

An ambivalence that becomes potential conflict when thinking about future careers: comparing future educational and job choices according to pupils and their parents, the gap for children of immigration is much wider than for Nationals. In the case of Ancona, where we started a deeper analysis, we can see that there's almost no nationality difference in pupils' expectations, while there's a large difference among parents. For example, this means that 75% of Italian parents/pupils expectations match – and when they do not match usually parents have higher expectations. On the other hand, immigrant parents have lower expectations, and when they don't match often parents have lower expectations than children. Again, social class and immigration accumulate, since a similar trend applies also to lower class parents.

Furthermore, besides this relational dimension, there's also a material dimension: immigrant families are over-represented among lower class households. Just to report some data: immigrant mothers' employment rate is 55,7 vs. 62,9% of Italian mothers; this also means that immigrant families are more often single-earner family – and with lower status. Using the ISEI,¹⁶ we can see that the gap between Italian and Non-Italian mothers is around 29%, and the gap between fathers is some 23%.

Though, as we hinted above, applying ISEI to children's expectations, interestingly enough we can see there's no gap at all in aspired jobs among pupils. Thus, the gap between expectations and family socio-economic status is much wider within migrant families (60%) than within nationals' ones (30%). So, there's also a risk of fallen expectations in a country with limited intergenerational upward mobility.

Not by chance, we can already see effects of delusion in long-staying CMB, that have lower aspirations than newcomers (whose aspirations are even higher than Nationals). In their aspirations (using here the ESeC),¹⁷ CMB are a bit over-represented in lower technical jobs and in intermediate professions, while under-represented among higher technicians. Though, breaking down the sample according to years of stay in Italy, the gap is much wider for long-stayers, aspiring less higher professional position (25% vs. 36%), and choosing more lower sales and service (19% vs. 11%) and lower technical positions (13% vs. 6%), i.e. the positions where also their parents are over-represented and that become a kind of destiny: actually, we have already seen above how much CMB are over-represented in professional paths.

5.5. Reported behaviours: downward assimilation of settled migrants

¹⁴ On a 5-steps scale, the average for non-Italians is 4,5 (with a very low standard deviation); 3,6 for Italians.

¹⁵ Scores here refers to mothers, but the gap is similar also for fathers.

¹⁶ International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (cfr. Ganzeboom *et al.* 1992)

¹⁷ European Socio-economic Classification, cfr. Rose & Harrison (2007).

It is time now to introduce a new disadvantage element in CMB's trajectories, that can be matched with differentials noticed in the paragraph above.

The GOETE questionnaire had also a set of questions on deviant and at-risk behaviours:¹⁸ so, we can see that 21,6% of CMB state they have played truant at least once (with a peak of more than 30% in Ancona), while Italians are just 10,2%; the share is highest for long-staying CMBs, reaching 25,9%.

Also other at-risk behaviours are over-represented in the sample of long-staying CMBs, even comparing them with recent migrants: they reported to have smoked tobacco, drunk alcohol, been sexually active, written/sprayed graffiti more than the others, with quite worrying levels in especially in Ancona (where, for example, some 45% of non Italians reported to have drunk alcohol in the last year, vs. 34% of general average).¹⁹

Usually just males report higher at-risk behaviours, while females have almost the same shares in the two subgroups – but for smoking.

Part of the difference can also be due to age, since on average CMB are older than Nationals (due to late school careers), but the link with underachievement is anyway clear, as shown also in other studies (cfr. FGA, forthcoming): long-staying CMB feel to be more underachieving than their peers, and even more than newcomers.

5.6. Summing up risks for CMBs

Above data show two different risk trajectories for newcomers and long-stayers: the first group feels excluded, the second is going toward a downward assimilation.

In this respect, the importance of achieving at school should not be underrated. Somehow, a relevant share of CMB living in Italy for more than 5 years seem to “give up”. Actually, in comparative terms we can see that newcomers “fight” much more to achieve: using a private tutor to improve their knowledge and skills,²⁰ spending more time studying at home.

Thus, it looks very important to close the gap as soon as possible, since this has an effect not only on school career, but on self-esteem – an issue that can be seen on assertivity scales, where CMB are more discouraged about their ability to cope with problems, trying hard (especially newcomers) and relying on their skills (especially long-residents), and much less interested in the “voice” options at school, since their trust or knowledge for chance of expressing their views at school is limited.

Furthermore, long-stayers seem quite “disenchanted”: poor feeling of belonging, lowest religious support in their coping network, more skepticism about school and work. They are also much more keen at moving to a different place to find a job (even much more than recent migrants, that one could expect to feel less belonging to their

¹⁸ Obviously, being self-reported behaviours, there's a well-known bias. Though, we can say something about the legitimization of such behaviours, analysing also opt-outs.

¹⁹ On the other hand, there's no difference in bullying rates.

²⁰ In Bologna and Ancona non-Italian pupils used private tutors more than Nationals, with a peak in 1-to-5-years residents in Bologna, where more than half of them used a tutor, vs. a general average of 37%.

new locale),²¹ for reasons that are not only acquisitive, but also based on self-expression.

From a welfare institution point of view, we can thus see that support agencies fail to cope properly with newcomers and to make up for their limited social resources; as time passes, a spiral of demotivation and downward assimilation starts, likely based also on fallen expectations.

Though, school is just part of the problem – as we will see in the last chapter: sometimes it even plays a role exceeding their strict remit (as the time spent by some children in afternoon social activities shows); somehow their educational task is achieved, though in a quite assimilationist way, as the gap between nationals and CMB becomes smaller for those spending more years in the Italian education and belonging to generations born in Italy show (Della Zuanna et al. 2009; INVALSI 2010), and with an excessive burden on families.

Though, the main issue seems an inconsistent support network, with a poor involvement of support professionals and of out-of-school activities and bodies. We will try to sort this issue out in the last part of this paper, with a qualitative point of view on definition of disadvantage and coping and governance according to principals, teachers, parents and pupils.

6. Defining and coping immigrant disadvantage in local case studies

6.1. Who is disadvantaged according to students, parents and teachers?

As we mentioned above, Italy is characterized by a low intergenerational mobility, so that people from poorly educated parents are at higher risk in their educational career, underachieving, being dropped out and ending up in vocational schools.

Therefore, the GOETE project aims at analysing the role of school in re-conceptualising education in terms of lifelong learning by combining a life course and a governance perspective which should be able to cope with socio-economic disadvantage. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to understand what success and failure in education depend on.

Is children's school achievement affected by problematic family life, housing conditions and poverty? Or is it much more affected by immigrant backgrounds? To what extent do success depend on the support pupils can get informally or formally? Are, finally, mobbing and bullying indications of increasing stress and pressure which will affect young people's career perspectives?

GOETE investigates how students, especially those from deprived social backgrounds, cope with educational demands. It analyses measures of active inclusion through

²¹ 86% of them would move to a different city (vs. 71% of Nationals), and 68% to a different country (vs. 45%).

formal and informal support inside and outside school and how formal, non-formal and informal learning are related within education systems in general and in educational trajectories in particular.

These research questions have been especially addressed in local case studies, aimed at understanding how educational trajectories evolve from the interaction between institutional structures, educational practice and individual agency. So, different perspectives of all relevant actors inside and outside school have been investigated through focus groups, individual interviews, expert interviews and classroom research. Local studies tried to examine differences in educational achievement mostly focusing on those pupils more at risk of scholastic failure such as immigrants and students with poor socio-economic background: thus, three schools (one per each city) were chosen because located in disadvantaged areas and/or having important shares of pupils with immigrant or lower class background.

“This area has been a ghetto since its urban planning birth. It is a sort of village at the fringes of the city. Pupils are worse off and when they go back home, they have more serious problems to cope with than a bad mark or doing homework”. (Teacher, Bologna).

“My parents don't allow me to go out without them: in this area there are people not to trust to, it isn't very safe. [...] They don't allow me to go out with my friends because of what they watch into television, of what happens, girls missing...they don't feel confident.” (Italian girl, Bologna)

“This is a hard neighborhood, under transformation and regression [...] Younger and more educated families are moving, so those staying here are immigrant children, also from Southern Italy, often with parents' relapse into illiteracy.” (Teacher, Ancona)

In the following lines, we will summarize the emerging issues coming out from focus groups and interviews trying to define “who is disadvantage at school” in the opinion of teachers, parents, but also students themselves.

First of all, we have to underline a significant difference between Bologna and Ancona on the one hand (North and Centre) and Catania(South) on the other. Due to the different immigration rate (as mentioned above), the inclusion of CMB among the disadvantaged is not the same.

Leaving aside disability and learning disorders as factors characterizing educational disadvantage all over the country, we can see that in Bologna and Ancona one of the main disadvantaged groups according to our interviewees are exactly CMBs, while in Catania those coming from families involved in illegal activities. So, we will focus mainly on first two cases.

In all the local cases, interviewed parents usually consider school and education as relevant to succeed and to overcome disadvantage: they have often a lower level of schooling than their children and do not want them to follow their footsteps. Though, most of them also state the importance of the economic factor: without money, it is difficult to give children great opportunities of education.

“In my opinion, unfortunately [children's] future doesn't depend on education, but on money and social status. Meritocracy doesn't exist neither in the public sphere nor in the private... And, after all, even if it would be existed, in Italy there's no money”. (Mother, Ancona)

This opinion is quite shared by parents. In Catania, most parents barely have a lower secondary school license: what really matters to them is to find a way to get a salary at the end of the month and this issue affect also their children's choices and views on education and work.

Not by chance, also in the GOETE survey immigrant and lower class parents state that there are difficulties standing in their child's way of achieving the desired level of education (up to 60% against a total average of 30%).

So, wealth is somehow considered a determinant of future success, and this can have a strong effect on expectation of future careers and social mobility for many disadvantaged groups, including CMB.

If money is among the most relevant issues, motivation is also quite important. In this latter respect, every interviewees passes the buck over the responsibility. On the one hand, parents are generally critical towards nowadays society that, in their opinion, make children spoiled and anxious to consume. On the other hand, teachers point out the gap between their teaching (on the relevance of education, on social values like respect and equality) and what pupils learn in other environments outside the school. Together with media, parents are exactly among the most blamed: actually, poorly supportive families, together with immigrant background, are the features that for most interviewees define risk of disadvantage.

“Most of them want a pragmatic job, to work for one’s bread and butter. The word “education” sounds empty to them”. (Teacher, Catania, referring to her pupils).

“These children lack emotional grounds. They are ravaged by those parents back in their adolescence; they are forty, but they look like fifteen years old. This lack of responsibility affects children dangerously, and at school one told me: “yesterday I couldn't do my homework, since I've been all the day with my mother”; “Where?”; “Mom had her back tattooed, and I spent all the day in the tattoo shop” (Teacher, Ancona)

Immigrant parents are somehow considered different, though lacking social and human capital to help their children enough. Some parents and teachers blame immigrant families because of their supposed lack of motivation in integrating their children and because of their poor communication with school. Actually, the interpretation of some teachers is that immigrant parents don't take care of their children the way they should: *“it is a cultural issue, they don't have a lease on life”* (Teacher, Bologna). Besides immigrants, such remarks refers to Roma children, isolated from a cultural and a geographical point of view.

“There is a hope for these children only if they have the possibility to interact with different realities. This is what we try to do here at school” (Teacher, Bologna).

“The reason of educational disadvantage are principally two: our pupils don't know neither to read nor to write. And they aren't able to stay too many hours in the same place (a classroom) respecting rules” (Teacher, Bologna).

Some difficulties and disadvantages are somehow perceived as time-bounded, as for lacking integration due to short stays and school attendance.

“They always stay at home, they don't go to birthday parties. They have not been integrating yet”. (Step Father of two Romanian Children rejoined with their mother at the age of 14).

Though, there are also signs and confirmations of downward assimilation trends. Actually, an interesting emerging issue is that Italian pupils with learning or relational difficulties tend to get along better with immigrant pupils.

“My son's best friend is from Senegal” (Italian mother of a child involved in an episode of bullying, Ancona).

“My daughter get along well overall with foreign girls” (Italian mother of a child involved in an episode of bullying and with learning disorder).

Besides this, there's also a perception of a structural disadvantage and the need for specific coping measures to close the gap as soon as possible to avoid problems to become chronic. And the need of education tools to face a radical change in society, where cultural diversity is becoming more and more common.

“School pays more attention to pupils who have been just arrived from abroad... to foreigners...because they have to reach our level in short time”. (Italian pupil, Ancona).

“It's difficult to take into account all individual needs, especially if there are more than 20 pupils per class! Teachers do a lot of work, due to personal will and motivation. I don't know how much do it really come from in service teacher training...” (Mother, Bologna).

6.2. How to cope with CMBs' disadvantage

All in all, school staff feels somehow overwhelmed by their task. Actually, if the definition of disadvantage includes “big” structures (social values and – to a lesser extent – pupils' culture) it could be that their role is perceived as limited and underrated.

So, motivation is an important issue also for school staff, and the perception of appropriateness in coping with disadvantage is often tied to a personal investment more than to a proper institutional structure or to a relevant training. This is true especially for disadvantage referred to CMB, since no specialized training path (if not some refresher courses) have been attended by our interviewees.

Teachers do a lot of work, due to personal will and motivation. I don't know how much do it really come from in service teacher training..." (Mother, Bologna).

Obviously this engenders well known problems of fragmentation, continuity and accountability of actions. Within schools coping strategies in the last years started to be more and more defined – more on the grassroots level than due to national guidelines and policies. It was a learning by doing (*"we have the art of getting by"* Teacher, Bologna), that built up a local know how, later on shared at local, regional and national level.

Despite expenditure cuts and personnel shortage, I think that teachers always did all they could do: they were always available, even in the afternoons when they asked pupils to stay at school for refreshing lessons. (Mother, Ancona)

We always work individually with pupils: they only trust into who they feel is really listening to their needs. Actually, it is a deal of relationships. (Teacher, Bologna)

This school does a lot: they organize afternoons at school to keep pupils far from the street...But, pupils are too many: some of them unfortunately remain outside with no place in educational centers or afternoons groups. (Teacher assistant, Bologna).

Intercultural education, coping paths for newcomers (e.g. assessment of skills) are more and more well-known issue within the school system, though without adequate "protection" by norms and policies. Thus, generalization of experiences and good practices risks to be limited:

- with no ripple effect outside school, due to a weak network linking schools with local institutions;
- due also to a weak network with some families that don't recognize the educational role of school: *"pupils get different messages and end up without catching which is the whole meaning"* (Teacher, Bologna).
- with no continuity and professionalism, due to a low level of institutionalization: measures are usually financed by projects, and just schools with planning and project-making skills – in a context of school autonomy – can

be “safe” on continuity; on the other hand, professionals considered as more and more relevant, like intercultural mediators and facilitators, suffer from a limited availability, and a not so clear professionalization.

- with no continuity with upper secondary schools due to a lack of supporting projects after the end of lower secondary school. Educators and teacher say that parents recurrently ask: *“And then? What about next year? Where should my child go? And where will you be?”*...

In this respect, we can compare the different organization models in Ancona and Bologna.

In the first case, we have a strong horizontal networks among schools: on their own, they agreed guidelines and procedures to welcome new-coming CMBs and to assess transitions to following school grades.

For example the “Commissione dorica” get together teachers from lower and upper secondary schools to assess transition problems of pupils, also defining an evaluation test on skills and knowledge helping teachers to fine-tune education according to needs.

This helps overcoming local level fragmentation, and shows a concern for problems arising from a misunderstood interpretation of school autonomy. Though, this self-organization is not matched with an easy involvement of other local actors.

The gap with the municipality is quite relevant: on the school side, it is perceived as a weak counterpart, mainly a cash supplier for side projects, while a stronger coordination and planning role would be desired. On the municipality side, there's an aggregative interpretation (March & Olsen 1989) of its role in the field of education: no intention to suggest policy addresses, just a provision of cash to support emerging needs. So, the same issue (a cash provision for side measures) finds strikingly different interpretations: it is considered as unconcern by school, and as the best way of expressing concern by the Municipality.

There are also other factors of conflict: another relevant one is the role of municipal social service, perceived as poorly collaborative by school staff, so that relevant cases are not coped at best.

In the second case, the coping network is much more articulated. Local institutions collaborate with school in the field of intercultural education and CMBs' integration: in this respect, the cases of CD/LEI (Archive and Lab for Intercultural Education) and “Centri Anni Verdi” are quite meaningful.

The CD/LEI was created in 1992 with an Agreement between the Municipality and the Province of Bologna, the Local Education Office and the University (Department of Education). From 2002 the Centre is part of the Education Office of the Bologna Municipality and, for this reason, it cooperates with territorial agencies and foundations to promote several projects inside and out of the schools.

In particular, the centre supports and encourages the schools to run intercultural projects and joining transnational networks. It helps educational services to set up intercultural tools that schools use to cope with cultural diversity. To promote these aspects CD/LEI offers:

- training, information, counselling and documentation services to teachers, intercultural mediators, educators, social workers, students and families;
- intercultural training (e.g. seminars, workshops) for teachers, school staff and social workers on themes related to intercultural education, citizenship, cooperation, human rights and equal opportunities;
- intercultural counselling concerning the inclusion of migrant students in school (e.g. information desk on norms regulating foreign students, projects, evaluation and case analyses);
- documentation (e.g. Multicultural Library and Archive of intercultural experimentations) which have been run by local schools.

“Centri Anni Verdi” are afternoon educational centers run by professional educators, who care for the educational intervention and daily relationships with families, schools and territory. They provide learning experiences, fun and relational moments aimed at preteens (11-14 years) in the city of Bologna, within an educational context in which the listening and participation are the fundamental prerogatives. They have about 140 children enrolled.

Together with schools, regular meetings with teachers are set in order to monitor the progress of children attending; they also define pathways for individual support: workshops and activities are co-designed. Centri Anni Verdi choose to work together with local services and educational agencies to promote a more targeted intervention in the development of existing resources within the community of life of pre-teens, creating shared projects to receive and offer possible answers to the needs and demands of children²².

7. Conclusions

CMB are actually disadvantaged within the school system, due to an institutional setting unable to cope with diversity in a structured manner. The cycle of falling into disadvantage starts with an insufficient safety net for newcomers, in which the

²² See also www.aspirides.it

comprehensive education system turns to be an assimilationist machine, with a selective and subaltern inclusion of CMB and the blaming of those cut out, that defines non-deserving risk groups (mainly: male pre-adolescents with a long migration history). This paves the way for demotivation and downward assimilation, thus reinforcing negative stereotypes and blaming.

School staff is usually quite aware of resulting problems and risks of disadvantage for CMB pupils. Probably, to them the risk is clearer as far as newcomers are concerned: grassroots actions for welcoming them are quite defined, though not always easy to implement due to resource and skills problems.

On the other hand, not rarely long-stayers are considered “like Italians”: this implicit assimilation underrates their problems of fallen expectations when clashing with legal obstacles (citizenship issue) and direct and indirect discrimination (Colombo, Domaneschi & Marchetti 2011).

Notwithstanding these limits, schools are quite active in promoting intercultural education: though, from an institutional point of view, the main failure is that school autonomy risks to turn into isolation, especially in a period of retrenchment. On the one hand, the state school policy targeting CMB as a disadvantaged group is extremely weak: it should be enough to say that the only norm that was echoed in the public debate concerned the maximum share of non-Italian pupils per class...

Besides funding owed to school having an high share of non-Italian pupils, there's a missing policy line supporting the coping of pupils' disadvantages. This has obviously an influence on institutionalization and the building of a steady know-how.

So, in a more and more federal State, we could assume that regional and local institutions play a focal role. This is however just partly true: first, the implementation of local autonomy is still ongoing, with blurred competence boundaries; second, the decentralization has not touched enough the resource allocation, so at the moment we are “decentralizing penury” (Mény & Wright 1985), in the Italian case in a way very consistent with its fragmented welfare state. That is: much responsibility on families, coping by emergency more than by planning, unsure resources and measures, linked with short-term projects.

Due to a lack of check and balances in the territorial governance, we see strong path-dependency in local networks, with weaker and poorer areas not able to catch up and with problems in building working inter-institutional actions to cope with multi-problematic cases and new need profiles.

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